

THE EMERGENCE OF THE SOUTH LEBANON SECURITY BELT
MAJOR SAAD HADDAD AND THE TIES WITH ISRAEL 1975-1978

by

Beate Hamizrachi

A thesis
presented to the University of Manitoba
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
in
History

Winnipeg, Manitoba
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Major Saad Haddad and the Ties with Israel 1975-1978

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BEATE HAMIZRACHI

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of
the University of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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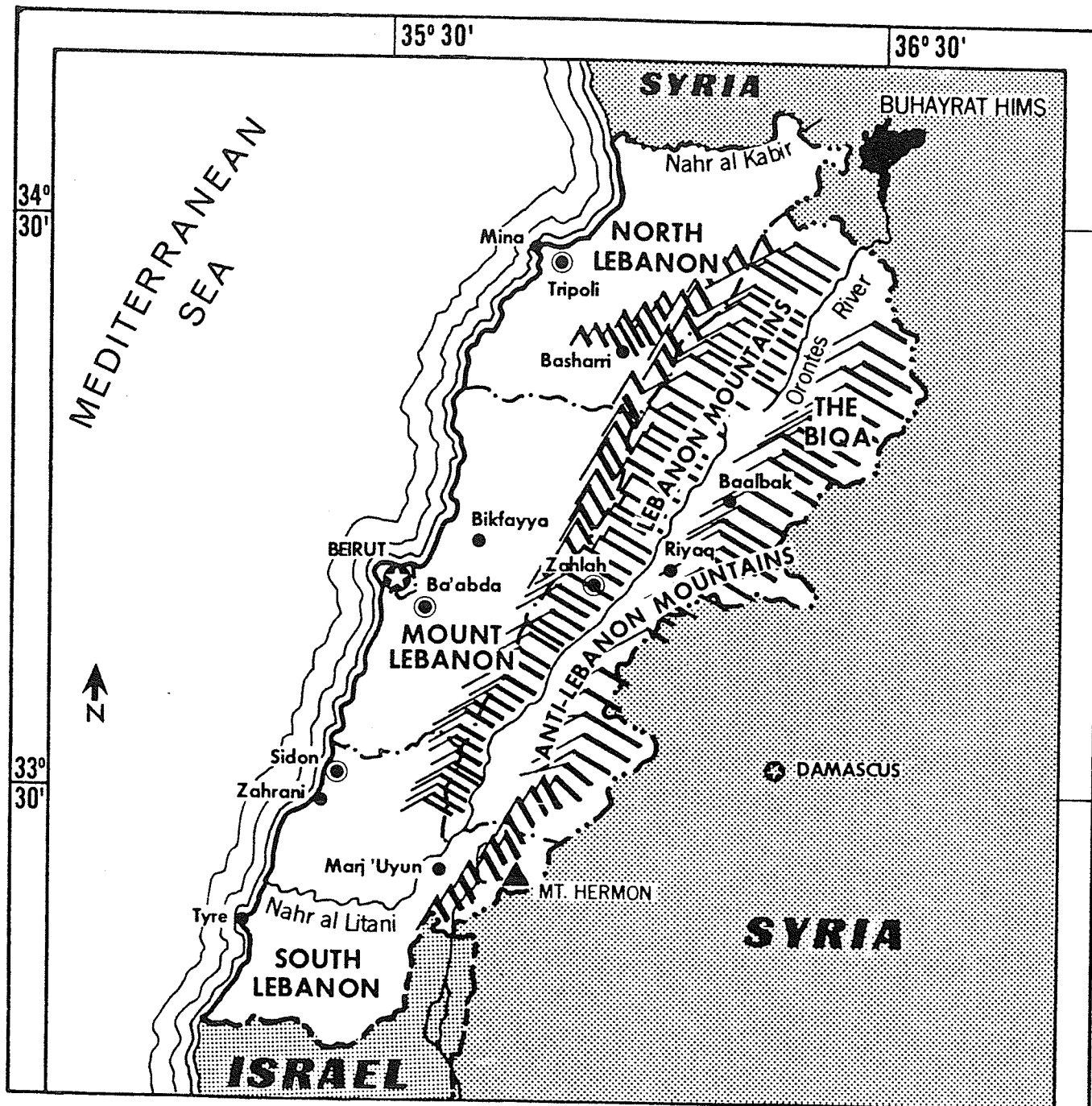
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I. Introduction

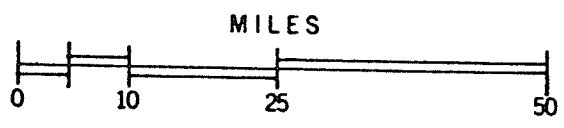
In April 1975, the first shots of the Civil War were fired in Beirut, the Civil War which in the end would engulf most parts of Lebanon and continues intermittently until today.

The first stages of the war shook the very foundations of Lebanon, destroyed the traditional structure of its society and government and struck a blow at the organization and the status of the small Lebanese Army.

Since the beginning of the war and the crises that followed, the different ethnic-religious and political camps were headed by leaders who usually belonged to the traditional, the feudal or pseudo-feudal leadership of Lebanon, the class of the "za'im" who also today continue to present a dominant political factor. However, the war also lifted from anonymity a number of leaders who did not belong to the ruling group. Their emergence on the national and international stage was usually meteoric and short or at least temporary. The only one who succeeded in remaining in a position of command and leadership for eight years, until his death as a result of cancer, was Major Saad Haddad, a Catholic infantry officer who ascended the stage without any political experience or background to become the leader of the southern part of Lebanon, along the Israeli border, which in the political jargon is called the 'Security Belt' or 'Cordon Sanitaire'.



- INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY
- - - CEASE-FIRE LINE
- · - · - PROVINCE BOUNDARY
- ⊙ NATIONAL CAPITAL
- PROVINCE CAPITAL



Haddad succeeded where others of higher and also of lower status failed. Even after his death in 1984, he remained in the eyes of many a symbol which, depending on the point of view of the observer, ranges in the political-ideological kaleidoscope from hero to coward, from friend to rebel and traitor, from patriot to Quisling. This research is a first and original attempt to examine the reasons for Haddad's rise in South Lebanon against the background of his personal history and that of the area where he operated. It will also examine the reasons for and significance of the Israeli involvement in South Lebanon in the period from the disintegration of the Lebanese Army to the open rebellion of Haddad against the shaky central government in Beirut.

Until today, very little has been written on what happened in South Lebanon in the years 1975-78. The analysis of the events therefore makes use of the few testimonies, interviews and personal documents available, but mainly relies on personal experience during this period in the area itself and on personal knowledge of or direct contact with many of the personalities and others mentioned in this paper.

Concepts like the "Lebanese Civil War" or the "Lebanese Crisis" which are mentioned in this study and in other material are a matter of controversy for various researchers. Some simply use the term "Lebanese War". A number of the leaders of the Christian, mainly Maronite,

camp claim for example that the events of 1975-76 were only an especially violent quarrel between Lebanese and Palestinians, and they cling to this version even today. It seems, however, that the fighting which started in April 1975 and ended with the Riyad and Cairo Summits in October 1976 was in fact a civil war whose roots lie in sharp inter-communal contrasts. During the first stage of this period, until January/February 1976, the battle was fought mainly between the rightwing Christian camp and the Muslim/Druze camp which sought and received the support of the terrorist organizations and of other Arab Leftist movements.

The "Lebanese Crisis" is the term usually used for the period following the Riyad and Cairo Summits up to the present. The term "Lebanese War" is used in and outside Lebanon by those who see in the violent events more than a civil war or a crisis and claim that Lebanon is only the arena for continuous military confrontations between external forces, especially Syria, Israel and the Palestinian Movement. This period, which is in part dealt with in this thesis, is characterized by the fact that the former social and political arrangements of Lebanon which came into being after World War One, have neither been rehabilitated nor replaced by a new order.

This study will examine the clandestine Israeli involvement in South Lebanon 1976-77; the phenomenon of the creation of the 'Good Fence' up to the relatively

large-scale, combined military operation code-named 'Cooperative', at the end of 1977; the period of the 'Litani Operation'; the arrival of UNIFIL and the creation of the 'Security Belt' from Mount Hermon in the east to the Mediterranean in the west, the area controlled by Major Haddad. It will also follow the development of Major Saad Haddad from his childhood in Marj Ayoun to his becoming a unique military and political leader who was supported by Israel and enjoyed the friendship of her people and her leaders. The account of "Haddad's Life" is important in order to understand both the person and his significance in the unfolding events in South Lebanon.

Until today, secret documents regarding the Israeli involvement in South Lebanon have not been made public. The IDF archives and their tens of thousands of documents on this subject are classified, and other sources open to the researcher lack depth, understanding and up-to-date information or suffer from a lack of credibility and from bias. Besides, there are no documents available from the area under Haddad's control simply because of the lack of any kind of administrative system which would have kept files. Most of the decisions and orders were not put down in writing or documented. It is precisely because of this that certain events have been described at some length and/or in some considerable detail, for it is necessary to establish facts before discussing them, and without the depth and detail of treatment subsequent analysis would not

have been possible. In addition, the complexity of events, and of the interactions of the factions in Lebanon, have necessitated the presentation of much background material, in order to make a very confused situation understandable.

The research is based on personal experience, the media, recorded and written interviews and events, private discussions and correspondence with persons involved in the events both from the South Lebanese and the Israeli side, as well as on secondary sources.

In many of the later events discussed in this study the author was a participant observer, both as an Israeli journalist who also worked for CBS, various press agencies and foreign media, and as press liaison officer to Major Haddad. This places the author in an unusual and somewhat difficult position among writers of M.A. theses. She hopes that she has maintained a requisite detachment.

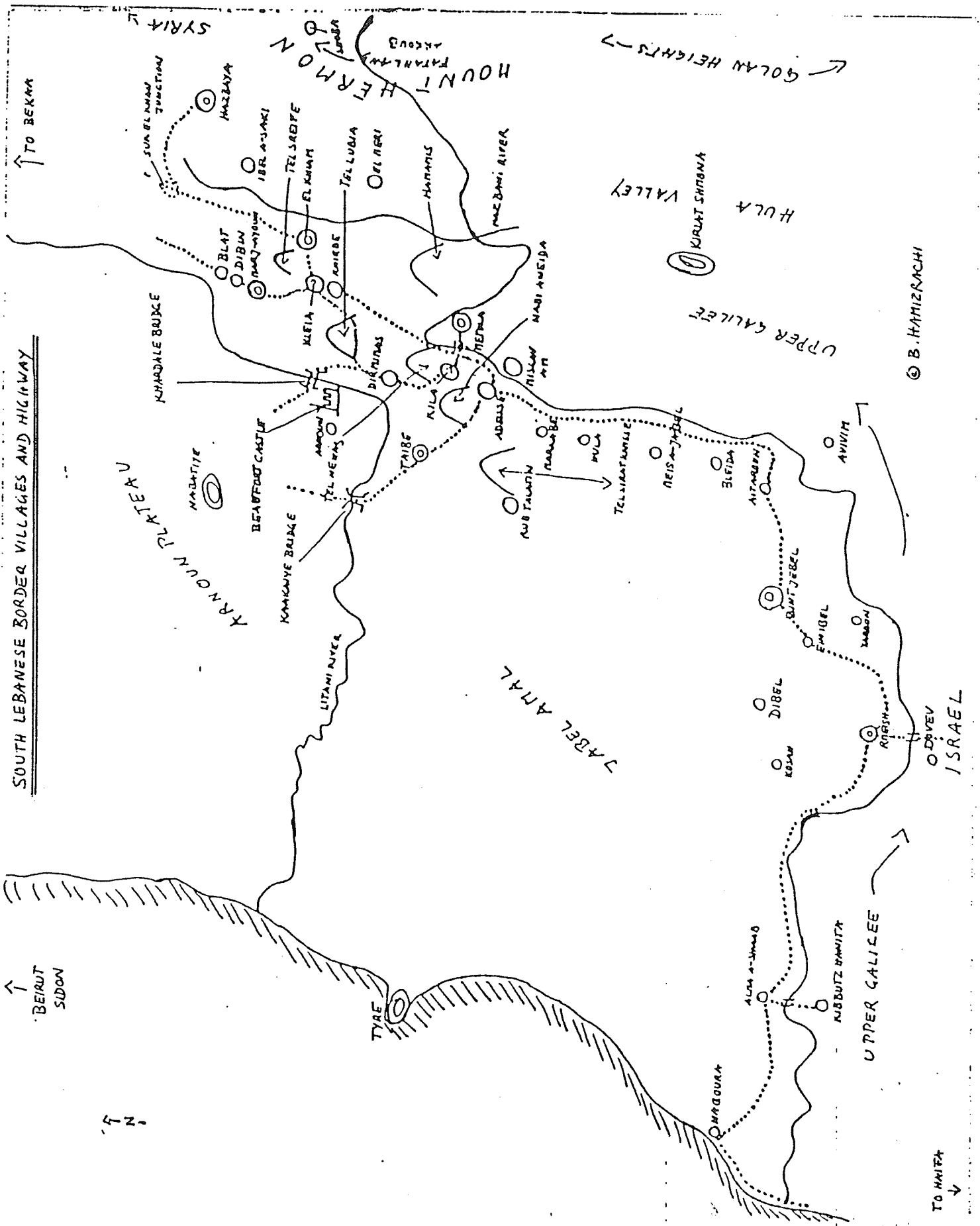
II. Lebanon : the Land and its People

Until 1974, modern Lebanon's image in the world was that of a land of tolerance where people from different religious, ethnic and cultural backgrounds lived peacefully together. Lebanon was seen as a nation that because of its economic stability and growth had become the business and banking centre, the "Switzerland", of the Middle East (*1). Because of its western, especially French, orientation the capital Beirut with its skyscraping tourist hotels, its bustling business and dazzling night life was called the "Paris No.2" (*2).

But after eleven years of Civil War, the famous business and night life have mostly disappeared and the world has become accustomed to connect Beirut with new slogans like "Green Line", car bombs, militias etc., all of them connected to the Civil War which started in April 1975 and to the developments afterwards.

While there are many different reasons for the continuous fighting in Lebanon, the major "casus belli" was the demand for a balanced representation of the different religious communities in the distribution of power, that power of decision-making and therefore of economic prosperity which until today is concentrated in the hands of the Christian, mainly Maronite, community even though numerically this community has lost its leading position. The last official census was taken in 1932. It showed a

SOUTH LEBANESE BORDER VILLAGES AND HIGHWAY



© B. HAMIZRACHI

TO HAIFA

T.N.

53.7 % Christian majority. Since then no official figures have been available. It is obvious though that since then the Muslim community with its much higher birth-rate must have gained the leading position in numbers.(*3)

On the eve of the Civil War, the Lebanese population was estimated as being close to 3 million (not included in this number are the estimated 250,000 Palestinian refugees).

Modern Lebanon (3600 sqm - half the size of New Jersey) is a narrow coastal strip on the Mediterranean, about 120m long and reaches from the Israeli border in the south to the el-Kabir River on the Syrian border in the north. The widest part of Lebanon stretches 35 miles from the Sidon area eastwards towards Jabel Mazar, about 15 miles from the outskirts of Syria's capital Damascus.

Lebanon is divided into four distinctive geographical zones : the coastal plain along the Mediterranean, the rugged Lebanon Mountains running north to south, the fertile high plateau of the Bekaa Valley on the eastern slopes of the Lebanon Mountains, and the Anti-Lebanon Mountains that form the eastern border of the Valley and of the country. To the south of the Anti-Lebanon lies the Mount Hermon massif where the borders of Lebanon, Israel and Syria meet.

The most important towns of Lebanon such as the capital Beirut (800,000 inhabitants) and Sidon (150,000) in the south and Tripoli (210,000) in the north, lie in the coastal

plain, while Zahle (150,000) is in the Bekaa Valley.

South Lebanon, and specifically the area dealt with in this thesis, is the hilly terrain north of the Israeli border. Geographically, it is a continuation of the Upper Galilee. South Lebanon consists of close to 800 sqkm and is bordered by the Mediterranean in the west, the Ankoub in the east, the Litani River in the north and the international border in the south.

In 1981, the majority of the population in the southern district was Shiite (60%). The Christians were 25% of the total population, the Sunnis 10% and the Druze 5%. The Christians belonged to several different denominations, and most of them lived in and around the town of Marj Ayoun.
(*4)

In March 1978, after years of civil war and hostilities which had forced many South Lebanese to leave their homes, the population figures for the area south of the Litani River were 100,000 Moslems and Druze, 20,000 Christians, 25,000 Palestinians and others. The area was also home to a small number of Bedouins who lived close to Alma a-Shaab in the west.

The average height of the terrain in the eastern and central sectors is 600m above sea level, while a narrow plain follows the coastal line in the west. The highest hills are Nabi Aweida in the east (860m), Maroun a-Ras in the centre (943m) and Jabel Ross (Har Dov) on the western slopes of Mount Hermon (1,530m). There are many deep and

narrow valleys. Large areas are covered with thick bush, and many of the deep ravines fill up with water in winter and spring. During the dry summers, the colour of the terrain changes from the lush green of spring to parched yellow.

In the middle of the seventies, agriculture was the main source of income for the villagers though many men found additional work elsewhere. A third of the country's farmlands was in South Lebanon. Sharecropping was the main form of tenancy, followed by fixed cash rents>(*5) Many of the Moslem and Druze landowners lived outside of the area and had their managers deal with the tenants. The majority of the fields which were worked by Christians belonged either to private owners or to the church. Because of the difficult hilly terrain, the generally small size of the farms and their fragmentation, the use of even simple modern machinery was very limited. (*6)

The topographical difficulties and the lack of modern irrigation created the special agriculture of the south. Vegetables including water melon, tomatoes, cucumber and eggplant were grown in the fertile valleys close to the rivers such as the Ayoun Valley lying between the towns of Marj Ayoun and El Khiam. Tobacco was the main crop growing around Rmeish and in the central sector, while citrus fruit and bananas grew on the coastal strip and in the Litani Valley.

The hills and mountain slopes were built into terraces

where fruit trees such as apple, figs, pomegranates and also almonds grew. Large olive groves with ancient trees and vineyards were cultivated especially in the eastern sector around the village of Dir Mimas. On the higher terrain such as the Arkoub and Jabel Ross farmers grew cherries which were famous in the whole area for their plumpness and sweetness.

Livestock included cattle and pigs in the lower-lying areas and large herds of black goats in the Arkoub.

The village houses were built mainly of limestone, the most common construction material. Therefore, until the fifties, nearly every village had its own masons. Since then though, more and more village homes were built of concrete which was cheaper and easier and quicker to get. In 1975, all of the villages discussed in this thesis were connected to electricity or, at least, had their own generators. All Christian and most of the larger, non-Christian, villages had running water.

The roads were narrow and followed the natural topography. The South Lebanon Highway, a two-lane road, and most of the main streets of the towns and villages were paved.

The towns and larger villages had small, central squares bordered by stores and public buildings. Some villages were built around a central rainwater pool which is used to water the local livestock as well as for household cleaning purposes.

Unlike Mount Lebanon, the south has no monasteries and only a few churches.

The original heartland of Lebanon, the precipitous Mount Lebanon, had been in past centuries a refuge for persecuted Christian and Moslem sects which had split from the main-stream religion or were minorities within other religious groups in the region. The Ottoman Empire, which ruled the region until 1918, could never really control this area and preferred to give it far-reaching autonomy. The true rulers, therefore, were the religious leaders and the feudal lords, the za"ims. Until the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire the northern part of Mount Lebanon was ruled by the Christians, the south by the Druze. In spite of usually good neighbourly relations between the two communities, serious clashes broke out from time to time. The bloody massacres of Christians by the Druze in 1860 led to the intervention of a number of European powers, especially France which had come to see itself as the patron of the Lebanese Maronites. (*7)

During the First World War the interest of the European colonial powers in this area intensified, and in May 1916 England's Sir Mark Sykes and France's Francois Georges-Picot, both of them senior diplomats in the foreign service of their countries, signed an agreement which divided the Arab areas of the crumbling Ottoman Empire into a British and a French sphere of influence. This act laid the foundation for a geo-political division of the area in

the future.

In April 1920 the League of Nations handed the whole area of Syria, which included Mount Lebanon, to France as its mandate. By removing the Bekaa Valley and the coastal plain with their predominantly Sunni-Moslem populations from Syria and adding it to Mount Lebanon, France created "Grand Liban", the Lebanon as we know it today. After the Second World War and the French pull-out, Lebanon declared its national independence. Though Syria de facto accepted this, she never recognized Lebanon de jure as an independent entity. Even today, there are no normal diplomatic relations between the two countries. This fact is seen by the Lebanese as a constant threat to their independence.

(*8)

In the new Lebanon the ruling powers were divided according to an unwritten agreement between the two major religious communities, the Maronites and the Sunnis. The basis of this "National Pact" is the last census of 1932. Since then, the Christians (mainly Maronites) have rejected every and all attempts to carry out a new census which would show that today there is a Moslem majority. The Christians "were afraid of losing their centuries-old preferred position and of becoming a minority helplessly lost in surroundings dominated by Muslims".(*9)

While the Maronites developed a special cultural and emotional relationship with France and from there with the western world in general, the Lebanese Moslems always felt

themselves as part of the surrounding Muslim Arab world. This feeling was reinforced by the the powerful surge of the Pan-Arab and pro-Nasserist movements that followed the officers' revolution in Egypt in the fifties.

"The Lebanese nationalism which developed also as an answer to the pan-Arab nationalism... is the "State-Ideology" of mainly the dominating Maronites supported by the Greek-Catholics and other Christian minorities. Contrary to the pan-Arab nationalism, it stresses the western, mediterranean orientation of the Lebanon and, in its extreme form, it traces the historical roots of the state back to the Phoenician culture negating the Arab element" (*10).

The Lebanese religious kaleidoscope is multifarious. The most important Christian groups are United Catholics - Catholics who accept the pope's authority but practice particular rites of their own; these include Maronites, Greek Catholics, and Armenian Catholics. Other Christian groups include Roman Catholics, Armenian (Gregorian) Orthodox, Greek Orthodox, and Nestorian Assyrians. Moslem groups include the Shiites (called Mitawalis in Lebanon) and Sunnites. The Druzes, although they are often described as an offshot of Islam and therefore grouped with the Moslems, have a faith of their own. "In all, the number of sects is twenty-two" (*11).

The Lebanese Maronites are mainly concentrated in the

Metn and Kasarwan districts, the former "Mont Liban", but Maronite villages can also be found in South Lebanon, close to the Israeli border, and in other areas of the country. Beirut, for example, has a large Maronite population which is concentrated in the Christian/Eastern part of the city. While the Maronites regard themselves traditionally as descendants of the Phoenicians and therefore as non-Arab, the main defenders of Lebanese independence and sovereignty in face of the surrounding Moslem world, the Greek-Orthodox see themselves as Arab Christians. They are politically more liberal than other Christians, and members of their community have become intellectual leaders of the Arab left and of the Communist party. The Greek Catholics or Melchites are in their political views closer to the Maronites than to their Orthodox brothers, and are mainly concentrated in Zahle, a city in the Bekaa Valley, and in villages in the south. The third largest Christian community after the Maronites and the Greek Orthodox are the Armenians who arrived in Lebanon in large numbers in the second decade of this century after fleeing from persecution and massacres in their homeland, Turkey. They settled mainly in and around Beirut. Other Christian communities, because of the small number of their members, are only of little political importance.

Because of their rapid growth, the Shiites have not only become the largest Moslem community in Lebanon (*12) (though officially they are still considered the second

largest after the Sunnis) but also militarily an important factor. Economically and politically they are still the most backward and neglected. The majority of the Shiites lives in the South and in the Bekaa Valley where they are mainly tenant-farmers who are completely dependent on the feudal lords on whose land they toil. Large numbers of Shiites have been displaced by political and military events in the South and have resettled in a belt of shanty-camps south of the capital.

The Sunnis regard themselves as members of mainstream Islam, the largest and to them only orthodox religious community within Islam reaching from Turkey to North Africa. While the original "Mont Liban" did not contain any Sunnis, large concentrations of this community were integrated into "Grand Liban" when the cities of Beirut, Tripoli and Sidon became part of the new country. From the very beginning, the Sunnis have rejected the idea of an independent Lebanon and their forced integration into the new state. Until today, they still prefer and hope for a return to the Syrian homeland.

In Lebanon, the Druze are the historical rivals of the Maronites who displaced them as the ruling community in "Mont Liban" in the 18th century. They still live mainly in their traditional mountain district, the Chuf, where they have retained their feudal structures and clan hierarchies. The Druze are mainly farmers who serve their feudal lords in absolute loyalty. In spite of political slogans of

"socialism" and "progressiveness", these lords have not shown any real intention of giving up their tribal leadership thereby liberating their people.

The newest and most problematic community in Lebanon is that of the Palestinian refugees who have been settled in UN-run camps mainly in and around Beirut and in the South but who have been denied any kind of citizenship status. Because of their large numbers, the Palestinians have always been a burden and a problem for Lebanon. "In a small county such as Lebanon, even under normal circumstances, the presence of over half a million unassimilated aliens would be very taxing in terms of employment, housing, balance of ethnic power and sheer social density". (*13) The emergence of the PLO and subsequent clashes and military escalations in the south of the country from where the armed Palestinian organizations staged their attacks against Israel, provoking retaliation, only heightened the problem.

In spite of the great number of communities, the Lebanese have their own ways to recognize each other's religious affiliation. "Language, dress, mosques and churches, accents and other signs and symbols distinguish one sect from another, adding to the extraordinary variegation of this small land. Names such as Michel and Pierre are tips that a person is Christian, Ahmad and Muhammad that he is Muslim - while Suleiman, Sarah, and Ibrahim can be either, indicating the common sources of Islam and Christianity" (*14).

Moving from one community to the other by conversion is an accepted fact of life. One reason may be political convenience like for the Moslem Shihabs who became Maronites in the eighteenth century. A Maronite may become a Greek Orthodox to divorce. A member of any sect may convert and become a Maronite in order to be a candidate for the presidency. Nevertheless, loyalties are to the sect. "On a more intimate and immediate level they are to the extended family more than to either state or class. The sense of family honor... is of paramount importance. And the values of the village, where kinship ties are strong and identity is communal, continue to form the basis for the socialization of most Lebanese" (*15).

In spite of the diversity of the population of Lebanon, there was one common denominator recognized by all the communities : the representation of the people "in the Lebanese polity by a handful of feudal families; the beys, the big men, al zuama were the descendants of landed families. The leadership of the big man... was the organizing principle of social and political life" (*16).

The Lebanese system revolves around this bey or zaim, the one "with the money, with the men with guns, and the land" (*17) who because of his powerful position as a feudal chief is also a political leader. Therefore, "the country's Parliament, a body with a fixed quota for each of Lebanon's religious sects, was the gathering place of the zuama" (*18). Even if he is not a member of government or

parliament his position still gives him enough power to manipulate and control deputies and even ministers. In his own district the zaim has probably more power than the government itself.

As a general rule, the zaim inherits his position, a principle recognized in Lebanese social and political life. The Druze leader Walid Jumbalat, for example, inherited the leadership position of his community and of the Progressive Socialist Party after the death of his father who was assassinated in early 1977. The two Maronite zaims, Pierre Gemayel and Camille Chamoun, made sure the hereditary principle would be upheld : the militias of both leaders were commanded by their sons, Bachir Gemayel and Dany Chamoun. When Bachir Gemayel was killed after having been elected to the office of President, his brother Amir "inherited" the office.

The main task of a zaim is to please his constituents, his "subjects" who prove their allegiance at election time, by finding them jobs, settling disputes and favouring them in any possible way :

"The most important single ingredient in the za'im-client relationship (and the element which cemented it) was patronage which, with its close relations, nepotism and corruption, existed at every level of the political and administrative "systems". Its use was considered entirely natural and acceptable and even the president was

expected to give posts to his supporters" (*19).

Over this feudal system of the zuama was imposed a Western-style parliamentary system with results that were doubtless not what the French initiators had intended and expected. "Lebanon does not constitute a modern political system. It remains, as it has been, the last remnant of the Ottoman empire, a precarious republic that is really a feudal arrangement among Moslem, Christian, and Druse leaders and their followers" (*20).

On April 28, 1920, the Allied Supreme Council in San Remo transferred the mandate for Lebanon and Syria to the French republic. Only three days later, the representative of France in Beirut officially proclaimed the new state of Great Lebanon (Grand Liban). The new state, which remained a French mandate and in this respect did not differ much from a colony, had no Lebanese head of state. The French High Commissioner was responsible for the administration of the country. Because of the French administration's preference, local employees were generally chosen from amongst the graduates of the Roman-Catholic missionary schools : "Thus it happened that the first and most influential officials of the state of Lebanon were Maronites. From the beginning, Druse and Moslems were left out" (*21).

The elections for a Lebanese Representative Council were held in April 1922 and promptly boycotted by the Moslems who rejected the inclusion of their home districts

in the new state. The divisions within Lebanon were further complicated by other events in the region like the revolt in 1925 in Jabel Druse (Syria) against the French which within a year spread to those areas of Lebanon which had been annexed in 1920, and to northern Palestine. But the rebel areas in Lebanon, especially the Druze inhabited Chuf of Mount Lebanon, were soon pacified and the rebels made peace by declaring their allegiance to the High Commissioner.

During the 1920s and 30s the constitutional and parliamentary system in Lebanon slowly took form. The constitution was mainly the work of the Greek-Catholic banker Michel Shiha who stressed the unchangeability of the state's boundaries and loyalty to the Lebanese Nation. Since Shiha hoped for the eventual disappearance of confessionalism in Lebanon, he did not include any directives concerning the cooperation of the different groups in the political life of the state.

The first Lebanese president under French auspices was elected by the Council in January 1936. President Emile Edde's government signed an agreement with France regulating the relations of the two countries. It stated that in peace and in war Lebanon and France were allies. This alliance entitled the French republic to a special status in Lebanon which included for example the control of the fledgling Lebanese Army by the French Ministry of War and priority status of the French ambassador before all other diplomats.

The agreement contained another clause which caused an uproar amongst the Moslem nationalist communities which had not given up their dream of reunification with the Syrian homeland. The clause stated that Lebanon and Syria were two separate sovereign states. Demonstrations in the heart of Beirut in November 1936 against the French-Maronite cooperation and clashes between pro-Syrian Moslem nationalists and pro-Lebanese Maronites ended with a number of victims, the first on the long road of political inter-communal strife in Lebanon. (*22)

During the early stages of World War II, after the collapse of France, Lebanon together with Syria were ruled by an administration that was under the aegis of the Vichy regime.

In the summer of 1941 Allied troops conquered both Lebanon and Syria. General Charles de Gaulle sent General Georges Catroux as Free France's representative to Beirut where he declared Lebanon's Independence, 27 September 1941. (Syria had become an independent state several weeks earlier.)

Lebanon's independence did not mean, though, that the control of the affairs of the state would now pass into Lebanese hands. The representatives of Free France continued to make the decisions concerning for example the person of the president, the promotion of high ranking officers, and foreign policy. Under the pressure of Great Britain as well as of Christian and Moslem politicians

France finally agreed to hold general elections. This decision had also been made possible by the cooperation of the Maronite leader Beshara al-Khuri and the Sunni leader Riad el-Solh who agreed to regulate the future distribution of parliamentary seats and power as well as the relationship and commitments of the major religious groups to their state.

Beshara al-Khuri

"urged an accomodation with Lebanon's Muslim communities and the Arab world and the abandonment of the traditional aspiration and demand for a Christian Lebanon. This development was matched by the crystallization of a Sunni leadership, headed by Riad al-Sulh, that despite its ritualistic commitment to Arab nationalism and unity was willing to share power with a senior Maronite partner in a Lebanese State" (*23).

Parliamentary seats were distributed according to the presumed numerical strength of the various communities : of the 55 elected members, 30 were Christians, 25 Moslems and Druse. From now on, this formula of "6:5" regulated the political and administrative life of Lebanon. Accordingly, the seats in parliament had always to be a multiplication of 11, the sum of 6 and 5. Today, there are 99 members of parliament. Of the 54 Christians, 30 are Maronies, 11 Greek-Orthodox, 6 Greek-Catholic, 4 Armenian Orthodox, 1 Armenian Catholic, 1 Protestant and one other Christian

minority. Of the 45 Moslems, 20 are Sunnis, 18 Shiites and 7 Druze. "Lebanon's predicament is that she must maintain balance. Schizophrenia is her way of life. Without it, the nation dies. Take away the divisions in her parliament between Christian and Moslem, and democracy is at an end. Insist on single minded loyalty to the Arab world, and Lebanon loses her uniqueness and independence" (*24).

The agreement between Khuri and Sulh, the "National Pact", which takes for granted a Christian majority, was never put down in writing but was for long recognized by the Lebanese as an untouchable agreement between the Christian and Moslem communities, an agreement that regulated not only the distribution of parliamentary seats but also of leading positions in the administration and the army. The validity of the National Pact was seriously questioned for the first time only during the later stages of the Civil War of 1975.

The "National Pact" also meant that all religious communities recognized their duty as guarantors of Lebanese independence.

"The Christians specifically renounced their traditional policy of calling upon European states, in particular France, to act as protecting powers vis-a-vis the political ambitions of the Muslims. The Muslims, for their part, agreed that they would no longer call on other Islamic states to intervene in the internal affairs of the

country. Within the Lebanese state the religious communities agreed to preserve the current status quo, the existing balance of power" (*25).

In September 1943 Beshara al-Khuri became the first elected president of Lebanon and promptly made his Sunni ally Riad al-Sulh Prime Minister. From then on, the President has always been a Maronite, the Prime Minister a Sunni, the Speaker of the House a Shiite, the Army commander a Maronite.

Within two months, on 11 November 1943, the President and the Prime Minister had been arrested by the French, and Emile Edde, a long-time French protege and former president, was appointed the new president. This drastic French step led to immediate and unified demonstrations and protests of both the Christian and Moslem communities and finally to a general strike in the whole country. The French clamped a curfew on all major cities including Beirut but with little success. The unrest continued, and on 22 November 1943 Khuri and Sulh were released and reinstated. At the beginning of 1944 the Free French government finally gave up all special privileges in Lebanon. The Lebanese now regard this date, 22 November 1943, as marking their country's political independence (*26).

The general strike of 1943 has been one of the few times the Lebanese communities united in an effort to reach a common goal, their national independence.

The last French troops finally left Lebanon in December

1946 and the Lebanese constitution was altered to remove all reference to France. The amended document provided for a president who is both head of state and chief executive; for a single chamber of deputies, with legislative powers; and a cabinet responsible to the chamber. The president, elected by two thirds of the deputies for a six-year term, appointed the cabinet led by the prime minister (*27).

Elections are held every four years. Since 1952 women were allowed to vote.

The office of the president had "no strings attached". Once elected, the president did not owe any responsibility to anyone. In this respect, his office was a continuation of the French mandatory power which had not been responsible to any political or public body in Lebanon. This independence of the president is also his weakness because in order to make things work he has to assure the support of the powerful zaims in "give-and-take" arrangements. It was this kind of behind-the scenes dealings among the leading zaims of the country which would in the future decide who would become the next president, officially the politically independent first citizen of Lebanon, but in reality indebted to those of the zaims who had supported him.

When President Emile Edde finished his first year as Lebanon's first president, Saad Georges Haddad was born in the South Lebanese town of Marj Ayoun on 11 December 1937 (*28). His mother Zeina was a Maronite but his father Georges was Roman-Catholic and so, in due time, Saad was

baptised and brought up as a Roman-Catholic. The baby boy received his name, Saad (Luck), because on the day of his birth his family received a cheque from relatives in the USA. Saad Haddad (Blacksmith) had three older brothers (Adib, Habib and Salim), an older sister (Kemle) and was later followed by another brother (Labib). The family lived quite comfortably on the income father Georges made as a farmer who also served as a corporal in the Troupes Speciales du Levant under the French.

The Great War which had seemed so far away, reached the Haddad family and the rest of the population of the Marj Ayoun area in the summer of 1941 when the Allied Forces advanced into Lebanon and Syria. Marj Ayoun was defended by Moroccan units of the Vichy forces, while the central sector of the allied advance contained the 25th Australian Brigade and the Royal Fusiliers. "The Australians, starting from the Metulla salient, took Merj Ayoun on June 11 after heavy fighting on the frontier" (*29).

The Haddads joined the rest of Marj Ayoun and fled the town to find refuge in the church of Hazbaya (*30), north of their hometown, where Saad came to know the wonders of radio and electricity which were unknown in Marj Ayoun. While the refugees stayed in Hazbaya, Marj Ayoun was violently bombarded, and, for a few days, the French regained a foothold in the town. But, on June 24, the Australians occupied Marj Ayoun for good.

When the battle was finally over, Saad Haddad and

family returned to their home in Marj Ayoun. The independence of their country which followed soon after did not mean much to the Haddads who were sorry to see the French leave because they were afraid of the Moslems. Lebanese flags went up everywhere but Haddad remembered that his family was worried because "our independence was not something solid (*31)".

Footnotes to Chapter II :

- *1. Matti Moosa : The Maronites in History , Syracuse University Press, Syracuse 1986, p.300
- *2. PLQ in Lebanon. Selected Documents , edited by Raphael Israeli, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London 1983, p.239
- *3. See Appendix : Internal Unrest in Lebanon : An Historical Perspective , IDF Spokesman, prepared by Prof.Mordechai Gichon, p.7
- *4. Lebanon , published by the Chief Education Officer, General Staff, Information Branch, Israeli Defense Forces, Tel Aviv 1981, p.16
- *5. Harvey H. Smith : Area Handbook for Lebanon , Government Printing Office, Washington 1974, p.223
- *6. ibid. , pp.223-224
- *7. see Jonathan C. Randal : Going All the Way. Christian Warlords, Israeli Adventurers, and the War in Lebanon , Vintage Books, New York 1984, pp.30-52
- *8. ibid.
- *9. Jobst Knigge : Libanon - innere Konflikte, internationale Krise , DPA-Sonderdienste, Information, Nr.3092, 13 December 1983
- *10. D.Th. Schiller : Der Buergerkrieg im Libanon , Bernard & Graefe, Guetersloh 1979, p.43
- *11. David C. Jordan : The Republic of Lebanon , Westview Press, Boulder 1983, p.5
- *12. Fuad Ajami : The Vanished Imam. Musa al Sadr and the

- Shia of Lebanon , Cornell University Press, Ithaca 1986,
p.189
- *13. Tribes of Lebanon dictate politics for religious communities , Oikumene, No. 59 E, May 1984
- *14. Jordan, Republic of Lebanon , p.11
- *15. ibid. , p.33
- *16. Ajami : The Vanished Imam , p.63
- *17. ibid. , p.73
- *18. ibid. , p.63
- *19. David Gilmore : Lebanon, the Fractured Country ,
Sphere Books Ltd, London 1983, p.43.
- *20. Amos Perlmutter : Israel, the Partitioned State ,
Charles Scribner's Sons, New York 1985, p.311
- *21. Gerhard Konzelmann, Der unheilige Krieg , Hoffmann
und Campe, Hamburg 1985, p.96
- *22. see Smith, Area Handbook , pp.25-45
- *23. Itamar Rabinovich, The War for Lebanon 1970-1983 ,
Cornell University Press, Ithaca 1984, p.24
- *24. Reuben Slonim : Both Sides Now , Clarke, Irwin and
Company Ltd., Toronto 1972, p.146
- *25. Harald Vocke. The Lebanese War , C. Hurst and
Company, London 1978, p.14
- *26. ibid. , p.11
- *27. Dilip Hiro, Inside the Middle East , McGraw-Hill Book
Company, New York 1982, p.46
- *28. see Biographic Sketch , Major Saad Georges Haddad,
Defense Intelligence Agency, US Department of Defense,

October 1982

*29. The Second Great War, A Standard History , Volume Five, edited by Sir John Hammerton, The Waverley Book Company Ltd., London 1943, p.1685

*30. Hazbaya is a mixed Druze-Christian-Muslim town though the Druze are in the majority. Nearby, at Halwat el-Bayadar, lies the most holy shrine of the Druze religion. Until 1936 Hazbaya had also a small Jewish community which left at the outbreak of hostilities in neighbouring Palestine. Hazbaya is famous for the massacres of 1000 Christians in 1860. See Haskett Smith, Handbook for Travellers in Syria and Palestine , John Murray Publishers, London 1892, p.292

*31. Saad Haddad, Tape 2, Side 1

III. The First Arab-Israeli War and the Emergence of the Palestinians

Lebanon was one of the first countries to join the Arab League, a roof-organization of Arab countries, which was founded in March 1945. The Arab League's decisions were not binding. Member countries used this organization mainly as a political stage and as a symbol of Arab solidarity, though it sometimes also served as a tool to coordinate military cooperation (*1). During its meetings in Lebanon at the end of 1947, the League decided that its member states would intervene militarily in Palestine, once the British had left. In April 1948 the Arab League appointed King Abdullah of Transjordan to be the Commander-in-Chief of all Arab forces which included the Transjordan Arab Legion, commanded by Lieutenant General Sir John Baggot Glubb ("Glubb Pasha"), the Egyptian Army, the Syrian Army, the Iraqi Army and a 2.000 men strong Lebanese contingent : 4 infantry batallions with limited artillery and armoured forces. "In practice, each army intended to act in its own national interest and to take orders from its own General Staff rather than from the overall commander. Indeed, the plan evolved not so much as a co-ordinated attack as a division of Palestine into areas to be occupied by the respective Arab armies" (*2). Accordingly, the Lebanese Army would attack in northern Palestine.

The Arab League also created a new force, the Arab

Liberation Army (ALA) made up of volunteers from Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Yugoslavia, Egypt and Palestine as well as of a few Germans. The ALA was to be commanded by General Taha al Hashimi of Iraq. As it turned out, the real leader of this force was Fauzi el-Kaukji, a former Syrian officer in the Ottoman Army. At the time of the Druze rebellion (1925) Kaukji had fought against the French. Later he became an instructor at the military academy in Baghdad. During the Second World War he was a member of the entourage of the Mufti Haj Amin el-Husseini in Berlin (*3).

In July 1948, Kaukji's forces were deployed mainly in the central Galilee (norther Palestine, today Israel) while four bataillions of the Lebanese Army were concentrated north of the mandatory boundaries from where they assured the supply and reinforcement lines of the ALA.

On 18 July 1948, the second and last truce of the war was declared by the United Nations. This left a central enclave in the northern Galilee, south of the Lebanese border, occupied by Kaukji's forces who were divided into the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Yarmuk Brigades (3-4,000 men) with a few 75 mm field guns and armoured cars "manned by Iraqis, Germans, and other volunteers" (*4). According to the United Nations Partition Plan for Palestine (1947) this enclave belonged to the Arab State (*5). Had the ALA adhered to the truce, most probably this part of today's Israel would have been a part of Lebanon.

But in complete disregard of the second truce, Kaukji's

Arab Liberation Army launched a surprise attack in the area of Kibbutz Manara (later re-named Kibbutz Ramim) overlooking the vulnerable Galilee Panhandle with the town of Metula. The Israelis now saw themselves free to implement "Operation Hiram" (*6) (named after Hiram, King of Tyre and ally of both King David and King Solomon, ca. 970-936 BC) whose objective was to push the ALA back over the Lebanese border. A Syrian battalion, which had been hurriedly moved down from Lebanon to reinforce the Arab defenses, was ambushed by Israeli units before it could deploy for attack, and left over 200 dead on the battlefield (*7). These unfortunate Syrian forces had arrived via Marj Ayoun.

The ALA defense collapsed, the Arab forces fled northwards into Lebanon using a dirt road to the Maronite village Rmeish which even now is still called "Kaukji Road". On 31 October 1948 "Operation Hiram" was over with Israeli forces controlling the entire Lebanese border. Some units crossed the border, took 14 Lebanese villages (among them Bleida, Muhbeib, Meis el-Jabel, Hula, Markabe, Benei-Hayoun, Adeisse, Taibe, Kfar Kila, Kantara and Alman) and reached the Litani River. This area was returned to Lebanese control after the conclusion of the armistice negotiations.

"Operation Hiram" was followed in Israel by discussions about the future of the conquered area in Lebanon. There was a small but vocal group of politicians and military men who demanded that this area be annexed to Israel, while the

majority warned against such a step. Eliahu Sasson, one of the foremost Israeli diplomats at the time who had frequent contacts with King Abdallah of Transjordan, wrote from Paris to Yaakov Shimon, responsible for the Near East department of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs :

I have expressed my opinion against any kind of penetration into Lebanon. I even request, if possible, to withdraw to the borders of Eretz Israel : first, I don't believe in the capability of any oppositionary Christian factor or power in Lebanon today to carry out a revolt or to try to take the regime by force, even if the Israeli Army reached Sidon or even further. Second, I am not convinced that a large or small scale invasion from our side will bring us closer to an understanding and peace with Lebanon. Third, I disagree that the way of "dictating conditions" should be our way towards peace with the Arab world or with one of its states (*8).

Sasson's letter is of particular interest in the light of events some 30 years later.

It was not surprising that the Lebanese Army had played such a negligible role during the war since its raison d'etre was to ensure internal security and the defense of the Lebanese borders which had not been endangered until the very last phase and the very last operation of the war.

First in May 1948 and later in August, the Lebanese

Army had actively taken part in the war when together with Kaukji's forces it entered the Galilee and captured the Malkieh district, less than one kilometer from the international border. On the night of 28/29 May 1948, heavy fighting erupted between the Lebanese forces in Malkieh and an Israeli force which approached the Lebanese positions on the South Lebanese road from the direction of Marj Ayoun and thus made the Lebanese think that it was their own force. Near the Shiite village of Aitaroun, where the ALA HQ was located, the Israeli force put a number of armoured cars and other Lebanese vehicles out of action. There were also many casualties among the Lebanese soldiers. At this stage, the Lebanese force withdrew from Malkieh :

From now on the Liberation Army was the main defense force in this area. Even though on the surface it acted in the name of the Lebanese Government that paid for parts of its operations and ammunitions, in reality it was directed by the Syrian General Staff (*9).

The Lebanese border and especially the Marj Ayoun area had been used by the Syrian Army as its staging ground for attacks on Israeli settlements which had been allocated to the Syrian forces by the Arab League. But the Syrian General Staff, more often than not, preferred to carry out its own operational plans and frequently re-called its units to attack a different set of settlements from its own territory.

Towards the end of "Operation Hiram" and the end of the war in the north in October 1948, when it was obvious that Israel would win the war, a number of Maronites from South Lebanese villages approached Israeli army officers offering to join the IDF. It was decided that even though the IDF did not have any special interest in organizing a regular Maronite unit, it was interested in a very small, irregular unit which would carry out mining operations and other forms of harassment in the rear of the enemy. While a small number of Maronites went through their training, more Maronites demanded to be allowed to join the IDF but were turned down (*10).

The occupation of Lebanese villages by the IDF had the unexpected result that a growing number of representatives of villages outside the occupied zone asked to be allowed to surrender to the IDF forces. These requests were rejected since the Foreign Ministry under Moshe Sharett was already hard pressed by the American President Harry Truman who threatened harsh sanctions if Israel were further to enlarge her area in South Lebanon. During "Operation Hiram" Israel's casualties had been 23 killed and about 60 wounded. More than half of the fallen soldiers were Israeli Druze.

The operation is considered to have been one of the most successful in the history of the IDF in regard to performance, success and number of casualties.

The inhabitants of Marj Ayoun were overwhelmed and

confused by the events of the war. Saad Haddad, who was then eleven years old and had developed a keen interest in anything military, remembered that different military units frequently passed through the town, often staying in the military barracks for some time before going into action. Passing through the central market place of Marj Ayoun the soldiers would usually use the opportunity to impress the population by holding a "fantasia" : "It is the custom for every man who carries a gun to blaze away with it. Usually, the shots are directed at the sky" (*11).

Syrian soldiers and units of the ALA passed through in colourful busses bearing the emblem of the ALA : a curved dagger dripping blood piercing the centre of a Star of David. The soldiers had been very excited about going into action "but it became known later in Marj Ayoun that all of them had either been killed or wounded" (*12).

When it became clear to the Lebanese, that contrary to what the Arab propaganda proclaimed, the Arab armies had been badly beaten on the battlefield, rumours in Marj Ayoun had it for example that the Egyptian Army had been beaten in the south because King Farouk had cooperated with Israel and therefore had issued blank ammunition to the Egyptian soldiers (*13).

The end of the war in northern Israel and South Lebanon, and the armistice negotiations in the small coastal village of Naqoura which established the international border between Israel and Lebanon, confronted

the Lebanese population in South Lebanon, Christians, Moslems and Druse alike, with a new harsh reality : even though it had been illegal to cross the mandatory border between Lebanon and Palestine, Lebanese as well as Palestinian Jews and Arabs had crossed over regularly in both directions in order to visit friends and relatives or to carry out some kind of business. Haddad's brother Salim for example used to cross the border regularly into Metulla and Chalsa (today Kiriat Shmona) in order to buy oranges and heating oil which he would then sell for a profit in Marj Ayoun (*14). Most of this illegal traffic came to an abrupt halt with the new reality of a state of Israel whose army tightened the control of its northern border. Salim Haddad lost the lucrative profits of his excursions into Palestine, but many others were also now cut off from their relatives and friends on the other side of the border. It would take nearly 30 years before the Israeli "Good Fence" policy would make the re-unification of families from both sides of the border possible. The new borders also cut off the long standing, good-neighbour relations between the Lebanese farmers on one side and the Jewish farmers on the other.

The new borders also cut off any possibility of return for the close to 100.000 Palestinians who had fled Palestine/Israel during the war. At the beginning, these refugees had settled "temporarily" in Marj Ayoun and other South Lebanese villages in order to await the Arab victory and their return home. The more well-to-do rented houses

while the poor spent the waiting time in their tents made of goat hair. Saad Haddad and other children in Marj Ayoun collected food for the refugees even though they were suspicious of them. Saad had been taught in the Catholic school in Marj Ayoun that the origin of the word "Falestin" (Palestine) was the word "balasin" (thief), and that these people had received this name because they used to swarm down on Tyre and villages in South Lebanon, rob and plunder them, and disappear. And besides, everybody in Marj Ayoun knew that these Palestinian refugees were dirty and flea-ridden (*15).

With time, the refugees began to realize that there would be no immediate return. They packed their belongings and trecked northwards and to the coast, while Marj Ayoun settled down to its new existence as a border town overlooking the northernmost part of the State of Israel.

Footnotes to Chapter III :

- *1. Zeev Schiff and Eitan Haber : Israel, Army and Defense. A Dictionary. , Zmora, Bitan, Modan Publishers, Tel Aviv 1976, p.292
- *2. Chaim Herzog, The Arab-Israeli Wars , Methuen, New York 1982, p.47
- *3. Schiff and Haber, Israel, Army and Defense , p.457
- *4. Ben Dunkelman, Dual Allegiance , Goodread Biographies, Toronto 1976, p.289
- *5. Martin Gilbert : The Arab-Israeli Conflict. Its History in Maps. , Redwood Burn Limited, Trowbridge 1984, p.36
- *6. In this operation, one of the largest of the war, the IDF used three brigades plus additional supportive forces and the air force.
- *7. Herzog, The Arab-Israeli Wars , p.90
- *8. ibid. , p.112
- *9. ibid. , p.50
- *10. Thirty years later, a number of Maronites and Druze from villages in the south proudly showed me their IDF Reservist I. D. s from that period following the Israeli War of Independence. Many of them had later joined the Lebanese Army without suffering from inner conflict.
- *11. Dunkelman, Dual Allegiance , p.304
- *12. Saad Haddad, Tape 2, Side 1 . See also History of the War of Independence , published by the Ministry of

Defense, Tel Aviv 1959, prepared by the History Branch of
the General Staff of the IDF, p.322

*13. Saad Haddad, Tape 2, Side 1

*14. ibid.

*15. ibid.

IV. The Civil War of 1958

President Beshara el-Khuri, one of the fathers of the "National Pact" (*1), was succeeded in 1952 by the Maronite Camille Chamoun, a liberal political zaim from the Chuf area.

During Chamoun's years in office, his main problems were caused by the meteoric rise of Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser who aroused the pan-Arab feelings of the Moslems and even some Christians in Lebanon. "Nasserism offered an external focus of loyalty for Lebanon's Muslims, to the detriment of their attachment to the Lebanese state. Why accept a secondary position in a state dominated by Christians with ambivalent attitudes towards Arabism, when Arabism was about to enjoy its finest hour?" (*2)

In order to protect his country from this pan-Arab aggressiveness and retain its pro-western profile which included close cooperation with the west, and in order to protect the internal Christian interests, President Chamoun made his country a partner to the Eisenhower Doctrine which assured Lebanon of American economic support and gave it the right to ask for American military assistance in times of political crisis. "Chamoun deeply resented Nasser's attempts to control the foreign policies of the Arab states. He was also convinced that it was Cairo's aim to destroy the Christian ascendancy in Lebanon... His Foreign Minister, Charles Malik, of Greek Orthodox persuasion, had

an almost maniacal hatred of Communism and was in favour of Lebanon joining any alliance that was directed against Russia. For Malik, therefore, the Eisenhower Doctrine was a heaven-sent opportunity to obtain unlimited American aid" (*3). The Lebanese parliament ratified Lebanon's membership in the Eisenhower Doctrine in April 1957 (*4).

The Moslems understood this step as just another affront to their soaring pan-Arab feelings which were further enhanced by the formation in February 1958 of the "United Arab Republic" between Egypt and Syria. Tens of thousands of Lebanese flocked to Damascus to hail the new Arab leader, Gamal Abdel Nasser, who used his stay in the capital of neighbouring Syria to call on the Lebanese to force their government to give up its ties with the west and join the UAR. The mere idea of having Lebanon join the union was abhorrent to the Christians. "They felt that it must be avoided by all costs, for union would convert them into a minority group in a predominantly Muslim nation and would lead to the loss of their rights and privileges" (*5).

Moslem emotions ran high, further kindled by the bickering between the government and its loyalists and the political opposition. Political manouvers of Chamoun and his supporters had been successful in gaining the majority of seats in parliament in the elections of June 1957. This strengthened persistent rumors that Chamoun was actively seeking a constitutional amendment which would allow his re-election as president.

The spark that ignited the insurrection that had been brewing for some time came in May 1958 when a well-known opponent of President Chamoun, the editor of the Leftist daily "al-Talegraph", Nassib Metni, was assassinated. Though the assassins were never found, the opposition immediately blamed the government for his death. Sand barricades went up between the Moslem and the Christian quarters in Beirut and elsewhere and armed followers of Nasser on one side and supporters of Chamoun on the other took to the streets. In Lebanon, there has never been a shortage of weapons owned by individuals and kept at home : "The Lebanese, with their separate religious and tribal loyalties, had long had a special addiction to personal weapons" (*6).

In the Nasser camp were also leading Sunnis like Saeb Salam from Beirut and Rashid Karame from Tripoli. Of Saeb Salam it has been written that he "seemed to wage his war with Chamoun largely by telephone, frequently exchanging ruderies with the President by this means. Likewise he would spend hours talking with Sarraj (*7) in Damascus and ordering ever more supplies of arms, knowing that the authorities who were listening in were afraid to cut the telephone wires. For... the rebels could retaliate by sabotaging the sewage pipes of the presidential palace which ran under his stronghold in the Basta quarter of Beirut!" (*8) Other members of the Nasser camp were Shiites like the zaim Sabri Hamade from the Bekaa Valley where he controlled

the hashish (marijuana) market; the Druze leader Kamal Jumblatt; and the Maronite brothers Hamis and Suleiman Franjiye from the North Lebanese high plateau. The most important supporter of Chamoun in this conflict was the leader of the Kataeb party, Pierre Gemayel (*9).

President Chamoun called on his Commander-in-Chief, General Fuad Chehab, to use the 6,000 men strong Lebanese Army to subdue the insurrection but Chehab refused, fearing the disintegration of the army into a Moslem, pro-Nasser and a Christian, pro-Chamoun camp. "Thus he would not use it to launch attacks on the rebels but limited its use to resisting their attacks, patrolling the streets of the capital, preventing clashes between the Christian and Moslem quarters of Beirut, and preventing the rebels from acquiring positions of strength outside their respective strongholds" (*10).

Since the Lebanese government complained to the UN Security Council that the Syrian part of the UAR was providing the insurgents with arms which were smuggled, together with volunteers, across the common border, the United Nations sent observers to these areas. The United Nations also sent a number of observers to inspect the Israeli-Lebanese border and this in order to keep the balance according to the demands of the Lebanese Left. After several weeks of investigation the UN delegation published its report, which concluded that no proof for the smuggling of arms from Syria had been found. Of course,

everyone in Lebanon was aware of the reality of a lively traffic in weapons and ammunition from across the Syrian border. But most of this had happened before the UN delegation was allowed into the border areas. Besides, "the Syrians were indistinguishable from the Lebanese, especially for visitors from outside the Arab world" (*11).

In July 1958, young officers carried out a coup d'etat in Iraq toppling the Hashemite monarchy there. Chamoun, feeling the existence of Lebanon threatened by the unrest at home and the violent events abroad which could easily spill over into his own country, asked the United States for their support under the Eisenhower Doctrine. The fighting between the opponents and supporters of Chamoun in this civil war came to an abrupt halt with the arrival of the American fleet, less than 24 hours after Chamoun had made his formal request to US Ambassador McClintock. The fleet unloaded "wave after wave of grim-faced Marines, rifles poised for action, to be greeted by startled bathers sunning themselves on Beirut's beautiful beaches and hordes of little boys selling chewing gum" (*12). The Marines "secured the internal and external lines of communication and guarded government buildings. Then, in the summer of 1958, the Marines were respected in Beirut. Nobody dared to demonstrate against them or, worse, to shoot at them" (*13).

At the same time, Britain, fearing that the events in Iraq could lead to similar developments in Jordan, sent British air force units to Amman to support the Hashemite

ruler there. Israel, concerned about the rise of Nasserism, placed many of its military units on alert.

The Lebanese crisis came to an end when the American Under-Secretary of State, Robert Murphy, held successful negotiations with the opposing Lebanese camps. In July 1958 parliament elected the Minister of Defense, General Fuad Chihab, to the post of president whose new government decided to restore the status quo under the slogan "no victors and no vanquished".

For the moment, the crisis was over.

In 1952 Saad Haddad had come to Beirut in order to get a better education than the schools in Marj Ayoun could offer. He stayed with his older brothers who were working in the capital. In 1957 Haddad passed his final examinations at the Patriarchial College. Since he did not have the money to go to university and because he had been interested in military things since his childhood, he decided to join the Lebanese Army and become a professional officer (*14).

The first 40 days in the military academy at Fayadiye south-east of Beirut came as quite a shock to Haddad who until then had led a carefree life, like most of his school friends. "I did not have any worries, I did not give a damn about politics. It was the golden era of the American movies, the era of "Quo Vadis" and "The Gladiators". When we were not at the movies, we spent our free time in restaurants and cafes" (*15). Now, he was scooped up in

military school for 40 days going through drills, combat training and military as well as civilian studies.

Since their establishment in 1945, the Lebanese Armed Forces have been maintained on a volunteer basis always following western patterns in organization, tactics and staff direction.

The army's position in the government was not specified in the Constitution. However, the president, by various laws and presidential decrees, held the position of Commander in Chief. The president was assisted in the exercise of military authority by the Prime Minister and the Minister of National Defense (posts usually held jointly), but in practice he maintained direct contact with the Commanding General of the Army (*16).

In order to be able to enlist, a Lebanese must have proof of Lebanese citizenship for a minimum of 10 years, and no convictions. He must be single, a widower or divorced without children.

The majority of commissioned officers came from the Lebanese Military Academy at Fayadiye. There were no facilities for advanced officers training in Lebanon. Accordingly, such training was offered by West European and Arab armies and the US military establishments within the framework of military assistance and cooperation programs (*17).

Towards the end of Haddad's first year at the academy, the cadets were startled one summer afternoon by sudden

explosions coming from somewhere in Beirut, immediately followed by the sounding of the alarm by the battalion trumpeter. While the experienced 4th Battalion (whose home was also in Fayadiye) was rushed to the capital, the cadets were left behind to guard their barracks. The civil war which had been brewing for so long had finally broken out, giving the cadets their first taste of their role as soldiers : they were supposed to assist the army to maintain law and order but without using their weapons (*18).

News about the bloody developments in the country were topped by such spicy incidents as the one brought about by former Prime Minister Saib Salam who led a demonstration from the Moslem quarter El Basta in Beirut. Approaching a roadblock set up by gendarmes and requested to disperse, Saib Salam slapped the officer in charge, found himself arrested and in jail. Political supporters secured his immediate release but "it was a big scandal" (*19).

The cadets spent the next few weeks standing guard over different places in the capital. Then the Marines landed. Haddad's unit was taken to Hazmieh (the suburb close to the Marines' landing point) where they were told that "Your mission is to stop the Americans". A short while later the orders were changed into cooperating with the Marines (*20). On the morning of July 16, Chehab had informed the US Ambassador that if the commander of the American Marines carried out his orders to advance into the city, Lebanese forces would open fire. The Ambassador had suggested

General Chehab and himself take positions between the opposing groups. "And this they did, accompanied by the Ambassador's poodle" (*21). The US Admiral in command, in order to save face for the Lebanese troops, agreed to place Lebanese military vehicles in intervals in his column. And so, "the cortege advanced, led by the ambassadorial Cadillac containing the Ambassador... and the poodle" (*22). Haddad like many of his fellow-cadets felt "it was a comedy" (*23). Before the Marines left Lebanon, they invited the cadets to the beach where they were treated to a night show of fire power from the US fleet.

During the events of the civil war, Haddad had kept up with the news from Marj Ayoun, from home : the commander of the Eastern Sector, Colonel Fuad Lahoud, who was stationed at the barracks of Marj Ayoun, had felt endangered and threatened by rumors about Syrian forces massing east of the Hermon mountain, ready to invade South Lebanon. Maroun Tanus Najem of Kleia (who had served in the IDF in 1948) made contact with Israel on Lahoud's behalf asking for help. Najem drove his red truck (whose remnants even now still lie behind his house) into the Israeli border town of Metulla where he received a load of rifles and ammunition from the IDF which were then distributed to the population. To discourage the Syrians further from carrying out their alleged invasion, IDF units carried out a number of night patrols in Lebanese territory up to the road junction of Naba Abel, east of Marj Ayoun. The Syrian invasion never

materialized. Colonel Lahoud was later fired from the army; he was accused of plotting with Syria in order to overthrow the government of President Chehab in the hope that his brother Salim, a cabinet minister, would become the next president. Neither this nor his connection with Israel in any way proved an obstacle to his becoming a deputy in parliament who, twenty years after his own "Israeli connection", accused Saad Haddad in the House of treason because of his cooperation with Israel (*24).

At the end of his first year as a cadet, Haddad felt that the events of the civil war had marred the image of the Lebanese Army. "In the past, the army was like something sacred to the people but 1958 was the first nail in the coffin of the army. The people had lost their confidence in the army, and they no longer feared and respected it. In the future, when the army was sent to break up demonstrations, people would laugh at the soldiers" (*25).

Footnotes to Chapter IV :

- *1. Riad el-Sulh had been shot dead in Amman, Jordan, in July 1951 by a member of the extreme right-wing "Syrian National Socialist Party" whose founder, the Lebanese Greek-Orthodox Antoine Saade, had been arrested and executed in 1949 on the orders of Sulh.
- *2. Itamar Rabinovich : The War for Lebanon 1970-1983 , Cornell University Press, Ithaca 1984, p.27
- *3. Anthony Nutting : Nasser , Constable, London 1972, pp.227-228
- *4. see Schiller : Der Buergerkrieg im Libanon , p.60
- *5. Leila M.T. Meo : Lebanon. Improbable Nation , Indiana University Press, Bloomington 1965, p.159
- *6. Anthony Sampson : The Arms Bazaar, from Lebanon to Lockheed , Viking Press, New York 1977, p.17
- *7. Abdel Hamid Sarraj was the head of the intelligence and security branch in Syria.
- *8. Nutting, Nasser , p.234
- *9. Harald Vocke, The Lebanese War , C.Hurst and Company, London 1978, p.20
- *10. Meo, Lebanon , p.176. See also Nutting, Nasser , p.36
- *11. ibid. , p.181. See also Nutting, Nasser , p.36
- *12. Miles Copeland : The Game of Nations , Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London 1969, p.203
- *13. Konzelmann : Der unheilige Krieg , p.114

- *14. Saad Haddad, Tape 2, Side 2
- *15. ibid.
- *16. Smith, Area Handbook , p.300-301
- *17. ibid.
- *18. Saad Haddad, Tape 3, Side 1
- *19. ibid.
- *20. ibid.
- *21. George E. Kirk : Contemporary Arab Politics ,
Frederick A. Praeger, New York 1961, p.132
- *22. ibid. , pp.132-133
- *23. Saad Haddad, Tape 3, Side 1
- *24. Personal knowledge. See also Francis Rizk : Tape 1, Side 1 , interview in Winnipeg, 17 August 1985
- *25. Saad Haddad, Tape 4, Side 1

V. The Six-Days-War 1967

President Chehab's refusal to use the army against the rebels during the 1958 Civil War, endeared him to the Moslem masses while the Maronites took a more cautious "wait and see" attitude (*1).

The president's intentions to create, under his leadership, a Lebanon which would free itself from the traditional system of the zaims came to naught (*2). In order to free himself from the political corruption, he turned more and more to the Military Intelligence, the "Deuxieme Bureau", increasing its responsibilities in a bid to shore up his own position. This, of course, alienated the political za'ims, especially on the Maronite side. Chehab used the Deuxieme Bureau "as an alternative system of government, designed to split or crush those groups powerful enough to resist the president's efforts to impinge on their privileges" (*3).

The army had been very satisfied with the election of its former commander to the presidency and had celebrated this fact with a truly formidable "fantasia". Saad Haddad was now entering his second year as a military cadet; at the same time a new batch of volunteers sat for their exams which would open the doors of the military academy to the best amongst them. Or, at least, it had been like that until this time. Now, the new Prime Minister, Rashid Karame, refused to publish the results of the entry exams

demanding that the number of accepted cadets should be equally divided between Christians and Moslems. "Usually more Christians passed because they went to private schools where the education was of a higher standard, whereas Moslems attended public schools" (*4). Many Christians who had scored higher marks were now rejected in favour of Moslems. "It became a question of religion, and no longer of knowledge" (*5).

In October 1960 Saad Haddad received his commission as a Second Lieutenant in the Lebanese Army. His happiness was dampened by the fact that his father did not take part in the ceremonies. He had died of cancer in the preceding summer. Shortly after the ceremonies, the whole class of 54 new Second Lieutenants went off to France for a one-year advanced training course.

On his return from France, Saad Haddad was assigned to the Second Company of the 4th Battalion stationed in Fayadiye. There he met Second Lieutenant Ali Haj Hassan. "I liked him, even though he was a Moslem. He was honest and fair" (*6). But this friendship with a Moslem officer would soon turn into disappointment.

Towards the end of 1961 the United Arab Republic of Egypt and Syria broke up. The supporters of the "Syrian National Socialist Party" in Lebanon felt strongly that the refusal of the Lebanese government to join the UAR and thereby come closer to the realization of the dream of the "Fertile Crescent", had been one of the reasons which had

led to the separation of the Union.

At that time, Haddad's company was sent south to the Israeli border to demonstrate the presence of the army. It was the usual symbolic move, because the company took over such a long stretch of border that could not possibly be defended by such limited manpower. On the morning of New Year's Day, Saad Haddad who was on duty because Ali Haj Hassan had taken a holiday, heard on the radio that a coup d'etat attempt against the Chehab government in Beirut had failed.

Two young officers, Captain Fuad Awad, the commander of an armoured company in Sidon, and Captain Shauki Chirallah, the commander of an infantry company in Marj Ayoun, both of them sympathizers of the Syrian National Socialist Party, set out for Beirut with a small convoy of trucks and about 50 supporters to put an end to the present regime. On the way, they cut the telephone lines but Beirut HQ was warned about their coming by wireless radio communications. When the small rebel group surrounded the Army Intelligence HQ, it suddenly found itself surrounded by a much larger force. In the ensuing confusion, the two rebel captains escaped, bringing the short-lived and only revolt against the Chahab regime to an end (*7).

Captain Shauki Chirallah was later arrested at the outskirts of Beirut, while Captain Fuad Awad was caught in Zahle. The authorities alleged that the two had been heading for the Israeli border, and they even displayed a

radio transmitter 'supplied to Chirallah by Israel". These allegations were never officially confirmed or denied by Israel but during a visit of Metulla at the beginning of 1976, Israeli Foreign Minister Yigal Allon talked about "the links which Israel had established in 1958 and in 1961 with Christian elements in Lebanon who were in revolt against the Government... We supplied them with arms and assistance, he said, right here, just north of Metulla (*8)".

After the aborted mini-revolt was over, the Minister for Interior Affairs, the Druze zaim Kamal Jumbalat, accused former President Camille Chamoun, of collusion with Israel. On Jumbalat's orders the Army and Gendarmerie were ordered to arrest members and supporters of the Syrian National Socialist Party. Haddad's company was recalled to Beirut, where he found out that his friend, Second Lieutenant Ali Haj Hassan, had been amongst the plotters and was now under arrest (*9).

For the next three months, the company was deployed in Mount Lebanon where it went from village to village arresting those party members and sympathizers whose names appeared on long lists the soldiers had been issued by the Deuxieme Bureau which always composed "lists" of members of various movements. These lists were not always accurate and in many cases were based on rumors, revenge and information given by informers. Haddad recalls that many thousands were arrested and held in large, open-air compounds surrounded by barbed wire. "Many were treated savagely by the soldiers

who did not care if they died from the beatings or from the cold" (*10).

The state of alert lasted for nearly a whole year, until the end of 1962, when the excitement about the revolt, the mass arrests and the following trials died down.

Saad Haddad's mind had anyway turned to other important things : he had begun to court his future wife, Therese Shakar, a young teacher and a Roman Catholic like him, who lived with her family not far from Haddad's brother in Beirut. In 1964, Haddad was promoted to First Lieutenant and married Therese. (According to Army regulations, Second Lieutenants were not allowed to marry.)

Over the next three years, Saad Haddad was rotated to different battalions, stationed in different areas of the country, carrying out various assignments. At the beginning of 1967 he was transferred to his home town, Marj Ayoun, as the commander of the First Company of the First Battalion. Towards the middle of the year, tension between Israel and her Arab neighbours grew which led to feverish activity in the First Battalion. In numerous meetings, the officers discussed the situation, while in the field defenses were improved, the artillery re-deployed and the soldiers kept on their toes.

On the political stage, in the meantime, the usual differences between the government and the opposition continued. In 1964, Charles Helou had replaced Fuad Chehab as president. At the beginning of 1967, his fourth

government, this time under Prime Minister Rashid Karame, was in place, but it had to face strong and continuous opposition (*11).

With the tension between the Arab states and Israel mounting, the Lebanese government implemented military and civilian emergency measures in May 1967, which included the mobilization of the reserves for the first time since 1948, the transport of re-enforcements to the southern border, and the organization of civil defense activities as well as the preparation of shelters in the south. The government stopped short, though, of supplying arms to the inhabitants of South Lebanon as these demanded. On 5 June 1967, Karami instructed the army command to launch an offensive along the Israeli border in co-operation with the Syrian army. The Army Commander, General Bustani, backed by President Helou, refused (*12).

Saad Haddad learnt that the war had broken out from the Lebanese radio and from observing Syrian artillery attacks on Israeli settlements in the Hula Valley. From his command post on Nabi Aweida Hill, less than 100 m from the Israeli border, he had a perfect view of the Syrian Golan Heights and the Israeli Hula valley at its foot including the position of the Israeli gun embankments which he duly reported to a Syrian liaison officer who visited his forward position (*13). (There was some confusion in transferring the gun coordinates on to the Syrian map because it was in Arabic while the Lebanese military map was in French.)

Syria soon reported that her soldiers had advanced into the Hula Valley on Israeli territory, which lay in plain view of Haddad's post. Shortly afterwards, Haddad was called from his HQ and informed that the Lebanese Army was going to join the attack since Syria was now about to cut Israel into two. "Lebanon wanted a piece, too" (*14).

The 5th Battalion, stationed in Ibel-a-Saki, north-east of Marj-Ayoun, was to head the attack with its 25 pound guns and the support of one aging Vampire FB-52 fighter-bomber. The Moslem officers with Haddad were excited: "Tomorrow we will have lunch in Tel Aviv with all the blond women around us" (*15). Haddad who in the meantime had taken to dividing his Lebanese fellow countrymen into two groups, the "fanatics" (i.e. Arab nationalists, usually Moslems) and the "enthusiasts" (i.e. Lebanese nationalists, usually Christians) commented "That's Arabs, they fight for women" which was not surprising since "the Moslem officers were all fanatics" (*16). The planned attack was finally cancelled and Haddad spent the remaining few days of the war watching the IDF advance in the distance on to the Golan Heights. "The Moslem officers became very angry, the Christian officers were happy" (*17). Later it became known that many Syrian soldiers from the Golan had fled to Shaba, a Lebanese Sunni village on the slopes of Mount Hermon, where they sold their weapons, if they still had them, for 10 Lebanese Pounds a piece. Many Syrian soldiers were later evacuated from Shaba with taxi-cabs which took them to the northern

Bekaa on route to Damascus. Others made their way back to Syria climbing the slopes of Mount Hermon.

For a time, the atmosphere in the Lebanese units along the border was very tense. The Moslem officers had been led by the Arab propaganda to believe in a swift victory. The crushing defeat of the Arab armies seemed unbearable and more so in face of the open satisfaction of their Christian fellow officers.

All over Lebanon

"opinions seem to have been divided according to religious communities. Moslems believed that Lebanon should have taken an active part in the war and therefore criticized General Bustani's decision to keep the Lebanese army out of it. Christian opinion generally approved of the decision. The authorities feared that mutual recriminations over Lebanon's war-time conduct would cause increased inter-communal tension. Press censorship was prolonged after the end of the war mainly in order to prevent the public discussion of this issue" (*18).

But with the passage of time, the tension eased, the state of alert and emergency measures were lifted and officers and soldiers returned to their usual duties.

Footnotes to Chapter V :

*1. President Chehab was a descendant of a princely family that had ruled Mount Lebanon in the 18th and 19th centuries... The Chehabs were originally Sunnis.

Walid Khalidi : Conflict and Violence in Lebanon , Harvard University 1979, p.163

*2. Kamal S. Salibi : Cross Roads to Civil War, Lebanon 1958-1976 , Caravan Books, New York 1976, p.19

*3. Rabinovich, The War for Lebanon , p.30

*4. Saad Haddad, Tape 4, Side 1

*5. ibid.

*6. Saad Haddad, Tape 9, Side 1

*7. ibid. , see also Ruven Avi-Ran : The Syro-Palestinian Conflict in Lebanon : Syrian Nationalism versus Palestinian Particularism , University of Tel Aviv, May 1985, p.8 and p.38

*8. Yoram Hamizrachi, The Road to Beirut , unpublished manuscript, p.54

*9. see Labib Zuwiyya Yamak : The Syrian Social Nationalist Party. An Ideological Analysis , Harvard Middle Eastern Monograph Series 1966, p.74

*10. Saad Haddad, Tape 10, Side 1

*11. Middle East Record 1967 , Israel University Press, Jerusalem 1971, p.424

*12. ibid. , p.439

*13. Saad Haddad, Tape 11, Side 2

- *14. ibid.
- *15. ibid.
- *16. ibid.
- *17. Saad Haddad, Tape 12, Side 1
- *18. Middle East Record 1967 , p.439

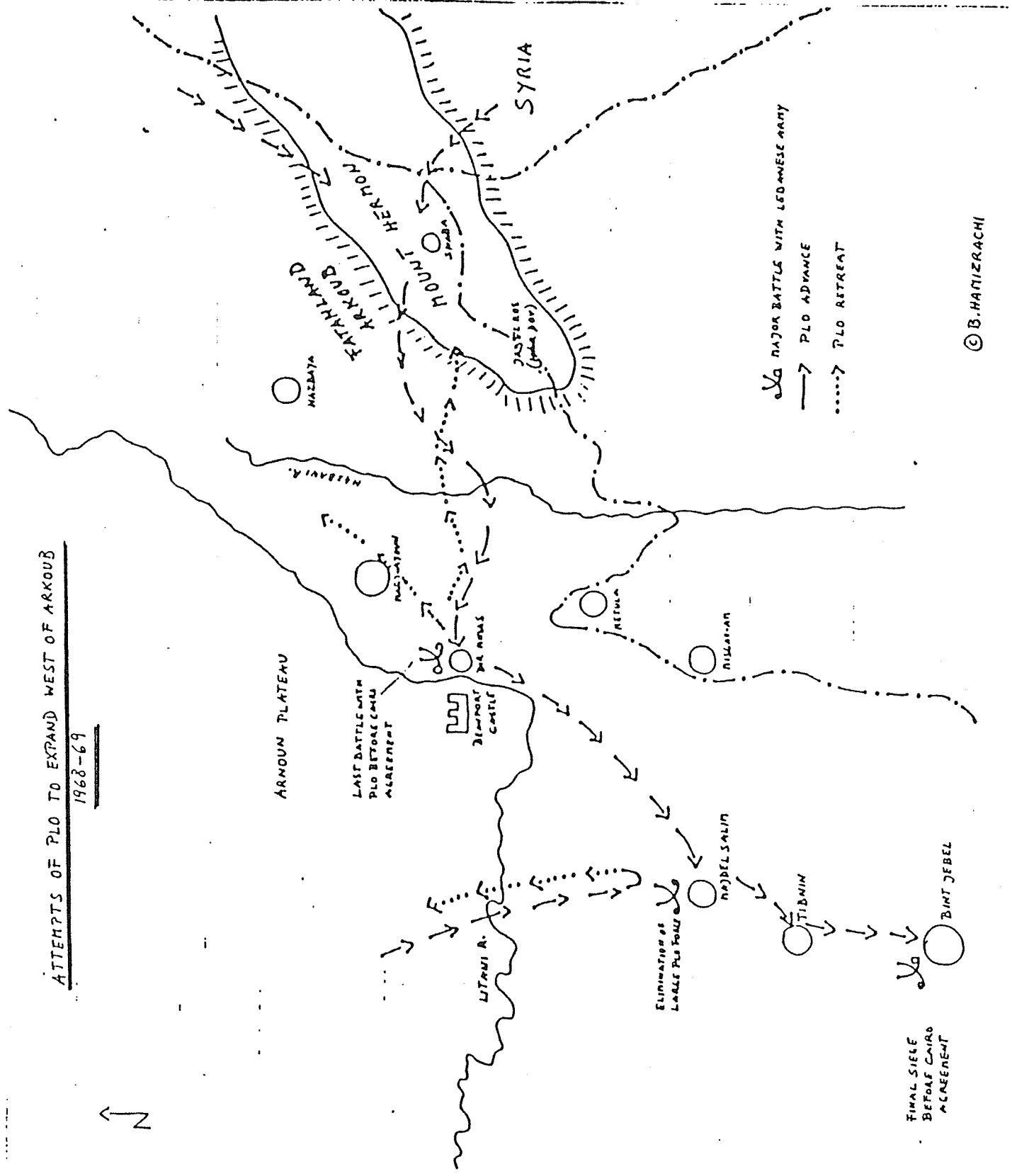
VI. The P.L.O. and the Cairo Agreement

After the trauma of defeat suffered by the Arab armies in the 1948-49 first Arab-Israeli war, the Palestinians who had fled to Lebanon, found themselves in refugee camps, without a homeland, without leadership and without hope, dependent on the hand-outs of UNRWA and the good will of their host country.

Palestinian intellectuals and political activists who tried to use established political movements in order to further their cause, namely the return of the Palestinians to Palestine, were disappointed time and again. There was no real interest or enthusiasm. Finally, and because of the lack of response and support in the Arab host-countries, Palestinian "leaders" understood that they would have to rely on themselves, on their own people and on their own resources in order to realize their aims. The climate was right for an independent Palestinian movement.

Under the leadership of the civil engineer Rahman el-Qudwa el-Husseini, who was later to become Yasir Arafat (*1), a cadre crystallized which within a few years would develop into the largest Palestinian movement. The first letters of the group's name, "Harakat el-Tahrir Falestin" (Movement for the Liberation of Palestine), read in reverse order became its final name "Fatah" (*2) Similar groups appeared in refugee camps all over the Arab world with the same aim, the liberation of Palestine and the return of the

ATTEMPTS OF PLO TO EXPAND WEST OF ARKOUB
1968-69



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refugees to their homes.

The newly awakened Palestinian nationalism received a decisive push when in September 1963 the Council of the Arab League (which had no Palestinian representation) delegated Ahmad Shukeiri (*3) to form a Palestinian Liberation Organization whose aim would be the solution of the Palestinian problem and which would include Fatah and all the smaller movements. At the beginning of 1964, a summit conference of Arab States convened in Cairo and agreed to the creation of the Palestine Liberation Organization. The PLO under the leadership of Shukeiri was recognized by the Arab states as the representative of the Palestinian people. At the beginning, its main function was to keep in line the militant elements whose demands and activities could lead to a confrontation with Israel, an unplanned for and therefore undesirable development at the time. Though Fatah and other militant organizations demanded freedom of action, the Arab states from whose territories operations were to be carried out, refused. The first operation against Israel was carried out only at the beginning of 1965, the first of an ever increasing number.

In February 1969, Arafat became the Chairman of the PLO but also remained the leader of Fatah, a member organization of the PLO. "He organized the PLO into a Fatah-dominated organization and then set out to incorporate rival groups into it and persuade the Arab world in general to recognize it as the only "legitimate representative of the Palestinian

people" (*4).

At that time, two years after the Six Days War and the loss of the West Bank, the presence of the Palestinian organizations in Jordan had become a major problem for the Hashemite Kingdom. The PLO as well as other organizations rejected any kind of state control concerning their activities on and from Jordanian territory. The tension between the Palestinian organizations and elements loyal to the king finally escalated into the civil war of September 1970 (called "Black September" by the PLO). Fatah and other PLO organizations were badly beaten by the Jordanian army and fled mainly to Syria which had always supported them. But Syria which had barely allowed any operations from her own territory, was not interested in their presence and "encouraged" them to leave for Lebanon.

Because of her volatile internal situation and the dual identity of the state, Lebanon was aware of the problem the mass of Palestinian refugees posed to the country. The Deuxieme Bureau which had developed into an important political instrument under President Chehab had shown its vigilance when it arrested one of Arafat's Fatah groups at the end of 1964, as it was about to carry out the first operation against Israel from Lebanese territory. Political activities were not interfered with but as soon as these turned into paramilitary activities which could threaten the very existence of the Lebanese state, the security services stepped in. Following the interrogation of the intercepted

Fatah members, Arafat and others of the Fatah leadership were arrested in Beirut and held for 40 days. During their time in prison they decided to take on code-names so that their true identity would not be known to their enemies. Arafat now called himself "Abu Amar".

The Lebanese authorities released the Fatah leadership from prison on the promise that they would leave Lebanon. Because of earlier connections with Syria and Syria's favourable position towards their organization they went to Damascus where they were promised the full support of the Syrian regime. In the future, Fatah would receive the credit for all raids against Israel whether they were organized and carried out by Fatah or by Syria. Failed operations were published in the Arab press with accounts of what supposedly had taken place and received the same prominence as actual raids. This led to the mistaken impression that Fatah commanded a very large Palestinian force (*5).

The Six Days War of 1967 and the resultant Israeli expansion caused a new flood of Palestinian refugees and changed the position of Lebanon towards Fatah. "The government - under pressure from both its own Muslim citizens and other Arab States - gave the guerrillas a certain degree of freedom in building their organizations within the refugee camps and in mounting operations against Israel across the southern border" (*6). The Palestinian problem had reached a new dimension and Fatah enjoyed

growing popular support. Then, the Fatah network in the Israeli occupied West Bank crumbled under the effective methods of the Israeli security forces. New alternatives and new staging grounds for operations had to be found. South Lebanon seemed to be the perfect spot.

The 110km long Israeli-Lebanese border runs partly through rugged mountain areas which can easily harbor small groups of infiltrators, making detection difficult. Many of the small villages on the Lebanese side are inhabited by Shiites who, like the Sunnis and the Druze, generally supported the Palestinians, while the chain of agricultural cooperative settlements on the Israeli side provided good targets for rocket and artillery attacks. The refugee camps in Lebanon were a never-ending source of new recruits and the long border with a supportive Syria which trained and equipped the Palestinian groups made the uncontrolled import of weapons and ammunition possible. The small Lebanese army did not have the manpower and lacked sufficient government backing to stop the massive infiltration of Palestinian militants into the border area as well as operations against Israel from Lebanese territory.

"Christian groups soon showed a marked - and public - resentment against the emergence of an organized military force with what amounted to extra-territorial authority in their country. The Christians resented the fact that Lebanese authority was being openly flouted if not

superseded. Their opposition became much more vocal when Israeli retaliatory raids began to inflict real damage on the economic interests of the country" (*7).

Fatah smuggled men and weapons over the Syrian border into the Lebanese Arkoub area, at the foot of Mount Hermon, the starting point for attacks on Israeli settlements, and the expansion east, across the Hazbani River, close to the Israeli border. This area was soon called "Fatahland" by all sides involved while the supply line itself received the name "Arafat Trail" (reminiscent of the Ho-Chi-Minh Trail in Vietnam). Originally, these names were used by the Western media and in due time turned into political concepts.

At the beginning, the PLO activities in Lebanon concentrated on two aspects : the military aspect which dealt with the construction of a network of operational bases in the Fatahland, and a political aspect which dealt with the political-ideological infiltration of the refugee camps. "Already in 1969, the UNWRA-officials admitted in one of their statements that they had no longer any control over 14 of the 15 camps and that the control had been taken over by the Fedayeen-groups" (*8).

The Lebanese government found itself in a dilemma : it did not want to be drawn into the Arab-Israeli conflict by operations from its territory against Israel, but it also did not want to act against the PLO which by now enjoyed the support of the Arab world and of the majority of Lebanon's

Moslems. The government's first real reaction to the growing number of armed Palestinians in the country, their operations and Israel's retaliations, came in form of a law of 1968 which prohibited the infiltration into Israel from Lebanese territory. It stayed mainly a paper law, only half-heartedly supported by the Lebanese army which often did not have any concrete orders to enforce it. The army units stationed in South Lebanon from time to time made feeble attempts to stop armed Palestinians which led to ever increasing numbers of skirmishes (*9).

One of the more spectacular anti-terror operations of the Israeli Defense Forces took place at the end of December 1968 when IDF units under the command of Brigadier General Rafael "Rafal" Eitan (later to become Israel's Chief of Staff) landed with helicopters on the tarmac of Beirut's airport and blew up 13 planes belonging to Lebanon's Middle East Airlines. There were no casualties. The Lebanese army did not intervene, which led to a government crisis resulting in the resignation of Prime Minister Abdallah el-Yafi and his cabinet. The new Prime Minister was, once more, Rashid Karame.

But the Israeli attack on the airport had finally brought the overall problem of the presence and activities of the armed Palestinians in Lebanon to the awareness of the whole country. Demonstrations for and against freedom of movement and freedom of action led to widespread clashes and a polarization of the population with the Moslems mainly on

the side of the Palestinians and the Maronite Christians mainly against them. The clashes spread to other areas of the country and a state of emergency was declared. In April 1969, Prime Minister Karame resigned. For the next seven months Lebanon stayed without a Prime Minister.

At about the same time the Lebanese army began to take a tougher stand and for the next few months tried to contain the Palestinian forces in South Lebanon and in the Arkoub area, denying them access to the Israeli border. This led to repeated heavy battles between the two sides which spread to other parts of the country and towards the end of the year threatened to endanger the very existence of the PLO. Diplomatic efforts by the Arab states, especially Egypt, for a solution of the crisis culminated at the beginning of November 1969 in a meeting in Cairo between the Commander of the Lebanese army, General Emile Bustani, and Yasir Arafat. The negotiations were chaired by President Gamal Abdel Nasser and resulted in the "Cairo Agreement" which was to regulate the relationship between Lebanon and the armed Palestinian organizations as well as the conditions for their presence in Lebanon. The contents of the agreement were supposed to be secret, but soon some of the points became common knowledge. "The activities of the Fedayeen were limited to observation points in the border area, a passage to the Arkoub-region and the formation of a liaison-unit with the Lebanese Army. Stipulations as to the dismantling of bases and controls by the Lebanese Army were

as much part of the agreement as the responsibility of the PLO for the activities of all armed Palestinian elements in Lebanon" (*10).

Everybody involved gave the agreement their own interpretation. "To the PLO the agreement meant... the consolidation of the status quo ante and the recognition of the PLO as the spokesman of the Palestinian people, i.e. a success... while the opinions in the Lebanese government concerning the far-reaching success of the agreement and the limitations of the Palestinian activities, were divided" (*11). The Lebanese Army which had proved itself in its war of containment against Fatah in the Arkoub region, felt humiliated by the agreement which would now give the PLO unhampered access to the Israeli border in the Arkoub area.

Henceforth, "the P.L.O. in Lebanon, with all its external connections... could now behave as a state within the State, as it had acquired, by the terms of the Agreement, what was tantamount to sovereignty not only over the commando bases under its control, but also over the Palestinian refugee camps" (*12). The agreement was endorsed by Camille Chamoun, and also by Pierre Gemayel who would later become one of the formidable enemies of the Palestinians (*13). The Cairo Agreement had not solved the problem, it had just resulted in a tense "time out" which was used by the PLO to improve its position for the next round.

General Emile Bustani, the Lebanese partner of the

agreement, found himself under fire from the Lebanese right wing who accused him of having demonstrated weaknesses and having made unnecessary concessions to the PLO "in the hope of gaining favor with the Lebanese Left and setting himself up as presidential candidate to contest the elections later this year" (*14).

And so, Bustani became the victim of the agreement. While the Lebanese television every few minutes interrupted its broadcast to announce the good news of the cease-fire, and while Arafat praised Bustani for his cooperation during the Cairo talks, the right wing leaders started their campaign to oust him. They waited only a few weeks to see whether the military activity in Lebanon would really slow down and especially to see whether Syria would stop infiltrations of members of Saiqa (*15) into the Masna area.

In the middle of November Rashid Karame became the new Prime Minister (*16) and on 7 January 1970, he fired the Commander of the Army. Karame's explanation was Bustani's age (61) and the need of the army for new and younger blood. But the Lebanese and the international media reported that Bustani had been sacked because of the pressure from the right wing. The new Commander, General Jean Najim, was killed a short time later in a helicopter crash. He was replaced by General Iskandar Ghanem, who was called out of retirement.

From the beginning of 1969 till the signing of the Cairo Agreement, Saiqa posed the major operational problem

to the Lebanese army. Elements of this organization which were most active in the south, in the Sidon area, in the northern Bekaa near Masna and also in the Tripoli area, operated mobile forces also in other sectors.

The army had also to deal with large Fatah forces who entered the country from the slopes of Jabel Ross and Mount Hermon, and crossed the Hazbani River to the Shiite villages of Majdal-Salim, Shakna, Kabrikha and Hula which lie in the centre of the southern sector. The army defeated these Fatah forces through skilled use of its own units which imposed a siege on the area. Many Fatah members were killed during this operation and close to 100 surrendered to the soldiers.

The operations in this sector came to an end in late October when units of the 1. Battalion managed to remove PLO forces from the deep ravines near the Greek-Orthodox village of Dir Mimas on the banks of the Litani River, close to the Israeli border.

It seems that the Commander of the army gave the highest priority to operations against PLO units close to the Israeli border, obviously in order to prevent an Israeli military reaction. Perhaps he also listened to the statement of the Israeli Deputy Prime Minister, Yigal Allon, of 25 October 1969, which included the warning to the Lebanese that "the terrorists will eliminate the government if the government does not eliminate the terrorists" (*17).

Allon's warning came at the time the PLO moved forces

from Tyre into the large Shiite town of Bint-Jebel. Bustani directed large army concentrations from the Majdal-Salim area and from the north to Bint-Jebel and repeated his tactics of imposing a state of siege on the city. But the General refrained from moving his forces into the town itself, apparently because of the political negotiations which, a few days later, led to the Cairo Agreement.

On other fronts, things did not go as smoothly as in the south. From the end of April 1969, the army fought Saiqa over the control of the Hazbaya area where, since 30 April 1969, Saiqa forces besieged small army posts holding the road-junctions of Suk el-Khan and Burghus in an attempt to prevent the army from closing the roads leading to the Syrian border.

Mobile Saiqa forces harassed a number of police stations and customs installations along the Syrian-Lebanese border in order "to distract police from frontier surveillance" (*18). They also conducted a series of local skirmishes in order to help Fatah units or to force the army to open new local fronts. This became obvious for example during July when the army fought the PLO and the Saiqa near the Nahar el-Bard area, close to Tripoli, or during fighting near Yanta and Kfar Kouk in October.

The most severe battles, in regard to the number of participating forces and the kind of weapons, were fought near Rashaya and Aiha where tanks, armoured cars and artillery took part in a so-called "restrained offensive".

In these battles, the army losses were a result of the use of heavy mortars and "Katyusha" (*19) rocket launchers by Fatah and Saiqa during their continuous attacks. On 1 November 1969, the eve of the Cairo Agreement, the last of these heavy battles was fought near Masna, close to the Syrian border.

The Lebanese Army operated under many restrictions related to the constant Syrian threat of invasion, Iraqi hints that "its army will protect the commandos" (*20), and Israeli warnings which, between 1-3 October, resulted in operations and raids on the slopes of Mount Hermon. The army also had to face vicious political attacks from politicians of the Lebanese Left, and PLO propaganda urging the soldiers "not to allow the conspiracy against the Palestinian Revolution to succeed" (*21).

The camp of the Maronite leader Suleiman Franjeh established its own private militia, accused the army of corruption and demanded the resignation of the officers of the Deuxieme Bureau who, according to Franjeh, interfered in non-military matters.

In the middle of this mini-war Lebanon was shocked by a bizarre scandal. On 2 October, army intelligence discovered a Russian plot to steal a Mirage fighter and to smuggle it abroad. The pilot, Lieutenant Michel Matar, who had been approached by a Lebanese middle-man, revealed the plot to his superiors. As a result, the intelligence forces arrested a Lebanese in whose possession they found a large

amount of money. During subsequent arrests, two Russian agents were shot and wounded. One of them turned out to be the First Secretary of the Russian Embassy in Beirut. According to the plot, Lieutenant Matar was to land his fighter-jet in either Syria or Iraq. During a press conference, he was then to denounce the stand of the Lebanese Army in the confrontation with the PLO and to condemn it for not going to war against Israel. The two Russians were expelled but the affair embarrassed the army and portrayed it as a rotten organization (*22).

On the whole, General Emile Bustani managed to lead the army successfully through the 1969 crisis. The army appeared as a disciplined body which faced the Fatah and the Saïqa without disintegrating. This in itself was an important achievement in the Lebanese context. Bustani's critics claimed that his success stemmed from the fact that he was "a political soldier" but this criticism cannot deny his success in the critical months of 1969 and it is unjustified in comparison to the behaviour of other high-ranking Lebanese officers of the era.

The quiet of 1968 was disturbed by the slow but steady infiltration of terrorists (*23) who entered South Lebanon from Syria via trails on Jabel el-Sheikh (Mount Hermon). The terrorists came in small groups passing first through the village of Shaba and then through the village of Shuba where one platoon each of the battalion was stationed. During this initial stage of infiltration, the villagers

reported the presence of the terrorists to the soldiers who then arrested them and returned them to the Syrian border. Haddad later recalled : "Our orders were strict : if they resisted, we were even allowed to shoot them" (*24). But later in the year, the orders changed. Now the soldiers were told not to interfere and let them pass. The soldiers were bewildered and complained. New orders, which contradicted each other, were issued and left commanders and soldiers of the area in an operational limbo.

By this time, Haddad had made up his mind about the PLO and the danger its activities posed to Lebanon. "I warned my soldiers that these terrorists are like a small snake, still without poison. But it will become bigger and strike, and then its poison can kill" (*25). As an officer, Haddad rejected any kind of compromise with this organization which threatened the very existence of his country. As a Christian, he opposed their presence which endangered the 'status quo". As a son of the south, he understood better than others that their activities would first and foremost bring destruction and instability to this area. The future proved him right.

In October 1968, the terrorists began to shell Israeli settlements, especially Kiriati Shmona, from the Arkoub area and later also from Aweida Hill. The Israeli forces returned fire. Haddad was called to Headquarters in Marj Ayoun where the Battalion Commander, Colonel Edmond Zaatar, told him that Lebanon had received an official Israeli

warning : if the terrorist shelling from the Arkoub would not be stopped, Israel would invade and conquer the south. Accordingly, Haddad was to take his company to the Arkoub and "cleanse it of terrorists" (*26). It was suspected that about 70 terrorists occupied the Arkoub area and that they would surrender without resistance to an official Lebanese army request, served by Haddad. Concerning the Israelis, they would be content with any kind of Lebanese action. The terrorists were to be arrested, escorted out of the south to Sidon, and released. "A comedy" (*27).

The company was on its way before dawn, its two 81 mm mortars carried by mules. Outside the village of Shuba the soldiers spread out, Haddad leading the left wing along a narrow path along the border. Dawn found them climbing up the rocky mountainside where boulders, trees and bushes could hide anything. From the Israeli side, a group of soldiers was watching their progress. The Lebanese soldiers under Haddad came upon a small group of terrorists but instead of surrendering, they disappeared among the rocks. The army advance came to a sudden stop when fire was opened from different directions on Haddad and his section of soldiers. "I called out to them that we were Lebanese army but they shouted back that we were Zionists" (*28). Haddad gave orders to return fire. "I also wanted to use the mortars but when the mules heard the fire, they ran away with the mortars" (*29). During the ensuing exchange of fire, Haddad was grazed by a bullet that ripped through his

shirt and burnt the skin on his chest (*30). The battle ended with the surrender of the terrorists who had a number of casualties. The only wounded Lebanese soldier was taken to the village of El-Meri for treatment. "The Israelis broke in on our wireless and offered their help in treating him but we did not answer" (*31).

During the advance, Haddad and his soldiers had come across a large arms cache concealed in one of the many caves in the mountain. There was such a large amount of weapons and ammunition including mines and Katyusha-rockets, that the soldiers could not possibly carry them away on their backs. In El-Meri Haddad reported this find to his commander but did not arouse much interest. And in the evening, Israeli helicopters landed at the site and carried the weapons away (*32).

But the battle had not ended in the field. The PLO leadership complained to the Moslem politicians about the incident. As a result, Haddad was asked by his commanders to change his report and make the exchange of fire look like the result of a regular patrol and not like coming in the wake of specific instructions and orders. The lie was successfully used during the following investigation. Haddad was upset and disgusted but played by the rules.

The day after the incident, the village of Shuba turned out in force to demonstrate against the Lebanese army. The demonstration was organized by the local school principal, Ibrahim Diab. Haddad was not surprised, "Shuba was fanatic

from the beginning" (*33).

The same day, Haddad began to receive threats, and for a time, he was officially allowed to carry a rifle at all times, including at home. At night, soldiers guarded his house and motorized patrols passed frequently. "Nothing changed" (*34), he commented in 1978. At that time, his house was guarded by members of his militia and sometimes by IDF soldiers, and motorized patrols passed now and then because of threats from the PLO and other sources.

The battallion commander put Haddad up for a decoration but it never materialized. Later, during a meeting with the Commander-in-Chief, General Emile Bustani, Haddad inquired about the reason and was told that the political circumstances, at the time, had not allowed it (*35).

At the beginning of 1969, Haddad was promoted to Captain. During the year, the clashes and incidents with the PLO increased. Haddad's men laid many ambushes for Palestinian groups on their way into Israel. They had orders to shoot but not to kill, an order Haddad found illogical and hard to explain to the soldiers. Haddad was dead set against the terrorists and their activities. "They were bad for Lebanon, especially for South Lebanon, because they brought on Israeli retaliations" (*36). The success of the ambushes was marred by the fact that his reports had always to state that the PLO had opened fire first, even when this was not true. Terrorists who had been arrested were usually sent to Sidon where they were released and had

their weapons returned to them (*37).

Finally, the incidents escalated into an outright war between the Lebanese army and the PLO. There were no more negotiations but fire was opened on sight and soldiers fired in order to kill. The situation calmed down somewhat after the Cairo Agreement. "The rumor was that General Bustani had signed because President Nasser had promised him, he would become president in the 1970 elections. The Cairo Agreement was a slap in the face of the Lebanese army because we were winning and the agreement made us look like losers" (*38).

The agreement was never really applied or adhered to and after a short while, Haddad and his soldiers were again mainly chasing terrorists.

Footnotes to Chapter VI :

*1. Born 27 August 1929 in Cairo as Rahman Abdul Rauf Arafat al-Qudwa al-Husayni. "Rahman" was the name of his father's father. Abdul Rauf was his own full name. Arafat was for the sacred mountain near Mecca where Muhammad the Prophet, according to Islamic belief, had been transformed into the final messenger of God. Arafat took on the name "Yasir" after his teacher Majid Halabi compared him (Gaza 1941) to the leader of the "Sacred Society for the Recovery of Palestine", Yasir al-Birah, who had been killed in 1939 by a British patrol while trying to smuggle weapons onto the beach at Haifa. Thomas Kiernan, Yasir Arafat , Abacus, London 1976, pp.24, 57, 59, 65-66.

*2. The name was established during Arafat's stay in Kuwait, where he worked as a contractor with a few like-minded Palestinian friends. Beginning in 1960, Fatah was divided for a time into three divisions : one in Stuttgart, West Germany, where Arafat had stayed a few months in 1957, one in Algeria where members of the new Palestinian organization had worked underground with the FLN, and one in Kuwait where Arafat was working and raising money for the organization.

ibid. , p.181, p.183

*3. Ahmad Shukeiri, a Palestinian, was the representative of Saudi-Arabia to the United Nations. He belonged to a well-known family in Acco and was known for his demagogic

speeches.

*4. Kiernan, Arafat , p.219

*5. see ibid. , pp.201-202

*6. Abbas Keidar and Michael Burrell, Lebanon, the Collapse of a State , Eastern Press, London 1976, p.6

*7. ibid.

*8. Schiller, Buergerkrieg im Libanon , pp.131-132

Fedayeen is a word derived from the root Arabic word for 'sacrifice'. "It referred to those who sacrifice themselves or embark on suicidal missions. Historically, the name was first used in the twelfth century to designate warriors selected by the Isma'ili sect of Islam to assassinate its enemies." Thomas Kiernan. Yasir Arafat , Abacus, London 1976, p.57

*9. Schiller, Buergerkrieg im Libanon , pp.132-133

*10. ibid. , p.138

*11. ibid. , p.137

*12. Salibi, Cross Roads to Civil War , p.43

*13. Moosa, The Maronites , p.297

*14. New York Times , 8 January 1969

*15. Saiqa : a terror organization of the Syrian Baath Party with camps in Lebanon especially (until the 1975 Civil War) in the Fatahland. After the rise of Hafez el-Assad to power in Syria (1970), the leadership of Saiqa became the victim of an internal purge. The new leaders, among them Zohar Mohsen, cooperated with Fatah. See Schiff and Haber, Israel, Army and Defense , p.439

*16. "In the elections of 1970, when forty-nine members of parliament voted for his father and forty-nine for Elias Sarkis, it was parliamentary deputy Toni (Franjieh) who walked up to the dais, drew his pistol, and asked the Speaker how he intended to use his tie-breaking vote. For your father, of course, was the answer Toni got". Dan Baily and Elihu Salpeter : Fire in Beirut . Stein and Day, New York 1984, p.51

*17. New York Times , 25 October 1969

*18. ibid. , 1 May 1969

*19. Katyusha rockets vary in size and range from the BMD-25 (450kg/20km) to the RM-130 (26kg/8.2km). The most popular type with Fatah was the BM-21 (46kg/15km). See Edward Luttwak and Dan Horowitz : The Israeli Army , Harper and Row Publishers, New York 1975, p.312.

*20. ibid. , 23 October 1969

*21. ibid. , 23 April 1969

*22. ibid. , 7 October 1969

*23. I follow Haddad's nomenclature

*24. Saad Haddad, Tape 13, Side 1

*25. ibid.

*26. ibid.

*27. ibid.

*28. Saad Haddad, Tape 13, Side 2

*29. ibid.

*30. Haddad liked to display the nearly invisible scar left by the bullet.

*31. Saad Haddad, Tape 13, Side 2

*32. ibid.

*33. ibid.

*34. Haddad's comment "Nothing changed" refers to the fact that also during his cooperation with Israel, his house was guarded and Israeli as well as militia patrols passed frequently during the night.

*35. Saad Haddad, Tape 13, Side 2

*36. Saad Haddad, Tape 14, Side 2

*37. Haddad comments here "Like today", referring to UNIFIL which operated under exactly the same orders.

*38. Saad Haddad, Tape 15, Side 1

VII. The Yom Kippur War 1973

The Cairo Agreement was followed by a few weeks of relative quiet. But soon enough it became clear that the PLO and other armed Palestinian groups had no intention of keeping to the limitations of the agreement.

The next major incident occurred on the very last day of 1969 when terrorists crossed the Lebanese border from the village of Kila into the Israeli settlement of Metula and kidnapped Shmuel Rosenwasser, an elderly watchman (*1).

The PLO tried to use the kidnapping as a means to force the Israeli government into recognizing the organization through negotiations but Israel refused to negotiate directly with Fatah. In the spring of 1971, Rosenwasser was exchanged for Mahmoud Hijazi, an imprisoned terrorist, who had been wounded and captured in January 1965, after infiltrating from Jordan and unsuccessfully trying to blow up an irrigation installation at an Israeli border settlement. He was the very first Fatah member to be captured and jailed in Israel.

During the first few months of 1970, Fatah and other terrorist groups increased the number and extent of their attacks on Israeli settlements and territory. The IDF answered with retaliatory raids against the PLO bases in Fatahland. Attacks and exchanges of fire increased and resulted in May 1970, following a rocket attack on the town of Kiriat Shmonah, in the invasion of South Lebanon by IDF

units which held a 100 sq. km area for nearly two days searching for members of terror organizations and blowing up their installations and offices, sometimes in the heart of villages and towns. A number of small Lebanese army units in the operational area entered the battle and suffered heavy casualties.

The terror attacks and the reprisal operations continued throughout the summer. As many as 30.000 Shiite families whose villages suffered most from the hostilities because of their closeness to the border, fled northwards looking for refuge in Beirut and other urban centres of Lebanon. Demonstrations all over the country increased the pressure on the government to protect the south from both Israel and the terrorists.

"The inactivity of the government, the purely defensive behaviour of the security authorities, who did not receive any directions, the growing influence of the fedayeen... led to the organization of armed paramilitary formations by the za'ims of the Christian and Sunni population" (*2).

Following the example of paramilitary organizations like the Najada (Sunni) and the Kataeb (Maronite) which existed since the early 40s, Suleiman Franjiyeh, the leader of the north-Lebanese Maronites, now organized the "Zghorta Liberation Army" (known also as "Liwa el-Marada" - the Brigade of the Giants) whose 5.000 members were trained near the Franjiyeh home in Zghorta. Toni Franjiyeh, son of the za'im, became commander of this force. Next was Camille

Chamoun who founded the "Militia of the Tigers" which was commanded by his son Danni and trained near the family palace at Sadiyat. Other za"ims soon followed suit. But also smaller ethnic groups like the Armenians who were not linked to a za"im, now formed their own militia or secret military organization.

In August 1970 Suleiman Franjiyeh was elected to the office of president. He was reputed to be a strong man (*3) and it was expected that he would impliment the articles of the Cairo Agreement which until now had been on paper only. By this time "the Hashemite Monarchy was beginning to take measures to curb the powers of the commandos in Jordan. Faranjiyya, it was hoped, would do the same in Lebanon" (*4). But soon it became clear that the new government under Prime Minister Saeb Salam had no intention of following a collision course with the PLO. Accordingly, the army which had been mostly inactive since the Cairo Agreement, now became more and more ineffective losing the confidence of the people.

Over the next two years, PLO operations from Lebanese territory into Israel decreased somewhat but activities increased on the international scene. During 1972 and 1973 spectacular operations and retaliations seemed to chase each other. The massacre of passengers in Israel's Ben-Gurion airport in 1972 was followed by IDF operations against PLO bases in Lebanon. After the murder of eleven members of the Israeli Olympic team in Munich in the same year, Israeli

troops invaded South Lebanon , in some places reaching the Litani River, with the aim of destroying Palestinian bases there. In the following spring, IDF units landed in Tripoli and destroyed PLO bases. Shortly afterwards, IDF commandos blew up PLO offices in Beirut and killed three Fatah leaders in their homes.

These and other Israeli operations led to a government crisis in Lebanon which resulted in the resignation of Prime Minister Saeb Salam who blamed the Commander-in-Chief, General Iskander Ghanem, for the failure of the army to defend Beirut. But it took one more PLO operation, the explosion of the pipeline leading from Saudi-Arabia to the American-owned Tapline oil refinery at Zaharani, near Sidon, to push the government into ordering the Lebanese army to take action against the PLO bases. The fighting concentrated mainly on refugee camps around Beirut and the International Airport which had to be closed for the first time. For the first time, too, the Lebanese air force took part in the fighting against the PLO. The battle ceased with the signing of a new agreement between the Lebanese government and the PLO that basically re-affirmed the clauses of the Cairo Agreement. This accord is known as the Melkart Agreement, named after the hotel where it was signed, and saved the PLO from destruction by a determined Lebanese army. For the second time, the Lebanese army had been cheated out of the fruits of its success in the battlefield. Just as before the Cairo Agreement, the

soldiers had been ordered to cease fire, the very moment victory seemed in their hands. From now on, the army command would not intervene any more, would in fact stay neutral, during future internal Lebanese conflicts.

Lebanon took no official part in the Arab-Israeli war of October 1973. The PLO now allied itself closely with the sympathizing radical Lebanese Left, a tactical move which was seen as a new threat by the Christian Maronite camp. An armed conflict now appeared unavoidable.

The Cairo Agreement only slowed down the process of deterioration of the Lebanese army. Shocked by the Israeli retaliation following the kidnapping of Rosenwasser from Metula, in which ten soldiers and twelve civilians were taken prisoner by the IDF, the Army had growing difficulties securing the southern border. Its problems included not only the growing number of Israeli retaliatory or anti-terror operations but also activities of the co-signers of the agreement in Cairo who refused to give up their strongholds in the Arkoub, on the Announ Plateau (*5) and in the large refugee camps surrounding Tyre and Sidon on the coast.

The new Commander of the army, General Najim, tried to steer his army away from confrontations with the armed elements in the country. In the beginning he worried the PLO, which believed in the officer's public image of "a strong man". But soon enough, coordination meetings between Najim and Arafat were arranged (January 1970) and

demands of the army command that the PLO return to the refugee camps were dismissed as not serious. These demands really only echoed the growing number of warnings, threats and military operations from Israel (*6). The terrorists, the survivalists of the Middle East, learnt to find their way also with the new army command.

At the beginning of 1970, the army was involved in several skirmishes, mainly with Fatah. On 19 March, an officer was killed and two soldiers were wounded during a clash with a PLO squad returning from a border operation. General Najim's solution of the problem was a traditional one, namely to offer the PLO "joint patrols". But the main test of the Army came towards the end of March following a confrontation between the PLO and the Kataeb militia in the village of Kahale (*7). The fighting started when Kataeb militiamen refused to allow the PLO to pass through the village en route to Damascus with the coffin of a killed terrorist. During the skirmish eight terrorists were killed and many more wounded. Tension rose in various parts of Beirut. In the Tel Zaatar refugee camp, PLO elements arrested Bashir Jemayel, son of the za'im, who passed by in his car, but released him a few hours later.

The army moved into the Kahale area and also had armoured cars and APCs take up position near the presidential palace, government installations and the Fayadiyeh barracks. In order to prove that the army "meant business", army forces including armour were brought up from

the south. This step led to immediate criticism. Israeli pressure in the south was mounting and the Lebanese army was accused of neglecting the border region, leaving it to the mercy of the Palestinians and the Israelis. This criticism became stronger in May during a series of Israeli raids, the most spectacular taking place in the Arkoub which showed to many Lebanese that "the area has slipped out of government control" (*8). The Israeli operation (12/13 May 1970) which was carried out near the Syrian border, included armoured units, airborne forces and artillery. One of the most important villages in this region was the village of Shaba "which served as a major base mainly for Saiqa and from which terrorist patrols were leaving not only in the direction of Israel but also towards villages and towns in the Hazbani region where only small forces of the Lebanese army were stationed" (*9). The Israeli viewpoint on the vanishing control of the Lebanese army in the Arkoub was expressed by General Mordechai "Motta" Gur, then OC Northern Command : "In the land of the cedars they (i.e. the PLO) found almost unlimited operational grounds. The Lebanese government and her army indeed showed efforts to stop the terrorist infiltrations but they did not have the power to do so. Soon enough they were based all over South Lebanon and the Beirut government lost almost completely its control over this part of the country" (*10).

In the May operation, Israeli forces penetrated deeper than usual into the area, and General Najim instructed the

army to return fire. As a result, the army suffered heavy casualties especially from the Israeli armoured columns. But this brave and unusual act of the Lebanese army was overshadowed by the fact that Syria, which had so far refrained from intervening in the south, sent some fighter bombers to strafe Israeli columns. In the following dogfights with the Israeli air force three Syrian planes were shot down over Lebanese territory (*11). The Syrian involvement diminished the impact of the efforts of the army which for the first time since 1948 had actually been fighting the Israelis, fulfilling its role as the defender of Lebanon (even if this defense was not directly on the border line but deeper inland, in the direction of the Hazbaya road). General Najim was lucky though, since at about the same time the PLO found itself confronted by a more determined government and a better prepared army in Jordan. The fighting in Jordan reached its climax in October 1970 and as a result, many PLO forces left Lebanon and Syria in a hurry towards the Syrian-Jordanian border, while others lowered the scale of their operations in the area (*12).

During this time, the army had also to face the fact that the Lebanese left was gaining more power, mainly because in 1969, the Minister of the Interior, Kamal Jumblat, had lifted the ban on the Communist and other Leftist parties. Now, Leftist organizations operated in the open and began to organize themselves like other armed

sectors in Lebanon including opening of offices, obtaining weapons and training of militias, all of which endangered internal security, especially during the August elections and the first days of Suleiman Franjiyeh's presidency. These new tensions from time to time led to clashes, especially in Sidon and Tripoli, between pro-Nasserists and the PLO over the question of the control of the "Moslem street". The army was reluctant to interfere but sometimes was instructed by the government to do so.

At the end of 1970, disappointed by the army's inability to provide some kind of coherent defense, some villagers in the south tried to organize their own local militias whose official role was to provide better protection from Israeli attacks. In reality they were formed in order to establish some form of security against the PLO and the armed Leftists. This self-help damaged the shaky image of the army in the south and occasionally led to tensions, criticism and accusations which were heightened by local incidents. In November, for example, members of a PLO group assassinated an organizer of a local militia, his pregnant wife and his father in the village of Aitaroun close to the Israeli border (*13).

In 1970 the army suffered a severe insult from an unusual source : the US Administration offered Lebanon a military aid package worth \$5 million as compared to \$30 million for Jordan and \$500 million for Israel. The negotiations with the Americans were used by the Lebanese

Left who stressed that there was also "a Russian option". On 30 June, the Lebanese Government decided, in principle, to examine the possibility of buying \$15 million worth of weapons from the Soviet Union, mainly Jeeps, APCs and artillery guns. The rest of the weapons would be purchased according to tradition from Britain and France.

On 23 November 1971, Army Day in Lebanon, an officer and three soldiers struck a PLO mine not far from the southern border and were killed. The PLO claimed that this mine, like others, had been put there in order to stop future Israeli armoured, motorized and foot patrols as well as policing operations which at that time were already regular occurrences in areas close to the border. This incident was seen by many Lebanese soldiers as a "mistake of the officer who should not have left the main road with his patrol" (*14).

General Ghanem, like his two predecessors Bustani and Najim, needed the talent of political manouvering more than military skills. The new commander also failed to stop Israel's military operations in the south. The army now moved only in restricted areas and this only on main roads and between the camps. And so the PLO took over the rural areas where they were from time to time confronted by IDF forces pursuing them.

In January 1972, following severe clashes between the police and the PLO in Beirut, officials briefed foreign correspondents on the situation and told them that "There

are now some 2,000-3,000 regular terrorists, members of seven main organizations, who operate in 15 refugee camps. At least one third of this force is regularly in the Arkoub" (*15). The government sources did not reveal figures for members of leftist armed organizations but according to Sergeant-Major Jeries Kassarwani of Marj Ayoun (a former member of the Deuxieme Bureau) Lebanese intelligence estimated the number of leftist militia members and other private forces supporting the PLO in the north, the Bekaa and in Sidon at at least 2,000. These figures did not include semi-regular PLO units, such as Saiqa and others who moved back and forth between Syria and Lebanon. The figures demonstrate, however, the magnitude of the military problem facing the Lebanese Command which had more armed irregulars of all kinds to deal with than it had soldiers in its own force.

Israel suspected that, because of inter-Arab political pressure as well as pressure from the Lebanese Leftists and the Moslems, the Lebanese government had reached another secret agreement with the PLO allowing the terrorist more freedom of operation and closer cooperation with Syria. On 21 June 1972, in an operation known under the codename "Box Two", Israeli paratroopers and intelligence officers laid an ambush for a group of high-ranking Syrian officers who were touring the South Lebanon Highway; they were in plain clothes and were accompanied by PLO officers. Five Syrians including a Brigadier-General of the air force intelligence

were taken prisoner. Israel's dissatisfaction with the situation expressed itself in the words of General Aharon "Anale" Yariv, Director of the IDF Intelligence Branch, who said on 27 September 1972, that the Lebanese government apparently decided "upon massage, not a major surgery for the guerrillas" (*16). And so, as the crucial year of 1973 came closer, the Lebanese Army in the south no longer showed the kind of operational initiative which resembled its actions in 1969. It seems that the main concern of General Ghanem was the Beirut district, the north and the protection of major traffic arteries and essential road junctions leading to the south, a safe distance away from the international border with Israel. All this made the impression on the people of Lebanon that there was an unwritten gentleman's agreement between the Lebanese army and the IDF according to which Israel was responsible for policing the south while the army was active further back. Whenever the army now tried to check PLO activities, it was seen as cooperation with Israel. In September 1972 (following the assassination of 11 Israelis in the Olympic Village in Munich), during a massive Israeli mopping-up operation in the south, the PLO, the Leftists and other critics of the army saw the events as a joint effort of the IDF and the Lebanese army. "Many commandos fled advancing Israeli tanks during the raid and then found themselves prevented by the Lebanese army from returning to their bases" (*17). Against this background, the deterioration of

the army's prestige continued. Accusations that the army did not safeguard Lebanese sovereignty fell on fertile soil in the south, mainly in Shiite areas.

At the end of the year, the army had its annual scandal. It seems that in 1968 a French weapons manufacturer had bribed high ranking officials and army officers into signing an arms deal which would provide Lebanon with a French anti-aircraft missile system. The name of former Army Commander Emile Bustani was also mentioned but the General silenced his critics, threatening that he himself would reveal details related to the scandal (*18).

In May 1973, following clashes with the PLO, General Iskandar Ghanem deployed his army again in the Beirut region. Twelve soldiers were killed and 60 others were wounded. The army moved armour, commando, infantry and artillery units and even the air force against the major refugee camps close to the capital. The incident had started when the army put up roadblocks near the refugee camps of Sabra and Chatila. The PLO claimed that thereby the army had overstepped its rights. The PLO also accused the army of inefficiency following a successful Israeli commando raid in the heart of Beirut on 10 April which resulted in the death of three high ranking PLO commanders. As in 1969, the PLO now repeated its strategy by sending some forces to North Lebanon and, on 9 May, to the Arkoub. This was part of a plan to ease the pressure on Beirut by

forcing the army to open secondary and local fronts or at least to move forces to the periphery. Although the media reported on fighting also in the south, the PLO had sent most of its elite forces to Beirut where "Anafat's nephew, Captain R.Awad, was killed in the fighting on 3 May. Usually, Awad commanded Palestinian commandos in the Arkoub of southern Lebanon" (*19).

However, the army concentrated the bulk of its fighting power in the greater Beirut district, in vital areas in the north and in those areas in the south which were far enough from the Israeli border to be safe, such as Rashaya and Yanta. Just as in 1969, the army inflicted heavy losses on the PLO but, under Syrian and leftist pressure, was again forced into a cease-fire on 12 May when both sides stated "that they have reached identical viewpoints on the settlement of the conflict in which at least 250 persons have been killed since May 2" (*20).

The lesson learnt by the army in the May events was that it could bring reinforcements from the south including armour and artillery, since Israel took care of policing this problematic district. The army also concluded that it had to deploy forces in order to block major access routes from the Bekaa Valley to the north such as the Kfar Mishki/Rashaya junction and the Masna junction. As long as the Muslim political leadership continued to support President Franjiyeh, the army could successfully face the Palestinians and their supporters. In regard to the air

force, the army concluded that its deployment could be useful for silencing PLO artillery on the eastern flank of the Hazbaya/Rashaya highway, for example (*21). The air force flew its "Hawker Hunter" fighter-bombers in combat and not its few Mirage jets. These were only partially operational since they were intended to be sold back to France because of maintenance and operational problems (*22). The use of the air force against the PLO enjoyed American encouragement and, on 24 September, the Nixon Administration offered to sell to the Lebanese a squadron of eighteen Skyhawk/A-4 fighter-bombers which were regarded as an excellent weapon system by the Israelis. In the end, the deal fell through although the army reacted positively to the American offer. The politicians doubted that the small, 1,000 men strong air force would be able to handle the jets. In the end, the Lebanese army was left only with a highly sophisticated radar system which had been installed on the Lebanese side of Mount Hermon in 1969 (*23). This radar station which supplied vital intelligence information to the Syrians was destroyed during the 1973 October war by the Israeli airforce.

During the war (6-24 October 1973) the Lebanese Command kept the army out of the hostilities, in spite of strong pressures from the Left and the Moslems, and orders from the Prime Minister. The army command ordered the units in the south to stay on full alert but to keep to the barracks and the major border installations. This neutral stand of the

army gave the PLO room to increase their harassment of Israel along the southern border especially with artillery.

Immediately after the war demonstrations against the army's inactivity during the war took place mainly in Beirut, Tripoli, Sidon and Tyre. The demonstrators also protested against the opening of negotiations between Israel, Egypt and Syria. Another reason for violent demonstrations were the rising prices of commodities. Several times the army was sent to quell leftist demonstrations but succeeded to avoid major confrontations.

During the last days of 1969, Haddad and his company were stationed in the village of Dir Mimas (west of the Israeli border) overlooking the Litani River and the Khardale Bridge that spanned it. Other companies were stationed in the village of Khirbe, the road junction of Tel Nehas, Hill 608 and in the "customs building" (*24) at the entrance to the village of Kila. The building stood on the western side of the South Lebanon Highway, a narrow road which at that point was only a few meters away from the Israeli-Lebanese border. On the Israeli side, large apple orchards stretched eastwards towards the settlement of Metula, less than one kilometer away.

On the 29th of December, Haddad and other officers, including Sector Commander Colonel Khuri, were having lunch at the officers' club in Khirbe when the Colonel was called to the phone. On the other end of the line was Major Sami

el-Khatib of the Deuzieme Bureau in Beirut informing Colonel Khuri that a terrorist force would stage an operation during New Year's night via the village of Kila and the "customs building". Colonel Khuri was asked not to intervene. The Colonel angrily rejected the request and slammed down the receiver (*25).

The very next day, Colonel Khuri went on his New Year's leave being replaced by Colonel Femi Hamdan, commander of the 3rd Battalion, who was known for his pro-PLD stand.

During the evening of 31 December, all companies received orders from Headquarters in Marj Ayoun to immediately stop all patrols. Company commanders were informed that during the night the PLD was carrying out an operation and that they were not to interfere.

Late that night, about 80 terrorists arrived via Khardale Bridge, Tel Lubia and Dir Mimas where they left their cars continuing on foot. Last orders were issued in the village of Kila. Starting point of the operation was the "customs building" (held by a squad of Lebanese soldiers) from where it was only a few steps to the border which at that time was marked only by few and far apart boundary-stones. The operation went smoothly. The terrorists returned with an elderly watchman of the settlement, bundled him into one of the cars and drove off. Tension amongst the soldiers and officers of the 1st Battalion mounted. "We all knew that Israel would not let this pass, that there would be retaliation".

But, for the time being, the companies were rotated as usual and Haddad found himself occupying the "customs building". Convinced that Israel would stage her own operation which must surely include the "customs building" because of its involvement in the kidnapping, Haddad asked the battalion commander for permission to evacuate his soldiers from the building during the night. Permission was granted, and Haddad and his men slept in the surrounding hills under the stars. Since the building had only one entrance, they broke another opening in the opposite wall which would allow them a quick escape. The soldiers were grumbling, especially about the nightly trecks into the hills, but Haddad did not give in : "Better you cry now, than I cry later".

Finally, they were relieved by another company. Haddad explained the precautions he had taken to the company commander, Captain Kalil Wehebi, but the captain was sure nothing would happen. Therefore, his soldiers slept in the building and nobody stood guard outside. In the second night, IDF soldiers surrounded the building and called the soldiers to surrender. A shaken Captain Wehebi was on the phone to inform headquarters about the situation when the receiver was politely taken out of his hand by an Israely soldier and quietly returned to the cradle. Wehebi and his ten soldiers were then marched into Israel and the building was blown up (*26).

The Lebanese Army Commander, General Emile Bustani,

arrived in Marj Ayoun in early January 1970 to hear first-hand about the incident. Colonel Khuri was reprimanded and relieved by Colonel Hamed el-Haj. Because of the incident the soldiers received new orders : to stop further PLD infiltrations and operations.

The year passed with Haddad and his men chasing terrorists and ducking Israeli retaliatory attacks. The situation deteriorated, and in 1970, following the attack on the Avivim schoolbus (22 May 1970) (*27) and rocket attacks on the town of Kiriath Shmonah, IDF units crossed the border in force. The Lebanese army withdrew. Haddad who had fled in his private car, was caught in an air-attack which left his car demolished but himself intact. During the night, Haddad and some soldiers were at Nabi Sidkin when they found themselves surrounded by an Israeli column. To Haddad's astonishment, the column was led by the battalion commander's jeep driven by his driver Abbas Tarafe from the village of Dibin. Beside him rode Colonel Hamed el-Haj himself and an Israeli officer. Another seven Lebanese prisoners followed in a truck. Haddad's soldiers immediately disappeared into the night. According to Haddad's account, he shouted orders to imaginary soldiers calling out to the Israelis that they were surrounded. The Israeli officer explained that he was on his way back to his line and promised that he would let his prisoners go, once he reached his unit, if Haddad let him pass. "He gave his word as an officer to an officer". When Haddad stepped

aside, the Israeli officer wanted to shake his hand but Haddad refused. "You are my enemy". The Israeli officer fulfilled his promise and sent the prisoners back (*28).

Haddad joined his commanding officers at Bir a-Salassel where Major Aziz Rashid, second in command to the Sector Commander, was busy giving orders to destroy the expensive communications equipment thereby cutting off all communications with headquarters and the units in the field. This task accomplished, "he ran away. In the end, he got a medal instead of being punished" (* 29).

After the withdrawal of the Israeli forces, everyone returned to headquarters in Marj Ayoun and the paper war began. "The Sector Commander put me up for a medal but army headquarters refused because I had not taken the Israeli officer prisoner. Aziz Rashid, the coward, received a medal like others who had hidden or run away. They put all the blame on my shoulders as if I personally had lost the war. It was a real comedy. But in the end, Commander in Chief Iskander Ghanem sent me congratulations which proved that they had been wrong all along" (*30).

The next major escalation between the Lebanese army and the terrorists occurred in 1973 when Haddad was stationed at Hamana, near Beirut. Since the beginning of the year, the terrorists had slowly begun to impose their own laws. They set up roadblocks where people were often kidnapped. They trained their recruits in broad daylight "as if Lebanon was theirs". The army did not react to the general

deterioration. Then, on 1 May, two soldiers were kidnapped in Beirut.

The Commander of Beirut, Colonel Aziz el-Ahdab, sent a warning to the terrorists giving them an ultimatum of two hours, at which time the soldiers had to be released. But Colonel Ahdab neglected to inform all the units in Beirut about the ultimatum. At the end of the two hours, the soldiers were still missing but the terrorists opened fire on all the military barracks in the city. To many of the units, the sudden attack came as a complete surprise. During the first day of fighting, the army had 60 casualties, many of them dead. The fighting spread to other parts of the country. In Beirut, the army slowly won the upper hand and was ordered to counter-attack. Haddad's unit, together with commando units ("Marawir") and heavy weapons, was to attack the Palestinian camp of Tel-Zaatar which over the last few years had been transformed into an armed fortress. Then, the attack was stopped.

While the soldiers were waiting for new orders, a car was stopped at a roadblock manned by Haddad's soldiers. The passengers turned out to belong to one of the terrorist organizations. The soldiers pulled them out of the car and beat them savagely. The car's papers showed that it belonged to the wife of Amin el-Hafez, the new Lebanese Prime Minister who was just forming his new cabinet.

Haddad returned to Hamana where his company's main duties lay in manning one of the many roadblocks around

Beirut. During one incident, his men arrested Zahel el-Khatib, a member of parliament, whose car transported a considerable number of RPGs (*31). He was arrested for smuggling weapons for the terrorists. Later, President Suleiman Franjiyeh called Army HQ and arranged his release because "his father was a good man" (*32).

On another occasion, Haddad's soldiers arrested Zoher Mohsen, one of the leaders of "Saiqa" but in this case also, orders from high up arranged his release (*33).

Haddad was disgusted. While he and his soldiers had been ready to sacrifice their lives in order to finish the terrorist problem once and for all, some politicians, the representatives of the Lebanese people, played their own game. As Haddad later stated, "The events of 1973 were another nail in the coffin of the army. We were all ready to give the terrorists the last blow. All the camps were surrounded by the army and we only waited for the order to attack. And then we were stopped. The soldiers were disappointed and felt that their dignity had been hurt" (*34).

Later that year, Haddad was re-assigned to the First Battalion at Marj Ayoun as the Second-in-Command to the Battalion Commander. At noon on October 5, 1973, all officers were called to a meeting at Battalion headquarters where Colonel Jubran informed them that at 14:00 hours, Syria and Egypt would launch an attack against Israel. Syrian aircraft would fly over Marj Ayoun on their way to

bomb northern Israel. The news came as quite a surprise, since the officers had not noted any special tension between the Arab countries and Israel. The officers returned to their companies and put the soldiers on alert without disclosing the reason. At exactly 14:00 hours a wave of Syrian fighter planes came in low over Marj Ayoun screaming towards the border. Since the soldiers had not been informed of what was about to happen, they opened up with a terrific machinegun barrage but no plane was hit. Soon, they could observe dogfights between Syrian and Israeli war planes over Lebanese territory and artillery exchanges on the Golan Heights. Battalion headquarters were transferred to Dhur Dibin, north-east of Marj Ayoun, which had a small bunker system.

The Lebanese officers and soldiers on Israel's northern border followed the progress of the war on their radios and listened in on military wireless transmissions. "Israeli aircraft flew into Syria and came back over Marj Ayoun. We noted the density of the Syrian SAM-6 missiles. We did not believe that the Syrians and Egyptians were advancing because of our experience in 1967" (*35).

On the third day of the war, three Israeli Phantom/F-4 fighter bombers flew over Marj Ayoun on their way out of Syria and back to Israel. One of the planes, apparently already damaged, came in very low and slow. A Lebanese machinegun opened fire, and the plane was hit crashing into the entrance of a bomb-shelter in el-Khiam. A family of

seven burnt to death. The pilots had ejected and parachuted into the Marj Valley. "Our soldiers raced towards them in their jeeps in order to save them from the people of el-Khiam. The pilots were taken to the hospital in Marj Ayoun. They were angry that they had been shot down by Lebanese soldiers as if there were an agreement not to shoot" (*36). During the night, the pilots were transferred to Beirut.

Until the end of the war, the Lebanese army sat in its positions and barracks along the border and watched but did not get involved. During the war, dozens of incidents and skirmishes between IDF units and the PLO occurred and in many cases the PLO shelled Israeli settlements and border positions. Small armoured and infantry patrols of the IDF crossed the border in pursuit of the terrorists. The Lebanese army did not intervene.

When the war was finally over, the Haddad's battalion returned to the barracks in Marj Ayoun. The officers picked up where the war had interrupted. "Nearly every night there was a party at the house of one of the officers, but I did not like that very much and did not go often. I preferred to stay with my family" (*37). Haddad now had three daughters and was getting impatient for a son.

At the beginning of 1974 Haddad was sent to the USA to take part in a nine month long "Advanced Course for Company Commanders" at Fort Benning. He then spent another three months in a "Vehicle Maintenance Training" course at Fort

Knox where news of his promotion to the rank of Major reached him. In February 1975, he returned to Lebanon.

Footnotes to Chapter VII :

*1. "Rosenwasser, Shmuel - born in Hungary (1912). Watchman. Was kidnapped on 31 December 1969 by terrorists while on guard duty in Metula. He was held as a prisoner of the terrorists for 14 months in Lebanon, Iraq, Syria and Jordan and was badly tortured. Fatah demanded 100 terrorists for his release. Was returned on 28 February 1971 in exchange for the first terrorist to be caught in Israel, Mahmoud Hijazi, who was transferred to Lebanon". Schiff, Zeev and Haber, Eitan, Israel, Army and Defense. A Dictionary, Zmora, Bitan, Modan - Publishers, Jerusalem 1976, p.482

*2. Schiller, Der Buergerkrieg im Libanon, pp.145-146

*3. Franjiyeh gained his fame in 1957, when a blood feud with another clan divided the people of the Zghorta region into two camps. When the Franjiyeh clan felt it was losing its influence and that the other clan was gaining strength, Suleiman Franjiyeh surprised his opponents during Sunday mass. He opened fire with a submachinegun on the rows of worshippers who filled the church. How many died has been kept a secret. Franjiyeh emerged as the victor. Though he was cautious enough to spend some time in Syria, he was back in Zghorta in 1958 returning to the Lebanese political arena as if nothing had happened. Two years later, he was elected to parliament.

*4. Salibi, Crossroads to Civil War, p.51

*5. Announ Plateau, named after the village of Announ near the Beaufort Castle. The area stretches to the Ansar Region in the west which overlooks the coastal plain. The southern part is bordered by the Litani River.

*6. New York Times , 20 March 1970

*7. The village of Kahale lies east of Beirut on the main road to Syria, not far from the Presidential Palace and the Fayadiyeh barracks.

*8. New York Times , 16 May 1970

*9. Schiff and Haber, Israel, Army and Defense , p.437

*10. Ilan Kfir, Paratroopers. The IDF. Encyclopedia for Army and Defense , Revivim Publishers, Tel Aviv 1981, p.197

*11. Schiller, Der Buergerkrieg , p.143

*12. Interview with Omar Hamdan, May 1977

*13. New York Times , 19 November 1970

*14. Interview with Major Sami Shidiak, 4 December 1977

*15. Interview with German TV correspondents, 21 February 1972

*16. New York Times , 28 September 1972

*17. ibid. , 21 September 1972

*18. ibid. , 3 September 1972

*19. ibid. , 5 May 1973

*20. ibid. , 18 May 1973

*21. Interview with Lieutenant George Zaatar, Lebanese air force, January 1978

*22. Schiff and Haber, Israel, Army and Defense , p.283

*23. see ibid. , p.322

*24. The name "customs building" remained from the time of the Mandate when the building was used as a border customs point between Palestine and Lebanon.

*25. This and the paragraphs that follow are based on Saad Haddad, Tape 15, Side 2

*26. The remnants of the building are still there. The Lebanese soldiers were held in Israel for ten months. During that time, they toured the country and picked up some Hebrew. After their return to Lebanon they were separated and posted to different units "because they told everybody what a good time they had and they talked against the terrorists". ibid.

*27. A schoolbus transporting the children of Moshav Avivim was attacked with improvised bazooka-launchers operated from across the border by remote control. The operators were apparently in the Lebanese village of Yaroun. "On the same day, villages in South Lebanon were shelled (by the IDF). Twenty villagers were killed and forty wounded. After the Avivim attack, Israel's policing operations in South Lebanon began". Schiff and Haber, Israel, Army and Defense , p.15

*28. Saad Haddad, Tape 15, Side 2

According to Israeli sources, Haddad was taken prisoner and held for a few hours on the Israeli side of the border where he was introduced to the commander of the operation, General Mordechai "Motta" Gur, later to become the IDF Chief of Staff. Haddad liked to tell that in the 1970 incident, he fired on the Israeli forces and even hit an APC. He told

this story which was never verified for the first time to Sarit Yishai, reporter for "Ha Olam Ha Se" weekly, Tel Aviv, in 1979.

*29. Saad Haddad, Tape 16, Side 2

*30. ibid.

*31. RPG - Anti-tank grenade launchers made in USSR and China. Some launchers were manufactured by the PLO but the organization could not manufacture the rockets themselves.

*32. Saad Haddad, Tape 17, Side 1

*33. After the rise of Hafez el-Assad to power in Syria (1970), the leadership of "Saiqa" became the victims of an internal purge. The new leaders, among them Zoher Mohsen, cooperated with Fatah. See Schiff and Haber, Israel, Army and Defense , p.439

*34. Saad Haddad, Tape 17, Side 2

*35. Saad Haddad, Tape 18, Side 1

*36. ibid.

*37. Saad Haddad, Tape 18, Side 2

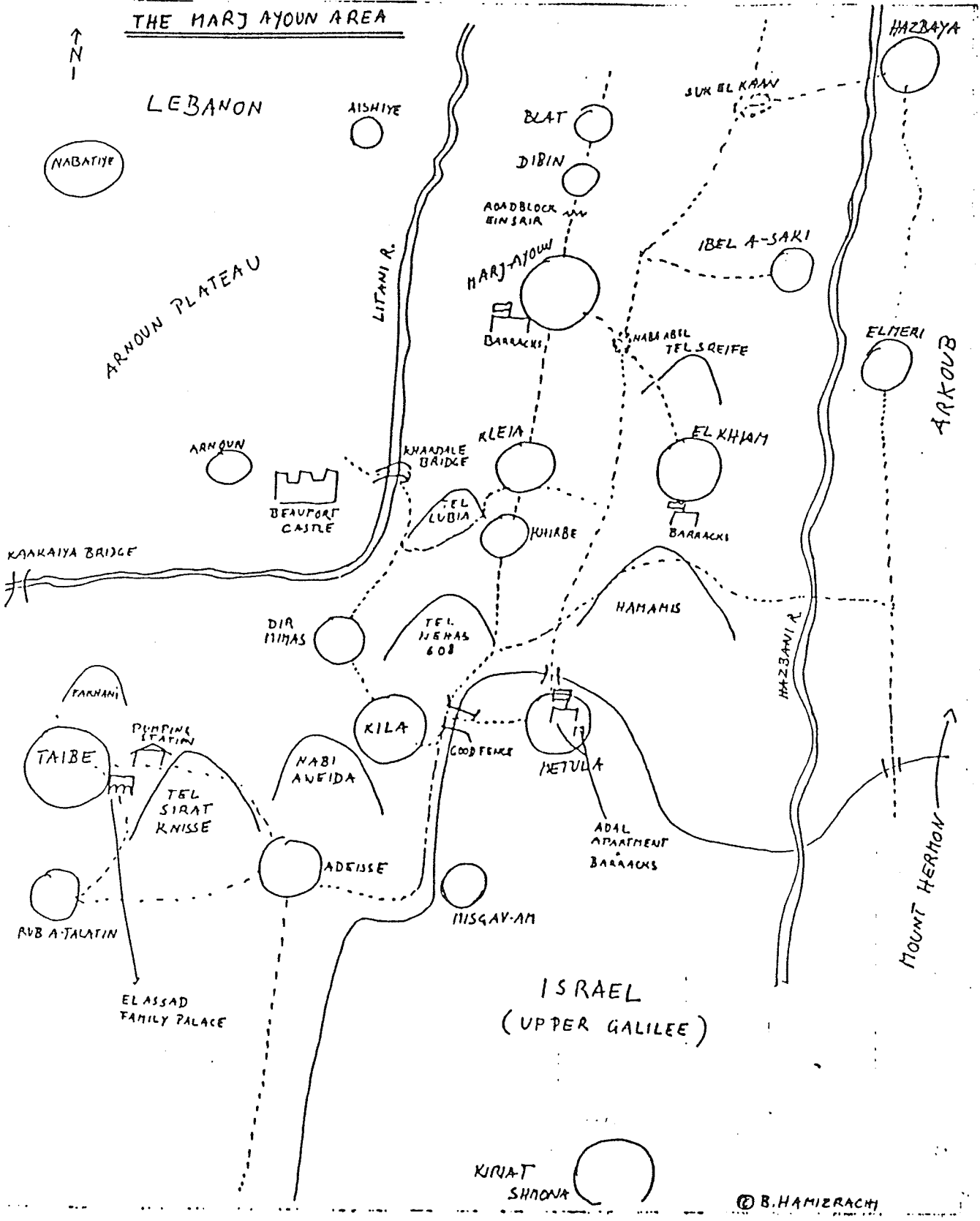
VIII. The Lebanese System under Strain : From Kiriat Shmonah to Ein Rumaneh.

Kiriat Shmonah is an Israeli development town of about 16,000 inhabitants, situated at the northern end of the Hula Valley which separates the hills of the Upper Galilee and the Golan Heights. This most northerly town of the State of Israel is inhabited mainly by immigrants of North African and Asian origin.

At dawn, on 11 April 1974, three armed Palestinians crossed the border from the Shiite village of Adeisse in South Lebanon into Israel between Metula and Kibbutz Misgav-Am. The dense bushes and the trees that covered the hill which led down to the town of Kiriat Shmonah concealed their approach. The men carried Kalashnikov (AK-47) assault rifles and handgrenades, and suicide belts packed with explosives were strapped around their waists.

The penetration of the border was not immediately detected, and the men made their way undisturbed down the slope towards the first houses of the town. At about 7:30 AM they reached the centre of the settlement. They entered the "Yanosh Korczak" elementary school, which was empty. At the same time their infiltration was discovered and security forces set out in pursuit. A state of alert was immediately declared in the town. In retrospect, it seems the Palestinians were unaware of the fact that it was the week of Passover and the schoolchildren were on vacation (*1).

THE MARJ AYOUN AREA



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When the terrorists left the quiet and empty schoolyard, a force of local police followed by a squad of Border Police (*2) and an IDF unit with mainly Druze and Circassian soldiers, arrived on the scene.

The Palestinians ran across the street and broke into a four-storey apartment house. While making their way to the upper floor, they broke into each of the apartments firing on anybody they could find or who happened to be in their way. They then barricaded themselves in one of the rooms of the uppermost apartment and fired in all directions. A short gun battle with Israeli security forces was interrupted by attempts to talk the three men into coming down and surrendering. Suddenly, the room exploded. The reason for the sudden explosion could never be determined. Perhaps their explosives were hit by a bullet, perhaps one or all of them had set off their suicide belts. In any event, when it was over, the bodies of 16 civilians, eight of them children, lay strewn in and around the building. Fifteen injured civilians were rescued from the apartment house. Outside, two soldiers had been killed and a number of policemen wounded in the gun battle.

"With this massacre, the terrorists started a new method of operations in the framework of their terror-war : the infiltration of a settlement and the killing of everybody they ran into. In later incidents... the terrorists took hostages in order to gain the release of imprisoned terrorists. In Kiriath Shmonah they did not try

to take hostages but killed everybody in their way" (*3).

The event, known as the "Kiriath Shmonah Massacre", was soon followed by the "Maalot Massacre" (15 May 1974) which resulted in the death of 24 high school students and one soldier. There were also 70 wounded. A group of three terrorists had infiltrated from Lebanon and taken over the school building of Maalot taking the students hostage.

Numerous other incidents followed and the tension in the northern part of Israel mounted. Palestinian activities soon included RPG-attacks on IDF forces patrolling the Israeli side of the border, where following the kidnapping of Rosenwasser and the escalation of PLO activities, Israel had erected a sophisticated electronic border fence which was supported by a network of IDF positions. The system was changed and updated with every new infiltration and the lessons learnt from it (*4). The tactics also changed and

"the Israelis began to patrol on both sides of the border. Pairs of Israeli tanks crossed the border in daylight along with a few soldiers on foot and took up commanding positions to observe and intercept guerrilla movement near the border. At night, the same objective was achieved by ambushes on the Lebanese side of the border. In this way Israelis could maintain effective military control of a strip of Lebanese territory without formal occupation, and without interfering with the Lebanese population in the area. After

some formal protests, the Lebanese government tacitly accepted these patrols and the Lebanese army made no attempt to intervene" (*5).

The increase in PLO attacks led to an increase in reprisals and retaliatory raids from Israel. "In the long nights of winter 1974-75 flares fired by Israeli gunners over various sectors of the border became a regular feature of the night time landscape. Israeli soldiers regularly crossed the frontier, setting up road blocks and mounting stop-and-search operations on the South Lebanon highway. The Lebanese army seldom interfered" (*6). In the first half of 1974, the Lebanese army faced yet another wave of criticism concerning its behaviour in South Lebanon and its inability to defend the state's sovereignty. The critics ridiculed the army who claimed that it had not been able to defend six villages raided by the IDF on 12 April 1974, the day after the Kiriath Shmonah Massacre. President Franjiyeh, in what had become already a common practice in such situations, announced on 18 May "that the cabinet has decided to spend \$ 1 billion over the next ten years to build up the military strength" (*7). Only a short time earlier, and for the first time since independence, Parliament had adopted a new conscription law which was aimed at increasing the manpower of the army from 15,000 to 18,000.

Lebanese politicians as well as the media claimed at the time that the Beirut government had rejected generous

offers of several Arab countries and the Soviet Union to deploy on Lebanese soil surface-to-air missiles which would enable Lebanon to defend herself against Israeli air raids. It seems that the government of the day, like those before, chose to publish statements on future arms deals only in order to prove that Beirut meant business while in reality very little was done. At the time, the Lebanese army had in its arsenals some very old weapon systems, especially in the field of armour. Even aging "Cherioteer" tanks and yet older American-made "Staghound" armoured cars were still in service. Like in the famous "Mirage", "Crotale" and "Skyhawk" fighter-bomber "deals", much was said and published but very little purchased. When the media reported that Lebanon was going to buy eighteen American TOW Anti-Tank systems, the politicians were quick to announce that they might be necessary to confront Syria (not Israel) who was reportedly concentrating forces close to the Lebanese border (*8).

The year 1974 was also marked by the government's directive of 18 September cancelling all private firearm permits of Lebanese citizens as well as Palestinians. The army and the police were of course unable to enforce this law, so completely alien to the Lebanese society and environment. The law had been proposed by none other than Kamal Jumbalat, the Leftist Druze leader, who was trying to embarrass his major right-wing rivals, Pierre Jemayel and Camille Chamoun as well as the President, Suleiman

Franjiyeh, who at that time had already a total militia force of about 10.000 men at their disposal (*9).

At the end of February 1975, trouble broke out in Sidon. The fishermen of the town had been worried for some time about the establishment of a new fishing concern which was to mechanize the fishing industry. Chairman of the board was to be none other than Camille Chamoun. The fishermen understood this move as an attempt to monopolize the industry, a direct threat to their livelihood. On 26 February 1975, the fishermen and their supporters from the Left and the from the Palestinian organizations held a huge demonstration against the new "Protein"-concern which soon degenerated into a riot. The pro-Nasserist Sidon leader Maaruf Saad who was walking at the head of the demonstration, was hit by a single bullet. He died a few days later (*10). The people of Sidon accused the army of the shooting and organized a second demonstration. In the clash with Lebanese army units who had arrived in order to open the road leading to Beirut, five soldiers and eleven civilians were killed.

This incident was the signal for all the political fronts in the country to go into action. "The first shot had hardly been fired when the radicals raised a concerted outcry against the Lebanese authorities, describing them as fascists, and accusing them of making common cause with the capitalists of Lebanon and the Arab world to suppress the working classes. Meanwhile, from another direction, the

conservative Muslim establishment denounced the Army intervention against the Sidon demonstrations as a suppression of democratic liberties" (*11). The Christian political forces in the Lebanon supported the official stand of the army in the whole affair. The Christian support for the army was seen by the Moslem population as the proof that the army had degenerated into an instrument of Christian power. Demonstrations and counter-demonstrations took place in Beirut and other towns, each side accusing the other of the responsibility for the interior instability of the country.

The crisis was still simmering when "the Sarajevo of the Lebanese Civil War occurred" (*12).

On Sunday, 13 April 1975, one year after the "Kiriath Shmonah Massacre", a memorial service was held in the town for the victims of the attack. The townspeople gathered in the little graveyard beside the 16 graves with their new tombstones. An IDF guard of honor fired volleys into the air. After a few short speeches, the crowd dispersed.

At the same time, in the big refugee camp of Tel-Zaatar in Beirut, the PLO held its own memorial service for the three "heroes" who had carried out the massacre in Kiriath Shmonah. Members of various PLO factions and of the Lebanese Left marched in a huge parade carrying big portraits of the three men.

And in Ein Rumaneh, another part of Beirut, hundreds of Christians, most of them Maronites, gathered in a newly

built church for the consecration ceremony which was to be led by the Maronite za"im and leader of the Kataeb militia, Pierre Gemayel. Outside, armed members of the Kateb stood guard over the area directing non-Christian traffic away from the church.

According to Kataeb sources, the PLO and the Left had been informed about the ceremony taking place in Ein Rumaneh and had been asked to refrain from passing through the immediate area. At midday, while the church ceremony was still in progress, the memorial ceremony in Tel-Zaatar was over and members and supporters of the PLO and the Left dispersed. Shortly afterwards, a bus carrying armed Palestinians appeared in Ein Rumaneh. A number of sharp explosions was heard while the bus neared the church with its cordon of militiamen including Gemayel's bodyguards. The bus was immediately raked by a hail of automatic fire which left 27 Palestinians dead (*13).

The shooting immediately spread all over the city. Roadblocks and barricades were set up everywhere and armed civilians joined this or that militia, thereby deciding which side they were on in the conflict which had been brewing for so long, finally being sparked off by the aftermath of the Kiriat Shmonah massacre of the previous year. In the evening violent clashes were reported from all parts of Lebanon except the south. A number of cease-fires arranged by the Lebanese government and by mediators from different Arab countries went unheeded, On 15 May 1975, the

Lebanese Government under Rashid Solh resigned.

The next day, Israel's Foreign Minister, Yigal Allon, said :
"No ceasefire will hold in Lebanon and it is reasonable to expect that the troubles will spread to the south and will involve Israel, too" (*14).

According to I.Rabinovich, it was at this point that
"The Lebanese political system finally collapsed under the persistent pressure of rival internal and external forces. The endless demands and ultimatums, acts of political violence, transgressions against the state's authority and sovereignty and other manifestations of social and political tensions developed into a civil war" (*15).

Footnotes to Chapter VIII :

*1. "At 11:15 on the day of the action, Radio Damascus announced that early that morning a 'suicide squad' belonging to George Habash's Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine had broken into the town and taken control of the Korcak school, where the terrorists were holding hostages. The announcement warned the Israeli authorities that all attempts to recapture the school would endanger the lives of the children". Moshe Dayan, Story of my Life , William Morrow and Company, New York 1976, p.582. Actually, the terrorists belonged to Ahmad Jibril's Popular Front-General Command.

*2. The Israeli Border Police is a paramilitary arm of the State Police. The force has infantry training and is also equipped with light APCs.

*3. Schiff and Haber, Israel, Army and Defense , p.470

*4. Israel developed a Security Border Fence which was a combination of barbed wire, mines, electronic and other devices as well as narrow strips of raked sand to detect footsteps. This fence surrounds all of Israel's borders on land.

*5. Schiff and Haber, Israel, Army and Defense , p.110

*6. Hamizrachi, The Road to Beirut , pp.6-7

*7. New York Times , 19 May 1974

*8. ibid.

*9. ibid. , 19 September 1974

- *10. Five years earlier, Maaruf Saad and his son had been kidnapped by the PLO, see ibid. , 25 August 1970
- *11. Salibi, Crossroads to Civil War , p.93-94
- *12. Khalidi, Conflict and Violence , p.47
- *13. There are different accounts and versions of what exactly happened in Ein Rumaneh. Kataeb militiamen who were present that day and to whom I talked later in South Lebanon insisted that the Palestinians on the bus opened fire first killing one of Gemayel's bodyguards at the church entrance and that the militiamen then returned fire. See also Schiller, Der Buergerkrieg im Libanon , p.167
David Gilmore, Lebanon, the Fractured Country , Sphere Books, London 1983, p.109
Harald Vocke, The Lebanese War , C. Hurst and Company, London 1978, p.39
Gerhard Konzelmann, Der unheilige Krieg , Hoffmann und Campe, Hamburg 1985, p.143
- *14. New York Times , 16 May 1975
- *15. Itamar Rabinovich, The War for Lebanon , p.43

IX. The Disintegration of the Lebanese Army

At the beginning of 1975, Saad Haddad returned to the 1. Battalion in Marj Ayoun, to his post as Second-in-Command to the Battalion Commander. After a short time, he was promoted to Second-in-Command to the Sector Commander, the commanding officer of the Eastern Sector, which included the 1. Battalion and different companies from other battalions deployed in the area. Haddad had a low opinion of the commander of the 1. Battalion, Colonel Kalas : "He was not interested in his army work. He was only interested in the parties he had at his house because he liked good-looking women" (*1).

The soldiers were busy chasing members of the armed Palestinian organizations who tried to enter the border area or tried to smuggle in weapons from Syria, both being contrary to the clauses of the Cairo Agreement. Other duties lay in escorting the Palestinians through the area without losing them in one of the villages. "It was like playing hide-and-seek with them, we all got really fed up with the situation" (*2). The number of incidents increased and tension rose, especially after the escalation and the clashes that followed the Sidon incident.

"Then the news reached us about the incident in Ein Rumaneh and the fighting in Beirut. That was the beginning of the event (i.e. the civil war)" (*3).

The army was kept in the barracks and did not

interfere. Interior Minister Camille Chamoun and other ministers demanded that the army intervene and put an end to the fighting but the Prime Minister claimed that this would split the army into a Christian and a Moslem camp. "This made the impression as if the army consisted of religious fanatics" (*4).

In South Lebanon, the 1. Batallion followed orders from HQ and stayed put. The new Commander-in-Chief of the army, General Hanah Said, a son of the Said family in Kleia, was in Haddad's view no different from his predecessor. "He was the stupidest commander. He could have changed everything by allowing the army to fight. A number of officers offered him their support in a coup d'etat but he refused. He was a coward" (*5).

As the fighting in Beirut continued, PLO traffic through Marj Ayoun, Kleia and the Khardale Bridge carrying reinforcements to the capital increased. Haddad proposed to the Sector Commander to initiate an incident with the PLO with the aim of stopping the through traffic, thereby relieving the pressure on Beirut. This would also have resulted in getting the army actively involved. But his plan was rejected. "It was interesting that always at the end of a month, a cease-fire would be arranged, if only for a few days. The reason was that at the end of the month everyone needed time off in order to get his salary" (*6). Ceasefires, in general, had a bad reputation. "During the civil war, the participants proposed, and broke, 61 of them"

(*7).

In Marj-Ayoun, the situation stayed relatively calm. Though there was some tension between right- and left-wing students, it never developed into violence. There was also some tension in the 1. Bataillon after it became known that some Christian soldiers in the north of the country had deserted from their units in order to join the Christian militias in Beirut.

In Beirut the war raged on, from time to time interrupted by one of the numerous ceasefires which never really took hold. In December, the Christian forces laid siege to the "Qarantina" refugee camp shelling it with heavy mortars, following with a frontal assault. The camp fell. About 600 people were killed, many more wounded. The 20.000 or so survivors were expelled from the site and the camp bulldozed to the ground.

"Qarantina" had barely fallen when the revenge followed : in January 1976, PLO and leftist forces together with PLA units laid siege to the Christian coastal town of Damour, south of Beirut, and to the village of Saadiyat, the home of Camille Chamoun. The settlements were heavily shelled and their resistance broken. More than 500 people were killed while the rest of the inhabitants fled the area by boat. Camille Chamoun was rescued from his bombed-out villa by a Lebanese air force helicopter. Haddad's sympathies were clear : "When I went through Damour one week after the fighting, everything was burnt and destroyed. I thought, my

heart would break" (*8). More heartbreak was to follow. At the beginning of 1976, Haddad's nephew, 18 year old Michel Haddad, son of Haddad's brother Adib, was killed in Beirut by a sniper.

The conquest of Damour by a united PLO-PLA-Leftist front initiated the establishment of an umbrella organization representing all the Maronite Christian movements, the "Lebanese Front". Bashir Gemayel, son of Pierre Gemayel, was appointed commander of the military arm of the new organization, known as the "Lebanese Forces".

Soon, the unnatural quiet in the south was to change. The person to change it was Lieutenant Ahmad el-Khatib, commander of the 1. Batallion's tank company which was stationed in Hazbaya. "Khatib was always a kind of a rebel. Contrary to army regulations, he would enter the officers' club unwashed and unkempt with his hands in his pockets" (*9).

In the evening of 23 January 1976, Brigadier Nasrallah of the General Staff called Marj Ayoun from Army HQ in Yarze with the order to withdraw all army forces from Hazbaya. According to intelligence information, Hazbaya would be attacked during the night by the PLO, and the position was untenable. Soon afterwards, Commander-in-Chief Hanah Said confirmed the order. The withdrawal was not to include the position at the road junction of Suk el-Khan which was held by Lieutenant Ibrahim On and his company whose equipment included two AMX-13 tanks and a number of trucks.

After the evacuation order for Hazbaya had been received, 1. Bataillon HQ tried to get in touch with Lieutenant Ahmad el-Khatib and other positions in the Hazbaya area but could not raise anybody on the wireless except Lieutenant Ibrahim On. An immediate investigation into the matter revealed that Lieutenant Khatib together with two other Moslem Lieutenants and a number of soldiers had deserted from the Army. On their way northwards, they had killed two soldiers at the position of the road junction of Burghus who had tried to stop them. They had also taken hostage a number of Christian soldiers. Marj Ayoun immediately alerted the roadblock at the road junction of Rashaya el-Wadi, north of the area. The officer in command there, Lieutenant Muhammad Abdallah, was ordered to stop the convoy of the deserters. Instead, Lieutenant Abdallah joined them. The convoy finally reached the border crossing at Masna where Syrian officers were already waiting. The Syrians released the Christian hostages and gave them money to pay for a taxi-cab back to Marj Ayoun.

The Palestinians took Hazbaya without resistance and began to fire in the general direction of the road junction of Suk el-Khan. "Lieutenant On became hysterical over the wireless claiming he was under heavy attack and the terrorists were moving in on him and his men" (*10). Marj Ayoun fired a number of supporting shells and then sent an APC with Lieutenant Antoine Abdel-Nur to check the situation. Lieutenant Abdel-Nur reached Lieutenant On and

returned to Marj Ayoun without any incident. But he had barely left Suk el-Khan when Lieutenant On was on the radio again pleading for permission to withdraw. Shortly afterwards, the officer commanding the 120 mm mortar battery at Naba Abel also claimed to be under attack. Finally, both officers were given permission to withdraw to Marj Ayoun. And the following day, both positions were taken over by armed Palestinians (*11).

Lieutenant Ahmad el-Khatib continued to call Moslem officers and soldiers to leave the Lebanese army and to join him, and many followed his call. "Soon, his name was known everywhere and the publicity around him was growing. He became a living legend. Moslem soldiers deserted from everywhere and joined him, especially since he paid good salaries from the money he received from Syria. The Mufti Hassan Khaled even said that he was sent by God like Nasser" (*12).

Next, the army barracks at Baalbek went over to Khatib, complete with its 130 mm guns. The morale of the 1. Battalion sank to a new low and an atmosphere of fear began to spread especially since Army HQ in Beirut made no attempt to stop el-Khatib.

Shortly afterwards, Major Nahara Saluhi, commander of the presidential Guard, flew in with a helicopter to meet with Colonel Kalas who now filled two positions, Battalion Commander and Sector Commander. Saluhi was gathering signatures of Christian officers on a petition calling on

Commander in Chief Hanah Said to dismiss el-Khatib from the army. But Colonel Kalas did not allow him to meet the officers. Instead, he called a meeting of his own explaining Saluhi's mission and pointing out that this was against army regulations".He wanted to win the sympathy of the Moslem officers. Next day, the whole story appeared in the leftist newspapers" (*13).

The next visitor in Marj Ayoun was the District Commander, Colonel Simon Suaid, who arranged a meeting with all the officers from Naqura to Marj Ayoun. Obviously, something was up, and the officers came to the meeting full of expectations. But, "while the country was burning, he talked to us about our vacation time and the different kinds of leave we were entitled to. The visit ended with a big party. If these high-ranking officers would have left the army, they could always have found jobs in the best hotels of the world as maitre d'. They were experts in arranging parties and good food" (*14).

Two weeks later, Colonel Suaid arranged another meeting in Marj Ayoun. This time, he also invited leftist and communist leaders of the area and representatives of the PLO. The meeting was supposed to deal with the current situation in the area but it soon turned into heated arguments and shouting matches. The Kaimakam (District Governor) accused the PLO of subversion while Suaid himself voiced his disagreement with PLO activities. In response, and while the meeting was still in progress, the PLO sent

word that it had blocked all roads in the area. Suaid hastily apologized, the roads were opened again, and Colonel Suaid left in a hurry.

The Kaimakam's accusations against the PLO did not pass unpunished either. Two days later, members of the PLO kidnapped him from his home, beat him up, broke both his legs and left him in a ditch beside the road. After his release from the hospital of Marj Ayoun, he refused to return home and was allowed to live in the Officers Club right beside the barracks.

Next, the barracks of Rashaya el-Wadi went over to Ahmad el-Khatib who now called his forces the "Lebanese Arab Army (LAA)". The political direction of the LAA had by now become clear : "The Lebanese Arab Army demands political and economic changes in Lebanon to improve the position of the Moslems. It also proclaims solidarity with the Palestinian guerrillas in the country" (*15). The symbol of the new force was a white stallion.

At the beginning of March, the LAA let it be known that it intended to attack and to take the army barracks at El-Khiam which were held by a company commanded by Lieutenant Farhan Barakat. While the 1. Bataillon waited for the LAA to make its first move, the Christian soldiers who were stationed in El-Khiam but hailed from Kleia, just on the other side of the Ayoun Valley, left the barracks and went home. The barracks were now held by Muslim soldiers only. Lieutenant Barakat had found reasons not to be in

El-Khiam but in Battalion HQ. And so El-Khiam fell and the LAA took over the barracks without any resistance.

When the news reached District Commander Colonel Simon Suaid, he gave orders to shell the barracks of El-Khiam. Colonel Kalas refused, reasoning that there might be civilians, too, who had joined the LAA soldiers. It is probably closer to the truth to assume that Colonel Kalas did not want to get into any trouble with the LAA force as yet. However, Colonel Suaid insisted, and so Colonel Kalas ordered the mortar company to fire four shells "but to make sure that they were well off the target" (*16).

The new situation left everybody dazed. "We were like paralyzed. Nobody knew what to do and so nobody did anything" (*17). It was obvious that the next logical step of the LAA would be to try and take over the barracks of Marj Ayoun. But nobody seemed to want any responsibility or to give any orders. Many Moslem soldiers who served in Marj Ayoun but had their homes in El Khiam went back and forth between the two towns. Most of the Christian soldiers had their homes in Kleis and they were used to leaving the barracks in the evening to spend the night at home. "There was no more discipline, everybody did as he pleased. Constantly changing rumours swept through the barracks" (*18).

In the first week of March, the position of Arnoun with its 155mm guns fell to the LAA which now threatened the barracks of Nabatiye.

In an effort to hold his command together, Colonel Kalas finally called for a meeting in the Officers Club. While the officers discussed the situation, Moslem soldiers stole the Panhard armoured car (*19) which was parked in front of the building and drove it off to El-Khiam. From now on, all batallion vehicles were parked inside the barracks compound. During the night, soldiers of the mortar company loaded two trucks with 120 mm mortar shells and drove them off to El-Khiam. Now, the batteries and the keys were removed from the vehicles during the night but there were no orders how to deal with the soldiers who had stolen the equipment.

The batallion asked for reinforcement from the tank batallion in Tyre, in the west, but the request was refused. Next, the batallion asked Army HQ to bomb the Announ position with its 155 mm guns from the air, but this was also refused. "These guns were our biggest fear. The soldiers were afraid to stay in the barracks because of those guns" (*20).

Lieutenant Ahmad el-Khatib's forces had also taken control of the Beaufort Castle, "a 12th century Crusaders' castle five miles from Lebanon's border with Israel,... on a cliff 1,000 feet above the Litani River" (*21). The castle which had been a favourite tourist attraction in the past because it offered a perfect view of the villages of the eastern sector of South Lebanon as well as of the border settlement of Metula, was now used by the LAA as a forward

artillery observation post for the 155 mm guns stationed nearby in the Announ position.

On 10 March 1976, word came from Army HQ that a unit of the PLA (*22) would arrive in Marj Ayoun in order to help in the defense of the barracks against attacks of the PLO and the LAA. Colonel Kalas called a meeting of all the remaining officers and soldiers and told them about the imminent attack on the barracks and the steps HQ had taken. However, he also told them that "whoever does not want to fight, can get a 48-hour pass" (*23). Most Moslem and some Christian soldiers took the offer and the pass. Under the circumstances, the Kaimakam did not feel safe any longer in the Officers Club and was transferred to the residence of the Bishop Asenassius Shaer, in the centre of Marj Ayoun.

The Christian soldiers who had decided to leave put together a small convoy of tanks, APCs and trucks in the compound of the barracks. Haddad tried to find out what was going on.

"They said they were going to organize the defense from outside the barracks, from their village Kleia. Sergeant-Major Milad Nimer who was serving in the intelligence, took me aside and told me that they had contacts with Israel (*24) and that Israel would help them. He asked me to join them but I refused. We had wondered all the time, why Israel had not intervened when all that with the LAA happened. We had even talked amongst

ourselves about shelling Metula and in this way forcing Israel to react, but in the end we did not do it" (*25).

It seems strange that Haddad did not know about the secret contacts between inhabitants of Kleia, including soldiers, and Israel. Besides, it was common knowledge in the area that since the beginning of 1976 Lebanese refugees, mainly Christians and Druze, had been allowed to cross the border into Israel in order to join relatives there. At about the same time, Lebanese had started to approach IDF patrols in the Metula area asking for medical help. It was an open secret in Metula, at the time, that doctors of the IDF Medical Corps were giving medical treatment to Lebanese in the orchards of the settlement. It is, of course possible, that Haddad did not know about these contacts because of the general disintegration of the 1. Battalion and the fact that its members barely left the barracks any more. On the other hand, the soldiers from Kleia might have kept their secret from Haddad because of historical suspicions and rivalry between the towns-people of Marj Ayoun and the villagers of Kleia.

After the convoy had left to Kleia, there were not many soldiers left in the barracks and the majority of these were Moslems. Haddad felt that

"there was no hope, everything was lost. Soon, a unit of the PLA arrived playing the role of the defenders against the PLO and the LAA who now

approached the barracks. But they only fired into the air, they put up a show. We army officers did not take part in the shooting, we were all sitting in the office. After a short while, hundreds of armed men were running around everywhere. I did not want to surrender but I had no choice. There was nothing I could do" (*26).

Afterwards, a number of Syrian liaison officers (*27) and officers of the PLO, the PLA and the LAA met with the army officers. It was decided that the army officers would be allowed to leave the next day for Army HQ at Yarze. Haddad was allowed to spend the night at home with his family. "I began to cry because of how things had turned out. It was too hard, I could not bear it (*28)". To make things worse, his wife Therese had returned that same day from Sidon where she had given birth to their fourth daughter.

The next morning, 11 March 1976, Haddad said good-bye to his family which stayed behind in Marj Ayoun and then the officers drove in their private cars out of the town and through Kleia where Christian soldiers had erected barricades and seemed ready for their village's defense. At Tel Lubia, the convoy was stopped by a LAA roadblock. The soldiers wanted to arrest Colonel Kalas because he had once said that he would surrender the barracks to Israel rather than to the LAA. But finally, they were allowed to continue.

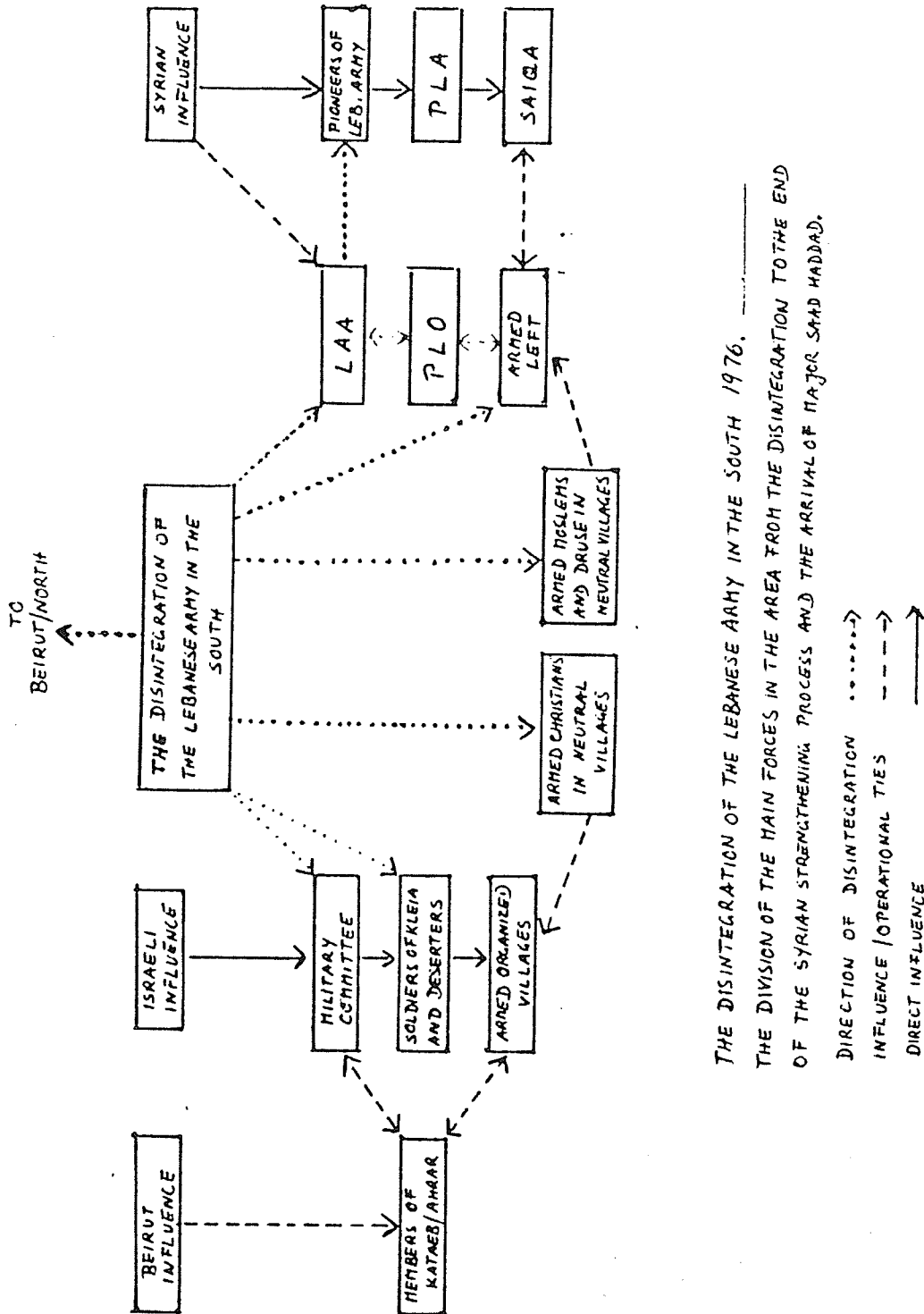
In Beirut, Haddad went to the house of his brother Adib. While watching TV, Brigadier Aziz el-Ahdab (*29), the Sunni commander of the Beirut garrison, appeared on the screen proclaiming a coup d'etat. Haddad's reaction was that this "move most probably had Egyptian support and was carried out with at least the foreknowledge of both the National Movement (*30) and the PLO. Ahdab called upon both President Franjeh and Prime Minister Karami to resign forthwith and upon Parliament to meet within seven days to elect a successor President" (*31).

"President Franjeh, in a statement from his palace, which was surrounded by the Presidential Guard, denounced the military intervention as illegal and said he would continue to defend 'legality'" (*32). The next day, "Colonel Antoine Barakat, a Christian officer belonging to the President's clan, seized the military academy at Fayadiye in order to lend support to the President in the defense of the presidential palace at Baabda" (*33).

When Haddad phoned Army HQ at Yarze for orders, he was told that the army supported Ahdab's coup d'etat and therefore he joined Ahdab's headquarters at Damascus Street. There was great excitement and great expectation, but soon this changed to suspicion between Christian and Moslem soldiers following the news that "a Battle of the Barracks developed between Maronite and Moslem soldiers" (*34). Each side tried to take control of garrison towns and the army's heavy equipment" (*35). Haddad decided to move again after

witnessing how Moslem soldiers overturned a vegetable cart on its way to Christian East Beirut on the grounds that it was bringing food to the 'isolationists'. He joined the Trabulsi barracks which was known for its neutral stand in the conflict : "The situation had become such that everybody could choose for himself where to go and what to do" (*36).

The New York Times quoted Raymond Edde, a moderate Christian politician with aspirations to the presidency : "It's becoming a vaudeville act. The coup d'etat is not serious. The soldiers are not serious. The head of state is not serious. Nothing is serious in my country" (*37). There was indeed much truth in this observation.



THE DISINTEGRATION OF THE LEBANESE ARMY IN THE SOUTH 1976.
 THE DIVISION OF THE MAIN FORCES IN THE AREA FROM THE DISINTEGRATION TO THE END
 OF THE SYRIAN STRENGTHENING PROCESS AND THE ARRIVAL OF MAJOR SAAD HADDAD.

DIRECTION OF DISINTEGRATION→
 INFLUENCE / OPERATIONAL TIES - - - -→
 DIRECT INFLUENCE —————→

Footnotes to Chapter IX :

- *1. Saad Haddad, Tape 20, Side 1
- *2. ibid.
- *3. ibid. , Haddad never used the expression "Civil War", it was always "the event".
- *4. Saad Haddad, Tape 20, Side 2
- *5. ibid.
- *6. ibid. , see also Bavly and Salpeter, Fire in Beirut , p.45
- *7. The New York Times , 27 September 1977
- *8. Saad Haddad, Tape 21, Side 2
- *9. ibid.
- *10. ibid.
- *11. ibid. One of the effects of the el-Khatib revolt was the evacuation of all the Lebanese army positions along the border with Israel, from the Hazbani River to Nabi Aweida. This was filmed for the Israeli TV and for CBS, from the Israeli side of the border, on 25 January. A day later, Israel's Defense Minister, Shimon Peres, toured the border area and observed the empty Lebanese positions.

Work Diary , 26 January 1976

- *12. Saad Haddad, Tape 22, Side 1
- *13. ibid.
- *14. ibid.
- *15. The New York Times , 11 March 1976
- *16. Saad Haddad, Tape 22, Side 2

*17. ibid.

*18. ibid.

*19. Panhard AML 90 - Armoured Car, made in France, with 90 mm gun.

*20. Saad Haddad, Tape 22, Side 2

*21. The New York Times , 9 March 1976

*22. PLA - "The Palestine Liberation Army, a regular Palestinian military force, was nominally subordinate to the PLO, but in fact took orders from those Arab governments on whose territory they were stationed. In the middle of 1975 the force consisted of about 5,000 soldiers belonging to the "Ein Jalut Forces" (in Egypt), the "Hittin Forces" (in Syria), the "Kadassiah Force" (in Iraq) and another battallion in Jordan ("Seid Ibn-Hareta Force"). The command of the PLA lay in the hands of officers stationed in Damascus under the protection of Syria. Commanders of the PLA were often in conflict with Fatah and the PLO leadership because of rivalries between the regular forces and the terrorists. PLA units began to infiltrate into South Lebanon in 1972. See Schiff and Haber, Israel, Army and Defense , pp.442-443, also Khalidi, Conflict and Violence , p.23, and United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, Parties/Movements/Organisations in Lebanon in 1980 , UNIFIL Headquarters, Naqoura, Lebanon, February 1980, p.9. (See also Appendix)

*23. Saad Haddad, Tape 22, Side 2

*24. Mordechai 'Motta' Gur (in the past CO Northern Command

and at the time of Haddad's return to the south the IDF Chief of Staff) revealed that there had been much earlier contacts : "During our many contacts with Lebanese officers who ruled in South Lebanon, among them Christians as well as Muslims, this topic (of the presence of terrorists) was discussed again and again following each especially outrageous operation of the terrorists". Elazar Papers , No.4, p.42

*25. Saad Haddad, Tape 23, Side 1

*26. ibid.

*27. "During 1975, the Syrians refrained from direct participation in the Civil War... At the beginning of 1976, they adopted a new policy in Lebanon, mainly to change their mediation attempts into direct military and political involvement". Daniel Asher, Mountain Armoured Warfare, Syrian Military Intervention in Lebanon 1975-1976 , Maarachot Publishing, Tel Aviv 1985

The status of the Syrian officers in Lebanon improved, and at the beginning of February 1976, following a Syrian initiative to find a political solution for Lebanon, President Franjieh visited Damascus where he met representatives of the rival factions who, with Syrian help, worked out the Constitutional Document. According to this document, the traditional distribution of power in Lebanon would be maintained but would contain improvements for the Moslems including their parliamentary representation. "The authority of the Muslim Prime

Minister was somewhat increased... The Arab identity of Lebanon was stressed". Reuven Erlich, Syria and the Lebanese Crisis 1975-78 , M.A. Thesis, Tel Aviv University, Faculty of Humanities, School of History, p.19

At the same time, the Syrians started their direct military intervention (19 January 1976) by sending PLA battalions to Tripoli and Zahle in order to assist the PLO and the Leftists there. From that time and until June 1976, the PLO and the Leftists saw in the Syrians full allies and accepted their mediation efforts like the ones in Marj Ayoun. After the massive Syrian intervention in June, the relationship between the Syrians and the leftist camp temporarily worsened.

*28. Saad Haddad, Tape 23, Side 2

*29. General Ahdab, then aged 57, had a reputation as a disciplinarian with neither rightist nor leftist political leanings. The New York Times Biographical Service , New York Times Company 1976. See also Camille Chamoun, Le Liban. Son terrain, son peuple, sa guerre , Hadar Editors, Tel Aviv 1979, p.133

*30. Lebanese National Movement - LNN (Al harahat al watnaiyya al lubnaniyya). "Founded in 1974 by Kamal Jumblatt, this umbrella organization served to unite all the leftist, radical groups in Lebanon which fought with the Palestinians against the Right factions". United Nations Interim Force In Lebanon, Parties/Movements/Organizations in Lebanon 1980 , p.14

- *31. Khalidi, Conflict and Violence , p.54
- *32. The New York Times , 12 March 1976
- *33. ibid. , 14 March 1976
- *34. In June, the Syrians organized and operated the "Vanguard of the Lebanese Arab Army" in the Bekaa Valley barracks. This military force included officers and men who did not belong to the LAA or any other force and had been left in the barracks and airbases which were now controlled by the Syrians. It also included soldiers who had left the LAA. "This body was created by the Syrians in 1976 from forces which previously had been under the command of the rebel Lieutenant el-Khatib. The Syrians reorganized the force and used it to police the Bekaa". Chaim Raviv, BaMahane , Tel Aviv, 9 August 1978
- *35. Khalidi, Conflict and Violence , p.54
- *36. Saad Haddad, Tape 24, Side 1
- *37. The New York Times , 17 March 1976

X. From Beirut to Marj Ayoun

The Ties with Israel

The first contacts between Israel and elements of the Lebanese Maronite camp began in 1974, initiated by the "Tanzim" organization which included mainly extreme rightwing intellectuals who dreamt of Lebanon as a Christian state and operated in a semi-underground fashion. At the beginning, "Tanzim" members met Israeli officials in Europe and, in 1975, their dialogue developed into further contacts between Israelis, mainly Mossad officials, and representatives of Camille Chamoun's Liberals. Only at a later stage, their meetings included also the Kataeb of Bashir Gemayel.

During the summer of 1976, Israel sent several intelligence delegations to Beirut. One of the first combined intelligence and military delegations was headed by Colonel "Fuad" who was greeted in Beirut by Dani Chamoun, son of the zaim. The visit took place during the siege of the refugee camp of Tel Zaatar. "After the first battle in Ein Rumaneh, the battles of Qarantina and Tel Zaatar followed. During one of his visits in Lebanon, Benjamin Ben-Eliezer "Fuad" observed Tel Zaatar which was under siege by the Falange, and after his return he wrote about the Christian needs in war materials" (*1).

Although Israel was not directly involved in the fighting at the refugee camp, Israeli war materials had

begun to reach the militias already earlier in the year and were used during these and other battles. But the most important assistance at that stage was without doubt the advice given by Colonel "Fuad" to the Christian commanders on the spot. "On 29 July 1976, Fuad was sitting together with the local commanders in the Christian Command Post above Tel Zaatar, and although the Syrians were already only a shell-distance away from Beirut, another small Israeli military delegation was invited" (*2). Soon enough, the relationship reached a point where "on one of the summer days 1976, an Israeli representative, the liaison officer to the Christians on behalf of the Mossad, reached Juniah" (*3). Although, for a short while, "Fuad" was the commander of a special unit dealing with the north and the south at the same time, there was no connection between the two areas, and the events in the southern sector were barely influenced by those in the north.

In regard to the process of the establishment of the ties between the Christian soldiers who left the Marj Ayoun barracks and the IDF, there are a number of versions, most of them popular myths or facts enriched by imagination. The truth is that the early contacts were established by Israeli intelligence officers using their contacts in the south which included members of the military and the police, mainly Christians but also a few Shiites and Druze. Rafael "Rafal" Eitan who was then OC Northern Command, describes how Lebanese soldiers driving along the South Lebanon

Highway on their way from their disintegrated unit, talked to Israeli officers and "a few days later, we found a note stuck at the security fence at Metula. The note said, "I am a Lebanese soldier. I'll return to this place tomorrow night in order to meet someone from your military personnel. This was the first contact" (*4).

It seems that this version relates to the second stage of the el-Khatib revolt when Christian soldiers left the Marj Ayoun barracks. This is the time which fits into Haddad's description of Sergeant-Major Milad Nimer who organized the convoy of the Christian soldiers and told Haddad on 10 March 1975 that the soldiers had ties with Israel. This leads to the conclusion that at least some of the soldiers of Kleia had ties with Israel before the final disintegration of the 1. Batallion.

Father Mansour of Kleia who met Israelis at the end of 1975 and even visited Metula on behalf of a civilian committee, also assisted in establishing the contact between the soldiers and Israel. In 1977, Mansour told the author that Israeli intelligence officers who had secretly met with Lebanese soldiers in order to receive intelligence information, had initiated "the official approach" of the soldiers to Israel (mentioned by "Raful") and that the first Non-Commissioned Officer to meet with "Raful" in Metula was Sergeant-Major Id Mussalem. This meeting is described by "Raful". "A Staff-Sergeant from Kleia arrived. He said that the Lebanese Army disintegrates and there is nobody to

defend the soldiers from the wrath of the Moslems and the terrorists. I reported the meeting to the Chief-of-Staff and received permission to continue the contacts but not to commit myself to any assistance" (*5). (Raful did not forget Id Mussalem. As Chief-of-Staff, he took part in a ceremony commemorating the 5th year of the operation of the Good Fence in Metula. When he saw that Id Mussalem was not present, he gave orders, against the wishes of Haddad, to rush the Sergeant-Major from Kleia to the place of the ceremony and had him sit beside him at the head table.)

The developments along the border worried Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin who was concerned that Israel would become too involved in Lebanon. "Even with regard to South Lebanon, Rabin was cautious and skeptical. When the residents of Kleia asked for the help of the IDF to push the terrorists from the area, Rabin instead offered to house them in a camp which would be established in Israel... Only slowly, with the encouragement of Peres and Raful, the Good Fence developed" (*6).

The Israeli government succeeded in keeping the developments and the results of her new policy in the area as secret as possible. The government achieved this by imposing strict censorship on the media. But the fact that Lebanese citizens arrived in Israel as refugees could not be kept secret for long. On 28 January 1976, I interviewed (for local and foreign media), in the offices of the Military Governor of the Golan Heights in Majdal-Shams, a

young girl from Kleia who had escaped to Israel after a quarrel between her family and a group of terrorists. On 29 of January, I interviewed and photographed a small group of Druze refugees who had crossed the border near the village of el-Meri with their black Mercedes. The head of the family had joined the IDF in 1948 and now asked, referring to his past service, for asylum. On 31 January, a group of refugees from Kleia and Khirbe entered Metula where the army put them up in Hotel "Anazim" where they met later that night with Knesset Member Yossi Sarid. On 12 February, I met at Majdel-Shams a young Christian refugee from the Damour area. Eventually, all of these refugees returned to Lebanon.

It was also impossible to keep other facts secret : that hundreds of Lebanese received medical help at the Good Fence, were hospitalized in Israeli hospitals, visited the country and even worked in the Upper Galilee. At the beginning of July 1976, the trade unions of Kiriat Shmonah expressed concern over the increasing number of Lebanese licenced to work in Israel.

All this was well known to members of the local and foreign media who in the end found ways to bypass the censorship and to report their stories. The fact that the narrow South Lebanon Highway, the main artery of the eastern sector, passed very close to the border, also helped to lift the veil of secrecy since no one could prevent Israelis, including journalists, from recognizing various types of

weapons given to the Lebanese or from talking to Lebanese travellers just across the border. This happened mainly near Metula, Misgav Am, Malkia and Hanita, where journalists were able to come close enough to the security fence in order to interview Lebanese, especially those from areas outside the enclave who were not committed to any kind of secrets. Most of these reports were stopped by the censor from reaching the public.

Other sources of information for the international media and foreign governments were UN officers, members of the Observers Group Lebanon (OGL), who continued to man their white-painted positions in El Khiam, Markabe, Maroun a-Ras and Marwahin as well as their district HQ in Naqoura. From all these positions it was easy to observe the entire sector, and the UN officers could move freely between roadblocks along the South Lebanon Highway. All the UN officers were professional soldiers, in many cases members of the intelligence branch of their respective armies, and as such did not have any difficulties with the correct interpretation of the new situation in the area.

During the spring and the summer of 1976 the cooperation between Israel and the village of Kleia (which includes here also the smaller village of Khirbe attached to its southern outskirts) intensified. The people of Metula satisfied their curiosity by strolling around in the apple orchards in order to get a closer look at the improvised clinic, which IDF-doctors had established there for their

Lebanese patients. The military censor, however, did not allow the publication of these facts until the beginning of June when journalists were officially invited to cover the story of the clinic which became known as the "Good Fence". Over the years, this clinic changed from doctors working among apple trees to a tent camp and finally to permanent buildings which soon became a major tourist attraction. (Similar clinics opened near Moshav Dovev, Kibbutz Hanita and other places.)

The people of Metula were also witnesses to strange comings and goings during the cover of darkness in the barracks of the local garrison which was located at the northern perimeter of the settlement, in an old Tegart-Fort (*7) built in the late 30's by the British Mandatory force. They observed a number of green-painted Sherman M-4/M-50 (the Israeli military colour is brown while the Lebanese tanks and other vehicles were painted green and later grey) tanks, parked in the compound of the barracks, whose drivers spoke Arabic, and Russian-made BTR-152 Armoured Personnel Carriers (APC) with large white crosses painted on their sides. It was clear, at least in Metula, that there were close and regular contacts between IDF representatives and the Christian village of Kleia. Foreign Minister Yigal Allon confirmed this when he spoke about "close and cordial links between the Christians in the south and ourselves" (*8).

At the end of June, food buyers from South Lebanon were

allowed to enter Israel, and a water pipeline was laid to the Good Fence to supply water to those villagers who had been cut off because of war-damage to the system. The Lebanese traders recounted that military and civilian committees conducted the affairs of the villages Kleia/Khirbe and also held regular meetings with representatives of the IDF and that a similar situation existed not far from the villages Rmeish in the Central Sector and Alma a-Shaab further to the west.

Each day, the crossings at the Good Fence seemed to offer some new developments. The food buyers were soon followed by groups of armed Lebanese who came to Israel in order to find work. Eventually, this first group was employed in the clearing of forests.

At the same time, members of the South Lebanese militias underwent military training, including armour and artillery, in temporary and secluded camps organized by the IDF. These clandestine courses usually ended with the participants raising both the Israeli and the Lebanese flags.

The Lebanese who entered Israeli territory used to hand over their weapons to the IDF soldiers guarding the border crossing. Soon, many of the Lebanese became a familiar sight in Metula, especially Abuna (Father) Mansour, the Maronite priest of the village of Kleia who became a regular visitor to the "Arazim"-Hotel in Metula and a source of information about the situation on the other side of the

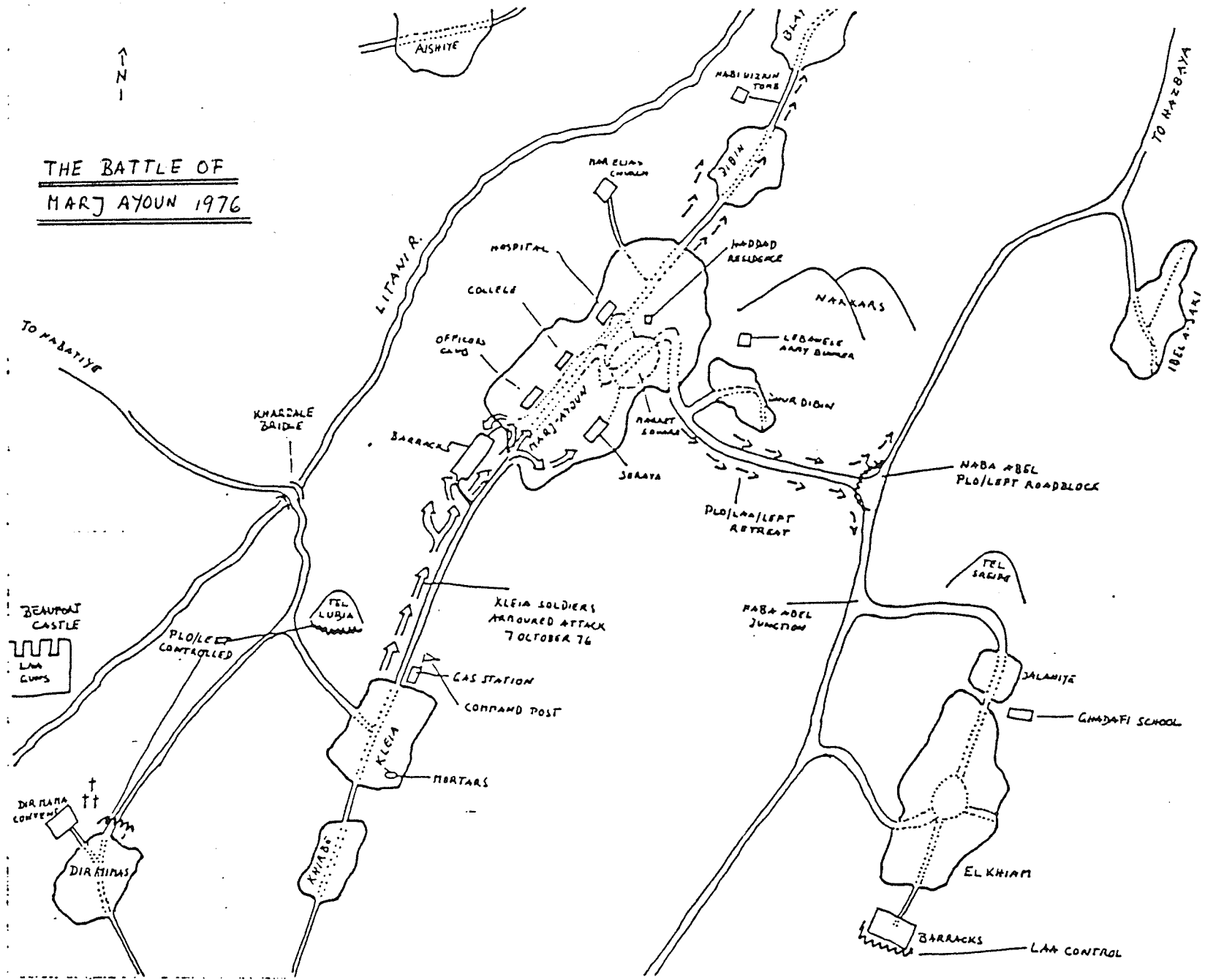
border-fence.

The news about the close relationship between the Christian villages of South Lebanon and the State of Israel did not pass unnoticed by the officers and soldiers in Beirut who had their homes and often also their families in the south. It also was an open secret that Israeli ships were coming regularly to the harbour of the small Christian town of Junieh, north of Beirut, delivering weapons and ammunition to the "Lebanese Forces" and taking militiamen for training in Israel. The Israeli version of the FN-rifle, for example, called "FAL Hashab" (*?) by the Lebanese, suddenly appeared in great quantities in the hands of the Christian fighters in Beirut and in the south.

The Battle of Marj Ayoun and Haddad's Return

Haddad had spent the spring and summer of 1976 in the Trabulsi barracks with fellow officers and soldiers who followed orders from Army HQ and in no way interfered in the savage battles that ravaged Beirut. Like others, he stood by during the election of the new president which took place in the private villa of Parliament member Albert Mansour since the parliament building had been occupied by demonstrators of the PLO and the Left. The approaches to the villa lay under constant artillery fire to make the arrival of the necessary quorum impossible. But 68 deputies eventually succeeded in getting through in armoured cars and APCs and cast their votes.

THE BATTLE OF
MARJ AYOUN 1976



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From Trabulsi, Haddad also followed the advance towards Beirut of the Syrian forces, whose full-scale intervention began on 1 June 1976, after an appeal by the Christian leaders. During his inaugural address on 23 September 1976, the new Lebanese President Elias Sarkis formally declared the Syrian military presence in Lebanon to be at the invitation of the Lebanese government (*10). Haddad was as excited about the Syrian arrival as other Christians who hoped that the Syrian fire power would wipe out the PLO and their allies and bring the war to an end.

The Syrian armoured columns advanced quickly, at the beginning towards the open terrain in the Bekaa and in the Akkar region and then moved along the mountain roads. These columns advanced on the main roads in order to reach the key areas in Beirut and Sidon as soon as possible. The first phase of the attack was repulsed by efficient PLO and Leftist resistance but was then renewed on 28 September. The Syrians were actively assisted by forces of the "Lebanese Front" who fought on their side. This was the short period of full cooperation between the "Lebanese Forces" and the Syrians which lasted until October 1976. "At this stage of the operation local forces, Christians who were familiar with the terrain, fought side by side with the Syrian forces. They operated on secondary lines of approach, securing the flanks of the main force, and opened additional fronts" (*11).

The presence of the Syrian forces was approved by other

Arab states who soon sent units of their own national armies to join the Syrian forces in the formation of the "Arab Deterrent Force" (ADF) (*12) which at the end of the year, after heavy battles with the PLO and the Leftists, occupied the majority of the country (*13). The Syrian dominated force made sure it did not cross the "Red Line", an imaginary line north of the Litani River drawn by Israel as the final line of advance southwards for the Syrian forces before Israel would see her security threatened.

"During the indirect contacts that developed between Syria and Israel, the Syrians agreed to the "Red Line" that had been drawn by Israel, the Sidon-Huna-Jezzine line. The presence of Syrian forces south of that line was prohibited" (*14).

In the meantime, however, the fighting continued on all fronts, and the Lebanese Forces under the command of Major Fuad Malik continued their siege of Tel Zaatar, the biggest of Beirut's refugee camps. On 12 August 1976, after 51 days of continuous siege, the resistance of the Palestinians was broken and the Christian forces stormed and wiped out the PLO positions. "For the one the defense of this well-fortified camp, benefiting from lying astride a complex of British World War II bunkers, was declared to be the Stalingrad of the Palestinians; and the fall of this camp...was likened by the other side to the fall of the Bastille (*15)". Tel Zaatar, like Qarantina before, was razed to the ground. "Immediately after the fall of Tel

Zaatar, about 1000 Palestinians were massacred. Bashir Gemayel claimed that had he reached the place in time, he would have prevented the massacre. He said, everything was over by the time he arrived" (*16).

During that time, Haddad was involved in one incident which led to a second chance-meeting with Saiqa leader Zohar Mohsen. The PLO and their supporters had succeeded in capturing the offices of the Saiqa, which had stayed loyal to Syria, and the commander of the PLA in West-Beirut. A number of Syrian and Saiqa officers including Zohar Mohsen found themselves surrounded in the "Fakhani Building" in Sabra. Late that evening, the guards of the Trabulsi barracks observed the approach of a man through the "Beirut Forest", west of the barrack lines. The guard challenged the man who called back that he was a Syrian officer. Once safely in the barracks, he told the Lebanese officers of the predicament of his colleagues back in Sabra. The Lebanese officers offered shelter and protection if the Syrians could reach the barracks. During the night, the group arrived safely. Zohar Mohsen wore a suicide-belt. "He said, he would have blown himself to pieces before falling into the hands of Fatah. We gave them a car and they drove to Army HQ at Yarze. The first time I met Mohsen, I arrested him. This time, I helped to rescue him" (*17).

From time to time, Haddad met Lieutenant Adnan Homsî, a native of Khirbe (also called "Burj el-Maluk"), who brought news from the south. "He went back and forth

between Beirut and the south by way of the sea. Everybody knew that Adnan Homsî had connections with Israel and that the Israelis were taking him by ship to the south (*18)". In October 1976, Homsî approached Haddad : the military committee of Kleia together with their IDF friends had decided that the time was right to attack and retake Marj Ayoun. Homsî proposed that Haddad return with him to the south and take part in the battle. Haddad agreed, in principle, under the condition that he join the fighters of Kleia only a short time before the attack. "Otherwise, the LAA and the terrorists in Marj Ayoun would hear about my presence and kill my family (*19)". Homsî agreed and promised to let him know in time.

Then, Homsî disappeared again, and Haddad suspected that the battle would be fought without him. Sure enough, a few days later, the news came that the fighters of Kleia had retaken Marj Ayoun. Forthwith, they called their forces "Lebanese Defense Forces (*20)".

The military committee of Kleia was headed by Lieutenant Adnan Homsî, his brother Rasan who in peace time had been a police officer, and a group of Sergeant-Majors, among them Hirallah Salame and Id Musallem, both former members of the Lebanese Army Intelligence Service with a long history of covert ties with the Israeli intelligence branch. Technical advice and part of the heavy weapons for the battle came from Israel. The initiative for the operation had also originated in the IDF which encouraged

the militias to attack as soon as possible without waiting for the still uncertain arrival of Haddad or any other senior officer. The military committee and the fighters of Kleia agreed, that the "glory" of a victory would be theirs alone.

In peace time, Marj Ayoun (also known as "Jdeideh") had been a town of about 20,000 inhabitants, most of the Christians with a minority of Druze and Moslems. The little town with its churches and schools, its college which was affiliated to the American University of Beirut, its municipal offices, the post office with its modern telephone exchange, the hospital and its barracks built at the time of the French Mandate and the creation of the first Lebanese unit, the 1. Battalion, straddled the South Lebanon Highway and dominated from its hillside position, especially from the barracks on the hill-top, the Litani River in the west and the Ayoun Valley in the east. In October 1976, only about 3,000 civilians, mainly Christians, remained in the town, the rest having left at the outbreak of the civil war and after the take-over by the LAA.

While there were generally cordial relations between the new rulers of the town and the Christian village of Kleia, the situation began to deteriorate when the cooperation between the Christian militias and Israel became evident. Finally, Kleia sealed off the South Lebanon Highway, the main road leading through the village which had been regularly used by LAA soldiers and their allies going

to Tyre, Sidon and Beirut via the Khardale Bridge. An armed confrontation was inevitable.

The Christian militias were well prepared : they had at their disposal two AMX-13 light tanks (made in France) and a number of M-113 Armoured Personnel Carriers (APC) (which it will be remembered had been taken by the Christian soldiers during their exodus from the Marj Ayoun barracks prior to the arrival of the LAA) as well as a few Russian made BTR-152 APCs and two Sherman M-4/M-50 tanks including ammunition and radio sets, courtesy of Israel. IDF medical teams were on stand-by at the Good Fence.

In the morning of 7 October 1976, the attack began. The main objective were the barracks on the top of the ridge. From the Israeli border at Metula it was quite easy to follow the course of the battle. The heavy exchanges of artillery and tank fire, the explosions, the clouds of dust and the rattle of small-arms fire were soon followed by cars crammed with people and possessions racing along the South Lebanon Highway fleeing from the area to the north. Soon, the resistance was broken, and the former HQ of the 1. Bataillon was in the hands of the Christian militias. Later, it became known that about 60 LAA soldiers had been captured. A "selection" was carried out which consisted of removing neighbours and friends from the group. The rest, about fifty in all, most of them Sunnis from the Arkoub and the Bekaa area, were mown down by machinegun fire.

The fall of the barracks had been a signal for LAA

soldiers, the Leftists and PLO elements holding other positions in the town to escape to El Khiam and Ibel a-Saki.

Casualties on the Christian side were relatively low. Seven fighters and a number of civilians arrived at the Good Fence clinic, the more severely wounded being flown by IDF-helicopters to Israeli government hospitals in Haifa and Safad.

The Battle of Marj Ayoun was over but the pride of having "liberated" the big town which had usually looked down on the villages in the area as somewhat inferior, would stay. "We entered Marj-ayoun and liberated it", became the slogan of Kleia and in the years to come a source of tension between the "liberators" of Kleia and the "liberated of Marj Ayoun which included Therese Haddad and her daughters.

The revenge for the loss of Marj Ayoun came less than two weeks later. The small Maronite village of Aishiye on the northern bank of the Litani River had joined Kleia at the beginning of the contacts with Israel. Like Kleia, the people of Aishiye had received some weapons from Israel which included, besides small arms, one heavy 120 mm mortar and a wireless radio with which they were in regular contact with Kleia and Israel. The dirt road which forded the Litani River and linked the village to Kleia led through an area under the control of the PLO and the LAA.

In the night of 19 October, the village was attacked by a combined PLO/LAA force. The defenders of Aishiye appealed for help over their wireless and in turn Kleia's military

committee demanded that the IDF intervene. Eventually, the IDF fired a few supportive shells, the first time since the beginning of the civil war that Israeli artillery fired in support of the Christian militias. But it was in vain. The attackers stormed the village. Most of the inhabitants succeeded in fleeing in time while the unlucky ones including women and children were killed in the local church where they had sought refuge (*21).

Next morning, in the fog and drizzle of late autumn, the refugees from Aishiye arrived at the Good Fence bitterly complaining that Israel had let them down. Eventually, most of the refugees were evacuated by Israeli ships to Beirut. Altogether, 238 people from Aishiye fled to the enclave. The number of the dead could not be determined at the time. More than a year later, a village notable visiting Marj Ayoun said that during the fall of Aishiye more than 40 inhabitants had lost their lives.

The fall of the little village came as a shock to the Christians in the south, a trauma they would not be able to forget. In the future, Aishiye would be seen as a warning of what could happen to other Christian villages and that Israel might let them down, too. This was the first time that major complaints and grievances were directed against Israel, instead of against the Lebanese government and army in Beirut.

OC Northern Command at the time, Major-General Rafael "Rafal" Eitan, wrote later, "My conscience bugged me. Had

we rejected the request of the village leaders for cooperation (with us) - perhaps the ruin, the destruction and the massacre could have been avoided. They and others put their fate into our hands and trusted us. And we helped as well as we could but because of political limitations and restrictions we were committed to - we could not always rescue them from the hands of their enemies (*22)".

The military situation in the south and the development of the ties with Israel, both in South Lebanon and in Beirut, seem to have been the main reasons for an uncharacteristic interest of the Lebanese Army HQ which now approached officers from the south with the offer to take over the area defense there. Several officers declined, amongst them Colonel Abdallah Khoury from Khirbe/Kleia. When Haddad was asked, he agreed to go.

Haddad had watched the political developments, the war and the disintegration of the army which had begun with the break-away of Lieutenant Ahmad el-Khatib and had escalated with the coup d'etat attempt of General Aziz el-Ahdab and the rebellion of Colonel Antoine Barakat. Many of Haddad's fellow officers had left the framework of the army and joined this or that camp though almost all of them still drew their salaries from the army including Khatib, Ahdab and Barakat. Haddad's loyalty to the army which had expressed itself in his presence in the neutral camp of Trabulsi had not led to anything, except his being completely removed from the developments. It was time to

decide for the future. And so, Haddad decided to go to the south. "I asked other officers to come with me but they refused. They did not know what the future would bring and others were afraid of the relationship with Israel (*23)".

Haddad was called to Army HQ where he met the Commander-in-Chief, General Hanah Said, a native of Kleia. Haddad was told that he would have to go by ship via Israel. "I did not mind but I asked for a written order which I received (*24)".

In November 1976, the Army Paymaster came to Trabulsi (*25). He told Haddad to be at the Aqua Marina in Juniah that very evening. After having said good-bye to his relatives in Beirut, Haddad changed into civilian clothes and went to Juniah. A small boat took him out to the open sea where an Israeli patrol boat was waiting. There were about 30 civilians on board, all of them returning to the south.

In the morning, they reached Haifa where the civilians were led to a bus while Haddad was taken to a civilian car. "It took me about two months until I got used to being in Israel and talking to Israelis. Everytime, I crossed the border from South Lebanon into Israel, I felt uneasy, queasy in my stomach (*26)".

In Metula, Haddad was introduced to Colonel Benyamin "Fuad" Ben-Eliezer (*27), the IDF commander of the South Lebanon Command (in Hebrew : Ezer Drom Levanon, short : ADAL) which was responsible for the ties with South Lebanon.

At the time, the IDF had rented a small, old house on the main street of Metula, the Sector HQ of the new South Lebanese Command. It was equipped with wireless and field telephones linking Metula to the militia HQ in Kleia and with the IDF Northern Command. A few Arab speaking officers and sergeants in plain clothes staffed the tiny HQ. The building which was "off limits" to civilians because of its clandestine character (only the humanitarian aspects of Israel's connection to South Lebanon, the Good Fence policy, were allowed to be published) , was called by insiders the "Apartment".

A call to Kleia over the military field-telephone brought a jeep to the Good Fence which took Haddad straight to his family in Marj Ayoun.

Footnotes to Chapter X :

- *1. Shiffer, Shimon : Snowball , Edanim Publishers, Tel Aviv 1984, p.24
 - *2. Schiff, Zeev and Yaari, Ehud : War of Deception , Schocken, Jerusalem 1984, p.53
 - *3. Shiffer, Snowball , p.24
 - *4. Eitan, Story of a Soldier , p.151
 - *5. ibid.
 - *6. Schiff and Yaari, War of Deception , p.51
 - *7. see Hof : Galilee Divided , p.46
 - *8. Hamizrachi, Road to Beirut , p.54
- This was confirmed in separate interviews by General Rafael "Rafal" Eitan, former Foreign Minister Yigal Allon, Lebanese Army Sergeant-Major Id Musallem, Bishop Atenassius Shaer of Marj Ayoun, Father Mansour of Kleia.
- *9. "Hashab" = wooden, referred to the wooden stock of the rifle.
 - *10. see Khalidi Conflict and Violence , p.63
 - *11. Asher, Daniel : Mountain Armoured Warfare. Syrian Military Intervention in Lebanon 1975-1976 , Maarachot Publishing, Tel Aviv 1985, p.81
 - *12. The ADF was from the beginning dominated by the Syrian force. This inter-Arab force which was about 30.000 men strong was agreed upon at the Arab Summit meetings in Riyad and Cairo in October 1976. Its mandate was to enforce a ceasefire in Lebanon and bring about an end to general

hostilities.

In 1981, Dr. Meir Pail (Col. ret. , in the past commander of the IDF Officers School), a military historian, said :
 "The only force in the world that is able to establish some kind of pacification in Lebanon, is Syria. Her army is an Arab army, and it is received there as an Arab army. It was invited in 1976 by the Lebanese Christian regime as a rescue force". Elazar Papers, No.4 , p.76

*13. El Safir Daily, Beirut, 16 October 1976

*14. Lt.Col. Reuven Aviran : Is an Israeli-Syrian Understanding in Lebanon Possible? , Maarachot No. 286, published by the Ministry of Defense, Tel Aviv February 1983, p.39.

*15. David C.Jordan, The Republic of Lebanon , p.92

*16. Shiffer, Snowball , p.24

*17. Saad Haddad, Tape 25, Side 1

*18. Saad Haddad, Tape 25, Side 2

*19. ibid.

*20. This name never really caught on. The international press which reported about the developments in the South (either from Israel or from Lebanon but outside the Christian held areas in the south) usually used the description "Christian militias".

*21. see Israeli, PLQ in Lebanon , pp.243-244

*22. Eitan, Story of a Soldier , p.156

*23. Saad Haddad, Tape 25, Side 1

*24. ibid.

I repeatedly asked Haddad to show me that order but though he insisted it existed, he never seemed able to find it. On the other hand, I was personally present during wireless communications between Haddad and Army HQ at Yarze. I also decoded several messages sent from Yarze to Haddad dealing with administrative aspects of Haddad's command in the south. See also Bavly and Salpeter, Fire in Beirut, p.56 *25. The paymaster visited the south on a regular basis via Israel in order to pay the army soldiers there their salaries. Abuna Mansour, the Maronite priest from Kleia, told me that at the very beginning of the isolation of the south, the salaries reached Kleia in jeeps of the Saiqa according to a friendly agreement reached in Beirut between Commander-in-Chief General Hannah Said and Saiqa leader Zuher Mohsen. Abuna Mansour said that these jeeps usually parked in the church square. This was confirmed by many Lebanese.

In August 1985, during a visit to Winnipeg, the former spokesman of the Lebanese Forces in the south, Francis Rizk (not to be confused with the tank commander of the same name), repeated this story and mentioned that many residents of Kleia had been strong supporters of the political wing of the Saiqa prior to the outbreak of the civil war.

"Therefore, at the beginning, when the administration broke down, it was only natural for the Saiqa to help us".

Colonel Benyamin "Fuad" Ben-Eliezer, the first IDF commander of the South Lebanese Command thought at the time that

everybody was trying to draw the south Lebanese soldiers to their side and that the Saiqa competed with the LAA, the PLO and the IDF in this respect.

*26. Saad Haddad, Tape 25, Side 1

*27. Colonel "Fuad" later became Brigadier-General and is now a member of the Knesset.

XI. The Consolidation of the Eastern Sector

The Situation in the South

The first excitement over, Haddad was immediately confronted with the realities of life in the south : there was no running water and no electricity. Both had been shut off by the LAA and the PLO who controlled the areas where the electricity plant and the pumping station were situated. The modern telephone exchange had been destroyed by the retreating LAA forces during the Battle of Marj Ayoun.

The collapse of the civil administration in the Marj Ayoun district and the lack of documents make it hard to reconstruct the condition of the enclaves, especially for the period covering the time just before the arrival of Major Saad Haddad and shortly afterwards, before the inclusion of Shiite and Druze villages, the link-up with the Christian village of Dir Mimas and the return of inhabitants who had fled the area when the army and the administration disintegrated.

Surveys were carried out only later, when officers of the unit providing civil assistance to the area started to visit the villages on a regular basis. This unit was a branch of the Golan Heights Military Government Command and the commander at the time, Lieutenant Colonel Akiva Dan, as well as his assistants were subordinates (in Lebanese matters) of Colonel "Fuad" but were not part of the regular

activity of the "Apartment".

On 8 December 1976, Archbishop Atenassius Shaer of Marj Ayoun visited the Good Fence at Metula. He brought with him "on behalf of the district commander" (then already Major Haddad) a list which Yoram Hamizrachi of Metula was asked to give to heads of municipalities in northern Israel. The list described conditions in areas of South Lebanon :

"Marj Ayoun :

paralyzed municipality. Electricity and waterlines badly damaged. No telephone. District hospital closed (there are only four nuns/nurses in the hospital). There is only one doctor (old Doctor Shdid who does not have equipment or medicine). Only one dentist (Dr. Karbis). Only two schools operating on limited part-time scale. The Marj Ayoun National College closed. The Seraya (government) building closed (building was vandalized by the Leftists and by the soldiers who took over Marj Ayoun). No courts. No police (the few gendarmes joined the local army). No postal service. Most grocery stores closed. There is a desperate need for commodities as well as for cigarettes and beverages. Need for fair quantity of cement and other building material in order to repair war damages. Bank is closed. There is no commercial activity. Agriculture totally paralyzed. Difficulties in providing food for livestock.

Size of population including children and refugees : 1,500 - 2,000

Kleia :

Services and overall condition like Marj Ayoun. Agriculture only partly possible, close to the Israeli border.

Population : about 3,500

Khirbe/Burj el-Muluk :

overall conditions like in Marj Ayoun. Population : about 1,500

Total population Eastern Sector (Christians) : about 7,000

Rmeish :

Municipality only partly operative. No medical services. Schools open. Water, electricity limited. Agriculture up to 50%, mainly tobacco. Size of population : about 4,000

Ein Ibel :

like Rmeish. Population : about 2,500

Dibel :

like Rmeish. Population : about 2,000

Kosah :

like Rmeish, population : about 900

Alma a-Shaab :

conditions extremely difficult. No services, no agriculture. Population : about 1,500

Total population Western Sector (Christians) : about 10,900

Total number of Christian population in the besieged south : about 17,900

All sectors need desperately fuel, cigarettes, building materials, glass or plastic to fix windows... (*1)".

This document was passed on to the Deputy Mayor of

Kiriat Shmona, Shmuel Ohana, who assisted the enclaves in many ways including mobilizing political and material support in northern Israel. From the beginning of 1977 until Haddad's death, Shmuel Ohana was one of his closest friends.

Haddad's arrival had hit Kleia like a bombshell. Until then, the military and civilian committees had been the deciding factors in the life of the area and in the contacts with Israel. Now, one person had been imposed on them, a man who was a native of Marj Ayoun, of all places, which had been liberated just a short while ago. And where had the new leader been while the soldiers of Kleia liberated his town and his family?!

The brothers Adnan and Rasan Homsî who until now had played a leading role in the south, returned to Beirut for good. Other members of the military committee, especially the soldiers of the Lebanese Army, grudgingly accepted what they could not change anyway and, realizing that Israel was backing Haddad, promised their support. The reign of the committees had come to an end. Any future attempts to organize support for Haddad in the form of councils, committees or staff failed. From the beginning, his command and administrative methods were centralist. From his first days as the commander of the area, Haddad developed characteristics which made his life difficult in the future : extreme suspicion of the motives and intentions of other Lebanese.

Haddad's aides became those men who held the highest ranks in the area : Lieutenant Ibrahim On who was a nervous wreck ever since the Hazbaya incident and the night of fear at the roadblock of Suk el-Khan, and Officer-Cadet Rizkallah Fheili. But in the events of the following months it turned out that the experienced Sergeant-Majors were a better choice than one nervous Lieutenant and one Cadet, and the positions which were important for the survival of the area were quietly taken over by the Sergeant-Majors. This rank was used by the Israelis also for some Lebanese NCO's, not only the official Sergeant-Majors. Therefore, several soldiers described in this study as Sergeant-Majors (in Arabic : Mesaed Awal), were in reality only Sergeants (in Arabic : Rakib) or Sergeants First Class (in Arabic : Rakib Awal).

In Kleia, Haddad was introduced to Captain Jalbout, the LAA commander of neighbouring El Khiam. Though Jalbout claimed that the town was neutral, it was in fact run by elements of the LAA and the PLO. Captain Jalbout, though, wanted to make sure that he personally was on the "right side", the winning side, and therefore had developed cordial relations with the committees of Kleia which he now transferred to Haddad. Jalbout was a valuable source of information concerning the goings-on in El Khiam and its hinterland. He was probably as valuable a source of information for his comrades in El Khiam concerning the goings-on in the area of Kleia and Marj Ayoun.

The second day after his arrival, Haddad was driven to Nazareth, to the HQ of the IDF Northern Command, where he was introduced to the CO Northern Command, Major General Rafael "Raful" Eitan and members of his staff. Raful asked Haddad if there was anything Israel could do for his area. During his short stay Haddad had already taken note of the most urgent needs : first and foremost, he asked for Israeli assurances that the soldiers and volunteers in the south would continue to receive their salaries for their military duties. Lately, the delivery of the salaries had been somewhat irregular and there was concern among the men that it might be stopped altogether one day. Haddad also asked for more and better weapons including heavy artillery and tanks as well as sufficient ammunition for any kind of emergency. There was also the problem of water and electricity. Having listened to Haddad for a while, Raful interrupted asking him "What are your assurances that you will be friendly and loyal to Israel? I answered, the best assurance is that I am here, in your office. That is the best assurance I can give. Raful said, You know that in the same chair you are sitting in, also Bashir Gemayel and Dani Chamoun sat. I answered, I am an officer of the Lebanese Army, they are civilians, very popular civilians. If they will be put on trial, their popularity and their power will save them. But if I am put on trial, I will be shot. Raful seemed satisfied. From that first meeting I liked and respected him. I felt that he understood me" (*2).

During the next few days, Haddad tried to figure out what the military arrangements for the defense of the area, now under his command, were. There was not much. There were no fortified positions or a guard duty roster. The soldiers and militiamen kept close to their homes at all times including at night. Tanks and APCs were parked in front of their drivers' houses while artillery pieces had been put in backyards or open spaces close to the homes of the crews so that they could be fired without the need to go too far. "The PLO must have been under the impression that all of Israel's power was behind us. If they had known that there was barely a guard anywhere, they could have wiped us out" (*3).

Haddad had been appointed the officer in charge not only of the enclave around Kleia and Marj Ayoun which was known as the "Eastern Sector", but also of the "Central Sector" around Rmeish and the "Western Sector" around Alma a-Shaab. All three sectors were actually enclaves consisting of one or more Christian villages. These enclaves were surrounded by rather hostile villages with mainly Shiite populations who allowed the presence of PLO and armed Leftists in their midst, denounced the links of the enclaves with Israel and supported military attacks against them. These attacks usually consisted of artillery and machinegun fire and with the passage of time they increased in volume and frequency.

As in the Eastern Sector, the military and civilian

committees and their leaders in the two other sectors were not thrilled by the arrival of Major Saad Haddad as the overall leader of all three sectors. In addition, the committee members in all three sectors were continuously at odds with each other which made it nearly impossible for Haddad to establish some kind of order. In the end, Colonel "Fuad" called all the officers and soldiers to a meeting where he as the representative of Israel severely reprimanded them and stressed that Israel fully supported Haddad as the overall commander of the whole area.

During October and November 1976, while Haddad, with the help of Israel, still tried to establish himself, especially in his native area of Marj Ayoun/Kleia, PLO and Leftist reinforcements, now that their fight with the Syrians was over, arrived in the south in large numbers and dispersed around the enclaves. These forces had been pushed southwards (where they were supposed to be anyway according to the Cairo Agreement which had been reaffirmed in the Riyad and Cairo Summits) by the Syrian dominated Deterrent Forces in central Lebanon and Beirut. In the Eastern Sector these forces established themselves on the Announ Plateau, including the Beaufort Castle, in El Khiam and in Dir Mimas and at the road junction of Tel Lubia on the road between Kleia and the Litani River. One result of this development was the disappearance of Captain Jalbout who later turned up at Army HQ in Yarze. Captain Jalbout must have been afraid that his relationship with Kleia would be seen by the PLO as

collaboration with Israel. Like many others in Lebanon, he believed that the Syrians would be able to control the army and eventually take over the south. The only Lebanese army officer left in El Khiam was now Lieutenant Ramez Bovitch, a Moslem of Yugoslav descent, who continued the ties with Kleia which Jalbout had established but in a much more cautious and covert manner. He told Haddad and Israeli intelligence officers that the number of Leftists in his town had swollen to over 1000 and that there was also a large number of LAA soldiers.

Against the background of these problems, Haddad felt the rejection he encountered in Kleia as a deep personal insult and he sank into one of his numerous depressions which always culminated in the threat of resignation though everybody, including himself, knew that he had nowhere to go. The more he felt rejected by his own countrymen, the more he became attached to his supporters on the Israeli side. He developed a few sincere friendships with Israelis which lasted until his death in 1984.

In the meantime, the military situation in the enclaves became a reason for grave concern for the staff of the "Apartment". The only ones to go about their military duties with some kind of enthusiasm were the young Lebanese volunteers who had undergone training in Israel.

The soldiers of the Lebanese army including Haddad seemed to prefer the concept of a "comfortable war" without movement and operational initiative. It consisted mainly of

the use of artillery in the numerous artillery exchanges with the enemy. This concept demanded a minimum of manpower since only the artillery crews and a few spotters and plotters were actively involved. The rest of the men could stay comfortably in their homes which, because of the increasing amount of shellings, took on the look of fortified positions. Every window, door or other opening in the stone walls of the mostly one and two storey houses was protected against shrapnel with sandbags, sand-filled ammunition boxes and barrels. Under these circumstances, it was difficult to operate within the common military framework. When soldiers live at home, discipline weakens, intrigues increase and sometimes may lead to open insurgency.

The First Show of Power : El Khiam

Colonel "Fuad" waited for the right moment to give Haddad and his forces the necessary push in order to make them decide to go over to the offensive and carry out their own operations against the combined PLQ-Leftist-LAA forces which surrounded them on all sides except the south, Israel (*4). The right time had come when the continuous demand of Haddad for more artillery pieces was finally answered in December 1976 with the delivery of four Russian 122mm shortrange howitzers (captured in one of the Israeli-Arab wars) to the Eastern Sector and two to the Central Sector. The general excitement about the new guns was heightened by

the arrival (via Israel) of the Paymaster of the Lebanese Army whose pouches bulged with hundreds of thousands of Lebanese Pounds. Colonel "Fuad" used the good mood and sudden high morale to suggest that Haddad's forces should undertake their first aggressive patrol towards El Khiam in a display of power.

"Power" is relative, and "display of power" in South Lebanon often involved what in other circumstances would appear as puny forces. In this instance, a small convoy of two APCs and one M-4 Sherman tank moved from Kleia to Tel Nehas along the road which was in plain sight of the Beaufort Castle, then turned east advancing along the "Tapline" road across the Ayoun Valley and finally climbed the Hamamis Hill which overlooked El Khiam and the stone walls of the army barracks. But when Haddad was asked to order his men to fire a shell or two, he refused with the same excuse Colonel Kalas had used during the take-over by the LAA of El Khiam in the spring of 1975, namely that there were civilians there. The short excursion to Hamamis Hill had one positive result : the Druze inhabitants of the village of El Meri, south-east of El Khiam, had watched the patrol bypass El Khiam, a proof of control over the road that linked their village with the enclave. Now, they offered Haddad their cooperation.

Haddad's position in the enclave was strengthened by this short and small-scale show of force, which was typical for the civil war as a whole, and even the other enclaves

did not hide their admiration. Haddad claims that this was the turning point in his relations with Kleia. Though there would be many more misunderstandings, disagreements, quarrels and intrigues in the future "they became attached to me and began to trust me" (*5).

While in the north of Lebanon the civil war was officially declared over (and the events afterwards were described by many researchers as the "Crisis") , the bloody developments in the south were only at their beginning stage. There were those who doubted that there was any future for the south with its, for the Arab world, abnormal ties with Israel. One of the doubters was Lieutenant Ibrahim On who explained to everyone how his relatives in Beirut who held high positions in the new government would arrange his safe conduct to the north. One day, the northernmost roadblock of Marj Ayoune near the Ein Zrir spring reported that Lieutenant On was about to leave the area with a truck-load of possessions. Haddad was furious and ordered his immediate arrest. A shamefaced Lieutenant On was escorted back to Kleia only to continue scheming how to get out of the south.

Though the fronts in the south seemed clearly drawn, everyone in the region who enjoyed some kind of leadership position or other influential status tried to keep all possible options open for himself. This included the establishment of cordial contacts with Haddad and other personalities in the area and with Israeli officers. This

game of "covering one's back" continued throughout the period of ever increasing artillery attacks at the beginning of 1977. The main message being transmitted during these meetings, mainly with LAA commanders, was that the new President, Elias Sarkis, was interested in the cooperation of the LAA and Haddad in the south. Haddad flatly refused any kind of cooperation with the LAA other than meetings which committed him to nothing. Two of the more interesting visitors to the south because of their high-ranking posts, were Major Mounir Mullah, a Lebanese officer of Kurdish descent, now one of the LAA commanders of Tyre, and Halim Fayyad, the governor of the southern region.

The two men came to the Central Sector in order to express their sympathy with the family of the Maronite Bishop Butrus Kreish upon the loss of his mother in the village of Yaroun. Samir el-Haj from Rmeish arranged a meeting between Major Mullah and IDF officers. Mullah told Lieutenant-Colonel Yehoshua "Yosha" Bar-Tikva during the meeting on 22 January 1976, that "President Sarkis is interested in finding an arrangement for the south" (*6).

At about the same time, Samir el-Haj met the commander of the Central Sector of the LAA, Major Amin Kassem, and reported that Kassem had told him that "the President is interested in strengthening the LAA in the south and recommends cooperation between the LAA and Major Haddad's forces" (*7).

Similar contacts with other officers and NCO's of the

LAA led to the general opinion that the LAA Command in the south was looking for new allies or that they were acting on behalf of the Syrians which according to rumour held Lieutenant Ahmad el-Khatib under house-arrest in Damascus after they had achieved most of their goals in north, east and central Lebanon.

The Extension of the Eastern Sector

In the Eastern Sector, the population was worried about the Syrians. The news of the arrival of Syrian forces in the area of Nabatiye at the end of January 1977 aroused much anxiety and distress in the south. Everybody was thinking about Aishiye. Haddad was alarmed and became furious when Israel did not immediately react to what he saw as a new threat to his area. In defiance of Israeli orders, he fired a number of shells on Nabatiye which triggered a barrage of shells in return and some of them exploded close to the Israeli border. An angry Colonel "Fuad" issued a stern warning coming directly from the Israeli Chief-of-Staff : Hold your fire or Israel will have to reclaim her guns.

The Israeli government stressed its Red Line policy and demanded the withdrawal of the Syrian force from Nabatiye. On 26 January, Foreign Minister Yigal Allon met with Haddad in Metula. Also present was Colonel "Fuad". Haddad emerged from the meeting in good spirits and Yigal Allon gave a short statement : "We have sent the Syrians many warnings. We will not agree to their permanent presence in Nabatiye,

but it is better to solve the problem by peaceful means than by war. I think the situation is clear to the Americans and they will do everything in their power to bring about a Syrian withdrawal to the north" (*8). Allon also revealed that some members of the Israeli General Staff were in favour of letting the Syrians enter the south. These officers were convinced the Syrians would eliminate the PLO and in the end come to an agreement with Israel.

"This Syrian step confronted Israel with a difficult problem which centred on the question what is preferable, the presence of terrorists in South Lebanon or the presence of the Syrian Army which would perhaps restrain the terrorists but would be a threat to the security of Israel because of their presence beside her border... Israel passed an ultimative demand to Syria through the USA to take her forces out of Nabatiye. The Syrians who were not interested in a military confrontation with Israel withdrew their forces from Nabatiye (15 February)" (*9).

January was also the month Haddad was informed over the radio by Lebanese Army HQ in Yarze that the General Staff had appointed him "Commander of the Border Zone". The two officer cadets in the area, Rizkallah Fheili in the Eastern Sector and Sharbal Barakat in the Central Sector, were to remain in the south to assist Haddad rather than returning to Beirut to resume their studies at the Military Academy.



THE RED LINE

LEBANON

TAIPOLI

BEIAYT

ZAHLE

AVAN R.

SIDON

NABATIYAH R.

DAMASCUS

RED LINE

HOBAYEH

SYRIA

LIFANI R.

RAJ ATOUN
MOUNT NEARON

TYRE

UN BUFFER ZONE

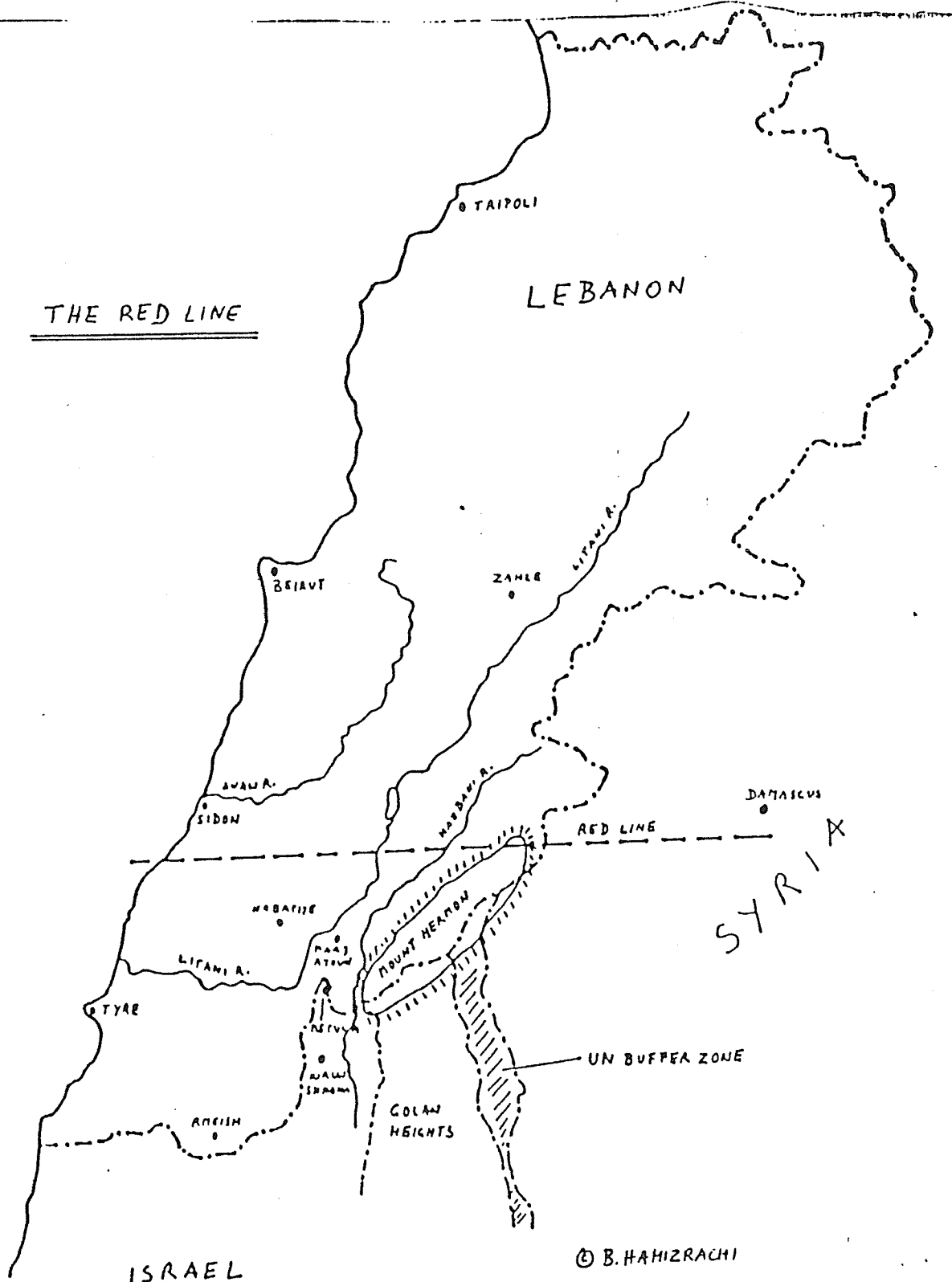
NEIVA
JAWA
ISRAH

GOLAN
HEIGHTS

ARZILH

ISRAEL

© B. HAHIZRACHI



Secure in his position in the south, encouraged by Israeli assurances concerning the Syrian presence in Nabatiye, Haddad finally gave in to the prodding of Colonel "Fuad" and agreed to some action. Following secret contacts with inhabitants of the Greek-Orthodox village of Dir Mimas, especially with former Lebanese soldiers Michel Ashkar and Yussuf Karam who lived there, Haddad called his informers to Kleia where he told them to spread the rumour in their village that he had prepared a force of 3.000 fighters and planned to attack Dir Mimas during the night. The bluff worked. The Leftists in the village packed up and left the area via the Khardale Bridge. When the PLO elements who were stationed outside the village and at Tel Lubia saw the convoy they immediately left their posts and joined the exodus. Michel Ashkar informed Haddad that the village and Tel Lubia were now "clean". A small foot patrol from Kelia joined up with the soldiers from Dir Mimas and took over the deserted position at Tel Lubia. Later that night, Haddad went there to check the situation "especially since the terrorists were firing with DShK from Beaufort Castle. When I came to the position, I found them sitting together, drinking Arrak and having a good time" (*10).

The fall of Dir Mimas and Tel Lubia put the large Shiite village of Kila in a precarious situation. Deprived of the access to the Khardale Bridge, with Kleia in the east and Israel in the south, only the South Lebanon Highway leading west was still open and even then the villagers had

to pass the Good Fence area. Haddad used this situation immediately by calling the known Communists and Leftists in the village to a meeting in Tel Nehas, the former police station at the junction of the South Lebanon Highway and the Tapline road leading eastwards. He told the few shaken villagers who had had the courage to show up that they could stay in Kila if they cooperated with him and the militias. Next morning, all of them left the area. A local committee was established headed by Abu Rassan (*11) who, in spite of his well-known Saiqa past, was made responsible for the defense of the village.

Though the Khardale Bridge was now ready for the taking, Haddad flatly refused to establish a position there. "The road there was narrow and twisting, the bridge was too far away from Tel Lubia and it was dominated by the Beaufort Castle" (*12). Haddad also refused to take over control of the Shiite village of Dibin, north of Marj Ayoun. He did not see or pretended not to see how that village could pose any danger to his area. And had he taken the village, he would again have had to send guards there which at that point was very difficult. Most of the soldiers refused to do guard duty in a village other than their own. Since Dibin seemed neutral in the conflict and displayed no open animosity to the enclave, it served as a kind of buffer between Marj Ayoun and the Shiite village of Blat which was controlled by the PLO and lay just north of Dibin. As a concession to Colonel "Fuad", Sergeant Ali Aneissi (*13), a

native of Dibin, was appointed village commander and supplied with some rifles and a field-telephone.

The "pacification" of the immediate area accomplished, Colonel "Fuad" steered Haddad's thoughts towards Adeisse, the little Shiite village that straddled the South Lebanon Highway and lay right at the feet of Kibbutz Misgav-Am. There had been contacts with villagers for some time and one of them, Sergeant Rubin Aboud, a former member of the commando unit of the Lebanese Army, the son of an Armenian mother and a Shiite father, even secretly served with Haddad's forces during the day returning to his village in the evening. Aboud had become a local hero when, while stationed at an army post at the Khardale Bridge, he had been involved in an argument with an armed Palestinian, had wrestled him to the ground and disarmed him and finally drowned him in the Litani River. Now, Aboud brought the news that the PLO and their Leftist supporters planned to take over his village. While Haddad was still pondering what to do, a villager was kidnapped by the PLO as a suspected "Zionist" and a contact to the Christian militias. The incident led to the organization of a village delegation which came to Haddad and demanded some kind of action. Haddad turned to his IDF friends for advice. It was suggested that his forces raid the village and take a few known Leftists hostage.

Sergeant-Major Id Mussalem, one of the former leaders of the now defunct military committee of Kleia, was to lead

the raid. He quite simply took his car, drove into Adeisse, seized two inhabitants who were said to be leftist sympathizers, and hastily retreated to Kleia. Intense negotiations followed accompanied by much coming and going between Adeisse and Kleia. As a result, the suspected "Zionist" and the suspected Leftists were returned to their homes.

Two days later, during the night of 23 January 1977, news reached the "Apartment" in Metula that Adeisse had been "invaded" by a large force of armed Leftists under the command of Ali Hamoushi, a native of Kila and a member of the Iraqi Baath party. Colonel "Fuad" recommended that Haddad organize a force which would establish order in Adeisse. Haddad and his men fretted. They saw no reason why they should advance in the middle of a dark night towards a Shiite village whose fate at the hands of the Leftists was really none of their concern. Especially not at night. After heated discussions, grumbling and objecting, a force was finally set up : 45 men mounted on two M-4 Sherman tanks, two BTR-152 and one M-113 APCs. The column entered Adeisse before daylight, arrested one suspected PLO sympathizer and hastily returned to its own territory.

This performance was absolutely unsatisfactory to the IDF. Next day, when the presence of a blue Opel car with PLO members was reported from the village, the same militia force was sent out again. But they were beaten to their

objective by a group of young Druze from Marj Ayoun, members of Chamoun's "Free Liberal Party". The small group, headed by Nasib Hamra, entered Adeisse in an old Landrover. Hot on their heels followed a rattling Mercedes with Rubin Aboud and his friend Shakib Ramal (*14), also a native of Adeisse. The battle was over before Haddad's column reached the village. Three bullet-ridden corpses were thrown out of the blue Opel which was then hitched to the Mercedes and triumphantly towed back to Kleia. Their papers identified the dead occupants as members of Fatah.

The incident finally brought the villagers of Adeisse around. That same day, they organized their own local defense force, part of Haddad's overall forces. Shakib Ramal was appointed village commander. Adeisse immediately received weapons from Israel including a heavy machinegun and a radio-set which linked the village to Haddad's HQ in Kleia and to the "Apartment" in Metula.

El Khiam was now the only place left that had not joined Haddad and the militias. From a purely geographical point of view, the town's inclusion in one consolidated entity was of the utmost importance. Otherwise, the presence of heavily armed PLO/LAA/Leftist elements just opposite Kleia and Marj Ayoun with only the few kilometers of the Ayoun Valley in between would be a continuous threat to the militias and to the civilians living in the area.

The situation in El Khiam itself was very unstable. Lieutenant Bovitch told Haddad that fierce rivalries between

the LAA on one side and the PLO/Leftists on the other for the rule of the town had separated the forces. There was also a small group of neutralists who tended to support Lieutenant Bovitch and his small force of about 15 officially pro-LAA but secretly pro-enclave former Lebanese Army soldiers. The ruling feudal family of El Khiam, the Shiite Abdallah clan, still lived in the town and was quite undecided as to who to support. Lieutenant Bovitch who was married to one of the daughters of the clan encouraged his relatives to throw their lot in with the militias and Israel.

On 30 January 1977, a delegation of the family led by Bahij Abdallah arrived at the Good Fence assuring Israeli representatives that the 3,000 members of the Abdallah clan in the town (of among 12,000 inhabitants who had stayed there) were ready to cooperate with Israel. The rest, they said, belonged to the Syrian and Iraqi Baath Parties or were supporters of the Lybian President Muamar Ghaddafi who had donated a large school to the town which was named after him and, since it was built on the highest point of the town, was a landmark which could be seen from the surrounding villages and from the Israeli border. After much talk the meeting ended without any concrete commitment of the delegation.

Morale in the enclave had in the meantime sunk to a new low. The Syrians were sitting in Nabatiye, their very presence constituting a threat; the PLO had stepped up their

artillery attacks on the enclave; El Khiam was still a worrying factor. The deployment of the Syrian forces so much south of the Red Line finally triggered some action from the Israeli side and on 31 January, a column of Israeli tanks and APCs for the first time crossed the border, at night, advancing from Metula to Kleia with the declared intention of raising the morale of the Christian population. The noise of the tracks of the Israeli "Centurion" tanks must have been clearly heard in the Beaufort Castle and in Nabatiye. The message was obvious. The column had barely returned to Israeli territory when a fierce artillery bombardment hit the enclave including 155mm shells, and "Grad" and "Katyusha" rockets fired from LAA batteries at Announ.

During the month of January, Haddad also became the proud owner of a new car. A group of four Saudi-Arabians strayed into the area under Haddad's control. They were arrested on suspicion of drug trafficking and jailed in the former police station at Tel Nehas. Their shining yellow Mazda car became the private and much cherished property of Haddad who usually parked it in Metula. The charges against the unfortunate Saudis could never be verified, but they had barely spent a few days in jail when personal appeals from former President Camille Chamoun reached the area asking for their immediate release. Haddad was in no hurry and so Chamoun repeated his request time and again, over the radio, in writing, through runners and finally through his Israeli

contacts, until Haddad released them. "The rumour was that Chamoun had received millions of Lebanese Pounds in return for his efforts" (*15).

In the night of 16 February, shooting broke out in El Khiam between the different factions in town. Bahij Abdallah, one of the heads of the Abdallah clan, was reportedly killed (though years later rumours placed him in Beirut). Lieutenant Bovitch sent a message to Haddad asking for help. To Colonel Fuad's surprise, Haddad suggested a limited operation, namely the seizure of the LAA roadblock of Naba Abel on the Marj Ayoun-Hazbaya-El Khiam road junction. A small force consisting of one tank, one APC and one jeep advanced towards the objective. In Haddad's words, "The last part of the way we went on foot, leaving the vehicles behind as our cover. We caught the LAA soldiers by surprise and overpowered them. We took the position before they knew what had happened" (*16). The sixteen prisoners were relieved of their weapons and sent back to El Khiam. When the news of the attack spread in the town, the position of Naba Abel came under heavy mortar and machinegun fire. "We left in the evening because nobody wanted to stay there during the night. We never went back there. The position stayed empty but no traffic passed through there any more" (*17).

Encouraged by his success, Haddad asked Colonel Fuad for permission to move against El Khiam which was granted two days later. A large force was now organized consisting

of four M-4 Sherman tanks, one AMX-13 light tank, two M-113 and two BTR-152 APCs, one 106mm recoilless rifle mounted on a jeep and about 50 soldiers and militiamen including the group of Druze Chamounists under Nasib Hamra who had played such a big role in the village of Adeisse just one month earlier. Haddad's artillery was aimed at targets of the PLO and LAA. The operation was planned to be a repetition of Naba Abel, which achieved surprise as a result of a rapid advance.

In the afternoon of 19 February 1977, the column entered the town in a two-pronged attack, one force being led by Haddad who rode in an APC. The main objective was the former Lebanese barracks. Surprise was complete and there was only a minimum of resistance, mainly small arms fire and a few RPG bazookas which missed their targets. In order to be on the safe side, Haddad ordered his mortars to open fire on the centres of resistance in the town and on the barracks.

When Haddad's force reached the barracks, they were empty. Jubrayel Assaf, a tank commander in the second force, reported that he had come upon a Panhard AML-90 armoured car. As it turned out, this was the same Panhard that had been stolen from the Officers Club in Marj Ayoun at the time of the disintegration of the 1. Battalion.

By nightfall, Haddad's forces had gathered a considerable amount of military equipment which included three APCs, one 120mm mortar, an anti-aircraft gun and all

the rifles found in the barracks which actually belonged to Lieutenant Bovitch and his men. The shaken Lieutenant was brought to Haddad and immediately complained that Haddad's failure to inform him about the impending attack had endangered his life and was an insult to his position as a loyal informer. The only casualties of the operation were four killed and five wounded, all of them civilians from El Khiam. The wounded were brought to the Good Fence from where they were transported to hospitals in Israel.

Haddad called the heads of the Abdallah clan and some LAA soldiers to a meeting. "I told them that I had come to establish order and that I would leave now. I stressed that it was their responsibility to keep the town quiet and clean of terrorists" (*18). The dignitaries complained that the militiamen were looting the town and stealing everything they could lay their hands on. Haddad did not react to these complaints since, as every Lebanese well knew, it was the unwritten law of this kind of war that the victor could do with the possessions of the vanquished as he pleased. And indeed, when the column finally left the town for home, the tanks and APCs made bizarre silhouettes against the evening sky. From furniture to appliances and personal belongings of the townspeople, everything was piled on the war-machines and triumphantly carried to Kleia and Marj Ayoun which were by now heavily bombarded by PLO/LAA positions to the north and the west of the area.

In El Khiam there remained a small force of militiamen

under the command of Sergeant-Major Michael Fheili who felt very uncomfortable with their mission since they detested doing guard duty at a place which was not their home. In order to boost their morale, a group of Israeli officers visited the town during the night. After a typical Lebanese "haflah", a lavish banquet, for these important guests, the officers returned to Israel.

The Battle of El Khiam had a sad end. When Haddad's happy column neared Marj Ayoun, the victors fired off the usual "fantasia" during which one of the fighters, Jean Rafael, was accidentally killed (*19).

Over the next few days, it became a pastime of the militiamen to take a vehicle (a tank, an APC, a Jeep, a private car, anything on tracks or wheels), drive over to El Khiam and continue the looting. This led to a number of incidents between the Christian fighters and the townspeople. By nightfall, everybody was back in his own village or town except the little force under Michael Fheili who became increasingly upset with his post and finally resigned. Haddad appointed in his place Sergeant-Major Hirallah Salame whose never-ending energy and good mood had made him the right hand of Haddad. In a very un-Lebanese fashion, Hirallah's first step as the new town commander was to set up roadblocks where his fellow-fighters from the enclave were stopped from entering the town thereby putting an effective end to the looting. Hirallah Salame took the administration of the town and his position as its commander

very seriously. He worked tirelessly to improve its defenses, to solve problems and to deal with the population in a strict but fair and reasonable way. Lieutenant Bovitch who felt that he did not play any kind of important role any more, left the town and made his way to Beirut where he rejoined the Lebanese army.

The PLO-LAA-Leftist forces around the enclave did not idly stand by while one of their strongholds had been conquered by the hated "collaborateurs" with Israel. During the following days, hundreds of shells were fired on the villages and towns of the enclave including El Khiam, and a growing number of wounded civilians were evacuated to the Good Fence and Israeli hospitals. In order to raise morale in El Khiam, Haddad let it be known that he would lead a patrol into the town. According to custom, a "haflah" was prepared by the heads of the Abdallah clan. During the feast, Haddad invited his hosts to come and visit the Good Fence. They needed some convincing but the next day a delegation headed by Hassan Dawi arrived. To their surprise and consternation, they found a TV crew and a photographer waiting for them whose presence had been arranged by Lieutenant-Colonel Yosha, one of the Israeli officers under Colonel Fuad's command. Nevertheless, the delegation agreed to pose under the Israeli flag against the background of the Ayoun Valley and their hometown, El Khiam. "We put them under the Israeli flag in order to incriminate them, to force them to fully cooperate with us and with Israel"

(*20). That same evening, Hassan Dawi and his delegation appeared on Israeli TV, during the regular newscast. And during the night, "there began a large-scale exodus of residents from El Khiam, led by members of the Abdallah clan and the Dawi family" (*21). Hirallah Salame was not overly worried by the drastic fall of the population in town, since a smaller population made life for his force easier and safer.

The conquest of El Khiam did not bring any relief to the population of the enclave. In fact, during the next few weeks, artillery and Katyusha rocket fire increased dramatically. The border clinic at the Good Fence began to look like a casualty clearing station in the rear of a battlefield. Wounded Lebanese of all ages arrived in ever-increasing numbers, their blood-stained bodies filling every available stretcher and space in the long first-aid huts where sometimes emergency surgery was performed under the curious eyes of tourists accompanied by the wailing of Lebanese relatives of the casualty.

The ferocity of the artillery shellings, the high number of casualties, and the fact that the Israeli TV reported in depth about the situation contributed to the growing awareness of the Israeli people of what was happening to their Lebanese neighbours. A deep sympathy developed for these Lebanese who now suffered what the Israeli settlements in the north had suffered for such a long time. This sympathy was accompanied by the need "to do

something" for these people in order to let them know that not only the IDF but also the ordinary Israeli neighbour in the north felt with them, wanted to help and be their friend.

"The TV cameraman, Israel Gal and his soundman Yaakov "Kutzi" Moshe from Kibbutz Ha Goshrim helped us to collect blankets, medical and other equipment for the Good Fence Clinic. The people of the Upper Galilee Regional Council donated beds, stretchers, electrical equipment and more. Woolen blankets came from the Golan Heights settlements who also sent bandages and food packages. Even factories in Kiriat Shmonah headed by the steel plant "Ramin-Gichner" of the Koor-Concern joined in the operation" (*22).

These humanitarian efforts which via the television screen brought South Lebanon into every house in Israel, also created a special political atmosphere. Many Israeli politicians although sometimes ideologically against any involvement in Lebanon were obliged publicly to come to the support of the Lebanese (*23). Major Saad Haddad was at that time still unknown to the general public though a familiar figure mainly in Metula.

Footnotes to Chapter XI :

*1. Letter of Haddad to Israeli municipalities, 8 December 1976

*2. Saad Haddad, Tape 26, Side 1

*3. ibid.

*4. In December 1976, these forces consisted of (approximately) :

1. Tel Lubia : 30 PLO + DShK machinegun

2. Khardale Bridge : 30 Leftists + 1 Russian 120mm mortar

3. Blat : 200 PLO + recoilless rifles

4. Beaufort Castle : LAA + 1 French 120mm mortar, 1

Charioteer tank

5. Tibnit : PLO + Russian 120mm shortrange guns, 2
Russian

120mm mortars

6. Announ : LAA + 2 French 155mm guns

7. Dir Sirien : Leftists + RPGs, 1 Russian 82mm mortar

*5. Saad Haddad, Tape 26, Side 2

*6. Hamizrachi, Road to Beirut , p.47

*7. ibid.

*8. Hamizrachi Road to Beirut , p.163

*9. Aviran : Is a Syrian-Israeli Agreement in Lebanon Possible? , p.39

*10. Saad Haddad, Tape 26, Side 2

*11. At a much later stage, Abu Rasan was accused by Haddad of subversion, was arrested and jailed in Afula,

Israel. After his release from prison and his return to Kila, he remained quiet and withdrawn and did not get involved any more in local politics, at least not openly.

*12. Saad Haddad, Tape 26, Side 2

*13. Ali Aneissi had been among the lucky ones who escaped the massacre that followed the Battle of Marj Ayoun because of his special status as a neighbour to Marj Ayoun.

*14. The charming and red-haired Shakib was famous in the area because of his stunningly beautiful wife whose presence at the Good Fence always aroused excitement among Israelis and Lebanese alike. Shakib and his wife were involved in an incident which demonstrated the fragile nature of the Christian-Shiite relationship under Haddad's command :
During the first visit in Marj Ayoun of the newly appointed OC Northern Command, General Avigdor "Yanosh" Bengal, Shakib got into trouble. While driving in the motorcade accompanying General "Yanosh" which entered the town during sporadic artillery fire, Shakib passed a Landrover carrying Sergeant-Major Id Mussalem and his "aides". This, coming from a Shiite, was an insult to the status of Mussalem who forced Shakib to stop. During the heated argument that followed, Jihad Tubaya, member of the Mussalem entourage, punched Shakib in the face who immediately retaliated by shooting him in the leg. He then escaped to the house of the mukhtar. Because they could not find Shakib, Mussalem and his fiends decided to go to Shakib's house in Marj Ayoun and take revenge by raping his wife. At that stage, they

were joined by most of the male population of Kleia. While they were busy breaking down the door of Shakib's house, where his wife was just in the middle of a shower, Shakib himself was rescued from his hide-out by IDF officers of the "Apartment" who had accompanied General "Yanosh" and wanted to prevent a bloodbath. While trying to smuggle him out of Marj Ayoun in a car, Shakib was recognized and the chase was on. About fifteen cars packed with enraged and armed men from Kleia who expressed their feelings by firing into the air raced along the narrow South Lebanon Highway at high speed in hot pursuit after the yellow Lancer with Captain Avi Gletzer behind the steering wheel and Shakib crouching in the backseat. At the last possible moment and hidden by a curve in the road, Captain Avi succeeded in crossing undetected into Israeli territory while the persuers raced on towards Adeisse.

Shakib never returned to the area. He and his wife left for AKKra, Ghana, from where he wrote to the officers of the "Apartment" thanking them for having saved his life.

*15. Hamizrachi, Road to Beirut , p.182

*16. Saad Haddad, Tape 27, Side 1

*17. ibid.

*18. ibid.

*19. This was the official version. Haddad later claimed that Jean had been killed during a quarrel over some items of the loot. Whichever is the truth, Jean Rafael was the only Christian casualty of the Battle of El Khiam, and would

always be remembered as such.

*20. Saad Haddad, Tape 27, Side 2

*21. Hamizrachi, The Road to Beirut , p.194

*22. Bat-Ami Hamizrachi, Fire Amongst the Cedars, a Diary of a Reporter in South Lebanon , Maariv Daily, Tel Aviv, 16 April 1982

*23. MK Yossi Sarid who at that time lived in Kiriat Shmonah is one of those politicians. At one stage, he phoned from my house to Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin urging him "to do something for the Lebanese".

The Chairman of the Upper Galilee Regional Council who came from the left-wing "Shomer Ha-Tzair" Kibbutz movement, is another example.

XII. The Awakening of the Shiites

The political interest in cooperation between the Christians in the south and the LAA, most of whom were Shiites, was a new development and a result of the change this community had undergone.

In the sixties, while South Lebanon was suffering the results of the Israeli-Arab dispute which was intensified by the internal conflicts in Beirut, an important change took place in the areas close to the Israeli border. The Shiite community who for generations had been the most backward in Lebanon, now began to register an increasing and rapid growth. The improvements of living standards and general health care led to a decreasing mortality rate amongst both old and young, and the Moslem community in general recorded the highest birth rate in the country. This phenomenon took place earlier in the thirties, fourties and at the beginning of the fifties, amongst the Sunnis, the majority of whom were urbanized. Only during the sixties, was the same process also recorded amongst the Shiites, most of whom lived in villages (*1).

This part of the Lebanese population which was concentrated in and mainly around the mixed towns of Nabatiye, Bint Jebel and Tyre where they formed the absolute majority, lacked its own economic resources. The representatives of the Shiites in the Lebanese administration were the heads of the el-Assad family, rich

landowners from the area of Taibe who lived in Beirut and traditionally held the office of the Speaker of Parliament. Until the sixties, the Shiite community was of no special political importance. "The Shiites were at the time an unimportant, powerless sect... With the exception of a few wealthy families, the Shiites were and are peasants, exploited agricultural workers : a rural proletariat" (*2).

The deteriorating security situation along the border and especially the lack of an effective defense system; the difficult economic situation of the Shiites with their high birthrate; the crowded living conditions; the lack of land for further agricultural development - all these made tens of thousands of Shiites leave the south for Beirut where they lived in slums beside and even inside Palestinian refugee camps. But even in the city, they did not find the solution to their social and economic hardships and this, in the end, turned them into a "strong source of social bitterness and political radicalism" (*3).

Official Lebanon usually tried to overlook the "Shiite problem" or to see it as part of the overall Moslem-Druze question. While the leaders of the community were caught in the traditional, feudal web of the el-Assad family, their allies and protectors, the Moslem world witnessed the first ripples of the great earthquake which shook the foundations of the biggest and most important Shiite society - that of Iran. "The men and women of Shia Lebanon had become part of a large upheaval. The Iranian revolution raised high the

once timidly advanced and embarrassing symbols of Shia Islam. Shiism, for centuries a faith of lament and submission, had become a movement of exaltation and rebellion" (*4).

In 1955, Sayid Abdel Hussein Sharafeddin, the 82 year old Shiite Imam of Lebanon, invited Musa Sadr from Iran to Lebanon to become his heir. He could not have foreseen that his protegee, who arrived in Lebanon in 1959, would unite the Shiite community and build a strong political-organizational basis for his people.

The new Imam had family ties with Ayatollah Khomeini; Sadr's niece had become Khomeini's daughter-in-law by marrying his son Ahmad. Musa Sadr settled in Tyre (*5).

Sadr did not ignore the plight of the Shiites in Lebanon and gave priority to their problems. He understood that in the fragile situation of Lebanon they had to consolidate not only as a religious but also as a political entity. This process was not an easy one within the framework of limitations confronting him : the ignorance and illiteracy of the backward masses he wanted to unite and the tendency of the few intellectuals towards Socialism/Marxism which were alien to the principles of Islam. Under these circumstances, Sadr had to approach his aim slowly and systematically. To this end, he utilized, as was common in the Shiite society, the Ashura ceremonies, the griefstricken mourning of the masses that accompanies the dramatization of the murder of Hussein, son of Ali and grandson of the

Prophet Mohammad, and the Battle of Karbala (in the year 680).

During the nine days preceding the mass meeting, the details of the tragedy leading to Hussein's death are recalled. And on the tenth day, the Ashura, the colourful performance (Taaziah) of the historical facts takes place followed by a mass procession of mourners "beating themselves or cutting themselves with knives and chains, intoning the names of Ali and Husain in a moving, sometimes frightening, display of grief" (*6).

The huge crowds gathering for the Ashura were an important part of the developments leading to the revolution in Iran. The Ashura of 1963 in Teheran for example was the beginning of the protest movement of the masses against the regime of the Shah. The Ashura of December 1978 led directly to the fall of the Pahlawi dynasty.

To his surprise, Sadr found that the Ashura ceremonies in South Lebanon were even more militant than those in Iran. Already in 1966, the Ashura of Bint Jebel showed "the influence of the Palestinian refugees in the demand for self-sacrifice now, centred to a large extent on the liberation of Palestine; and even more so the influence of the young intellectuals who had been educated in Damascus where they absorbed the ideology of the Baath and now demanded to merge it with the religious tradition" (*7).

In 1969, Sadr succeeded in bringing about the establishment of separate religious institutions, part of

the "Supreme Shiite Council", which broke away from parallel religious Sunni institutions. In 1974, he established the "Movement of the Underprivileged" or "Movement of the Deprived". A year later, following the growing awareness of the need for internal security, he also founded the armed militia of the Shiites, "Amal" (Hope).

Sadr made full use of the popular and affordable means of communication in the area; his speeches and sermons were taped on cassettes. Even today, these cassettes are hits in the Shiite community of Lebanon and, at the time, they helped to bring the Imam's words into nearly every house in the Shiite south.

Sadr brought about the "systematic transformation of the Ashura festival in South Lebanon in the spirit of his ideology of liberating the underprivileged. This ideology demanded a change of the political position of the Shiite masses, greater activism and the refusal to accept the existing fate and regime" (*8). On one of the cassettes from the 1974 Ashura in Nabatiye, Sadr says "Do not let mourning ceremonies become an alternative for action. Let us turn them around into a fountain from which revolutionary anger and constructive protest will spring" (*9).

Sadr did not incite against other communities. In fact, he always tried to communicate with them and, in general, was looking for allies in the south and elsewhere while continuing his untiring efforts to organize a political entity, especially in Tyre, as far away as

possible from the eastern sector of South Lebanon and the open hostility of the el-Assad family. Sadr succeeded in becoming the most outstanding religious personality in the south, while the leaders of the other communities were not religious but political-feudal zaims.

In the middle of the seventies, Sadr drew closer to the PLO, in order to make them ease their pressure on the population (*10).

The Shiite awakening had led to grave suspicions among the Christians of the south who, as a minority in their environment, saw dangers and threats in the consolidation of a Shiite-PLO-Leftist front. The awakening also worried the Lebanese Front in Beirut who preferred to see the Shiites contained in the south instead of finding them in the north and the centre as part of a pro-Palestinian coalition under the leadership of Kamal Jumbalat. Sadr tried to keep the cooperation with the PLO limited to the absolutely necessary. In the end, "he became impatient with Palestinian provocations, so he took a decisive stand against the Palestine Liberation Organization" (*11). He prevented the Shiites from joining the anti-Syrian fighting at the end of 1976, and continued to develop the Amal militia which in many places became a counter-weight to the PLO and even succeeded in denying the Palestinians control over certain villages and towns. Faced with serious logistic problems and the lack of heavy weapons, Amal could not stop the PLO and the Left from taking over the control

of the big cities. Nevertheless, Amal never withdrew from the cities and continued to see itself as one of the security forces there. "He was the Khomeini of Lebanon. But he was an enlightened Khomeini" (*12).

Sadr recommended to his people in the villages close to or inside the Christian enclave "to remain on the land and hold on to it" (*13). He also had indirect contacts with Israel by means of messengers who met in his name with Israeli officers. In 1977, Israel "made real preparations to widen the contacts with this community, which represents the majority in the south, to negotiate with its charismatic leader, the Imam Mussa Sadr, taking into account that there was also the Iranian option" (*14). More than once, the Shiites received supporting artillery fire from the enclaves which was initiated by IDF officers. In other cases, Amal made direct contact with Major Haddad asking for artillery support which was always given (*15). Amal also supplied the IDF and Haddad's forces with intelligence information and tried very hard to create the image of the "third force" in the area.

The Shiite awakening had to be taken into account by both Israel and Haddad. From the very beginning of the cooperation between Israel and the Christians in South Lebanon, both sides reached the decision to allow the big villages like Kila, Aita a-Shaab, Adeisse and Aitaroun to stay on their land without interference, accompanied by limited and secret cooperation. After the events of 1978,

this cooperation, especially between Haddad and local Shiite forces, became stronger. Often, this trend was confronted by the open and violent hostility of the Lebanese Front in Beirut which did not want any other Lebanese force, except itself, to be a possible partner in a solution (with Israeli help) of the Lebanese problem.

In Israel, the Shiite option "was torpedoed again and again by the intelligence community who preferred, with the stubbornness of a mule, the Christian camp which, already in 1977, like a high class callgirl jumped into any bed if the price was right" (*16)".

Mussa Sadr disappeared in August 1978 during a visit to Libya with whose leader, Muamar Ghadafy, he had been at odds (*17). With his disappearance, the Shiite activity moved to Beirut and the Bekaa where Shiites now concentrated their protest efforts demanding the return of their lost Imam from Libya.

Footnotes to Chapter XII :

- *1. see Porath Elazar Papers, No. 4 , p.24
- *2. Dietl, Wilhelm : Holy War , Macmillan Publishing Company, New York 1984, p.157
- *3. Porath, Elazar Papers, No. 4 , p.25
- *4. Ajami, The Vanished Imam , p.25
- *5. see ibid. , p.48
- *6. Hodkin, E.C. : The Arabs , Oxford University Press, London 1966, p.34
- *7. Sivan, Emmanuel : Radical Islam ; Medieval Theology and Modern Politics , Am Oved Publishers, Tel Aviv 1986, p.289
- *8. ibid.
- *9. ibid.
- *10. Dozens of high ranking Iranians, all of them opponents of the Shah, at that time stayed in South Lebanon. In Tyre, the Iranian scholar, Dr. Mustafa Ali Chamran who held the official title of "Principal of the Vocational School for Shiites and Palestinians in Tyre", was in reality the liaison officer to the PLO. He was also the commander of the Amal militia and regularly took part in Palestinian activities in the area. Later, Chamran became the Defense Minister in Khomeini's Iran and was killed in the Iran-Iraq war (1981). Among those who returned to Iran in 1978 "were guerrillas trained by Al Fatah in Lebanon, including Mohammad Gharazi, the future Islamic Oil Minister,

Jalaleddin Farsi, Khomeini's special representative to the PLO, and Ayatollah Ali Janati, who had taken part in several Al Fatah operations against Israel" (Ajami, The Vanished Imam , p.224). Khomeini's sons Mostafa and Ahmad frequently visited Lebanon in the early seventies. They received political and military training in the south in both Amal and Fatah camps. Also trained by Fatah in Lebanon was Mohammad Montazeri, Ayatollah Montazeri's son, "who subsequently won notoriety as "Ayatollah Ringo" for his gun-toting antics" (Ajami, The Vanished Imam , pp.166-167).

*11. ibid. , p.178

*12. ibid.

*13. Hamiznachi, Yoram : Personal Diary , 26 January 1977

*14. Davar Daily , Tel Aviv, 7 June 1985

*15. On 1 June 1980, a rally in support of Amal took place in Aitaroun with over 3,000 Christians, Shiites and Druze taking part. Haddad spoke in support of Amal and as a result, the "United Free Lebanese Amal Forces" were created. On 23 June 1980, Haddad's forces shelled Kaakaiye a-Jisser in support of Amal who had clashed with the LAA there.

*16. Davar Daily , Tel Aviv, 7 June 1985

*17. About efforts to solve the mystery of his disappearance see Ajami, The Vanished Imam , pp.185-187

XIII. The Battles of Taibe and El Khiam

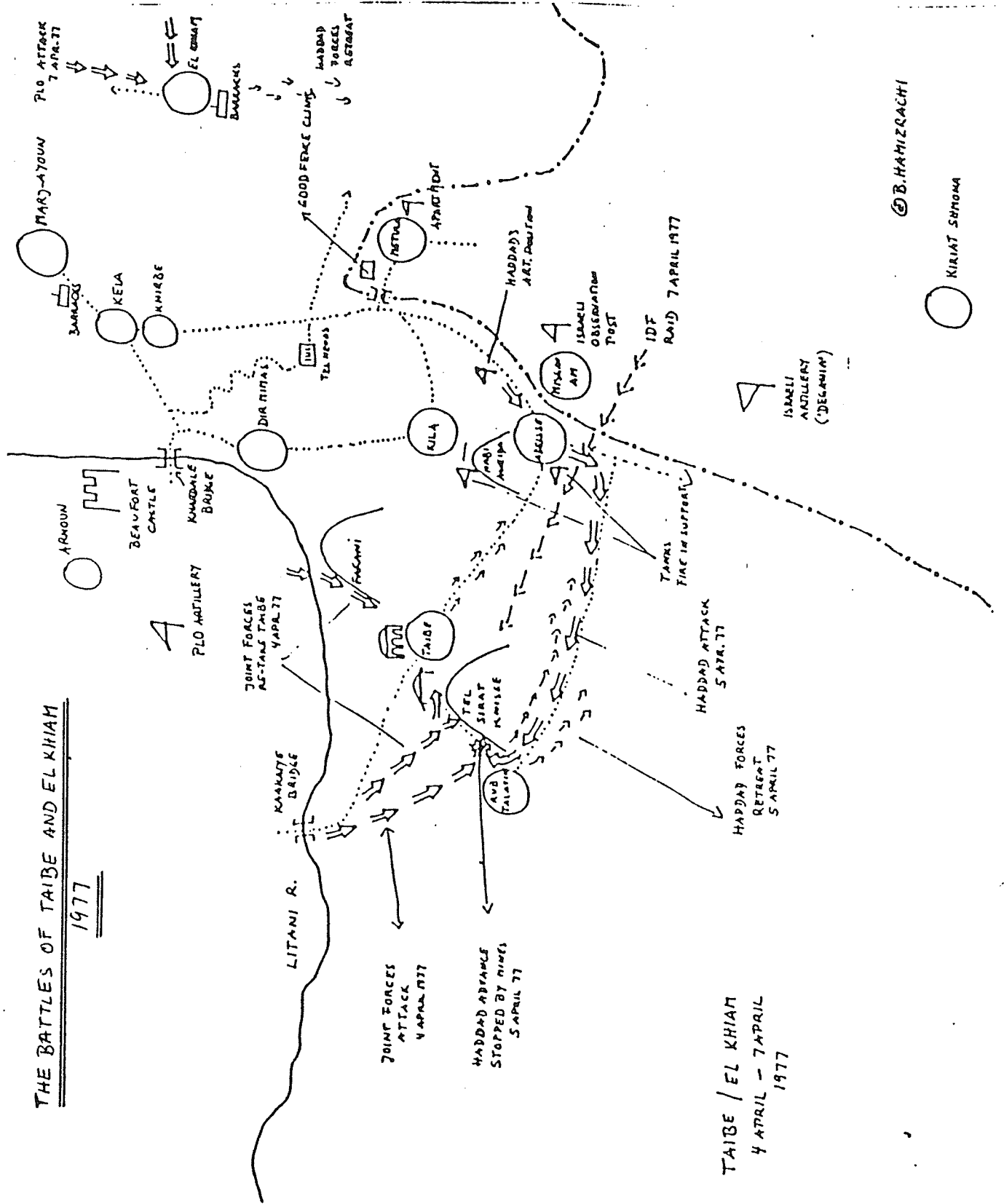
The First Battle of Taibe

On March 21, 1977, the Eastern Sector of South Lebanon and Haddad were faced with a heavy loss. Early that evening, Sergeant-Major Hirallah Salame, the commander of El Khiam and right hand man of Haddad, had taken a few of his men in an APC to attack PLO positions in the village of Ibel a-Saki which had been harassing El Khiam with DShK and machinegun fire. The M-113 APC was driven by Toni Said, a teenage red-head well-known and respected in the area and in Metula where he visited frequently.

Hirallah sat on the command hatch of the vehicle, his legs straddling the 12.7 mm heavy machinegun with which he fired bursts of tracer bullets towards the PLO positions. Fire was returned from various places around Ibel a-Saki but it was mainly inaccurate or fell short. Yet, one bullet reached its target hitting Hirallah in the thigh and cutting the main artery. The fighters with him were teenage boys belonging to the militia who did not know how to cope with the flood of blood. Nobody thought about applying a tourniquet. Moreover, instead of driving directly to the clinic of the Good Fence, the APC returned first to Kleia where Hirallah was transferred to a private car which eventually reached the Good Fence. By the time he arrived, Hirallah was dead from loss of blood.

Haddad and the Lebanese who had accompanied Hirallah

THE BATTLES OF TAIBE AND EL KHIAM
1977



TAIBE / EL KHIAM
4 APRIL - 7 APRIL
1977

⊙ B. HAMIZRACHI
○ KIRIATI SHOMA

blamed the Israeli system at the Good Fence border crossing for his death, accusing IDF soldiers and doctors of unnecessary delays. A general strike was declared throughout the Eastern Sector, and for two days, more than 400 Lebanese workers who usually crossed daily into Israel, stayed home.

Under the constant pressure of PLO artillery fire directed against the villages of the enclave and of the rumors of imminent attacks on this or that settlement of the Eastern Sector, the relationship between the Lebanese and the IDF was mended. Sergeant-Major Milad Nimer, a former member of the intelligence staff of the 1. Battalion and the organizer of the convoy of Christian soldiers from Kleia who had left the barracks of Marj-Ayoun prior to the arrival of the LAA, became the new commander of El Khiam.

At the end of March, informers from Moslem villages outside the enclave brought reports about new deployments of the PLO, especially of the Fatah battalion "Eagles of the Arkoub" under the command of Yihie Rabah and Abu Haled. According to the reports, their operational plans included the re-taking of El Khiam. Since there seemed to be no concrete time plan yet, the focus of the enclave turned in the meantime to the Shiite village of Adeisse. The situation there had steadily deteriorated since the village had joined the militias. PLO and leftist forces in the villages Taibe and Rub a-Talatin disrupted the life of the villagers with intermittent machinegun fire and the

occasional artillery shell while snipers harassed the population from the fortifications on Tel Sirat Knisse, northwest of the village, on a rocky hill overlooking the area. The sniping became so bad that the villagers could no longer approach the communal well in order to draw water.

In order to raise the morale in the Eastern Sector and especially in Adeisse, Colonel "Fuad" suggested to Haddad that some kind of positive action was imperative. The village of Taibe seemed to be the ideal objective. Its conquest would put an end to the harassment of Adeisse and enlarge the area under Christian control while the elimination of the Tel Sirat Knisse position would encourage the militias to use the South Lebanon Highway towards the west and perhaps even to link up with the Central Sector.

The Shiite village of Taibe was situated on the road junction leading to the Kaakaiye bridge and the pumping installation of the Litani river, and it lay just opposite Kibbutz Misgav-Am which housed a number of sensitive IDF installations.

As in most Moslem villages, the centre of Taibe was the market square with its nearby rainwater pond which served the local cow and goat herds as their source of drinking water. The local women used the pond to wash clothes and dishes. It was, therefore, a common picture to see a number of cows wade into the water for a drink and a bath while just beside them and with the same water women cleaned their pots and pans.

In the north of the village rose the rocky and barren hillside of El Fakhani which overlooked the Litani River, the southern flank of the Beaufort Castle and parts of the Announ Plateau. This area where the Litani turns westwards is known as the Litani Knee.

In March 1977, most of the villagers had deserted Taibe which was now dominated by armed Leftists from different organizations, a small PLO force and a few members of the LAA. Altogether, there was a force of about 100 men in the village while another twenty were stationed at the position of Tel Sirat Knisse.

Colonel Fuad went ahead with the operational plans for the attack, his young intelligence officer, Lieutenant Eiran, preparing maps and aerial photographs for Haddad and his assistants. But the Lebanese did not pay much attention and preferred to do their planning from their personal knowledge of the area. The IDF officers were astonished by this "disregard for fundamental military principles, while Haddad for his part brushed aside ... attempts at detailed briefings with the claim that the Israelis complicate everything" (*1). Haddad appointed Riskallah Fheili commander of the attack force. The young cadet had recently been promoted to Second Lieutenant and was eager to get his first taste of combat.

In the night of 29 March, Haddad's force was ready and waiting in the outskirts of Adeisse. The force consisted of about 40 infantry men, mainly from Adeisse and Kila (both

Shiite villages), mounted on three M-113 and two BTR-152 APCs, a jeep with a 106 mm recoilless rifle and one AMX-13 light tank. The reserve force included an M-113 APC and a number of jeeps with either recoilless rifles or heavy machineguns.

Just before dawn, Lieutenant Rizkallah Fheili started his advance along the Adeise-Markabe road turning into the narrow twisting road to Rub a-Talatin, south of Tel Sirat Knisse. By daylight, he had reached the village and was now advancing rapidly towards his objective.

While Colonel Fuad observed the operation from the IDF position in Kibbutz Misgav Am, and Haddad from the Nabi Aweida Hill where he had positioned the tank of Abu Hater to give supporting fire, the author followed the attack from the main water reservoir of Kibbutz Misgav Am which lies directly opposite Tel Sirat Knisse. Rizkallah and his men had just reached the slopes of the hill, when they were detected and a heavy machinegun opened fire on them. Abu Hater's tank immediately shelled the position while Haddad ordered his mortars in the rear to lay a barrage on the northern part of Tel Sirat Knisse and the village of Taibe. Rizkallah and his men stormed the trenches and bunkers and cleared them in a matter of minutes. Six armed Leftists were killed, one was taken prisoner.

The position on Tel Sirat Knisse secured, the way was now open for the armoured attack on Taibe which was led by Sergeant-Major Francis Rizk from Kleia in an AMX-13,

followed by Haddad in an M-113 APC. The force encountered no resistance and reached Rub a-Talatin where it turned on to the dirt road leading to the pumping station of Taibe from where it opened fire on Taibe. Then, the force advanced to the large stone palace of the el-Assad family and systematically took out the last few pockets of resistance in the village. The force of Haddad in Taibe received supporting fire from the 122 mm gun which had been positioned on the South Lebanon Highway just outside of Adeisse and a few metres away from the Israeli border. A number of farmers from Metula who worked in their orchards nearby looked on and encouraged the gunners with shouts and thumbs-up signs.

At 8:54, Haddad reported to Colonel Fuad that Taibe was in his hands. The conquerers were running through the deserted streets of the village shooting into the air, the "fantasia" of the victory.

The "Battle of Taibe" had been the result of Colonel Fuad's attempts to boost the morale of the area. In Beirut, though, where not too much was known about the personal relations with and sometimes manipulations of the Israeli officers of ADAL, the events took on a different meaning. "Observers close to President Sarkis believe that the Christian commanders in the south are trying to gain as much territory as they can before the newly appointed commander of the Lebanese Army, Brigadier-General Victor Khoury, can put together a military force strong enough to take over the

south" (*2).

It is very probable that Colonel Fuad had taken into account not only the morale of the area but also the strategic position of Taibe which overlooked and therefore controlled the South Lebanon Highway leading to the district town of Bint Jebel in the west where Palestinian forces were stationed. Taibe also blocked the road to Nabatiye on the Announ Plateau where PLO units were concentrated.

Soon after the battle, the South Lebanon Highway became a major traffic artery with excited Lebanese from the enclave rushing to the conquered village and soldiers and militiamen driving in the opposite direction returning from Taibe to their homes to tell the story of the battle.

Haddad's men found some 25 dead in Taibe, almost all of them Palestinians, and large amounts of equipment including a "Charioteer" tank of the LAA, a 120 mm mortar, a number of DShK heavy machineguns as well as small arms and ammunition. Haddad's forces had suffered only one casualty and he was only slightly wounded.

Sergeant-Major Maaruf Abu Rahal from Kleia was appointed commander of Taibe responsible for the organization of the defenses there. But Abu Rahal was confronted with considerable difficulties. The majority of fighters were busy looting the village and hauling the newly acquired property home to their own villages. Others became restless when, towards the evening, no food had reached them yet. So, most of them left for home to eat but never

returned. The few men left with Abu Rahal did not bother to take defensive measures or to set up a perimeter. Over the next few days, this situation did not improve. Most of the soldiers and militiamen sent there to defend the village, left with nightfall while the few who stayed passed the night in one of the empty houses of the village.

A few days after the "liberation" of Taibe, Haddad finally agreed to Colonel Fuad's suggestion to lead a "victory patrol" from Adeisse along the South Lebanon Highway which runs alongside the international border, towards the west. The mobile patrol consisted of one light tank, two APCs and a jeep.

The small convoy climbed the road towards the village of Markabe where local dignitaries and villagers turned out and received the visitors with applause. From there the patrol continued to the "Observation Post Markabe"-UN position on the Israeli-Lebanese border. Haddad spoke to a pair of UN observers "but they had no idea who we were or why we were there and where we had come from. They were completely confused about who was who and where in the area" (*3).

When the patrol neared the village of Hula (*4), the terror-stricken villagers fled in all directions. Haddad stopped some of them, explaining that this was a friendly visit. "Tell your people to return home, nothing will happen to them" (*5). In the meantime, he continued to Meis el-Jabel and Bleida where the Christian commander and his

men were well received. Haddad was invited to the house of the mukhtar where coffee and sweets were offered while the villagers covered the vehicles of the soldiers outside with almond branches which at that time of the year were heavy with green almonds, a delicacy in South Lebanon.

The convoy then cautiously approached the village of Aitaroun which had sent word that it had no intention of cooperating with the enclave. When two men were discovered lying in a nearby field, nobody waited to find out what their intentions were but opened fire. One man died on the spot while the other succeeded in getting away. The patrol did not continue any further but the tank took up position training its gun at the village. "I told them to fire over the roofs of the houses. I did not want to harm them, only to scare them" (*6). This accomplished, the patrol turned around and headed back home. When they reached Hula for the second time, the whole village was assembled in the square receiving Haddad with songs and applause showering the men with rice and sweets, the traditional signs of welcome.

Haddad returned, satisfied with the overall success of the first patrol which had ventured outside the small area under his control. The next patrol was planned for two days later but by then everything had changed.

The PLO attack started at about midnight, 4 April 1977, and was directed against Tel Sirat Knisse. The first reports about fighting in the Taibe area came from Adeisse which was then confirmed by the IDF positions in Kibbutz

Misgav Am. Maaruf Abu Rahal with soldiers from the villages of the enclave was in Taibe while Jubrayel Assaf held Tel Sirat Knisse with his tank and a number of men.

At the time, early April 1977, Haddad had not yet been able to organize some kind of standing reserve for emergencies. The only one who was usually ready with his APC and crew, was Rafael Rafael. Now he answered Haddad's call and advanced towards Adeisse.

Haddad then called the "Apartment" over the field-telephone pleading for Israeli intervention. "When they refused, I got crazy. I lost my nerves, I shouted into the phone. I don't remember what I said but Colonel Fuad later claimed that I had cursed Israel. I did not know what to do. In the end Israel fired a few flares but no explosive shells" (*7).

In the meantime, Rafael Rafael had reached Adeisse where he met the soldiers of Taibe who had withdrawn in a hurry. Under these circumstances, the APC advanced just to the outskirts of the village from where he opened machinegun fire at Tel Sirat Knisse.

The soldiers on the hill had not heard anything until the first shots were fired at their position. While Jubrayel Assaf jumped into his tank trying desperately to get its motor running, the other men left the position and ran back to Adeisse. Now, only Jubrayel Assaf and Hassan Abu Rafah were left to defend the hill. The enemy fire raked the bunkers of the position and the tank which was

still not working. Assaf, unnerved by the sudden attack, the flight of his fellow soldiers and his useless tank, gave up and withdrew. Hassan Abu Rafah, now all by himself, tried to hold the attackers at bay. The staccato of his machinegun could be heard for some time before it suddenly fell silent.

Francis Rizk who had been with his tank inside Taibe had advanced in the direction of Tel Sirat Knisse in order to give supporting fire. But when he came close to the Assad palace (Kasser el-Assad) he was fired at and realized that the building was already in the hands of the PLO. He quickly withdrew and was one of the last defenders of Taibe to reach the safety of Adeisse.

The PLO counter-attack was not just another military move but had the blessing of Syria and therefore constituted a major change in the relationship between the former enemies. "Yasser Arafat, head of the Palestine Liberation Organization, and General Najji Jamil, Syrian deputy defense minister and the highest ranking Syrian officer in Lebanon, met just behind the front line in Nabatiye, where the Palestinians have their regional headquarters. Zohair Mohsen, head of Al Saiqa, the Syrian-controlled commando organization, also attended the meeting. The offensive started shortly after midnight, a few hours after the three men met" (*8).

Palestinian officers told reporters who visited the area after the battle that "Al Fatah, the largest of half a

dozen Palestinian guerrilla groups, was fighting side by side in that area with As Saiqa... During the 19-month civil war As Saiqa and Al Fatah often fought each other, and Al Fatah officers often charged that Syrian officers and men were fighting in As Saiqa ranks" (*9).

The anger about the defeat erupted when one tank crew from Kleia which made its way home, passed an innocent villager from Adeisse walking along the road near Tel Nehas. The tank stopped. The crew jumped down and grabbed the surprised man accusing him and fellow Shiites of the area of having betrayed them to the PLO. Before the man could defend himself, he was shot point blank, and the tank ran over his body so many times that nothing recognizable was left of him.

The Second Battle of Taibe and the Loss of El Khiam

The fall of Taibe had a devastatingly demoralizing effect on the area. Haddad was depressed and angry that he had received no support from Israel. Colonel Fuad tried to steer his anger into another direction by implying that the new Commander-in-Chief of the Lebanese Army, Victor Khoury, had congratulated Saiqa forces on their success in Taibe. Haddad immediately sent an angry message over the wireless to Army HQ in Yarze. General Khoury sent an uncoded wire back denying the accusation and adding "Stop behaving like a child!" (*10) Colonel Fuad then began to convince Haddad

that a counter-attack on Taibe as quickly as possible would be the solution to the dark mood in the area. In the end, Haddad agreed to the counter-attack on the very next day, 5 April 1977.

In preparation for the operation a number of new M-4/M-50 Sherman tanks and great amounts of ammunition were delivered to the enclave.

Haddad was worried about the possibility that the PLO had in the meantime mined the approaches to Taibe but Colonel Fuad assured him that the operation would take the enemy by surprise and would be an easy victory.

The attack force concentrated in Adeisse. The artillery was in place and ready. This time, the Israeli artillery was going to give supporting fire moving in stages from one target to the next. Haddad was given the code-word which would stop the barrage on one target and move it on : "Deganiah" (cornflower).

The advance was supposed to start with first light but by then the whole area was shrouded in dense fog. "We waited but the fog did not disperse. In the end, we decided to go on with it anyway" (*11).

Haddad was in the leading APC commanded by Rafael Rafael. They were followed by the APC of Tanus Said and by Daibes Daibes in one of the new tanks. The artillery of the enclave and of Israel opened fire. "Immediately, we had the first wounded. My APC had advanced with the rear door open and the Druze Nabie Saliba was hit in the leg by shrapnel.

Because of the fog, the artillery spotters could barely see us and the shells fell too close" (*12).

When Haddad's APC turned into the dirt road leading to Tel Sirat Knisse, it struck a mine. As he said: "I hit my head on something and blood started running down my face" (*13). The second APC which followed close behind, also hit a mine. The attack ground to a halt. RPG, DShK and machinegun fire opened up on the static force. Haddad and the crew of the APC consisting only of Rafael Rafael and Elias Shdid, jumped out of the rear door and returned fire. The fourth member of the crew, sixteen year old Elias Tanus, was paralyzed with fear and refused to leave the vehicle.

The tanks had seen the two lead APCs strike mines and kept well to the rear. Farajallah Daibes tried to manouver his tank closer to Haddad but withdrew when he came under RPG fire. Tanus Said and his crew had left their immobilized APC and made their way back to Adeisse. The only ones left from the attacking force were Haddad and the two other men of his APC. Young Tanus Said could not be counted on.

"They fired at us and we returned fire. But we could not move from the APC, the fire was too heavy, and the APC covered at least our back. Then I felt something hot and soft hit my left shoulder. I looked and it was the brain of Elias Shdid splattered all over my jacket. Soon afterwards, Rafael Rafael was hit in the head. I was alone" (*14).

Karamallah Said tried to reach Haddad crawling on his

belly but was turned back by the heavy fire. Then Michael Fheili approached with his APC. "He almost reached me. I signalled to him to come right up to me because I could not move. I was pinned down by the fire. I would have been killed on the spot. I wanted him to come closer and open the rear door for me. But suddenly, he turned and drove away. This was very hard for me, and until today I don't like Michael Fheili. Somebody who sees his leader in danger and does not come to rescue him?! I still hate him. This incident hardened me. I was alone now, and I knew I had to get out of there" (*15).

Haddad was armed with his Israeli "Galil" rifle, a personal present of DC Northern Command, General Rafael "Rafal" Eitan. Now, he also picked up the M-16 rifle of one of the dead men, put both on automatic fire and leaving his fingers on the triggers, he ran. It was only about 800 meters to the safety of Adeisse but he felt completely exhausted. He fell down and continued to crawl through a wheat field. Somewhere, he came upon Nabie Saliba, the first casualty of the operation who had left Haddad's APC after being wounded. They crawled together towards the road leading to Adeisse. The fog had lifted. It was already early afternoon. The sky was dark with clouds and it began to drizzle when Haddad finally reached the village. An APC picked him and Nabie Saliba up and brought them to the Good Fence (*16).

Except for a few scratches and bruises Haddad was

mainly exhausted from his ordeal and the overall disappointment. Colonel Fuad and General Raful who had arrived at the Good Fence worried about his fate, decided to send him for a few days to an Israeli hospital to give him a good rest. Haddad refused to go but gave in when Raful promised him that he would personally take care of the enclave during Haddad's absence. "Before the ambulance left, I told Raful that it would be on his conscience if something happened to the villages of the enclave, if another place would fall into the hands of the PLO. But he told me not to worry. I was angry and disappointed. I had nearly been killed and nobody from the Israeli side had tried to help me. Even if I had been killed, they should have come to get my body" (*17).

Haddad never again took part personally in the fighting. It was obvious from his behaviour that he had become afraid though he tried to justify this decision by claiming "I learned from Taibe that it had been a mistake for me to take part in the battle. If I had been in the rear, I could have directed my forces and we would have won. A commander should be in a place where he can command" (*18). This was a strange comment coming from an officer of Haddad's rank and training. During his advanced training course in the USA, for example, Haddad had attended the United States Army Infantry School at Fort Benning, Georgia, whose logo is "Follow Me" (*19).

During the night of 7 April 1977, Lieutenant Colonel

Moshe "Mussa" Atar, one of the officers of the "Apartment", picked Haddad up at the hospital and drove him to the IDF command post in Kibbutz Misgav-Am from where he was to observe an IDF operation. Following heavy shelling of Tel Sirat Knisse, an IDF unit was to cross the border, take the position and turn it over to Haddad's men. While everybody was watching the first shells explode on the hill, news came that El Khiam was under PLO attack. The IDF soldiers who were to take the hill were ordered to abort the original plan and instead to blow up Jubrayel Assaf's stalled tank and the two abandoned APCs and to return to Israeli territory. Haddad who was supposed to return to the hospital after the operation was whisked away to his command post in Kleia (*20).

Sergeant-Major Milad Nimer, who had become the commander of El Khiam after Hirallah Salame's death, reported to Haddad over the wireless that the unexpected attack had taken the small garrison by surprise and that it had withdrawn to the barracks from where it was defending itself.

Haddad tried to get a relief force together but the men refused to go. "I could not force them because it was not like a regular army where the commander gives an order and it is carried out" (*21). This was one of the difficulties, Haddad had to cope with. As the commander of a force consisting of former Lebanese soldiers and volunteers, he had to rely more on his power of persuasion and on the good

will of his force members than on the power of his command in order to get results. Though Haddad preferred to refer to his men as "Christian militia" which suggests some kind of orderly framework, in reality he was the leader of a very loosely knit group of fighting men. Often frustrated by the outright refusal to carry out an order, Haddad called in the ADAL commander or one of his officers whose orders carried more weight because they represented the wish of Israel. ADAL orders were always carried out.

Milad Nimer's brother George drove his tank to Bab a-Tnieh (*22) to cover the retreat of the beleaguered force which withdrew to Hamamis Hill and from there to the Tapline Road and Kleia. Raimond Abu Daher who had manned the communications room in the barracks of El Khiam had missed the withdrawal, but alerted by Kleia finally made his way back to safety. Two soldiers of the enclave were killed in the short battle.

The escalation of the fighting in the south worried the leadership of the "Lebanese Front" who appealed to Arab governments to use force if necessary to bring the PLO in South Lebanon under control. The appeal raised the political tension between Syria and the "Lebanese Front" who had been military and political allies against the Palestinians during the civil war (*23).

A statement issued by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine declared that El Khiam "has fallen as the result of an attack launched in accordance with a set

plan to clear all positions in the south from isolationist (right-wing) forces and Israelis" (*24). The leader of the assault on El Khiam, Captain Mussa Iraqi, told reporters who visited the town after the battle that the orders were to break through the security belt (*25).

In Jerusalem, Foreign Minister Yigal Allon, said in a television interview that Israel would not tolerate attacks by Palestinians in South Lebanon against mainly Christian villages "which we consider friendly to Israel. We will not permit the slaughter of Christian civilians within our reach" (*26). This statement was the first public warning directed by a member of the Israeli government towards the Palestinians and their allies in the South.

The two defeats, Taibe and El Khiam, were the result of mistaken local situation evaluations by both Haddad and his IDF advisors. Haddad's attempts to organize a reasonable defense in both towns had failed. The force in Taibe was small, unorganized and heterogeneous. It leaned mainly on Tel Sirat Knisse which had originally been a Lebanese army fortification designed to defend the border section opposite Kibbutz Misgav-Am and the approaches to Taibe, northwest of the position, against Israel. A similar situation existed in El Khiam where the local force was concentrated in the army barracks south of the town overlooking the Israeli border and not north of El Khiam facing the enemy. Those approaches were open.

On top of Tel Sirat Knisse, Haddad positioned a tank

without adequate protection like anti-personal mines and barbed wire. Unlike the enemy, the Taibe force did not lay ambushes nor did it send out reconnaissance patrols in the immediate vicinity. Haddad did not prepare a so-called S.O.S. (emergency) fire plan for his artillery pieces. The guns that had taken part in the original assault of Haddad's forces had been towed back to Kleia. Haddad was under the impression that the two tanks, one on Tel Sirat Knisse and the second one in Taibe, had sufficient fire power. There were no mortars in or around the town. Haddad's military education and training did not show in the organization of the two key positions, Taibe and El Khiam, and Haddad did not demonstrate the ability of a senior officer (relative to the Lebanese army) to control small irregular forces and to coordinate them.

The Israeli advisory system had also failed since it had mainly been concentrated on the organization of the cooperation of the Lebanese border villages. At that stage though, Israeli officers did not yet directly participate in the military events. The general assumption was that Haddad was capable of making the right decisions on the local tactical level and that he was brave and experienced.

General Rafael "Rafal" Eitan writes in his autobiography : "Haddad is brave, full of self-confidence, sometimes even exaggerating. Ignoring objective evaluations, he did not recognize his limitations. The Christians in the north ignored him and did not understand

the extent of the opportunity for uniting their army. He fought alone, learning the taste of success and failure" (*27).

The Israelis showed a tendency to underestimate the abilities of the Leftists and Palestinians who attacked Taibe and El Khiam. They did neither pass on nor correctly evaluate intelligence information on the intentions of the Joint Forces (*28) and believed that the closeness of the Israeli border would prevent them from attacking.

Israel also failed to fully understand the changes in Lebanon where Syria returned to her role as the main protector, supplier and operator of the Leftist-Palestinian coalition.

The unsuccessful counter-attack on Taibe, 5 April 1977, turned into a tragic farce instead of being a heroic battle. The armoured force of Haddad, inferior in manpower but superior in fire power, supported by the local and Israeli artillery, did not manage to penetrate Taibe. The advance was stopped by mines at the foot of Tel Sirat Knisse, a distance of no more than one kilometer from the outskirts of Adeisse. The Israeli Defense Forces did not know at the time that "the Joint Forces operated in the framework of a battalion, coordinating their artillery on the Announ Plateau and near the Kaakaiye Bridge. The attack was launched following night and day reconnaissance and intelligence information about Taibe which stated that Israeli forces were not involved in the defence of the town"

(*29).

The defeats shocked Haddad and formed his opinion that the place of the commander was in the rear. This created hostility between him and many of his aides, mainly from Kleia "who from the beginning did not want to sit in Taibe or fight for the Shiites of El Khiam" (*30). It also created antagonism between Haddad and Colonel Fuad because of Haddad's accusations against Israel and the IDF who had failed to rush to his rescue.

The defeats eroded the image of Haddad and his men in the eyes of the Israeli officers. From then on, many Israeli officers stopped believing in the fighting ability of the Lebanese militia and preferred to see them in defensive roles. Haddad's personal behaviour which would have been utterly unacceptable for an officer of the same rank in the IDF, changed the personal attitude of many Israeli officers from respect to scorn and ridicule.

Footnotes to Chapter XIII :

- *1. Hamizrachi, Road to Beirut , p.213
- *2. New York Times , 4 April 1977
- *3. Haddad, Tape 28, Side 1
- *4. The village of Hula was famous in the area for its strong support of the Communist Party. Many of the young villagers over the years have received their higher education in the USSR. There is a South Lebanon saying "When it rains in Moscow, in Hula they open their umbrellas".
- *5. Haddad, Tape 28, Side 1
- *6. ibid.
- *7. ibid.
- *8. The Globe and Mail , 5 April 1977
- *9. The New York Times , 6 April 1977
- *10. Personal knowledge
- *11. Haddad, Tape 28, Side 1
- *12. ibid., Side 2
- *13. ibid.
- *14. ibid.
- *15. ibid.
- *16. Haddad insisted, it was one of his, a Lebanese APC. I had been at the Good Fence clinic from the start of the operation. I had watched the wounded coming in and listened to their stories. Haddad's driver, Abu Eli, who had been in the APC of Tanus Said arrived with a bullet wound to his

arm. He had to be bodily restrained from returning to the battlefield "to retrieve the body of Haddad". In the afternoon, word came that Haddad was alive and on his way to the Good Fence. I left the clinic and waited beside the gate in the border fence. It was an Israeli APC that brought Haddad in. The IDF soldiers who had been looking for Haddad now rushed him on a stretcher to the clinic while worried Lebanese crowded around.

*17. Haddad, Tape 28, Side 2

*18. Haddad, Tape 29, Side 1

*19. United States Army, Intelligence Handbook, ST 7-15 1 FY 72, United States Army Infantry School, Fort Benning, Georgia, coverpage.

*20. The successful Israeli commando raid on Tel Sirat Knisse (7 April 1977) was accomplished without any casualties but because of the circumstances went unnoticed in the area. Because of the political circumstances and the policy of the then government of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin who did not want to be too deeply involved in Lebanon, the operation was kept secret until 1985. In reality, the IDF raided Tel Sirat Knisse mainly in order to demolish the tank and the APCs there, sparing Haddad and Israel the embarrassment of having an Israeli-supplied tank fall into the hands of the PLO and being shown to the world. As it happened, journalists were shown a few Israeli-made rifles, Israeli canned food and Matza Bread which had been supplied to the Christians instead of regular bread because of the

Pessah holiday.

*21. Haddad, Tape 29, Side 1

*22. Bab a-Tnieh is a former customs building from the Mandate period on the road leading from the Tapline road north along the foot of Hamamis.

*23. The New York Times , 8 April 1977

*24. The Globe and Mail , 8 April 1977

*25. ibid. , 9 April 1977

*26. The New York Times , 13 April 1977

*27. Eitan, Story of a Soldier , p.156

*28. This name was given to a group of Palestinian and Lebanese fighting men, often of very wide apart political tendencies, from 30,000 to 35,000 combatants. Chami, Joseph G. and Castoriades, Gerard : Days of Tragedy, Lebanon 75-76 , Beirut, no publisher, p.387

*29. Talks with Lebanese in the house of Naama Khaidar, Markabe, February 1979

*30. Francis Rizk, Tape 2, Side 1 , Winnipeg, August 1985

XIV. Further Expansion : Shuba and El Meri (*1)

A short time after the fall of Taibe and El Khiam and the arrival of Major Shidiak, the structure and command of ADAL was changed. Colonel Fuad was about to end his tour of duty in the Northern Command. Together with General Raful he worked out a new structural plan which divided ADAL into two sectors, the Eastern Sector and the Western Sector, the latter uniting the former central and western sectors (*2). A number of officers, all of them experienced intelligence experts who had been part of ADAL since its beginning, were also looking for transfers to other units. The service in the secret ADAL unit was far from professionally rewarding because the unit had not yet been given a place in the military command hierarchy. As such, it was a kind of IDF-stepchild. The fact that Haddad and his men had emerged from the events of spring 1977 as a bunch of losers did not contribute to the status and morale of the Israelis who worked with them.

In spring 1976, Colonel Fuad received General Raful's permission to call to special reserve duty Captain Yoram Hamizrachi, a resident of Metula and a personal friend of Raful, Fuad and Haddad. This, and the duties assigned to Captain Hamizrachi, was probably done without the knowledge of the Government. Captain Yoram, the Israeli TV-correspondent in northern Israel, had been involved, on a voluntary basis, in the activities of ADAL since 1976.

Captain Yoram's first duty was to deal with was the issue of morale in the enclave. The Eastern Sector was under constant artillery fire from the Announ Plateau (rockets and long-range artillery), the Arkoub (long-range artillery), El Khiam and the Nakkars (medium and heavy mortars and DShK) and the Beaufort Castle (direct fire of anti-tank and anti-aircraft guns, heavy machineguns). As a result of this war of attrition which often consisted of day-long shelling and sometimes of sporadic machinegun fire, almost all normal activities in the enclave had come to a halt. Schools were closed, stores shut their doors, and Lebanese who worked in Israel risked their lives every day they tried to reach the Good Fence. Farmers who until then had been able to work in the Ayoun Valley, in the olive groves of Kila and along the banks of the Litani River now were kept away by the continuous fire and watched helplessly as their crops went up in flames. IDF veterinarians were often called to attend to wounded livestock. Water was supplied by tankers which filled up at the special pipeline laid from Metula to the Good Fence. Electricity was cut off most of the time. Each day the number of wounded Lebanese and damaged houses rose. Under these conditions, the four Christian villages and the Shiite village of Adeisse changed their way of life (*3). Families moved into basements which had become fortified shelters. Some found refuge in churches, school-basements and former Lebanese army fortifications. They "lived like moles, afraid of the day

and afraid of the night, without hope for the future (*4)".

Israel did not intervene during the early stages of the attrition (*5) though she sent occasional armored night patrols into the area which served as a morale booster for the Christians and as a warning for their enemies. IDF officers and soldiers who took part in these night patrols wore regular IDF uniforms. ADAL officers, because of the clandestine nature of their duty, usually wore civilian clothes when they visited the enclaves. Officers of the Apartment spent a few hours each night in the Operations Room in the heart of Kleia which was run by Haddad and Sergeant-Major Fares Fheili (older brother of Lieutenant Rizkallah Fheili), a former Lebanese army NCO. The officers also spent time in the Communications Centre in Kleia which was managed by Sergeant Rasan and volunteer women and girls who operated the radios and field telephones.

There was no logic in having the Operations Room and the Communications Centre in Kleia. From a military point of view, it would have been more desirable to have them moved into the barracks of Marj Ayoun but the soldiers of Kleia refused to "surrender" them to Marj Ayoun, and besides, everybody was afraid to stay in the barracks because of their vulnerability to the guns on the Announ Plateau. Because of this and because of the fact that most soldiers came from Kleia, also all the tanks, the motorpool, the fuel depot, the ammunition dump and most of the artillery were stationed in Kleia.

Captain Yoram, together with Captain Avi Gletzer and Lieutenant Napso Azat, a Circassian IDF officer, started by spending most of their time with the Lebanese inside the villages especially during periods of shelling, which was highly appreciated by the inhabitants and served as a morale booster. At this time of generally great hardship Haddad approached Israel with the request to build a radio-station with which he would be able to reach not only his own people but also other areas of Lebanon. The IDF rejected this request because of the opposition of the Lebanese Forces in Juniah and their Mossad sponsors who were afraid that a radio station would give Haddad too much political propaganda power.

During the negotiations, Colonel Fuad suggested that the IDF transfer to Haddad a complete mobile radio transmitter which had originally been purchased by Israel for her Kurdish allies in Iraq (*6) who enjoyed Israeli support during the late sixties and the early seventies when they rose against the Iraqi government. This request was refused, but the negative Israeli reply did not stop Haddad. He continued to look for a way to build his own radio station and finally introduced Sharbal Yunis, a young radio technician from Marj Ayoun to the officers of the Apartment. Yunis claimed that he would be able to build a short range, medium wave transmitter. Haddad also drew the attention of the Israeli officers to the fact that military radio equipment had been left behind in the now deserted barracks

of Marj Ayoun and that perhaps some parts could be salvaged. During the night, the equipment was transferred to Israel, checked and returned as unusable (*7).

Sharbel Yunis continued to work on his project. Apartment officers and Shmuel Ohana, deputy mayor of Kiriath Shmona, showed their support by purchasing tubes and spare parts from an electronics junkyard in Haifa. Finally, the transmitter was ready. It was however very weak and its signals could hardly be heard outside the enclave. The first broadcast started with the Lebanese national anthem which brought Haddad to tears. But then the signal faded and Haddad's pre-recorded message could not be heard. The transmitter was located in the former Officers Club in Marj Ayoun and was left unguarded during the night. Two days later, it was totally wrecked. Haddad claimed but could never prove that the transmitter had been sabotaged by jealous soldiers from Kleia because it had started its broadcast with the station identification "This is the Voice of Besieged South Lebanon from Marj Ayoun". Kleia had not been mentioned. This was the end of Haddad's attempts to give the south its own voice (*8).

Another Israeli initiative aimed at improving morale in the besieged enclaves was the establishment of military courses for young Lebanese women and girls. These courses were held in great secrecy in a military camp in northern Israel where the girl-soldiers went through basic training, first aid instructions, and radio and telephone operation.

After their return to the enclaves, many of the new soldiers played an active role in the defense of the area by serving in command posts and manning roadblocks. The girls had been equipped with "Port Said" submachineguns, the Egyptian version of the Swedish "Carl Gustav" which had fallen into Israeli hands during the wars with Egypt. After some time, these weapons completely vanished. Haddad claimed that they had been sold on the black market but it is more plausible that the majority had been dismantled and hidden in homes for use "on a rainy day".

The events of Taibe and El Khiam had been followed by a propaganda effort by the PLO who guided reporters on tours through the captured towns. This led to a "counter-attack" by the Israeli side. On 8 April 1977, Haddad's existence was publicly revealed and for the first time he was introduced to a small selected group of journalists. The place chosen for the seemingly "impromptu" press conference was the military gate in the border fence, about 200 metres west of the Good Fence. This first encounter with the press immediately revealed the media personality of Haddad : he spoke acceptable English and his words left the impression of patriotism and toughness. During his first interview he said :

We have felt the weight of Syria influencing the terrorists, so they will dominate the small number of Lebanese citizens who wave the Lebanese flag, those who have the honor of bearing the Lebanese

flag and waving it higher and higher... I call the world to come to our aid and I call on all the Lebanese people to work for the liberation of Lebanon, through force of arms if necessary. Lebanon must preserve her honor for Lebanon is a nation of honor and freedom (*9)".

While the Lebanese soldiers and militiamen wore uniforms issued by the IDF, Haddad made a point of wearing his Lebanese uniform with Lebanese rank insignia. The only IDF part of his uniform was a winter parka known in Israel as "Dubon". This was also the way the world came to know him, a Lebanese major in Lebanese uniform. In this first interview the myth of the strong leader was born, the courageous fighter who knew no fear and who was loved and respected by all his people.

In early May 1977, the terrorists and Leftists increased their pressure on the eastern enclave by stepping up their artillery bombardments though they did not attempt to attack directly any of the villages. Against this background, the Israeli involvement deepened. The ADAL officers spent more and more time in the Lebanese villages, first only during the night but gradually also during the day. These visits gave the Israeli officers the opportunity to better know and understand the Lebanese they worked with and the situation on the other side of the border. It also made them the de facto commanders of the Lebanese in the field.

The Lebanese-Israeli relations, so strange in the Middle Eastern context, and the military and human aspects of the South Lebanon story were good copy. Local and foreign journalists crowded the hotels in Metula. Ultimately, the media interest expressed itself in daily reports in the Israeli press and on TV, and created in the mind of the Israeli public a sense of deep sympathy and solidarity with its Lebanese neighbors. The feeling of solidarity was reciprocal and expressed itself, for example, in a message of condolence sent by Haddad to the Israeli Chief of Staff, Lieutenant-General Motta Gur, following the crash of an air force helicopter during manouvers near the Dead Sea (May 1977) in which 54 soldiers were killed. "I hope, this is the last disaster and the last sadness to befall the inhabitants of the enclaves and your people", wrote Haddad (*10).

The increase of artillery fire on the villages of the enclave and especially on Marj Ayoun finally forced Haddad to move with his family from the spacious and modern rooms to the basement flat of his house. The windows and doors were fortified with so many sandbags and ammunition boxes filled with stones that it was nicknamed "Stalingrad (*11)".

The nearly complete siege of the area and the constant bombardments with their casualties made Captain Yoram look for ways to ease the pressure somewhat. At the end of June 1977, Northern Command agreed to the plan of sending a mobile patrol to the village of Shuba on the slopes of Mount

Hermon. Recently and for its own strategic purposes, the IDF had completed the construction of a road leading from the border to the centre of the village, and there were plans to install in the vicinity a clinic like that at the Good Fence which would serve the villagers and the shepherds of the area. Since there had been no major movement of Haddad's men since the mobile patrol just prior to the fall of Taibe, the plan was also seen as a means to lift the morale of the fighters. Haddad reacted favorably to the proposal.

Led by Haddad and Captain Yoram, a small convoy crossed the Good Fence into Israeli territory and then into the military zone at Har Dov reaching the border above Shuba. The convoy consisted of an APC, a light truck and a jeep all flying large Lebanese flags, and kept in radio contact with Fares Fheili and his artillery batteries in case of fighting in the village. But the patrol entered the village without any incident. Most of the houses lay in ruins after years of Israeli retaliatory bombardments. Haddad gathered the villagers in the central square and warned them of collaborating with the PLO and Leftists. His men hoisted a Lebanese flag on the pinnacle of the local mosque and Haddad warned them not to take it down. "Otherwise, I will destroy your village", he threatened. The men returned to Israeli territory, their vehicles loaded with cartons of American cigarettes and bottles of Arrak purchased in the local stores. Both were favorite items in

the enclave and had become quite rare because of the siege. From then on, mobile patrols visited Shuba, always through Israel, on a regular basis, both as a show of strength and as a way of stocking up on cigarettes and Arrak. The most important aspect of this regular contact was not the strategic location of the village dominating large parts of Fatahland including El Khiam but its propaganda value : for years, Shuba had been the springboard for PLO operations against northern Israel.

On the night of 29 June 1977, three armed men forced their way into a house in the Druze village of El Meri wounding three members of the Abu Kamar family who were evacuated to a hospital in Israel. Yihie Abu Kamar, a former corporal in the Lebanese army, for some time had been in contact with Israel and had received arms and a radio set. The attack made it imperative to strengthen the ties with El Meri, since otherwise it would fall to the PLO. While the members of the Apartment worked on a plan for Haddad's men to occupy the village, Haddad fell sick. IDF doctors diagnosed stress and exhaustion and recommended a period of rest. At the beginning of July, Haddad was admitted to the Rothschild Hospital in Haifa under the pseudonym "Sharbal Ahmad". After a few days of examination which confirmed the original diagnosis he was transferred to the guesthouse of Kibbutz Kfar Giladi, half way between Metula and Kiri'at Shmona, where he and his family were received with open hearts and treated as VIPs.

On July 10, Yihie Abu Kamar reported that jeep patrols of the PLO and the Left had entered El Meri. Now Yihie demanded help. Haddad, still in the Kibbutz guesthouse, refused to deal with the situation and asked Captain Yoram to decide what to do. Since El Meri was a Druze village, Captain Yoram turned to the leader of the Chamounists in Marj Ayoun, the Druze Alameddin Badawi. His group included Nasib Hamra who had helped to "liberate" the blue Opel in Adeisse, and Nabie Abu Rafah who had been wounded in the counter attack on Taibe. All of them were Druze from the Hasbaya region. They immediately agreed to supervise the defense of El Meri, and it was decided to send their force on its way on 13 July. In order to be on the safe side and to show that Israel "meant business", an IDF patrol entered El Meri during the night of 10/11 July. The patrol was led by Captain Yoram riding in a Lebanese BTR-152 and was commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Gideon Abbas, a Druze, who was accompanied by Colonel Fuad. Yihie Abu Kamar and the local dignitaries had assembled in the village square to welcome the visitors. Colonel Fuad explained the necessity of keeping the PLO out of the area and urged the dignitaries to follow the example of the enclave villages and cooperate with Israel. The visit had the desired effect. The next day, representatives of the village came to the border fence and informed Captain Yoram that the IDF patrol had aroused fear among the PLO. They also asked for more arms and ammunition (*12).

On 12 July, Alameddin and his friends were equipped with a newly arrived green-painted BTR-152, new uniforms, helmets and belts, weapons which included a 52mm mortar and machineguns, and battle rations. Next morning, the force crossed the border and disappeared northwards towards El Meri. During the day, Alameddin reported on the situation making the impression that his force had the situation in hand and was ready for any development. But as darkness approached, the communications became less enthusiastic and finally he asked for reinforcements claiming that the Fatah unit "Eagles of the Arkoub" had sent threats to the village. Even the knowledge that the artillery of both the IDF and Haddad was standing by could not change his mind, and at about 9pm Alameddin and his men were back at the border demanding to be taken back to Marj Ayoun.

The officers of the Apartment immediately began to organize an alternative force, this time from among the soldiers and militiamen of Marj Ayoun and Kleia. This force was bigger and included a Sherman tank and an APC which were to take control of Tel Sheira, the hill overlooking El Meri. The members of the force were to be replaced according to a weekly rotation system.

The new force set out the next day followed by a bulldozer to be used in the fortification work of the position on the hill. Towards evening another BTR-152 was sent to reinforce the force in El Meri. During the night, a column of IDF APCs visited the village where Yihie Abu

Kamar, now the village commander, had set up and manned defensive positions while Tel Sheira was firmly under the control of the men from the enclave.

The commanders of the "Eagles of the Arkoub" repeatedly tried to take the village which now threatened El Khiam from the east. They shelled El Meri, tried to infiltrate, and laid mines and ambushes on the road leading from the border to the village. During the night of 21 July, Haddad (now back in Marj Ayoun) and Captain Avi Gletzer from the Apartment rode in a jeep leading a column of APCs with Israeli paratroopers on patrol to El Meri when they were attacked from the west by bazooka and small arms fire. Eight IDF soldiers were wounded. Haddad and Captain Avi jumped out of the jeep taking cover at the road side and returned fire. Captain Avi narrowly escaped death when Haddad mistook him for a terrorist and fired at him, singeing his arm and tearing his sleeve.

In spite of their numerous efforts (*13), the terrorists did not succeed in taking El Meri which remained a threat to El Khiam.

To Haddad, the Druze in his area were of no special importance mainly because of their low number. Approximately 1,000 Druze of all ages lived in El Meri which in the past had actually had a majority of Christian inhabitants (*14) but now only a handful of Maronites still lived there. Other concentrations of Druze could be found in villages like Fradis and in mixed communities like Ibel

a-Saki, Rashaya el-Fukhar and Hasbaya. A number of families had also lived in Marj Ayoun and El Khiam but had fled the area during the general exodus of the civilian population at the beginning of the hostilities.

At the time of the developments in El Meri, only a few Druze lived in Marj Ayoun, mainly young men, members of the Chamounist Liberal Party, whose leader was the blue-eyed Alameddin Badawi, originally from the Hasbaya area.

Haddad was strongly prejudiced against the Druze. These feelings were based on the historical past and the long-standing Druze-Christian hostility in the area stemming from the events of 1860 when "the massacre of Maronites... turned into generally anti-Christian outbreaks that spread as far as Damascus (*15)".

Haddad saw in the Druze "mean traitors" and accused them of disloyalty to the Lebanese state and its army. Most of the Christian, Shiite and Sunni inhabitants of the enclave did not think much better of those Druze who lived in the vicinity, who were mostly farmers growing mainly fruit and grapes on the slopes of Mount Hermon, in the Arkoub and the Hasbaya area. The land they worked belonged mainly to the Anselan clan, one of the two big Druze landlords in Lebanon, the other being the rival clan of the Jumbalats (*16). The Anselans maintained a large farm at the foot of Jable Ros (Har Dov), in the area known as el-Majediye (*17) which was named after one of their leaders, Majid Anselan. Another farm, Mazraat Islamiye, lay

east of El Meri.

Although the Druze in the Hasbaya region tried to remain neutral in the overall Lebanese struggle and did not join the National Front of Jumbalat, and although they were known for their conservative and cautious nature, probably because of the concentration of holy places in and around Hasbaya which included the most holy Druze shrine Halwat el Baydar, Haddad constantly accused them of being Leftists and pro-Syrian. To clarify his opinion, he pointed out their family ties with Druze in Syria and in the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights. He even went so far as to take the fact of their living in Israel and serving in the IDF as a proof of their being 'servants of everyone (*18)".

The Druze however, a proud people with a strong fighting spirit and military tradition, pointed out that even in the remote Arkoub they had been part of the revolt against the French in Syria (1925) when "the guerrilla warfare spread over much of the country, especially in the south and centre, and into the Druze areas of southern Lebanon (*19)".

Since the beginning of hostilities in Lebanon and the establishment of the Good Fence policy, the Druze of the Arkoub had maintained contact with their relatives in Israel. From time to time, they used these contacts in order to exercise influence on the government in Jerusalem, the ministry of defense in Tel Aviv and the Northern Command in Nazareth. The Good Fence policy enabled the Lebanese

Druze to enter Israel as individuals and as delegations of their community and to meet with Druze religious and political leaders in the Galilee and the Carmel region. On a more limited scale, they met with Haddad and officers of the Apartment mainly in order to plead that their villages be spared from artillery fire. One such delegation, for example, held meetings in Metula, Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, and with the Druze spiritual leader Sheikh Amin Tarif in the Galilee village of Julis following an artillery attack of Haddad's forces on Hasbaya in 1977 which killed 18 people. Haddad's opinion of the Druze in general and the Druze lobby in particular made it difficult for him to digest the fact that Druze officers and soldiers served in the Apartment and in other IDF units he had to deal with.

Because of the Druze in South Lebanon, the Israeli government had to take into account the Israeli-Druze lobby which adopted its Lebanese brothers and their cause. This meant that the government had to act within certain political restraints. The leading personality in the Israeli lobby was the Druze Amal Nassereddin, a Knesset member of the Likud Party. The lobby not only turned to politicians but also used the influence of senior Druze IDF officers and the services of the Druze leaders who had good relations with Israeli politicians such as Yigal Allon and Moshe Dayan (*20).

After a new round of fierce fighting (which in part had been triggered by the developments in El Meri) between the

villages of the Eastern Sector and the surrounding PLO positions, the PLO announced on 19 July a ceasefire in the south. The next day, talks began in Shtoura (south-east of Beirut) between the PLO represented by the leader of Fatah, Salah Khalaf (Abu Iyad); the Syrian Army Chief of Staff, Major General Hikmat Shehabi; Commander in Chief of the Lebanese Army, Brigadier Victor Khoury, and the Lebanese commander of the Arab Deterrent Force, Lieutenant-Colonel Sami el-Khatib. On 25 July, an agreement was reached on the withdrawal of the Palestinian forces to a line about 15km north of the Israeli border and their regrouping in areas where their presence was allowed according to the Cairo Agreement of 1969. While new fighting erupted in the south, there was no sign of the announced withdrawal (*21).

In the Apartment, meanwhile, Captain Yoram was promoted to Major and appointed commander of the Eastern Sector of the South Lebanon Command directly answerable to the commanding general. His team included Major Dani, Captain Avi, Lieutenant Napso, the Circassian, and Lieutenant Moin, a Druze. General Rafal was leaving the Northern Command in order to join the GHQ of the IDF as Chief of the General Staff Branch. He was replaced by General Avigdor "Yanosh" Bengal. On the larger Israeli scene, Menahem Begin had taken office as the Israeli Prime Minister following the election victory of the Likud Party in May 1977. On 7 August, Begin arrived in Metula, his first official visit as Prime Minister, and immediately inspected the Good Fence

where he and his bodyguards were mobbed by enthusiastic Lebanese. Also present were Chief of Staff Motta Gur, General Rafal, Colonel Fuad (who was now at the National Defense College) and Major Yoram, as well as a great number of journalists.

In a press conference, Begin told the journalists for the first time officially that Israel was helping the Lebanese Christians with supplies, armor, artillery and training. He stressed that Israel was dutybound to stop the Palestinian attempts at genocide in Lebanon and promised that Israel would never abandon the Christian minority across the border, an important declaration from the Israeli Prime Minister. The party then moved on to the villa of Bialik Belski, a resident of Metula and the owner of the Arazim Hotel there. At the Belski house Begin was introduced to Majors Haddad and Shidiak. Though Begin encouraged "my brave friends" to tell him about their problems, the two majors seemed to be too awe-struck to give any kind of meaningful account and mumbled pointless and unimportant pleasantries. In the end, Major Yoram gave a brief lecture on the situation in the south. Begin promised to "support our brave friends also in the future in every possible way" but then showed signs of fatigue, and the meeting was adjourned (*22).

Footnotes to Chapter XIV :

*1. Where not mentioned otherwise, all information in this and the next chapter is based on personal knowledge.

*2. In 1978, the two sectors were reunited and ADAL became an independent unit with its own structure and budget within the Northern Command.

*3. The village of Kila did not suffer that much from the shelling, probably because of its proximity to the border.

*4. Francis Rizk, Tape 2, Side 1 .

*5. Occasionally, when PLO shells hit the Metula area, the IDF artillery returned fire. The more common practice of those days was to direct the light of a huge projector towards the source of fire. The projector was stationed on the Tsfia Hill on the western outskirts of Metula. At the beginning, the beam was sufficient to silence the PLO positions on the Beaufort Castle, the Nakkars and in El Khiam. But with the escalation of the artillery exchanges the PLO began to ignore the projector and in the end, it was removed.

*6. The Kurds in Iraq were codenamed the "Spartans".

*7. At the same occasion, Captain Yoram and Lieutenant-Colonel Yasha removed large amounts of Lebanese army documents and LAA material from the barracks for evaluation in Israel.

*8. Only much later, in September 1979, George Otis, spiritual leader of "High Adventure Ministries" based in van

Nuys, California, inaugurated a brand new radio station called "The Voice of Hope". It broadcast a mixture of country music, God's Commercials (Bible quotes), and news in English and Arabic from the old customs house at Bab a-Tniye north of Metula in the Ayoun Valley. See also George

Otis : Voice of Hope. A Daring Mission of Courage and Peace , Special High Adventure Edition, Van Nuys 1983

*9. Hamizrachi, Road to Beirut , p.244.

Ezer Weizman said about Haddad's media personality : "Haddad always appeared in my mind more as a TV star than as a military man. As an Israeli citizen I first met him on the small screen. During the years of fighting in the South Lebanon district, he was the only authorized spokesman of the Christian forces appearing almost every night on the screen, threatening to remove the crown of popularity from Haim Yavin (Israeli TV anchorman)... He used the simplest words to express the strongest and simplest feelings, liberty and honor". Weizman, The Battle for Peace , Edanim Publishers, Jerusalem 1981, p.258.

It should be remembered that Haddad usually did not grant interviews without consulting first with the author or with Captain Yoram.

*10. Hamizrachi, Road to Beirut , p.263

*11. "His house in Marj Ayoun overlooks beautiful scenery which he cannot see. The windows of the house which looked like a war-room are plugged with sandbags". Weizman, Battle for Peace , p.258

- *12. Hamizrachi, Road to Beirut , pp.303-304
- *13. The fighting around El Meri was not only costly to the villagers themselves but also to the defenders from the enclave. Keisar Salame, for example, was killed and Shakif Said paralysed. Both were from Kleia.
- *14. The name El Meri is a transcription of the Arab name. It might as well be written as "Mary" or "Marie".
- *15. Oded Gross : Political Dictionary of the Middle East in the 20th Century. , Jerusalem Publishing House, Jerusalem 1972, p.107
- *16. see ibid. , p.53
- *17. Majediye later became the major field training area for Haddad's forces.
- *18. Following a meeting between Haddad and Captain Adel Abu Rabiha (early 1977), a Druze who controlled a small local defense force in the village of Fradis, Haddad called the Druze "professional traitors and opportunists who take care only of themselves". See Hamizrachi, Road to Beirut , p.59
- *19. Tabitha Petran : Syria , Ernest Benn Ltd. , London 1972, p.66
- *20. In 1978, during the last stage of the Litani Operation, Israeli Druze leaders were instrumental in convincing Minister of Defense Ezer Weizman to halt the IDF advance short of Hasbaya. They argued that fighting in and around the town would not only endanger the holy places but since Israel would eventually withdraw, the Druze would be

left to the wrath of the PLO and the Left who would accuse them of collaboration with the enemy.

*21. see Keesing's Contemporary Archives , Volume XXIII, London 1977, p.28735

*22. A few weeks later, I received a letter from Prime Minister Begin thanking me for the pictures I had taken during the visit at the Good Fence and during the meeting. He wrote : "I will keep them as an authentic memento of a moving and highly interesting visit at the Good Fence in Metula". Personal letter, 31 August 1977.

XV. Operation Cooperative

The military situation in the Eastern Sector did not change. The daily, often day-long, artillery attacks on the villages led to a new low in morale especially among the fighting men who most of the time had nothing to do. It was obvious to the ADAL officers that Haddad's troops had to be given full-scale military activity, a new battle, a new objective. The situation was somewhat eased by the delivery to the area of the first two 155mm guns which were positioned in Khirbe after having been consecrated by Father Mansour of Kleia.

Other morale boosters were short fighting patrols in the vicinity of the enclave. Sleiman Said and Fuad Hasbani led attacks against the PLO in Blat; armored patrols went down to the Khardale Bridge and tanks firing from Nabi Aweida harassed Taibe.

Major Yoram suggested to General Raful and General Yanosh the conquest of Tel Sreife, a PLO position north-west of El Khiam which dominated the South Lebanon Highway leading from Kleia to Marj Ayoun. "That place made life hell. The DShK on the hill was zeroed in on the road. During the day, everybody raced along that stretch of road in danger of being killed either by the bullets or by his own speed. During the night, we drove with our headlights off but sometimes they spotted a brake light and opened

fire. The farmers could no longer work in their fields. Most soldiers were ready to carry out guard duty there if only we would take that hill (*1)".

Generals Raful and Yanosh agreed that the hill, part of a defensive system established by the French mandatory power and later improved by the Lebanese army, was a worthwhile objective. While the final plans were worked out in the Apartment, the artillery branch of Northern Command turned its special attention to Tel Sreife : whenever the Israeli artillery fired in support of Haddad at PLO and Leftists positions, a large amount of shells was directed against the hill.

Since Haddad, obviously haunted by the Taibe trauma, claimed that the approaches to Tel Sreife were literally littered with anti-vehicle mines, two IDF foot patrols checked the road to the hill under cover of darkness leaving only the very last part unchecked. As far as they could determine, there were no mines.

The operation was given the IDF codename "Cooperative". Major Yoram held a last briefing during the night of 15 September in the school of Marj Ayoun which was run by nuns but because of the continuous shelling had been closed for some time. Lieutenant Rizkallah Fheili, the intended commander of the attack force, appeared at the meeting limping heavily and leaning on some soldiers. Earlier in the day, he had volunteered, very uncharacteristically, to load ammunition on the Lebanese trucks which for this

purpose had to drive to a special depot in the Hula valley (*2). Now he claimed that an ammunition box had fallen on his foot and since he was barely able to hobble along, he could not possibly lead such an important attack. Haddad, clinging to his decision after Taibe that the commander must stay in the rear, refused to discuss the possibility of himself leading the assault. In the end, Sergeant-Major Jeries Kassarwani (Abu Johnny) from Marj Ayoun was appointed the commander. During the briefing, Haddad had radiated great confidence but later, in the privacy of his home, he expressed grave apprehension, foreseeing a dismal failure. He was very concerned about possible casualties and the resulting confrontation with their families. "I can't bear the responsibility. What will I do, if someone gets killed? I can't face their tears and sorrow. How am I going to explain to them that even if you fall on Tel Sneife, it was for the good of the fatherland?" (*3)

He decided that he would keep clear of the immediate combat zone and would join the commander of the Israeli Territorial Brigade, Colonel Amir Reuveni, who had established an observation HQ near the gas station between Kleia and Marj Ayoun, a safe distance away from the forward HQ of ADAL in Marj Ayoun and the battle zone itself. Near the border fence, the IDF kept in readiness at least one tank brigade, the Golani infantry brigade, and units of the Nahal Battalion (part of the Territorial Brigade). These forces which were supported by IDF artillery batteries were

intended as a show of force but not as part of the attack.

Zero hour was set for 14:30 hours the very next day, 16 September 1977, a Friday. This day, the weekly Moslem holiday, had been chosen since it was known that many fighters of the "Eagles of the Arkoub" would be away. In the late hours of the morning, IDF batteries began to shell selected targets around the enclave but mainly concentrated on Tel Sreife. The officers of the Apartment dispersed to their various positions : Captain Moin to El Meri, Lieutenant Napso to the Operations Room in Kleia, Captain Avi, Major Dani and Major Yoram to the municipal building at the eastern outskirts of Marj Ayoun, only a short distance from Tel Sreife. In the ground floor of the building the ADAL doctor, Dr. Rafi, opened a casualty clearing station while the clinic at the Good Fence was reinforced and was ready to receive casualties.

The jump-off point of the operation was the market square in Marj Ayoun which was hidden from enemy look-outs. In the square the force was assembled and ready : five Sherman tanks, four M-113 APCs and about 70 fighters, all of them with white identification ribbons around their foreheads or helmets. The atmosphere was quite relaxed, especially since Emile Shdid, the owner of "Photo Studio Marj Ayoun", was running around with his cameras taking a series of pictures which later became much sought after souvenirs in South Lebanon. At 14:20 hours, Major Yoram ordered the column to move out and to advance towards its

objectives. The IDF bombardment stopped, and the PLO fire on the road to Naba Abel and on the eastern outskirts of Marj Ayoun increased. The column passed the Naba Abel intersection and turned towards the dustroad leading to Tel Sneife where one APC struck a mine and stopped. Contrary to the debacle in Taibe, the other vehicles did not stop but pressed on towards their objective. Thirty-five minutes after the start of the operation, Sergeant-Major Kassarwani reported that the hill was in his hands and that scores of the defenders were fleeing northwards towards Ibel a-Saki. A short while later, the tank on Tel Sheira, the position above El Meri, also sighted fleeing terrorists and opened fire on their eastern flanks. Two tanks which had taken up defensive positions near El Khiam, now raced towards the suburb of Jalahia. They were immediately ordered to stop their advance and return to their positions "although it seemed it would be possible at this stage to capture El Khiam without difficulty (*4)". The order was confirmed by the HQ of General Yanosh, where the minister of defense, Ezer Weizman, and the chief of Staff, Motta Gur, were also present. "The memory of the terrors of Taibe were still fresh, and nobody wanted to take responsibility should the Christians become embroiled in a severe battle, or in the problems of defending a captured town (*5)".

While the majority of the infantry men were ordered back from the now overcrowded hill, the armored contingent was reinforced by a BTR. A bulldozer was also dispatched in

order to begin the work of fortification. Back came the commander, Sergeant-Major Kassarwani from Marj Ayoun because he felt he had been insulted by something or other someone or other from Kleia had said. He resigned forthwith. Sleiman Said, a tank commander from Kleia, was immediately appointed to take his place. Towards the evening the shelling on the hill decreased and trucks with barbed wire, mines and ammunition could be sent up. Haddad returned from the gas station to the operational HQ in Kleia where the officers of ADAL also assembled. The HQ in Kleia "bustled as usual with intense activity. In the fashion typical for this war in which the fighters operated so close to their own homes, the building also played host to their wives and children, and steaming cauldrons of soup competed for space with crackling radio-sets and stacks of weapons (*6)".

The night passed without any major incident though the terrorists kept up their continuous shelling. During the morning of 17 September, a broken-down tank and the bulldozer were removed from the hill. This renewed activity brought about an increase in the artillery barrage and soon there were casualties among the occupying force including the tank commander Fuad Hasbani from Kleia. At around midday, only two tanks and one APC were left on the hill, the rest having left in order to evacuate the wounded who were each accompanied by a large number of healthy fighters. The reports from the hill indicated that there was only a handful of men left there, that the tanks were running out

of ammunition for their 75mm guns and machineguns, and that the hill commander, Sleiman Said, had gone home to have lunch.

Haddad, who had listened in to the reports coming into the HQ in Kleia, lapsed into a hysterical state and threatened to withdraw the rest of the force from the hill. After trying unsuccessfully to calm him down, Major Yoram "resorted to the tried and tested method of stopping hysteria and slapped him twice across the face (*7)". For a moment, there was silence while everybody present held his breath. When Major Yoram turned to go to the communications room, Haddad joined him as if nothing had happened.

It was now of the utmost importance to get the fighters and especially the commander back on the hill. After a short consultation with Captain Avi, Major Yoram demonstratively picked up his helmet, belt and Kalashnikov rifle and loudly announced that he himself was taking a tank to the relief of the hill. This declaration was immediately echoed by Captain Avi and both officers grimfacedly marched over to one of the tanks wondering what they would do if none of the Lebanese would take up the challenge. Neither of the two Israelis had the slightest idea how to operate a tank. At the last moment, while they were already climbing the tank, Sleiman Said appeared and moved his tank force out, back to Tel Sreife.

In the afternoon, Colonel Amir Reuveni, commander of the Territorial Brigade, returned to his HQ near the gas

station between Kleia and Marj Ayoun in order to prepare for the arrival of an armored IDF force which was to take up positions in the area in order guarantee the safety of the villages. By evening, small Israeli units had taken their positions in the outskirts of the villages. There was a general belief that the terrorists would attempt a counter-attack on Tel Sreife and therefore every gun and mortar barrel of Haddad's artillery was aimed at the hill.

After darkness had fallen, the bombardment of the hill became more intense. Captain Moin reported from El Meri that the village was being heavily shelled and that one of the soldiers from Kleia had been killed.

It was shortly after midnight, and the sapper Nazir Hasbani was mining the eastern slope of Tel Sreife. A number of fighters helped him in his work which was often interrupted by exploding shells and bursts of machinegun fire from the direction of El Khiam and Ibel a-Saki. In the centre of the hill, behind the walls of earth the bulldozer had thrown up, there was a Sherman tank, one M-113 and one BTR-152 APC with about 15 men, most of them followers of the local Phalangist leader Shakib Samara from Marj Ayoun. The shelling had lessened somewhat and the men felt relaxed. At 3:10am Nazir Hasbani put his rifle on the ground and walked down towards the barbed wire where he intended to lay more mines when he saw a line of dim shapes move towards him. Nazir turned and raced back followed by a hail of bullets and the flash of bazooka grenades. He jumped over the earth

rampart and joined his fellow fighters who all took refuge in their armored vehicles.

The sudden outbreak of gunfire could clearly be heard in the villages of the enclave, and the concentration of tracer bullets, the flashes of bazooka and handgrenades on top of the hill could be seen even from Metula. All of it was swamped in the light of the small flares apparently fired from the 52mm mortar of the APC. Over the radio came the excited voices of Shakib Samara and other fighters shouting that they were under attack and that the terrorists were all around them.

According to previous instructions of Major Yoram, Sergeant-Major Fares Fheili had ordered his artillery into action the moment the first shots were heard. The small unit of the IDF "Golani" Brigade, mortar carrying APCs under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Zion Ziv which was positioned in the army barracks in Marj Ayoun, laid rapid fire on possible approach routes to the hill. A moment later, Shakib Samara asked for artillery fire right on the hill where he and his men had taken shelter in the armored vehicles.

The top of Tel Sreife disappeared in a cloud of dust and smoke lit up by the flash of explosions and the yellow light of flares. The IDF artillery opened rapid fire on targets in the area while shells and Katyusha rockets fired from PLO positions began to fall on Marj Ayoun.

At 4:30 hours it was clear that the defenders had held

out and that the hill had not fallen but the attack had taken its toll. Young Sami Nashash, a relative of Haddad, had been killed and a number of others had been wounded. About ten bodies of terrorists were scattered in the trenches and around the armored vehicles while others were spotted on the slopes of Tel Sreife.

During the day, additional IDF units took up positions in various parts of the enclave including Shuba and El Meri. The local fighters were happy to sit back and to enjoy this unexpected relief.

On 19 September, there were two more unsuccessful attempts of the PLO and their allies to take Tel Sreife. Over the next few days, there were also a few skirmishes and exchanges of fire between IDF units and PLO reconnaissance near Tel Sheira above El Meri, near Tel Ziye in the Dir Mimas area, and near Shuba. The Israeli Government had promised the Christians and warned the Palestinians that, if necessary, the IDF would intervene on the side of their allies in the enclaves. Now the government had followed up on its promise : Operation Cooperative was the first instance of large-scale Israeli involvement.

On 26 September, following American pressure (*8), the IDF forces evacuated the enclave through the "Fatma"-Gate, the operational gate used mainly for military traffic opposite the ruins of the old customs house. Haddad was outraged at the cease-fire : "This cease-fire is not fair. They should have provided for a concurrent withdrawal by the

Israeli Army and the guerrillas. That's the way we thought a cease-fire should be. I cannot understand how Israel accepted a condition like this, specifying a one-sided troop pullback, even if it was imposed by the United States (*9)".

The IDF evacuation was followed by a small ceremony beside the gate which was duly recorded by the international and local press brought there to cover the event (*10). The media did not understand the meaning of Operation Cooperative, mainly because of lack of information. Since journalists were not allowed to cross the border into the enclave and had also to adhere to the censorship laws of Israel, they used what little information they could get. In the case of Operation Cooperative, the journalists had received no information at all and scrambled to put together some kind of picture producing such absurd claims as "One of the Christians" goals... was to break out a route to the sea (*11)" or "The Israeli strategy was to push the Palestinians back to positions north of the Litani River (*12)".

On 1 July 1977, Haddad had appointed the author the "Liaison officer between the Lebanese Forces in South Lebanon and the international Press". Since then, the flow of information from the enclaves including press releases of Haddad's forces as well as press conferences, briefings and interviews with Haddad were regulated by the author in cooperation with Major Yoram of the Apartment. In the case of Operation Cooperative it was decided not to release any

information.

As soon as the army of journalists left the area of the Fatma Gate which had been demonstratively locked in their presence, the gate was reopened and the officers of the Apartment returned to Marj Ayoun.

On 27 September, Haddad and Shidiak with their wives as well as most of the officers of the Apartment assembled on Har Tsfia, the IDF stronghold at Metula where they had been invited to meet with Defense Minister Ezer Weizman. Also present were the Deputy Minister of Defense, Mordechai "Mottke" Zipori, Chief of Staff Motta Gur, Generals Rafal and Yanosh and other high ranking Israeli officers as well as Hanah Sfatli, a representative of the Lebanese Forces in Beirut. To the surprise of everybody, Weizman presented the two Lebanese officers with the IDF decoration "Ot haMofet", the Exemplary Conduct Medal, the lowest of the three existing Israeli military decorations. Weizman said in his speech that the medals were presented in appreciation of the outstanding work of the Lebanese officers in organizing their villages and in recognition of the fact that for a very long time they had faced the enemy alone. In Tel Sneife "we gave for the first time active military assistance which was not an easy decision for our government to make." He went on to give an important assurance : "We promise you that if the situation deteriorates once more, we shall intervene in even greater force... we shall return to fight shoulder-to-shoulder with you... The Israeli

Government has instructed me to congratulate you both for your courage and valor (*13)".

The officers of the Apartment who worked with Haddad and Shidiak on a daily basis and knew the two majors better than anybody else present, were shocked by this unusual move of the government, the first time ever the IDF awarded medals to foreign officers, let alone Arab officers. Chief of Staff Motta Gur turned to Major Yoram and whispered "You have built a Golem and now they decorate him with feathers."

During Hanah Sfatli's meetings with Weizman it had been arranged that the Lebanese Forces in Beirut would send a small force to the south in support of Haddad. On 28 September 1977, about 50 members of the S.K.S. (Section Kataeb Securite) arrived at the Good Fence in Metula. Rumours had it, that these men had been sent to the south because of their reputation as trouble makers and misfits. In Israel they had been equipped and gone through a training course prior to their arrival in the south. They had been issued "Slavia" rifles (*14) which had been purchased in great quantities by the Mossad in order to arm friendly forces in Lebanon. The S.K.S. force was accompanied by the Phalange officer Fadi Frem who later became the Chief of Staff of the Lebanese Forces in Beirut. He was one of Bashir Gemayel's closest aides and participated in the power struggle following Bashir's assassination in 1983. The force included also the middle-aged Kamal Mor (codename "Roger") who was introduced by Frem as Beirut's

representative.

Haddad met the new arrivals at the Good Fence and immediately expressed his disappointment about the youth and the small size of the force. The next problem was the question of chain of command. Frem informed Haddad that his men would receive their orders directly from Beirut via radio. Haddad rejected this demand outright. Frem yielded and appointed one of the men known as "el Mir" the S.K.S. commander in the Marj Ayoun area.

Roger informed Haddad that he had been sent in order to protect Shidiak's life in the Central Sector and insisted on being transported there immediately. He handpicked a bodyguard force of seven men who from then on were known as the "Magnificent Seven". They left via Israel to Ein Ibel. The rest of the force was taken to Marj Ayoun where it moved into the deserted buildings of the College.

The arrival of the men from Beirut was welcomed by the residents of the enclave as a sign of support from the Christian leadership in the north. The men received an especially warm welcome in Kleia where the local fighters enjoyed their stories about the civil war in Beirut which included long and detailed descriptions of battles and fights.

The main contribution of the force was that it took over the defense of Tel Sneife and participated in patrols to Jabel Ross (Har Dov) including patrols to the outskirts of the village of Shaba. They also took over the Dehur

Dibin suburb of Marj Ayoun which lay outside the perimeter of the town in the direction of Naba Abel and had been somewhat of a no-man's-land.

The overall balance of the battle of Tel Sreife was positive. The South Lebanese had proven their fighting ability in spite of the earlier losses and the doubts of the Israeli military establishment. Israel had proven that she was ready to actively support the Lebanese in the hour of need. This was the new concept of the new government under Prime Minister Begin, a concept unthinkable under Prime Minister Rabin. From now on, El Khiam was under siege. With Tel Sreife in the west and Tel Sheira in the east in Haddad's hands, the PLO forces, units of the "Eagles of the Arkoub" and "Karame", and their Leftist and LAA allies in El Khiam encountered growing logistic difficulties since also the positions around Ibel a-Saki, Rashaya el-Fukhar and El Khiam could now be controlled by direct tank and machinegun fire.

One of the immediate positive results was that Christian and Shiite farmers of the enclave could once again work their land in the Ayoun Valley. These positive developments finally convinced Haddad of the value of the concept of small fortified positions supported by the fire power of a tank. These positions, outside of the villages, had proven the best defense of the area. From now on, Haddad actively supported ADAL suggestions for further such outlying positions.

Footnotes to Chapter XV :

- *1. Saad Haddad, Tape 29, Side 2
- *2. The loading of ammunition was a task detested by most Lebanese soldiers and militiamen and usually led to endless discussions and quarrels in the enclave. Nobody volunteered for this heavy work. The problem was solved later when Haddad decided to use the prisoners in Tel Nehas who were anyway called "Abid", Slaves, for this bodily demanding work.
- *3. Yedioth Aharonot , Tel Aviv, 20 January 1984
- *4. Hamizrachi, Road to Beirut , p.328
- *5. ibid. , p.329
- *6. ibid. , p.331
- *7. ibid. , p.333
- *8. see Itamar Rabinovich : The Problem of South Lebanon , Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume Two, 1977-78, Holmes and Meir Publishers, Tel Aviv, p.187
- *9. Hof, Galilee Divided , p.83
- *10. A picture showing Haddad and Major Yoram embracing appeared in "Time" magazine subtitled "Christian and Israeli officers say farewell". Time , 10 October 1977. See also Jerusalem Post , International Edition, 3 October 1977
- *11. Time , 10 October 1977
- *12. New York Times , 18 September 1977
- *13. Notes taken during the occasion. *14. Made in Czechoslovakia as VZ-58. They are very similar to the AK-47

Kalashnikov used by the PLO.

Brassey's Infantry Weapons of the World , Bonanza Books, New
York 1978, p.53

XVI. Syrian and Other Efforts to Influence Haddad

During the period from the military disasters at Taibe and El Khiam, and until the Litani Operation 1978, the Lebanese government, the PLO and the Left tried to gain access to and stay in contact with Haddad and Shidiak. Their aim was to reach agreements or mutual arrangements which would minimize or even bring to an end Israel's influence in the area by stressing the nationalist Arab point of view and the officers' duty to obey the Lebanese Command. A number of these approaches were influenced by events in northern Lebanon and by the attempts of President Elias Sarkis and Commander in Chief General Victor Khoury to reach an agreement with the PLO which would ensure their withdrawal from the south (see Shtura Agreement), an attempt that failed.

Some of the contacts with Haddad were made through residents of the village of Dibin who travelled freely north of the enclave or residents of Yaroun in the Central Sector who had access to Bint Jebel.

Haddad and Shidiak reacted positively to negotiation attempts, which they often did not immediately report to their Israeli counterparts. In many cases, officers of the Apartment learnt about such contacts from informers and only later from the majors.

On 7 May 1977, Haddad met near Ein Zrir with a representative from the north who told him that the

intentions of the PLO were good and that basically they had nothing against him or his men (*1). The messenger who claimed to speak in the name of Yassir Arafat asked that at the beginning and as a gesture of good will the road between Marj Ayoun and the Khardale Bridge be reopened.

A day later, another messenger arrived, this time on behalf of Major Naim Farhat of the pro-Syrian "Pioneers of the Lebanese Army" which were stationed in the Bekaa Valley. Farhat who was known to have good relations with President Sarkis, repeated the request to reopen the road between Marj Ayoun and the Khardale bridge. These requests showed that the PLO and the Left needed an easy access road linking the Arkoub to the Arnoun Plateau. Without it, they had to pass through a number of Syrian checkpoints along the longer route from the Arkoub through the Bekaa Valley and the Jezzin area to Nabatiyeh and the coastal plain near Sidon. Farhat promised Haddad that in return for the reopening of the road, the acceptance of a minimal presence of Lebanese authority in the enclave and the eventual closure of the Good Fence, the Lebanese army command would send funds and supplies to the enclave. Haddad cabled the details of the meeting with Farhat to army HQ in Yarze and asked for verification. The response from Beirut was vague and non-committal, which put an end to the negotiations.

At the beginning of June 1977, negotiations between Haddad, Shidiak and the PLO centred on the problem of free passage for government rations which arrived from time to

time, on an irregular basis, from the north. These small convoys usually brought flour, cooking oil, sugar, egg- and milk-powder and other basic commodities but were never a match to the amounts and variety of supplies crossing the Good Fence.

Another problem whose solution depended on some kind of negotiations was the supply of electricity. The electricity lines criss-crossed the areas which were held by the different parties and therefore could be cut by each side, plunging the other into darkness. The PLO had somewhat of an advantage since the main transformer station was located close to Nabatiyeh. Haddad achieved the repair of damaged lines with the help of the International Red Cross whose representatives were allowed to enter the enclave. On the other hand, when the electricity to the enclave was cut off, all of a sudden, raising suspicions that this had been done on purpose, Haddad's artillery fired a few 155mm shells in the general direction of the Nabatiyeh transformer. This usually had one of two results. Either the PLO's electricity supply had also been cut by the shells, or the message had been understood and the electricity to the enclave was immediately restored. This type of artillery fire became known in the enclaves as "shalter tayar", the "flying switch". Sometimes, after Marj Ayoun was suddenly plunged into darkness, a messenger arrived in great haste from Nabatiyeh assuring Haddad that there had been a technical breakdown and that there was no need for the

"flying switch".

Jeanne d'Arc Kassarwani, a young Christian woman who served as a member of Haddad's militia at the Ein Zrir roadblock, for example, informed Lieutenant-Colonel Yosha of the Apartment about contacts between Haddad and the PLO which were carried out through the good services of Ayoub Shkheimi, a teacher from Dibin. Lieutenant-Colonel Yosha who investigated the report came to the conclusion that because of the need for electricity, Haddad and the PLO had worked out a "gentleman's agreement".

Another contact-person approaching Haddad was Jamila Naamtallah Salame, the daughter of the mukhtar of Kleia who because of her marriage lived in El Khiam. She regularly crossed the Ayoun Valley in order to meet with Haddad and officers of the Apartment. Usually she was sent by the commander of El Khiam who assured Haddad that he wanted to live peacefully alongside the enclave.

Haddad saw in these contacts an opportunity to become a junior partner to the high-level negotiations in Beirut. He sent numerous messages and reports over the army radio to Yarze but when his negotiating status in the south was not recognized, he accused the spiritual leadership of the Christians of neglecting their flock in the south. Finally, he also accused the army command of leaving the soldiers of the south to their bitter fate. On 9 June 1977, General Khoury put an end to the extensive airwave activity. He informed Haddad of the appointment of Major Johnny Abdou of

the Deuxieme Bureau to be the officer responsible for the south. This, in fact, meant that Haddad and Shidiak were to be under Abdou's command. The mere mentioning of the Deuxieme Bureau shocked and frightened Haddad and Shidiak and for a while softened their open criticism of the army. Major Johnny Abdou, a known sympathizer of the Syrians, never tried to exercise his authority over the two majors and never appeared in the south (*2).

On 19 June 1977, Taufik Kalakish of Dizin brought a personal message of Yassir Arafat urging Haddad to seek the welfare of Lebanon and agree to personal negotiations in the Biat area. But Haddad feared that the PLO was trying to lure him into a trap and refused. The PLO on the other hand let Haddad understand that Arafat would not come to Marj Ayoun for the same reason, and so the meeting never came about.

The PLO and the Left were not the only ones who tried to influence or to change the events in the south. Syria repeatedly showed her interest, too. The Syrian connection emerged in June 1977 through young Fahima Nashash of Marj Ayoun, a relative of Haddad. This Syrian move was a direct result of the family relations between Haddad and Nashash. In the Middle Eastern/Arab context it was expected of one relative to do his utmost to help another relative. The Syrians obviously took this into account. Fahima brought Haddad a personal message from the Syrian Intelligence Branch in Damascus. The message had been put in a small

glass vial and was hidden and transported through various checkpoints in Fahima's private parts. "In the name of Arab dignity and Lebanon", the Syrians urged Haddad to give up his ties with Israel and instead accept the Syrian option (*3). Fahima was the sister of young Sami who had been killed on Tel Sneife, and of Suleiman who had served in Haddad's militia in Marj Ayoun. The family originally came from Kuneitra on the Syrian Golan Heights, and therefore the Nashashs were Syrian citizens living in Marj Ayoun. Suleiman deserted Haddad's forces and left for Syria in order to join the Syrian army. He was arrested as an Israeli spy. Fahima was sent to Syria by her family in order to find out what had happened to her brother. According to her account, she was arrested by members of the Syrian intelligence branch in the Bekaa Valley, transported to Damascus and "persuaded" to become a Syrian agent in order to save her brother's and her own life, though she was never allowed to see Suleiman. Fahima was briefed by her Syrian operators and returned to the enclave. Haddad accused Sergeant-Major Id Mussalem of Kleia of having recruited Suleiman into the Israeli intelligence branch, therefore being responsible for his probable execution in Syria.

Bishop Atenassius Shaer of Marj Ayoun, also a Syrian citizen, played a role in the Syrian connection, too. The bishop who enjoyed complete freedom of movement in the enclave, the rest of Lebanon and in Syria, frequently

visited both Beirut and Damascus. Shortly after Operation Cooperative, Shaer approached Major Yoram and Major Dani on behalf of the Syrian Command in Lebanon and the Syrian Director of Intelligence, General Jamil, who proposed clandestine negotiations between Israel and Syria about the future of Lebanon. Alerted by the Apartment to this new and sensitive development, the Northern Command sent its chief intelligence officer, Colonel Shlomo Iliya, to take part in the talks with Shaer. The issue was brought to the attention of the General Staff of the IDF and shortly afterwards, all Israelis involved were instructed to immediately break off all contacts. Haddad did not take part in the meetings with Shaer who was afraid that "like all Lebanese, he can't keep a secret". At a later stage, Haddad heard about it from Dr. Karabis, the Armenian dentist of Marj Ayoun whose brother was the bishop's driver.

Other attempts to influence the events were made by the USA and by France and at a later stage also by the USSR and other Communist countries. On 16 September 1977, the day of the attack on Tel Sreife, Dr. Cecil Hourani, brother of the well known Orientalist Prof. Albert Hourani, entered the enclave as the guest of Bishop Shaer. Cecil Hourani, a native of Marj Ayoun, had in the past taught at the Marj Ayoun College and had been an advisor to President Bourghiba of Tunisia. He told Haddad that he had come as a messenger of an "interested American party" which later turned out to be the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). Hourani and

Haddad met several times more and because of Haddad's insistence, Hourani was introduced to Major Yoram and Major Dani. Before Hourani left after the first of many more visits to the enclave, he provided Haddad with a Telex number in France and the name of a high ranking member of the American embassy in Tel Aviv who was to act as a contact person. He also told Haddad that he was about to meet in Beirut with senior officials of the PLO. In one of his letters which arrived in Marj Ayoun in the bishop's car, Hourani wrote to Haddad: "I talked to all the people of influence about those in charge in El Khiam etc. Therefore, I suggest you hold positive negotiations with these. I am personally ready to assist in the negotiations. I suggest you contact the French Telex number and give an Israeli telephone number for direct contact through direct overseas dialling. I suggest you destroy this letter" (*4). The letter was later transferred by Major Yoram to Defense Minister Ezer Weizman who was furious and promised to protest to the Americans.

The French tried to build up their network of contacts mainly through Major Shidiak in the Western Sector, who was known for his pro-French attitude and liked to declare himself a product of French culture. On 18 April 1977, the French military attache in Beirut visited Ein Ibel where he met with Shidiak and Lieutenant George Zaatar. He told them that President Sarkis intended to dispatch to the south 3,000 soldiers who would arrive via the coastal road and

Naqoura, and suggested that they not oppose the legitimate army (*5).

Essentially, contacts of this nature were established in the hope of gaining some kind of personal or communal benefit. Until after the Litani Operation, the Lebanese government hoped that eventually the officers and soldiers in the south would return to their units and barracks, exactly like others who in the end had left their break-away factions.

The Syrians hoped to be able to convince Haddad and Shidiak to cross lines and join their camp since, at that time, Syria and not Israel was the most powerful element in Lebanon. The PLO and the Left were of the opinion that the two majors would have to come to some kind of agreement because their people could no longer endure the continuous war of attrition. The French simply followed their long standing tradition of support for the Christians and the central government in Lebanon, and they tried to conciliate between the government and the two majors. The USA were interested in solving the South Lebanese problem as quickly as possible and in such a way that would satisfy both the Lebanese government and Syria which had cooperated with the USA since the beginning of her involvement in Lebanon 1976 and the negotiations concerning the Red Line.

In fact, however, these various contacts led nowhere. Israel remained Haddad's main friend and his only source of regular support.

Footnotes to Chapter XVI :

- *1. see Hamizrachi, Road to Beirut , p.81
- *2. Johnny Abdou was a close friend of Jerries Kassarwani, the commander of the attack on Tel Sreife. Abdou was the godfather of Kassarwani's son, therefore Kassarwani was known as Abu Johnny, father of Johnny.
- *3. Fahima Nashash, Tape 1, Side 1
- *4. Hamizrachi, Road to Beirut , p.110
- *5. Hamizrachi, Road to Beirut , p.76

XVII. The Western Sector

The Central and Western Sectors

Though Haddad was the overall commander of all three enclaves, his efforts were mainly directed towards the Eastern Sector, his home "turf", and less towards the enclaves in the west.

The Central Sector stretched along the South Lebanon Highway from the easternmost building of the village Ein Ibel (called the "Casino") to the area of the village of Kosah, about 10 km to the west.

During the period of the first contacts with Israel (under similar circumstances leading to the opening of the Good Fence at Metula) and the establishment of a Good Fence installation in the pear orchards of Moshav Dovev, there were four Maronite villages in the area. The largest village was Rmeish, then followed according to their size, Ein Ibel, Dibel and Kosah. A few Shiite and mixed Shiite-Christian villages lay in between, the most important being the village of Yaroun where the family of the Maronite Archbishop Butrus Kreish lived. To the west, completely isolated and just on the other side of the Israeli border, lay the Western Sector, the small village of Alma a-Shaab which used the Good Fence installations Israel had opened on the lands of Kibbutz Hanita.

The relations between the Maronites and their Shiite neighbours were mainly cautious with both sides waiting to

see how things would develop and who would, in the end, rule the area. The village of Yaroun, for example, refused to join the enclave simply because only an old dirt road along the border connected it with Rmeish while its main road led to the town of Bint-Jebel which lay in a wide valley and straddled the main road leading from west to east, to Tibnin and Tyre, and to the north. The majority of the residents of Bint-Jebel were Shiites. The town and the surrounding villages like Ainata, were known for their support of the Left and the PLO who had opened offices and small training camps there, which threatened the whole area.

In contrast to the situation in the eastern enclave, the defense in the west depended mainly on members of the Kataeb and functionaries of other parties. There were fewer professional soldiers in this area than in the east, and while the majority of the soldiers of Kleia had served in the 1. Battalion, the soldiers of the Western Sector came from different units and therefore had not been part of any connection with Israel, initiated by Israeli officers.

The most outstanding and active among the former Lebanese soldiers in the west was in those days Sergeant-Major Samir al-Haj, a Maronite from Rmeish and a former member of the commando unit of the Lebanese Army.

Since the beginning of the relations with Israel, the teacher and merchant Nicola Haddad (no relative of Saad Haddad) had been the leading personality in Rmeish. He was known as a confidant not only of the Israeli intelligence

officers but also of the heads of the Kataeb. Nicola concentrated in his hands not only the direct and indirect control over the activities of the civilian committee of Rmeish but also a sizable part of the flourishing trade with Israel. He was the first Lebanese to keep a private car on Israeli territory. The black Mercedes, Nicola's heavy-set figure and his frequent intrigues were the reasons for his nickname, the "gangster".

Another outstanding military and political personality, though to a somewhat lesser extent, was the middle-aged Kataeb fighter and native of Rmeish Jerries Tanus Rizk, commonly known as Abu Emile.

The Alma a-Shaab area was headed by Habib Bueri and a few Kataeb fighters.

The village of Rmeish, which lay closest to the Israeli border, saw in the Good Fence only a temporary solution for the problem of isolation from the north and especially for the marketing of its tobacco crop which because of the situation could not be shipped to the north. From the very beginning, the village leaders weighed their relationship with Israel from a merchant's point of view, is it worth it or not? General Raful recalled the first meeting with representatives of the Central Sector :

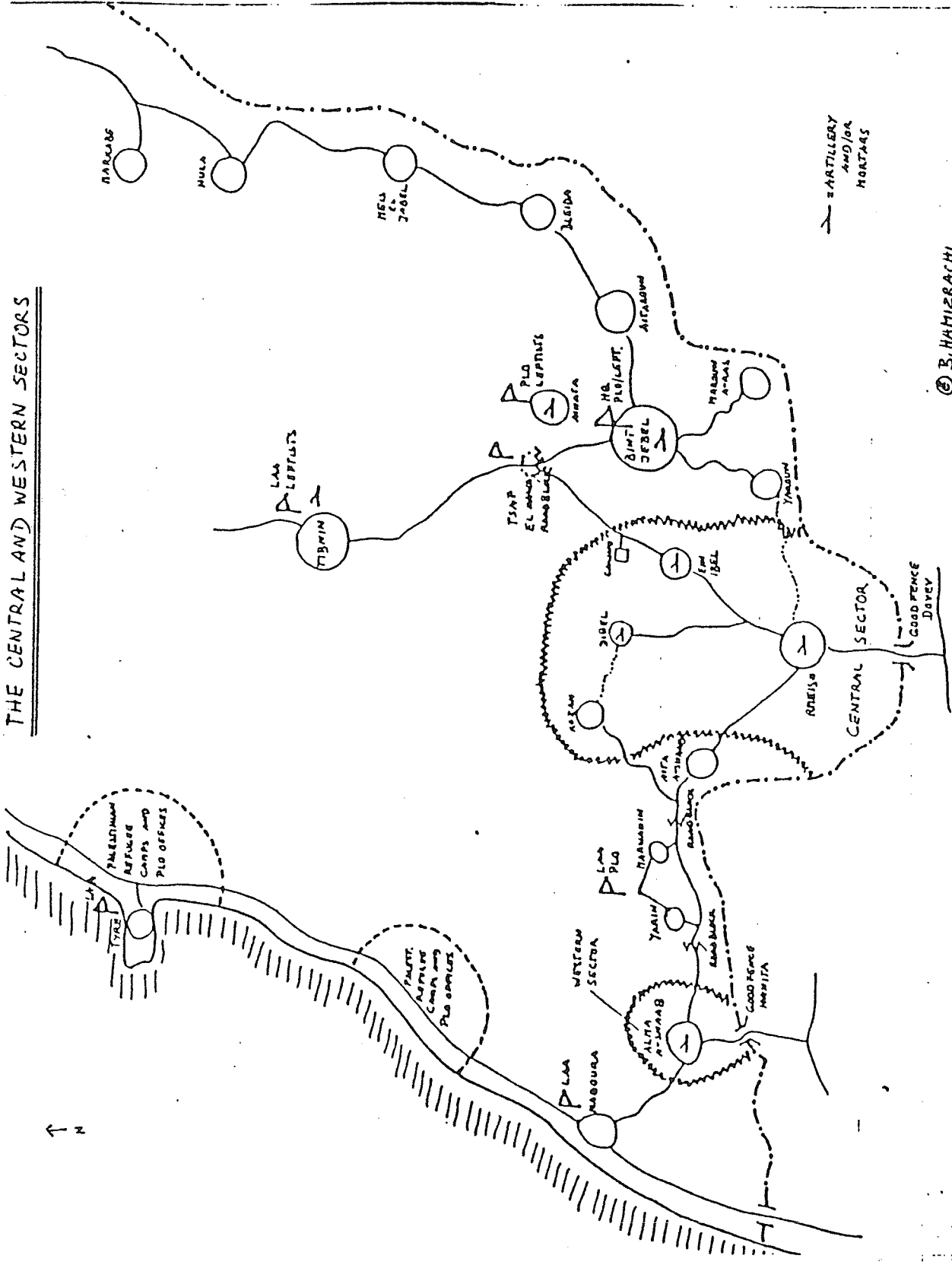
"Representatives of the Christian village of Rmeish opposite Biranit asked also that we help them. I met them in Naharia. They handed me requests and lists. I could tell them what I

could not ask of the people of Kleia. Kleia is isolated without contact to the surrounding villages. Rmeish lay within a group of Christian villages, Kosah, Dibel, Ein Ibel, Alma a-Shaab. I told the dignitaries from Rmeish : develop relations with your neighbouring villages, tell their dignitaries that Israel is ready to help if they are as determined as you not to give in to the rule of the terrorists (*1)".

Ein Ibel, which was one of the most beautiful and developed villages of the area, differed from Rmeish in that there the Kataeb was very active. Therefore, this village saw the contacts with Israel as part of an overall Christian strategy. This position was influenced by the Christian camp in Beirut and Juniah. The two smaller villages, Dibel and Kosah, saw the relationship with Israel mainly as a defensive necessity, a result of their fear of their Shiite neighbours, especially the villages Aita a-Shaab, Deheira and Hanin. The same was true for the people of Alma a-Shaab, who lived in an atmosphere of complete isolation without any Christian neighbours.

Contrary to the Eastern Sector, where (before Haddad's arrival) the brothers Rasan and Adnan Homsî, both of them officers, were seen as official representatives of the area acceptable to Israel, to the Army HQ in Yarze and to the leaders of the "Lebanese Front", in the Western Sector there was not even one Lebanese officer, only one Officer-Cadet,

THE CENTRAL AND WESTERN SECTORS



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Sharbal Barakat, from Ein Ibel. Under these circumstances, the conflicts and quarrels within each village and between the villages increased, a situation explained by Samir el-Haj as "doubts in the shadow of hope (*2)".

Samir al-Haj and Abu Emile had good relations also with members of the LAA, especially natives of the area of Rmeish. This relationship developed into nearly daily contacts when the signs of a Syrian victory over the Left and the PLO increased and heightened the fears and doubts of the supporters of Ahmad el-Khatib. The private meetings of Samir el-Haj and Abu Emile with LAA officers and meetings they organized for Israeli officers included also Shiite soldiers from the LAA barracks in Tyre, Sidon and Bir a-Salassel who now wanted to join the Christian camp, like for example the group of Shiite soldiers from the village of Deheira who, on 24 January 1977, sent a message that "they were ready to desert with their weapons from the Tyre barracks on condition that the Shiite villages between Rmeish and Deheira would first be conquered (*3)".

But these and other possibilities for Shiite cooperation did not arouse much interest among the Kataeb leaders in the Central Sector. Against the background of the Syrian consolidation in Lebanon, they developed the theory that as many Shiite villages in the area as possible must be destroyed and their inhabitants expelled in order to establish a Christian belt similar to the Juniah area (*4). In October 1976, these Kataeb activists started to

distribute leaflets signed by the "Lebanese Forces", the military roof-organization of the Christians mainly in Beirut, which said for example : "God will never accept a dirty people who befouls its God. Lebanon, the pure, is not the land of the Palestinians and the Syrians (*5)".

In this atmosphere and because of the lack of competent leaders Israel found it difficult to control the people and the events there, and Colonel Fuad's officers had to manouver carefully in between. This made it impossible to develop an overall local strategic attitude, both in the military and the political fields.

The military activity in the sector was mainly defensive in character though from time to time motorized or armoured patrols from Rmeish towards Yaroun, Aita a-Shaab and Hanin, and from Alma a-Shaab towards Naqoura and Deheira were carried out. The initiative for these patrols came mainly from Samir el-Haj. The lack of a recognized leadership made it also impossible to organize a unified defensive system for all the villages. A good example of the problems of the area is the incident of the night of 9-10 December 1976, when the little village of Kosah came under artillery fire of the PLO/LAA. The appeals of the villagers for supporting mortar fire from Dibel remained unanswered. Officers of the IDF camp in Biranit cut into the desperate radio transmissions and tried to convince Dibel to fire its mortars in support of Kosah. In the end, the IDF fired its own artillery from Israeli territory, and

the attack on Kosah stopped.

This incident happened a few hours after Major Saad Haddad returned from his first visit to the area (*6). He told the IDF officers of the Apartment in Metula that the situation in the Western Sector was much more serious than in the Eastern Sector because everybody was at odds with each other. Nevertheless, influenced by Colonel Fuad and because of his appointment by General Hanah Said, Haddad continued to carry out his duty of supervising the Western Sector, even if only through radio transmissions and rare visits.

The mere fact of Haddad's arrival in the sector, of his meetings with the former soldiers there and his claim "that he and nobody else was the commander on behalf of the legal government of Lebanon" (*7) caused considerable excitement and animosity in the area, but shocked first and foremost Nicola Haddad who feared for his position and quickly organized a wave of protests against Haddad and Israel with slogans like "Rmeish does not want Haddad but Nicola!" (*8)

But the month of March brought an even greater shock. On 14 March 1977, Major Sami Shidiak and Lieutenant George Zaatar arrived from Beirut via Israel in order to take over command of the Central and the Western Sector respectively. Both officers had been appointed to their posts by the Commander-in-Chief of the Lebanese Army and carried letters to confirm this. In the Lebanese Army, Shidiak who was accompanied by his wife Esther, a Lebanese Jewess, had

served as an anti-aircraft specialist, while Zaatar who was accompanied by a French woman of uncertain background, called Nicole, was a pilot and had flown one of Lebanon's thirteen Hawker Hunter ground attack fighters.

After a meeting with Colonel Fuad and CO Northern Command, General Rafal, the two Lebanese officers were introduced to Haddad the very next day. During the rather cool meeting which was conducted in French, Haddad repeatedly pointed out that he was happy to share the burden of command but it was quite obvious that he was irritated by this turn of events. While in the past he had complained about the fact that part of his life had to be spent in the two other sectors which were not as important or as close to his heart as his native Eastern Sector, now he claimed that the arrival of the two new officers was undermining his status as the overall commander.

Shidiak and Zaatar were also greeted with a fair amount of hostility when they finally entered the areas they were to lead from now on. The local commanders of the Central Sector which included Nicola Haddad, Samir el-Haj and Abu Emile, had been running the sector with minimal interference from Haddad and were not pleased with the new situation. Zaatar did not fare better in the Eastern Sector where Phalangist George Farah had succeeded Habib Bueri. His comment was that "Israel has brought two pimps into the south, but if she thinks that the south is a whorehouse, she is mistaken" (*9).

Skirmishes and Maroun a-Ras

The arrival of Major Sami Shidiak in South Lebanon in March 1977 had been overshadowed by the defeats in Taibe and El Khiam. From the beginning he was faced by many difficulties but mainly by the opposition of the local leaders, especially Nicola Haddad of Rmeish. Shidiak's arrogant behaviour towards the local leadership and the population only hardened their opposition which was strengthened by the fact that he as well as Lieutenant Zaatar were "strangers" who had no roots in the south. At every opportunity, Shidiak claimed to be coming from a superior cultural background and made it clear that he wished to be seen as a representative of the Lebanese Forces in Beirut and their commander, Sheikh Bashir Gemayel.

As the opposition to Shidiak intensified, the problems in the south as a whole increased. The attempt to link the Eastern and the Central Sectors had failed with the fall of Taibe. This failure encouraged the PLO and their leftist allies to strengthen their presence in Bint Jebel. Following the renewed understanding between the PLO and Syria, the PLO and the Left increased their military administrative presence in the whole area south of the Litani River, the area also known as Jabel Amil.

The IDF gave priority treatment to the Eastern Sector facing the Announ Plateau, the Arkoub and the Bekaa Valley since most of the military activity took place there. In the Central Sector, the ADAL command which at the beginning

had operated out of the IDF camp at Biranit and then moved into a house in Moshav Dovev, worked under different circumstances and in a different style from the Apartment at Metula. Shidiak and Zaatar did not try to establish personal relationships with their Israeli counterparts and there was no around-the-clock contact between the officers on both sides of the border (*10).

Shidiak quickly learnt that the soldiers and fighters in his sector were used to operating independently and without much military planning. Before his arrival, they had asked for and received approval from Haddad for some of their operations, usually by means of radio communications. An example of this state of affairs was the incident of 22 January 1977 when Abu Emile decided to attack Bint Jebel with artillery fire. He later offered a few reasons for this decision : Bint Jebel was becoming too powerful and a threat to the area; a parade of armed leftists was about to march through the town; he wanted to express his sorrow for the death in the village of Yaroun of the mother of Maronite Archbishop Khreish. It was market day in Bint Jebel when the guns in Dibei, Rmeish and Ein Ibel, and a tank in the Casino area opened fire on the town. According to ADAL documents, 129 shells of various calibres exploded in the town which was also raked by thousands of heavy machinegun bullets. The joint PLO/Leftist forces in the area returned fire with Katyusha rockets and heavy mortars. The fire exchanges continued for several hours.

Another example of independent and uncontrolled military operations took place at around the same time after Sergeant Hannah Haddad from Dibel received the news that his father had been killed at one of the PLO roadblocks in South Lebanon. Sergeant Haddad and two of his relatives drove a tank to the neighboring Shiite village of Marwahin where they fired in all directions killing and wounding a number of villagers and destroying property. According to ADAL reports, Sergeant Haddad fired at close range twelve 75mm tank shells and used most of his machinegun ammunition. This private revenge excursion resulted in the establishment in Marwahin of a village delegation that went to Tyre where it met with the local PLO commander, Azmi Zreier, and with Amal leaders, including Dr. Chamran. The delegation was promised increased support and protection and stepped-up pressure on the Christian enclaves as a whole.

Shidiak did not initiate any significant military operations. He seemed to be satisfied with armored patrols along the South Lebanon Highway between Ein Ibel and Kozah and with the occasional exchanges of fire with the PLO and their allies. He tried to neutralize the military independence of the villages under his command by giving his support to the Kataeb members of the militia and their commander, Louis Hasroni, from the village of Ein Ibel, and by paralyzing tanks and APCs. He simply denied them ammunition and spare parts which like fuel and other regular Israeli supplies needed his approval for distribution.

Contrary to Haddad, Shidiak did not see any sense in cooperating with the Shiites in his area. His Phalangist ideology and the daily instructions from Beirut strengthened his anti-Moslem attitude, and he often threatened that he would expel the Shiites from their villages Hanin, Marwahin and others. On 18 April 1977, the visiting French military attache asked Shidiak about a number of explosions in the area. Shidiak answered: "We are destroying the village of Yarin and expelling the cannibals from there." (*11)

Though the Maronites in Shidiak's area did not feel any special sympathy for their Shiite neighbors, most of them rejected Shidiak's anti-Shiite excesses. The more he harassed and humiliated them, the more the Maronites complained to Haddad and to Israeli officers. Shidiak did not really care and called the complainers "Shiite lovers" and "friends of the cannibals". Under these circumstances, the opposition under Nicola Haddad became stronger.

While at the beginning Shidiak had underestimated and ridiculed the opposition against him, he soon began to be concerned and to fear his enemies. Suddenly, he found himself under a kind of housearrest in Ein Ibel, unable to move around because of death threats from Rmeish and Dibel. One of the reasons for the opposition of Rmeish to Shidiak were the frequent instructions he received from the north. These orders were usually connected to the political or military situation in Beirut. In June 1977, for example, Bashir Gemayel sent a directive to immediately heat up the

Central Sector probably against the background of the Shtoura negotiations. Outraged Shidiak rivals mentioned this incident in August 1977 when they chased him as far as the Israeli border after an attempt on his life in Rmeish had failed.

On 29 December 1977, Shidiak was slightly wounded in the leg when an armored patrol in the Aita a-Shaab area clashed with leftists. Shidiak angrily demanded an investigation in order "to find the local son-of-a-bitch who tried to kill me."

The hostility against Shidiak also affected his assistants, Lieutenant George Zaatar and Kamal ("Roger") Mor. Roger, the leader of the "Magnificent Seven", was wounded in the leg at the beginning of February 1978 when somebody fired at him in Rmeish.(*12)

The constant pressure made Shidiak's wife Esther move permanently to Naharia where she gave birth to her first child, a daughter. Later, Shidiak also moved to this Israeli coastal resort town. After the move, Shidiak arrived every day in his VW-Beetle at the border crossing at Dovev, and after having spent a few hours in South Lebanon returned to Naharia. This new situation increased the hostility towards him. Haddad commented that "now Shidiak comes to work like a bank manager, in his private car and an attache case in his hand." (*13)

Shidiak often went to Tel Aviv and to destinations abroad where he consulted with Kataeb leaders and urged them

to get him out of South Lebanon and back to Beirut. (*14)

The main military events in the Central and Western Sector during Shidiak's presence there were not initiated by him. These were a series of aggressive armored patrols led by George Farah from Alma a-Shaab. The patrols were mainly directed against the villages of Deheira and Yarin where the PLO and their allies blocked the South Lebanon Highway preventing free traffic between the two Christian enclaves. The skirmishes reached a climax in early August 1977 when a patrol under Farah's command attacked Yarin and during the short exchange of fire killed fifteen members of the local force including a number of black fighters. One teenage Sunni was taken prisoner. He was transferred to the Tel Nehas prison in the Eastern Sector (via Israel) where Haddad kept all his other prisoners, too, including a large number of PLO, LAA and Leftist fighters. These prisoners were regularly visited by representatives of the Red Cross from Beirut. The Sunni teenager became the chief teamaker of the jail where he spent close to two years before being released. Asked about the background of the blacks who had been killed in Yarin, he described them as "volunteers from Somalia who had joined the PLO mainly because of the good and regular pay" (*15).

Farah left the village of Yarin immediately after the clash because of the difficulties in the defense of a captured village, a point which had been proven in Taibe and El Khiam.

On 8 August 1977, Farah led another aggressive patrol against Yarín. His force came immediately under fire from a building held by a detachment of Somalis near the local mosque. While storming the building at the head of his men, Farah was hit in the head and shortly afterwards died. The attack was broken off and the men, including a number of wounded, retreated to Alma a-Shaab which by then was being heavily shelled.

The death of George Farah who in all three enclaves had the reputation of being the toughest amongst the three sector commanders and was seen as an equal to the two professional officers, Haddad and Shidiak (*16), shocked the south. For a while, Shidiak and to some degree even Haddad were accused of not being tough enough and not as devoted to the cause as the late hero of Alma a-Shaab (*17). But soon enough, everything returned to normal and new local leaders of much less charisma took over in Alma a-Shaab.

Meanwhile, Major Yoram of the Eastern Sector initiated contacts with most of the Shiite border villages situated between the different enclaves, and in the Arkoub. Major Haddad assisted whenever asked to but displayed no special enthusiasm. The villages contacted included Shaba and Hamam on the slopes of Mount Hermon, Fredis and Hibaria in the Arkoub, but mainly Markabe, Hula, Meis a-Jabel, Bleida, Muhbeib and Aitaroun, all of them between the Eastern and the Central Sectors on the South Lebanon Highway.

The motto of the constant meetings with the village

notables which were held in broad daylight (*18) on the border, was "keep your village clean", meaning free of the PLO and their allies. All the villages cooperated (*19) after having weighed the "pros and cons" including the dangers of refusing. The result of this cooperation was that during the Litani Operation in 1978 all these villages remained untouched by the war. All of them joined Haddad's defense system and were trained and equipped in Israel. Their equipment included tanks and artillery.

One of the aims of these contacts was the construction of a dirt road from the Israeli border, at a point between Kibbutz Manara and Kibbutz Yiftah, down to the large Shiite village of Meis a-Jabel. This road enabled Haddad to send patrols from the Metula Good Fence along the border on the Israeli side into Meis a-Jabel and from there to the west and north. On 18 February 1978, the first small patrol entered the village. The patrol under Haddad's command consisted of a number of APCs and was accompanied by Major Yoram and a number of ADAL officers who on the previous day had held their regular meeting with the notables for the first time inside the village, actually inside the village mosque.

The move of Haddad's forces into the Shiite villages increased the tension in the PLO/Leftist camp with their leaders and commanders from Tyre, Sidon and Beirut trying to force the villagers to resist. "Amal" on the other hand sent cautious assurances to Haddad that the organization

would not resist his presence in the villages since it did not consider the occasional patrols as actual occupation.

The success of this initiative made ADAL/Western Sector look for a success of their own. Together with the temporary ADAL commander, the District HQ of ADAL planned to move into the strategic Shiite village of Maroun a-Ras. The then Defense Minister Ezer Weizman saw the importance of the village which nestled on a 950m high hill, the highest in the area, in that it was "overlooking several of our settlements. From there, they used to shoot directly at our settlements" (*20). ADAL had been in contact with the local Fares family for over a year and thanks to the efforts of this family, no permanent PLO/Leftist force had ever occupied the village. In February 1978, members of the Fares clan reported to ADAL that increasing numbers of PLO and Saiga officers were visiting the hamlet, observing Israeli territory from there and keeping good relations with the small number of UN Observers stationed there as part of the OGL-Observers Group Lebanon.

ADAL/Western Sector believed that Shidiak would be able to re-enforce the Fares family and establish a base in the village which was overlooking and therefore controlling Bint Jebel from the south. Because of its special location, Maroun a-Ras was considered one of the best observation and communication positions in the whole south (*21).

Shidiak rejected the plan to take over the village claiming that the whole idea (as introduced by Colonels

Meiri and Erez) was "Jewish fantasy" (*22). He preferred to keep to the status quo as long as possible. While the preparations for the operation went ahead, Shidiak disappeared on one of his trips abroad. Local commanders then dealt with the preparations. Shidiak returned the day before the operation and immediately demanded assurances of full Israeli support, especially artillery. Meanwhile, Colonel Erez, the commander of the Territorial Brigade, sent a small unit of sappers into the vicinity of Maroun a-Ras where the men blew up a stone wall which would have hampered the movement of the Sherman tank which was to move into the village via a dirt road leading from the eastern part of Rmeish and Yaroun to Maroun a-Ras. The dirt road was the only way to move vehicles to the village since the main road from Bint Jebel was controlled by the PLO and their allies.

The operational plan as worked out by ADAL/Western Sector had been approved, in general terms, by Northern Command but had not been given final approval. No permission had been received from the General Staff who during the preliminary stages had stressed that such an operation would have to be carried out by Shidiak's forces only, without any IDF involvement. Shidiak, on the other hand, emerged from his meetings with Colonel Meiri and Colonel Erez under the impression that the IDF whole-heartedly supported the plan and would extend all possible and necessary support. Besides, IDF sappers had

already been involved by removing the obstacle for the tank. Major Haddad was not informed about the operation. Accordingly, his forces were not put on alert. ADAL/Eastern Sector had received only general information but no details.

During the night of 2 March 1978, a force of about 40 fighters including the "Magnificent Seven" of the SKS entered the village of Maroun a-Ras with one Sherman tank, one halftrack and a few other vehicles. The men were welcomed by those villagers who supported the Fares clan and were ready to cooperate with Shidiak's enclave. Other villagers fled to Bint Jebel sounding the alarm.

Instead of immediately setting up a defense system around the outskirts of the village, or at least on the northern slope controlling Bint Jebel and the access road, Shidiak's men first of all savored the feeling of the conqueror and had the villagers dine and wine them. Consequently, they kept a low level of alert. A few hours later and in broad daylight, a combined PLO/Leftist/Saiqa force with jeeps mounting recoilless guns and heavy machineguns attacked Maroun a-Ras, supported by artillery from Ainata and the Tibnin area.

Shidiak's force did not put up much resistance. Most of the men fled down the hill leaving behind their vehicles including the tank and the halftrack (*23). The vehicles were later towed to Tyre where they were put on exhibition.

Seven members of Shidiak's force were killed in the

short battle. Six of them belonged to a group of former Lebanese army soldiers from the village of Dibei and one was a member of the SKS unit from Beirut (*24).

The news about the battle in Maroun a-Ras reached the Eastern Sector at about midday. The communications centre in Kleia received urgent calls for help. Haddad quickly organized a small force of tanks, APCs, trucks and jeeps with about 100 fighters. He then requested permission from ADAL/Eastern Sector to pass from Metula to Meis a-Jabel on the Israeli side of the border. After his return to Lebanese territory, Haddad planned to move on the South Lebanon Highway to Aitaroun from where he intended to engage the PLO force from the rear.

Major Yoram contacted Northern Command but could not secure approval for Haddad's planned movement since OC Northern Command, General Yanosh, was at the time escorting Chief of Staff Gur on a tour of the Misgav-Am region. Major Yoram and Capt. Moin caught up with the Chief of Staff in Kibbutz Misgav-Am. General Gur wanted to know the meaning of the distant artillery fire and the smoke rising in the west. He was amazed when he was told about the events in Maroun a-Ras and gave strict orders not to involve the IDF. This put a stop to Haddad's plans and to the hope that Israeli artillery would intervene (*25).

Most of the inhabitants abandoned the village during and after the battle, fleeing partly towards the Israeli border, partly to Shidiak's area and partly to Bint Jebel.

Those who sought refuge in Shidiak's area were soon confronted by open hostility especially from those Christian villages that had had casualties. Soon, rumours about atrocities against Shiites began to circulate in the area. It also became known that most of the villagers who had been killed during the flight from Maroun a-Ras had been shot down by Shidiak's men, mainly by the "Magnificent Seven", now reduced to six (*26).

The SKS men kidnapped a number of young Shiite women whom they kept in their compound in Ein Ibel. Other hostages were kept in the village of Dibel by relatives of missing soldiers. Most of them were released after it had become clear that the soldiers had been killed in action. Two men were later stoned to death. The kidnapped women did not fare better. The SKS men raped and cruelly tortured them, and murdered at least two of them. (*27)

The atrocities of the SKS led to the IDF decision to remove them from the Western Sector and send them back to Beirut. They were ordered to the border crossing at Dovev where they were stripped of their weapons (*28). They were then taken to Haifa where they were arrested by the IDF Military Police and kept in a military prison until arrangements for their transfer to Beirut were completed.

The defeat at Maroun a-Ras, like the defeats at Taibe and El Khiam, led to a slump in morale in all the enclaves. On 12 March, Shidiak sharply criticized Israel and the IDF while addressing a large gathering in Rmeish which was also

attended by Haddad and IDF officers. Shidiak said that "from now on, no more Lebanese will die for Israel" (*29).

Shidiak's men accused the UN-OGL officers at the Maroun a-Ras Observation Post (OP) of having reported to the PLO command in Bint Jebel the situation in the village including the size of the Christian unit there and its low level of readiness for a counter-attack (*30). But the atmosphere of depression in the enclaves and of soul-searching in Israel over the events at Maroun a-Ras were cut short a few days later when a group of terrorists landed on Israel's northern coast.

Footnotes to Chapter XVII :

- *1. Eitan, Story of a Soldier , p.152
- *2. Hamizrachi, The Road to Beirut , p.44
- *3. ibid.
- *4. Talks with Abu Emile, January 1979
- *5. Hamizrachi, The Road to Beirut , p.31
- *6. At that time, Haddad could reach the Western Sector only by leaving Lebanese territory at Metula, driving along the border on the Israeli side to the Good Fence at Moshav Dovev where he would re-enter Lebanon.
- *7. Francis Risk, former "Spokesman and Political Advisor" of Haddad, Tape 1, Side 1 , 18 August 1985
- *8. Hamizrachi, The Road to Beirut , p.44
- *9. ibid. , p.204
- *10. After Colonel Fuad had left for a new military assignment, the Eastern Sector became an independent entity under the command of Major Yoram while the Central and Western Sectors saw a number of temporary commanders. Shortly after the Litani Operation, Lieutenant-Colonel Yoram became the commander of the re-united ADAL unit (which now controlled the whole area from Mount Hermon to the Mediterranean) and of the Military Government administration which dealt with the humanitarian aspects of the Good Fence. This combined unit was called "Mifkedet Shlita/Ezor Drom Lebanon", Control Command/South Lebanon District.
- *11. Hamizrachi, Road to Beirut , p.76

The term "les cannibales" was often used by Kataeb members in the south to describe Shiites. After the Litani Operation, Shidiak's Phalangists cruelly murdered a number of innocent Shiites. Haddad's men in the Eastern Sector who worked and fought side by side with Shiites demanded that Shidiak be punished for these murders. And indeed, they were one of the reason for his downfall

*12. On 18 February 1978, I met Roger in Kibbutz Baram during a friendly basketball game between Phalangists from Ein Ibel and members of the Kibbutz. His leg was in a cast. He told me, "I have come to rest from the assassins". To curious Israelis he explained that he had been wounded in a skirmish with terrorists.

*13. Interview with Haddad , 3 March 1977.

Haddad also kept a private car in Israel, the Mazda taken from the Saudi "drug dealers". Since the original papers for the car had disappeared, all documents for licencing and insurance purposes in Israel were "prepared" in Kleia. The municipality of Kiriat Shmona had given Haddad an apartment in the town for his private use, free of charge. Haddad and his family used the apartment only rarely, much to the chagrin of the Israeli tenants, who loved to have their famous Lebanese neighbours in their apartment block.

*14. A few months after the Litani Operation, Lieutenant-Colonel Yoram, then Commander of ADAL, expelled Shidiak from South Lebanon. This step was the result of a series of atrocities committed by Shidiak's men against

Shiites. The Shidiaks then lived for a while in Naharia where they operated a store dealing in women's lingerie. In the end, they left Israel and according to Kataeb sources spent some time in France and Canada before returning to Beirut.

*15. see also Israeli, PLQ in Lebanon , p.185 and p.238

*16. On 2 August 1977, I organized a press conference in Metula for the commanders of South Lebanon. Both Haddad and Shidiak agreed that George Farah take part as an equal partner.

*17. The IDF highly regarded George Farah. Rafal described him as "a charming young man who from the very first moment conquered our hearts with his personality, his loyalty and his patriotic drive". Eitan, Story of a Soldier , p.152

*18. This initiative was a change in the usual policy which was to approach certain individuals or a certain clan of a village at night and in secrecy, as for example in the case of El Meri. The new concept centred around meetings in broad daylight on the border with as many notables as possible. Sometimes 30-40 men came to such a meeting drawing strength from the number of people involved. This was some kind of "insurance". Nobody could now be singled out as a collaborator.

*19. PLO and Leftist activists usually left these villages immediately during the very first stages of the negotiations. With the exception of the village of Hula which contained a small office of the Lebanese Communist

Party, there were no PLO offices or installations in these villages.

*20. Koteret Rashit , 13 May 1986

*21. The UN had chosen Maroun a-Ras as an observation post because it overlooked the Israeli border just like the other positions at El Khiam, Markabe and Marwahin.

Frederic C. Hof saw that from the PLO point of view "The significance of Marun an-Ras lay, however, not in its proximity to Israel but in its elevated position overlooking the town of Bint Jubayl two kilometers to the northwest". Galilee Divided , p.87. The rest of Hof's account of the events in Maroun a-Ras is completely wrong.

*22. Hamizrachi, Road to Beirut , p.121

*23. New York Times , 7 March 1978

*24. Codenamed "Abu Radab" he was one of the few Moslem members of the Kataeb. It was later established that Abu Radab was badly injured when he was captured. He was then bound to the bumper of a Saiqa jeep and dragged all the way to the main square of Bint Jebel where the badly mutilated body was put on display. Interview with store owners around the Bint Jebel market place, 20 September 1978.

*25. General Gur did not know that IDF sappers had already been involved .

When Haddad heard about the decision, he as usual resigned. Later in the day, he admitted that he had been relieved.

*26. The exact number of civilian casualties could not be established. Sergeant-Major Hail Hashem of Dibel claimed

them to be somewhere between 15 and 25.

*27. Lieutenant-Colonel Scharfman, at the time commander of ADAL/Western Sector had a slightly different recollection of the events : "The members of the (Fares) family joined the fleeing villagers who escaped to the village of Yaroun. But the Christians did not know who they were... They immediately killed two of them, one was our contact person... They took two women, wives of prominent family members, and also 14 men, prisoners... Later, they killed the two women. I succeeded in having 12 men released. Two men remained in the hands of the people from Dibel as hostages in the negotiations for the release of their men".

Koteret Rashit , 20 August 1986

*28. During the search of their belongings at Dovev, jewelry was found which had probably belonged to their victims.

*29. Hamizrachi, Road to Beirut , p.127

*30. The unarmed UN-Observers who moved freely in the south had a reputation of being spies selling information in return for money or their personal safety. At the time of the events at Maroun a-Ras, the commander of the LAA detachment in El Khiam, Ibrahim Kashmar, who was in constant contact with Haddad and ADAL, claimed that he had especially good relations with the UN-OP there. Kashmar said that US Navy officer, Lieutenant-Commander Ziegler, was teaching his men and PLO members from El Khiam the use of explosives and of weapon systems.

XVIII. The Litani Operation

On 11 March 1978, eleven terrorists belonging to the Fatah organization who had set out from Damour on the Lebanese coast, landed in two rubber boats on the Israeli coast, about 30 km south of Haifa and near Kibbutz Maagan Michael. They continued to the nearby Tel Aviv-Haifa highway where they stopped a Haifa-bound bus with Israeli weekend travellers. They forced the driver to turn around and head towards Tel Aviv. Firing at the traffic passing in both directions, they killed and wounded a number of people.

In the meantime, the police had been alerted and had established a roadblock near Rishpon, about 17km north of Tel Aviv. But the bus broke through at high speed. It was finally stopped near the "Country Club", about 11km north of Tel Aviv where policemen and a passing soldier had organized a larger roadblock. As the bus approached, it came under heavy fire from the roadblock. The exchanges of fire between the Israelis at the roadblock and the terrorists in the bus came to an end when an explosion went off in the bus, and it burst into flames.

When it was over, 34 Israelis, men, women and children had been killed and 74 wounded. Also dead were nine terrorists. The two others were captured alive. Leaflets found in the possession of the two surviving Fatah members and their interrogation showed that they had planned to seize a hotel in Tel Aviv and to hold tourists hostage

during the negotiations for the release of terrorists imprisoned in Israel, including Kozo Okamoto, the Japanese Red Army terrorist who had taken part in the massacre at the Ben Gurion Airport in May 1972 (*1).

During the next two days, Prime Minister Menahem Begin repeatedly hinted at retaliation against the PLO which had confirmed Fatah's responsibility in the coastal road massacre in a number of communiques issued in Beirut. Begin stated that "those who killed Jews in our time cannot enjoy impunity" and that Israel would "cut off the evil arm of the PLO" (*2), that "those who shed the blood of innocents will not escape unscathed" (*3). A further indication of an immediate Israeli military reprisal action was the fact that Begin postponed his trip to Washington, part of the Camp David peace initiative, scheduled for 15 March, and that the Israeli Defense Minister Ezer Weizman returned from New York where he had awaited Begin's arrival.

The Israeli security and intelligence forces had established that the terrorists had come from Lebanese territory. The Lebanese Prime Minister Salim Hoss hurried to issue a statement on 12 March saying that "Lebanon is not responsible for what happened" and that therefore "any attempt to involve Lebanon in the matter is pure calumny" (*4).

The Israeli government decided to react with a large scale military operation in South Lebanon. As on similar occasions in the past, the main objective was the punishment

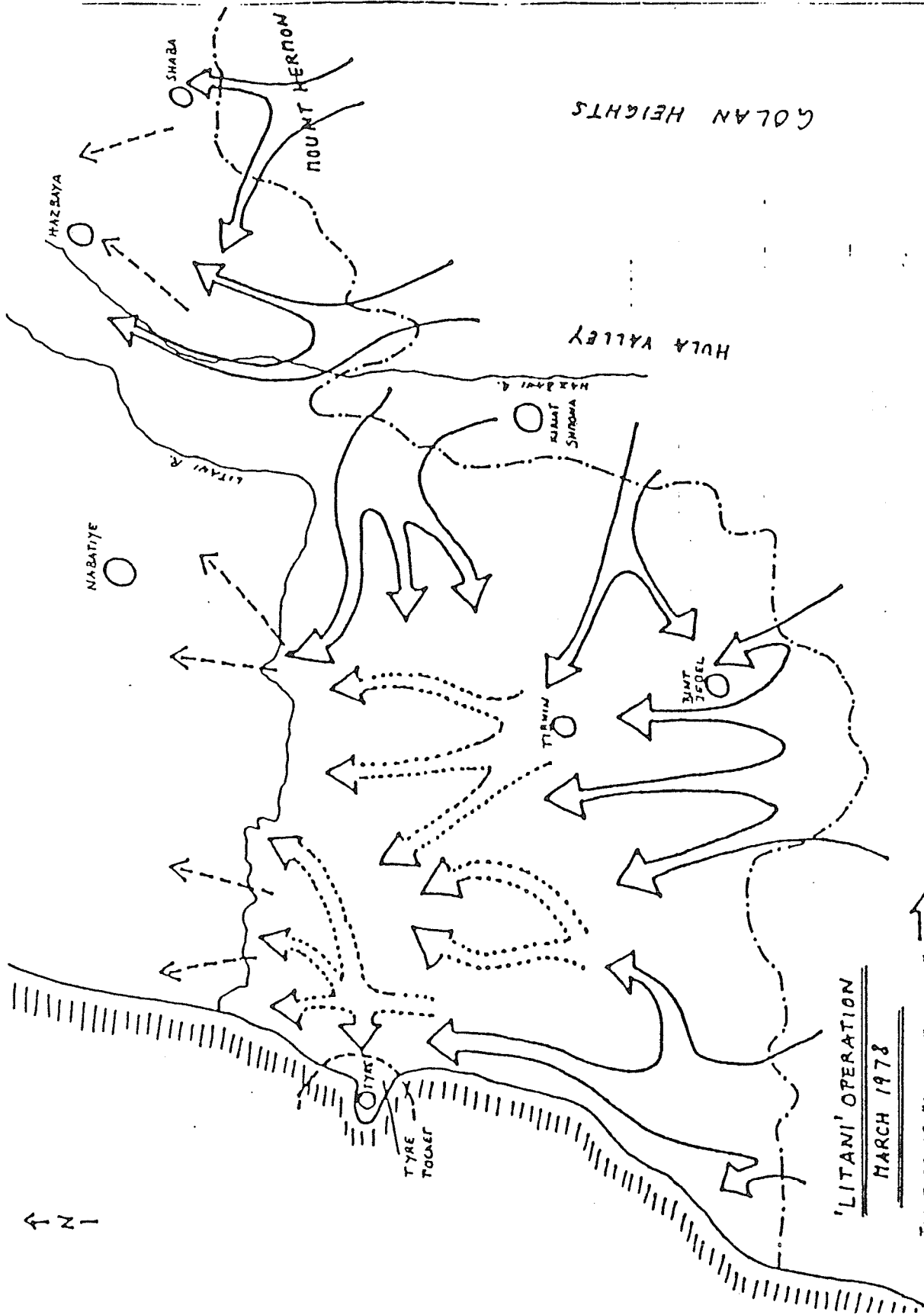
of the PLO and, in this case, specifically the destruction of the PLO infrastructure south of the Litani. "During 30 years of war and terrorist activity, a tariff of revenge and reprisal was created in Israel like the commercial balance of a blood bank. The success or failure of operations and wars, the need for retaliation and the decision to react or not were also measured according to the number of coffins on both sides of the border (*5). The start of the operation was delayed for two days because of the continuous rain in March which had left the ground rather muddy and unsuitable for tank movements. This delay gave the terrorists in South Lebanon ample time to evacuate their positions and to withdraw northwards before the first IDF unit even crossed the international border. "It was estimated that only about one-fifth of some 5.000 guerrillas present in southern Lebanon at the time of the March 11 raid on Israel remained by the time the Israelis attacked. The civilian population also took shelter, and as many as 200.000 people... were reported to have fled to areas further north" (*6).

The Israeli forces consisted mainly of regular infantry and paratrooper units. The command of the operation which was codenamed "Stone of Wisdom" was given to the infantry. "The Chief Infantry and Paratrooper Officer, Brigadier-General Uri Simchoni, commanded an Utzva (*7) in this combined operation which included besides regular paratrooper units also units of the Golani Infantry Brigade as well as armor, artillery and engineer units, and the

airforce" (*8). The IDF crossed the border during the night of 14/15 March 1978. In total, about 10.000 Israeli soldiers came to be involved in the operation in Lebanon.

Ezer Weizman remembered that according to the operational plans worked out by the Chief of Staff Motta Gur and DC Northern Command, General Yanosh, the Israeli forces were to operate "against all terrorist bases in South Lebanon, all along the 100km of the Israeli border and to a depth of 10km inside Lebanon. Our intentions were to refrain as much as possible from harming the civilian population, to operate in a way which would insure a minimum of casualties to our forces, not to clash with the Syrian army and to create a Security Belt in South Lebanon in cooperation with the Christian forces" (*9).

The claim that the establishment of a Security Belt was one of the original objectives of the Litani Operation seems incorrect in light of the fact that no plans for such a belt had been made prior to the beginning of the operation. The preparation of such plans was carried out in great haste only after all the military objectives had been reached and after the United Nations Security Council had voted on sending UN forces to the area. It is more likely, therefore, that the idea of a Security Belt came more as an "afterthought" after it had become clear that the military presence of the IDF would be shortlived. From this point on, both Israeli and foreign media started to call this area "Security Belt" rather than "Buffer Zone" as before.



'LITANI' OPERATION
MARCH 1978

- ⇨ FIRST STAGE "STONE OF WISDOM"
- ⇨ SECOND STAGE "LITANI OPERATION"
- ⇨ WITHDRAWAL OF PLO/LEFTISTS

© B. HANIZRACHI

On the evening of the first day of the operation the original objectives had been reached. The IDF had taken the whole area along the border to a depth of 10km. The Israeli Prime Minister declared that Israel would withdraw only after she had received guarantees that South Lebanon would no longer be used as a terrorist base.

On 15 March, the first day of the operation, the Lebanese Government officially complained to the UN Security Council. The next day, the United States called for an Israeli withdrawal. Jimmy Carter, the President of the United States, recalled that "as President, I considered this major invasion to be an overreaction to the PLO attack, a serious threat to the peace in the region" (*10). On 16 March, the United States proposed that the Israeli forces in South Lebanon be replaced by a United Nations force.

In Israel, meanwhile, as Defense Minister Ezer Weizman recalled,

"it had not yet been decided how to end the operation; and then, I was told by Northern Command that the town of Tibnin had surrendered. The inhabitants had hung out white flags. Tibnin lay outside the distance of 10km that had been set for the operation. We had not planned to get there. Many more villages followed the example of Tibnin, one after the other. It is possible that we would not have reached them if the UN had not interfered. When it became clear that there was a

proposal before the Security Council to send an emergency force of the UN to South Lebanon the following proposal was put before me : to continue the advance to the Litani River in order to make sure that the UN forces would deploy in the whole area between Israel and the Litani. Thus, the terrorists would have to withdraw to the north of the river" (*11).

In the light of this new development, this new objective of the operation, Chief of Staff Motta Gur proposed to change its name, and so "Stone of Wisdom" became "Operation Litani".

On 19 March, the objectives of the Litani Operation had been reached : Israel controlled the whole area from the border to the Litani River except for the town of Tyre and its refugee camps, the so-called "Tyre Pocket". The IDF Chief of Staff stressed that Israel should not get entangled in the conquest of Tyre : "Experience had shown that fighting in built-up areas meant difficulties and a great number of casualties. There was also an evaluation that the Syrian army would have to react to the conquest of Tyre" (*12). Taking these views into account, the IDF stopped its advance south of Tyre.

On the same day, the United Nations Security Council approved a US-sponsored resolution which called for an Israeli withdrawal from South Lebanon and established a UN force to be called UNIFIL, United Nations Interim Forces in

Lebanon (Resolution 425). The task of the force would be threefold : to confirm the withdrawal of Israeli forces; to restore international peace and security; to assist the government of Lebanon to return its effective authority in the area (*13). Israel was not very happy with the resolution because "the resolution was weakened to include language that made it less clear that UNIFIL would be empowered to prevent Palestinian guerrillas from returning to southern Lebanon. The resolution made no direct mention of the Palestinian guerrillas" (*14).

Nevertheless, on 22 March, an advance force of UNIFIL moved into Lebanon via Metula after arrangements for the deployment of the force, which was commanded by Major-General Emmanuel Alexander Enskine of Ghana, had been worked out one day earlier at a meeting in Jerusalem between Israeli Defense Minister Ezer Weizman and Lieutenant-General Ensio Siilasvuo of Finland, the chief coordinator of UN peacekeeping missions in the Middle East (*15).

The Litani Operation did not fulfill the ambitions and expectations of Haddad and Shidiak and disappointed the leaders of the Lebanese Front in Juniah. The two majors had expected to take over large territories conquered by Israel, and they had hoped that the IDF would drive the PLO and their allies also from the Announ Plateau and the Nabatiye area, from the Hasbaya district and the Arkoub, and from the coastal plain including Tyre. The leaders of the Lebanese Front had hoped that Israel's military operation would

develop into a thrust northwards, in the direction of Beirut, and towards the Bekaa, in the direction of the largest town, Zahle.

Israel evaluated that such moves would have meant a clash between the IDF and the Syrian forces. Therefore, Chief of Staff Motta Gur had cut such hopes short. "Bashir Gemayel came... I debriefed him for five minutes and it turned out that what he wanted was that we should fight their war of liberation against the Syrians. I told him, no" (*16).

Haddad had also hoped that the IDF would allow him to participate in the fighting, at least with his artillery or with some of his forces in mopping-up operations. He was disappointed when ADAL officers instructed him and Shidiak to hold their fire and to keep their forces in check. Since the beginning of the state of alert which followed the bus massacre, Haddad and Shidiak had not been given any information as to the Israeli plans. Until close to the actual beginning of the operation in the night of 14/15 March, they did not know any details about the attack or about the timing and direction. Only a few Lebanese soldiers, among them the tank commanders Fuad Hasbani and Sleiman Said and the sapper Nazir Hasbani accompanied secondary Israeli forces, mainly as guides inside El Khiam.

El Khiam fell without any street fighting. All the military activity took place in the northern suburb of

Jalahiah and on the slopes to Ibel a-Saki. Lieutenant Colonel Yoram (promoted during the operation) who together with Sleiman Said was guiding an APC force of the Golani Brigade along a dirt road bypassing the town from the west, was wounded twice when the APCs he rode in struck a mine and was hit by an explosive charge, respectively.

Small forces of Haddad's appeared immediately after the take-over by the IDF in El Khiam and in the PLO positions in Tel Dahur and Tel Akush. In El Khiam they killed a Syrian officer who had been captured near the town square. Asked why they had killed him, they said: "The son-of-a-bitch was wounded. Your people told us to guard him but we shot the dog dead" (*17).

The presence of Haddad's men in El Khiam during the first day of the operation was made possible by Colonel Amir Hareuveni, commander of the Golani Brigade who knew Haddad from the time he commanded the Territorial Brigade. Both men had watched Operation Cooperative together from the gas station of Kleia. Colonel Amir, who intended to move his soldiers out of El Khiam to other, more important sectors, ordered them to turn over to Haddad's men in the town a small group of Shiite civilians who had been concentrated in a square in order to await their transfer to the Shiite village of Kila. During the preceding months, ADAL officers had been in contact with Ibrahim Kashmar, the local LAA commander, and with some of the about 80 civilians still living in the town. They had been assured that in

case of an attack by the IDF or by Haddad's forces, they would be allowed to stay in the enclave.

On 15 March 1978, about 40 civilians were left in the town. Anticipating an IDF attack, the rest had fled earlier or during the night after the first shots of the operation had been fired. Twenty-seven civilians including old people and a number of children, among them a blond little girl, had been rounded up by the Golani soldiers and concentrated in the square. The soldiers then transferred them into the custody of the small detachment of Haddad's men who had arrived with an APC under the command of the Tubaya family from Kleia. Instead of organizing transport for the civilians, the men on the APC opened fire with their heavy machineguns and mowed them down. Lieutenant-Colonel Yoram arrived a short while later. "There I saw the horrible scene. Not far from the square lay the bloody bodies of the murdered people, and at the entrance of a wide-open store lay the torn body of a golden-haired little girl" (*18). The bodies were buried the same day by a bulldozer sent by Haddad. Three more civilians were killed in other parts of the town. About ten civilians were gathered later in the day by the IDF and transported to Kila.

The massacre of El Khiam was later reported by the Western media who usually put the number of murdered civilians at seventy (*19). But at the time, no reporter was allowed to enter El Khiam and none did.

Colonel Zion Ziv of the Golani Brigade and Lieutenant

Colonel Yoram complained to Northern Command about the massacre in El Khiam. The officers accused the commander of the Golani Brigade, Colonel Amir, of having ordered his men to hand the civilians over to Haddad's men, even if he could not possibly have foreseen the results. These complaints were later investigated by the office of the State Comptroller in the framework of an investigation of the whole Litani Operation. The findings were not published.

Haddad who condemned the massacre of El Khiam was himself involved in another atrocity. Two wounded PLU men were captured by him and his men in one of the positions north of Marj Ayoun which had been overrun by the IDF. One of the terrorists was shot dead. The other was doused with gasoline and burnt to death.

In reaction to the massacre, the IDF closed El Khiam to Haddad's men for the next couple of days. Yet small groups of looters succeeded in infiltrating the town. During more than a year of constant fighting and bombardments, El Khiam had been badly damaged but only a few buildings had been totally destroyed. The Ghadafi School, for example, was intact. After the IDF soldiers left El Khiam, looters from the enclaves and from other areas took over. When the looting finally stopped, people from all over South Lebanon began to demolish buildings in order to remove, either for their own use or in order to sell, plumbing, doors, window frames and bars but especially the iron parts which had been used in the construction of the buildings. The term "Hadid

El Khiam" (Iron from El Khiam) became a professional term among the building constructors in Lebanon. Later, El Khiam, now a ghost town, was used by the IDF for combat training in built-up areas. The Ghadafi School and many other buildings were nearly demolished during this training with live ammunition and explosive charges. The UN Observers in their post south of the town repeatedly filed complaints with Israel about the use of El Khiam.

Immediately after the end of the military operations in South Lebanon, a special reserve unit of the IDF Military Government moved into the occupied areas in order to deal with civilian matters. Colonel Fuad was recalled from the National Defense College and was put in charge of this unit. He immediately ordered his men to continue with the policy of the operational forces : not to allow freedom of movement between the enclaves and from the enclaves into occupied areas. Colonel Fuad's HQ was located in Bint Jebel. The unit was mostly occupied with the close to 200.000 refugees who had fled the area at the beginning of the hostilities and were now returning to their villages.

The refugee phenomenon had bypassed the Shiite border villages which had cooperated with ADAL. During the very first hours of the Litani Operation, ADAL officers had installed large signs at the entrance of those villages. These signs said in Hebrew and Arabic "This is a protected village", included warnings not to harm the inhabitants and their property and were co-signed by Lieutenant Colonel

Yoram and Haddad.

During the early stages of the IDF occupation of South Lebanon, ADAL made preparations for the reception of several hundred fighters of the Lebanese Front from the north who would take over new positions around the old enclaves, mainly north of Marj Ayoun, east of Ein Ibel and in the Alma a-Shaab area. For this purpose, Haddad and Shidiak received BTRs, APCs, guns, mortars and other equipment from the IDF (*20). In the end, only a small number of fighters arrived from the north via Israel. The force was about 80 men strong and included 30 members of the "Ahrar" militia of Camille Chamoun. These men were refugees from the Maronite village of Aishiyeh which had fallen to the PLO in early 1977. They believed that the IDF would cross the Litani River and thus bring them back to their homes. After about a week in the south, the other fifty fighters demanded to be returned to Beirut, but the Aishiyeh contingent stayed and was attached to the SKS unit. Towards the end of the IDF presence in South Lebanon, the joint SKS-Aishiyeh force began to show signs of unrest. A number of times the men refused to carry out orders and finally demanded to be returned to Beirut. During their stay they had been housed in the barracks of El Khiam and later in the school building in Taibe. When the IDF withdrew from Taibe, the men were sent back to Juniah via Haifa.

The leaders of the Lebanese Front had correctly evaluated the developments that were going to take place on

the international scene. Mainly for this reason, they did not send the promised number of fighters to the south and even refused to temporarily transfer to the south those members of their organizations who were undergoing training in Israel at the time of the Litani Operation.

A few days after the beginning of the Litani Operation, small forces of Haddad and Shidiak, usually under the command of ADAL officers, began to carry out patrols in those areas where there was no IDF presence such as near the Burghus junction, the Kaukaba junction, the Khardale Bridge and others. From time to time, these patrols ran into small forces of the PLO and the Left which led to short skirmishes and occasional exchanges of fire. The objective of these patrols was mainly the retrieval of abandoned PLO equipment such as 122mm guns from the Burghus area and Toyota Jeeps and trucks from the Kaukaba junction.

In May, ADAL officers started to work on plans for the establishment of a new line of defense for the area which included the three former enclaves and the connecting Shiite regions along the Israeli border. The plan took into consideration the manpower strength and equipment level before the Litani Operation as well as the recruitment of a small number of Shiite fighters from villages such as Markabe, Hula, Meis a-Jabel, Aitaroun and Bint Jebel. These Shiites were recruited as "village guards" while Haddad appointed commanders for the new villages who came from the enclaves, mainly Christians. By appointing enclave veterans

to these command duties, pressure on Haddad was eased, especially from the Kleia contingent which claimed as usual that it had contributed most and received least. The post of village commander was considered a position of responsibility but was also a lucrative source of additional income through the issue of permits and licences by the commander.

The local defense system in the new areas centred around a roadblock on the South Lebanon Highway, usually made up of sandbag positions, adjacent accommodations for the guards and an office for the commander. This arrangement assured the villagers that the safety of their village lay in the hands of their own men. At a later stage, villages with larger contingents of fighters also received tanks, mortars and other equipment. All the villages were connected by radio and in some cases by field-telephone to ADAL and the communication centres in the former enclaves. The entire region was now divided into two sectors, the western Sector stretching from the Mediterranean to Aitaroun and the Eastern Sector from Aitaroun to Mount Hermon.

Footnotes to Chapter XVIII :

- *1. see Jerusalem Post , 12-15 March 1978
- *2. Facts on File , pp.175-176
- *3. Keesing's Contemporary Archives , p.29647
- *4. ibid.
- *5. Weizman, Battle for Peace , p.247
- *6. Keesing's Contemporary Archives , p.29648
- *7. Utzva is a Hebrew military term for an unspecified force or "formation, a military body established for specific tasks. It consists of several basic formations, secondary formations and units of other forces according to the needs of the specific operation".
Dictionary of Military Terms , IDF General Staff, 1-90, July 1965, p.248
- *8. Ilan Kfir : Infantry and Paratroopers. IDF Encyclopedia of Military and Defense , Vol.4, Revivim Publishers, Tel Aviv 1981, p.199
- *9. Weizman, The Battle for Peace , p.253
- *10. Jimmy Carter : The Blood of Abraham , Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston 1985, p.96
- *11. Weizman, Battle for Peace , p.256
- *12. ibid. , p.257
- *13. For the full text of Resolution 425 see Facts on File , Vol. 38, No. 1950, p.197
- *14. ibid.
- *15. "The Finnish General Ensio Siilasvuo was a nice man

who saw his task as "extending good services" and did not pretend to be the policeman of the world... The second one I met was the UN Secretary General, Dr.Kurt Waldheim, one of the most repugnant persons I ever met. Hostile, cold and stupid, he learnt nothing and did not understand anything".
 Weizman, Battle for Peace , p.257

*16. Interview with Motta Gur in the article "Litani Operation - Second Thought", Koteret Rashit , Tel Aviv, 13 May 1986

*17. Hamizrachi, Road to Beirut , p.130. The identity of the Syrian officer could not be verified but there were indications that he belonged to the intelligence branch of Saiqa.

*18. ibid.

*19. see New York Times , 30 March 1978

*20. General Yanosh appointed Colonel Gideon Meiri commander of this operation. Lieutenant-Colonel Yoram was appointed for the duration of the IDF presence in South Lebanon "Advisor to the DC Northern Command on South Lebanon Affairs", thereby becoming in effect the commander of ADAL. After the IDF withdrawal, the ADAL command and the Military Government were united into one independent unit under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Yoram.

XIX. The Deployment of UNIFIL

The deployment plan for the new area was worked out in great haste. It was obvious that the creation of a Security Belt in South Lebanon, in contrast to the objective of a Buffer Zone of Operation "Stone of Wisdom", had developed in the wake of UN resolution 425. The IDF began to allow Haddad's and Shidiak's forces to take limited control over areas outside the former enclaves only after it had become clear that Israel would not prevent the deployment of UNIFIL. Israel encouraged direct contacts between UNIFIL commanders and the two Lebanese majors. This created a situation where they and not the IDF handed areas over to UNIFIL in spite of the fact that UNIFIL refused to recognize Haddad and Shidiak as representatives of the Lebanese army. At the beginning, UNIFIL insisted on gaining full control over the whole area south of the Litani River including the former enclaves. Haddad and Shidiak refused, enjoying the support of Israel in this matter.

In the first "Memorandum of Understanding", 12 June 1978, between UNIFIL commander, General Erskine, and the commanders of the Eastern and Western Sectors, Majors Haddad and Shidiak, UNIFIL agreed in fact to deploy its main forces

north of the borders of the sectors while Haddad and Shidiak allowed the establishment of a few UN-observation posts in their areas. In paragraph 2, UNIFIL recognized

"the Lebanese Army officers" as "representing the legitimate government of Lebanon". Paragraph 4 established the impotence of UNIFIL in the Lebanese theatre by declaring that "UNIFIL will not fight, establish roadblocks, disarm legitimate Lebanese forces or put any obstacle before the activities and freedom of movement of forces under the command of Major Haddad and Major Shidiak in areas which are now under their command and control". Both sides agreed in paragraph 13 that "the good services of the IDF representative will be used when necessary during the process of developing relations or in times of crisis" (*1). While UNIFIL worked closely with the two "representatives of the legitimate government of Lebanon" along the Israeli border, it also established good working relations with representatives of the PLO and the Left in the Tyre Pocket, along the coastal plain road, and near Kaukaba (*2).

The first UN unit arriving in the Eastern Sector consisted of elements of the Swedish infantry battalion serving with UNEF (United Nations Emergency Forces) under their commander Colonel Lindgren, who were now temporarily attached to UNIFIL. The Swedish soldiers arrived in Metula in a bus convoy straight from the Sinai Peninsula where they had been stationed. The Swedes were met by Lieutenant Colonel Yoram, Lieutenant Colonel Gari Gal, commander of the IDF liaison unit to UN-forces in the north, Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Leverett of the US Army attached to UNIFIL, a Canadian major and an Australian captain. The initial task

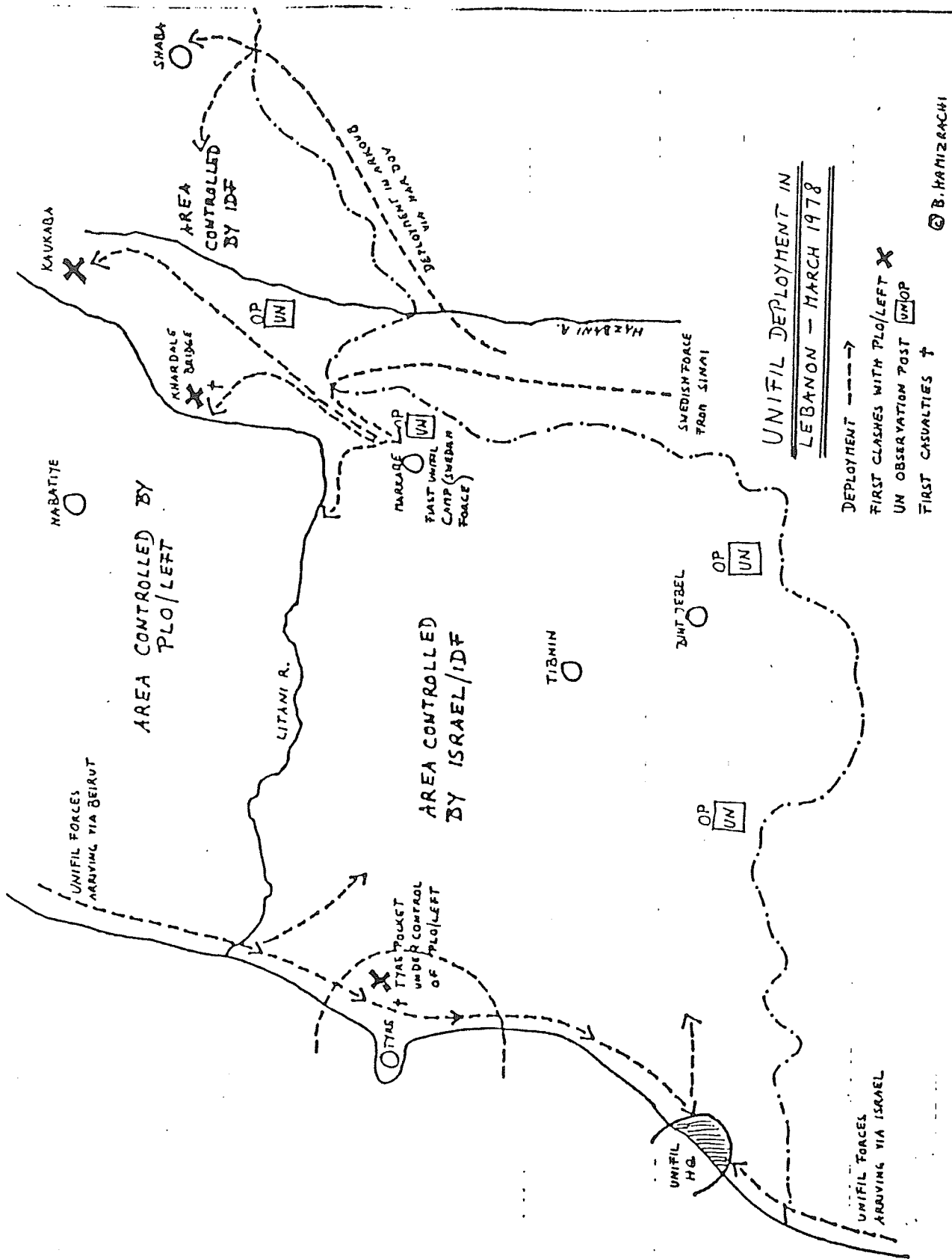
of the Swedish contingent was to deploy along the southern bank of the Litani River from the Khardale Bridge northwards, to take over Ibel a-Saki and the road leading to Shuba and Shaba, and the Kaukaba area. Haddad offered the force the use of the large school building in the village of Markabe as a temporary camp. The school thus became the first UNIFIL field command in South Lebanon and was immediately decked out with huge Red Cross flags. A few hours after the Swedes had settled in Markabe, the UNIFIL commander, General Erskine, arrived, inspected the camp and ordered Colonel Lindgren to take over the Khardale bridge as soon as possible. This order came as a result of pressure from the PLO who had expressed concern about Haddad's patrols along the Tel Lubia/Khardale road. A UNIFIL force on the bridge would assure that the road leading from the bridge to Nabatiye and Aishiye would be closed not only to Haddad's men but also to Israeli forces in case these attempted to attack (*3).

On the morning of Sunday, 26 March 1978, the Swedish force was ready to carry out its orders. Colonel Lindgren arrived at the head of a convoy of bright white UN trucks near the Kila junction where he coordinated further moves with Lieutenant-Colonel Yoram : because of information that the road to the bridge might be mined, IDF sappers were to head the UN convoy. Lieutenant-Colonel Yoram, who was to accompany Colonel Lindgren, had been informed by Northern Command that the IDF would not interfere under any

circumstances, even if the PLO opened fire from the Beaufort Castle. Colonel Lindgren was in good spirits since he had just received a report from UNIFIL HQ that negotiations between UNIFIL and the PLO in Beirut had resulted in the solemn promise of the PLO not to interfere with the UN deployment on and around the Khardale bridge. Nevertheless, Lieutenant-Colonel Yoram made arrangements with Haddad's artillery and tanks to return fire in case the UN force was fired on from the Beaufort Castle. The codeword for this possibility was "Pharao".

Near the position of Tel Lubia, the UN unit lined up in order to advance down the narrow winding road to the bridge: in front the IDF sappers, followed by a jeep with Lieutenant-Colonel Yoram and Colonel Lindgren, and Swedish soldiers on foot swinging huge UN flags. An official Swedish army photographer was running around to perpetuate the proceedings. While the sappers, the jeep and the soldiers on foot started to move towards their objective, the white trucks were still idling on the Tel Lubia junction waiting to take their place in the slowly moving procession. On the flatbeds of the trucks the Swedish soldiers had erected sandbag positions, just in case...

The head of the column had barely begun its descent, when the PLO on the Beaufort Castle, just on the other side of the river and towering above the Swedish force, opened fire with an anti-aircraft gun and with heavy machineguns. Pandemonium broke out when the shells began to explode on



**UNIFIL DEPLOYMENT IN
LEBANON - MARCH 1978**

- DEPLOYMENT - - - - ->
- FIRST CLASHES WITH PLO/LEFT X
- UN OBSERVATION POST [UN] OP
- FIRST CASUALTIES †

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and near the road. Most of the flagbearers threw down their flags and ran back to the junction where the trucks tried to turn around, all at the same time. In the ensuing chaos of manouvering vehicles most of the sandbag positions in the back collapsed and spilled over onto the road.

Colonel Lindgren had disappeared in the direction of the road junction the moment the first shots rang out. Lieutenant-Colonel Yoram was shouting warnings to the Swedish soldiers that the roadsides were mined and not to take cover there, and then radioed the codeword "Pharao". Haddad's artillery and tanks immediately opened fire on the castle. In the meantime, all the Swedes had safely made it back to Tel Lubia and the trucks had begun to withdraw towards the village of Dir Mimas. Left on the exposed road were the IDF sappers and Lieutenant-Colonel Yoram and another accompanying IDF officer. Lieutenant-Colonel Yoram now ordered an APC down from Tel Lubia to pick up the sappers. Miraculously, none of them had been hurt.

In the afternoon, Colonel Lindgren gave a press conference in Metula where he tried to explain what had happened and why his unit had fled in terror. The behaviour of the Swedish unit was also dealt with in the Swedish parliament, where deputies demanded an explanation for the disgrace heaped on their armed forces by the performance in South Lebanon.

The incident near the Khardale bridge established two facts : the first to open fire on UNIFIL in South Lebanon

was the PLO, and the confidence of Lebanese and Israelis in the ability of UNIFIL to deal with the PLO had received a severe blow.

The Swedes finally took the bridge on 28 March. The next day, one soldier was killed and one wounded when they stepped on a mine in their area of deployment near the bridge, the first casualties of UNIFIL.

The area between the village of Taibe and the Khardale bridge was the most sensitive and problematic spot to be taken over by UNIFIL. Here the Litani River ran first southwards and then turned to the west, close to the Israeli border which was in some places only about 2km away. Since the IDF had not crossed the river at any point, the PLO/Left positions on the other bank remained intact. These included the Beaufort Castle and the Announ Plateau. This, the narrowest point of the Security Belt, was sometimes described as the "bottleneck", and in the future UN troops repeatedly found themselves in a position of the PLO and Haddad's forces firing at each other over their heads.

The Beaufort Castle had not been taken by the IDF because of Israel's decision to avoid any direct confrontation with Syria. Intelligence analysts in Israel had warned that the Syrian forces in Lebanon would join in the fighting if there was a direct threat against Nabatiye which like Tyre was an important PLO/Left centre, or against the Aishiye region across the Litani River where, although south of the "Red Line", the Syrians kept small military

contingents.

These decisions were not fully understood and appreciated by Haddad and his men who continued to believe, even after the unilateral Israeli ceasefire and the arrival of the first UN units, that the fighting would continue and eventually reach the other side of the Litani. When they finally realized that this would not happen and that the 'status quo ante" along the western front of the eastern enclave would remain the same, they accused Israel of being hesitant and over-cautious. "They don't always understand the legitimacy of (that) caution. One must understand how things look in the eyes of a Lebanese in a Sherman tank, a wreck from the Second World War, when suddenly in front of his eyes a military operation like Litani begins. Suddenly, huge frightening tanks of a well-organized army rumble into the area. This Lebanese steps aside, full of wonder, and says, how is it possible that a nation with so many tanks, so many aircraft, so many guns, with such an awesome army, hesitates..." (*4).

Haddad and Shidiak took part in the preparations for the arrival of more UN forces from Iran, France, Ireland, Norway and Nepal. Though they assisted these units to deploy mainly north of the Security Belt, they refused to allow UNIFIL to take up any meaningful positions inside the former enclaves, and they restricted them in the connecting areas. Following the advice of ADAL, Haddad handed over to UNIFIL the villages of Taibe, Biat, Rashaya el-Fukhar, Ibel

a-Saki and Kaukaba as well as the area between Taibe and the Kaakaiya bridge. On most occasions, Haddad's forces entered an area just evacuated by the IDF and then transferred the same area to UNIFIL (*5).

For some time, UNIFIL insisted on taking control of and deploying in the whole area between the Litani River and the Israeli border but during the final stage of the IDF withdrawal finally recognized the futility of these demands. The closest UNIFIL came in fulfillment of its mandate was when it set up one battalion HQ north of Naba Abel and small liaison teams in the Dehur Dibin neighborhood, east of Marj Ayoun, and in a suburb of Bint Jebel (*6).

Immediately after its deployment, UNIFIL came under pressure from both the PLO and the Left, mainly in the areas of Tyre and Tibnin which resulted in a number of casualties. UNIFIL command realized that there would be no full cooperation from either Haddad or the PLO and therefore built its infrastructure mainly in those areas which had been turned over to the UN directly by the IDF.

On several occasions, UNIFIL officers confronted Haddad with written orders from Lebanese Army HQ in Beirut which ordered Haddad to turn over to UNIFIL the army barracks in Marj Ayoun and El Khiam. This approach was quickly abandoned by UNIFIL when Haddad ridiculed these orders by General Victor Khoury and finally threatened to cut all relations with UNIFIL if it continued to treat him as a subordinate of the Lebanese Commander in Chief.

The South Lebanon Highway stayed exclusively in the hands of Haddad and Shidiak. Haddad's men also manned positions on the high ground around Taibe such as Tel Sirat Knisse and Fakani. The forces of the two majors also controlled Bint Jebel, the southern half of the village of Blat and the high ground above Tibnin. Their northernmost position on the Mediterranean was established at Ras Bayada, north of Naqoura. They also established a permanent stronghold in the village of Shuba on the slopes of Mount Hermon.

Because of UNIFIL's choice of where to deploy, it repeatedly found itself in the position of having become a permanent hostage of the warring sides and of having to endure endless threats, intimidations and outright attacks. The nature of UNIFIL's mandate which had made it a non-combatant force, and its dependence on long supply and communications routes leading through the Security Belt, made it dependant on the good will of Haddad and Shidiak who could close (and often did close) the roads to UNIFIL traffic at any time and under any pretext and kept UN traffic already underway trapped for days in the area.

General Erskine's decision to establish UNIFIL HQ as well as UNIFIL's main logistic installations and depots in the Naqoura area, northwest of the Lebanese customs building which had been used by the UN since 1949, resulted in the HQ being completely surrounded by the militias of Haddad and Shidiak. From the first day of its operation in Lebanon,

UNIFIL HQ thus had put itself into the hands and at the mercy of one of the warring parties in the South Lebanon conflict and had to endure the resulting tensions, clashes and casualties. This situation was fully used by Haddad whose ability to put pressure on UNIFIL resulted in a more "reasonable" approach and reduced UN demands (*7).

The IDF had made it clear from the very beginning that UNIFIL would have to address requests, complaints and proposals directly to Haddad and Shidiak and would have to work out any differences in cooperation with them. The IDF continued to keep to this position even though UNIFIL insisted on sending those requests, complaints and proposals to the IDF. Israel continuously repeated that Haddad and Shidiak, and later only Haddad, were the "landlords", a point that was further stressed by the final withdrawal of the Israeli forces from Lebanon on 13 June 1978.

The realities in the field demonstrated the impotence of the Lebanese government, the client and official host of UNIFIL; the weaknesses and instability of UNIFIL and its mandate; and the determination of Israel to continue to support Haddad and to strengthen the Security Belt.

Frequently, intelligence information from UNIFIL-controlled areas enraged Haddad and confirmed Israel's claim that the international force had only a limited effect. In fact, Norwegian soldiers provided medical assistance to the PLO north of Kaukaba, and French troops were openly fraternizing with PLO fighters in coffee

shops in Tyre (*8). Haddad repeatedly complained that after clashes between UNIFIL and the PLO, the UN spokesman always seemed to play down the responsibility of the PLO and the seriousness of the event.

To Haddad, UNIFIL became the most dangerous factor in the area. UNIFIL's demands and its ambition to take control over the Security Belt in the name of the Lebanese government endangered the very existence of the area, more so than the PLO and the Left who were no longer a military threat. Since the battle of Tel Sreife and Israel's demonstration of force they had not shown any offensive initiative and seemed satisfied with a war of attrition, mining and small commando raids. "Israel made it clear that she has an obligation to defend South Lebanon... Because of their fear of the IDF, the knowledge that Israel will interfere (the PLO will not attack). Therefore, there is no military problem there" (*9).

Just prior to the IDF withdrawal from South Lebanon (minus the officers and men of ADAL who continued their work inside the Security Belt), General Yanosh, during a ceremony at Meis a-Jabel on 13 June 1978, officially turned the area over to Haddad and Shidiak. Speaking in the name of the Israeli government, General Yanosh said : "The Israeli government insists on its commitment to continue to protect the Christian minority in South Lebanon" (*10). Out of earshot of the many local and foreign journalists attending and covering the event, General Yanosh assured the

two worried Lebanese majors in French : "We'll see each other soon. Don't be afraid, we are just on the other side of the border" (*11). Haddad praised Israel and the IDF for having cleared the terrorists out of South Lebanon and promised to keep in good relations with Israel "who will keep an eye on the area" (*12).

With the PLO/Left camp no longer being the danger they had been before the Litani Operation, UNIFIL and its ineffectiveness became the biggest threat to Haddad and the Security Belt. It did not take very long before the PLO infiltrated the area of operation of UNIFIL where they set up extra-territorial armed camps. UNIFIL seemed unable to stop this development and the confidence of the Lebanese population in the abilities of the multi-national force soon disappeared. Unable to control the movement of the PLO in its area, UNIFIL began to be seen as a collaborator with the enemy. Most of the confrontations and clashes of Haddad's forces in the period between the Litani Operation 1978 and Peace for Galilee 1982 were with UNIFIL. UNIFIL's attempt in August 1978 to lead a Lebanese Army task force through Marj Ayoun to Tibnin led to the final break between Haddad and the Lebanese Government. Haddad's forces stopped the advance of the Lebanese army units with artillery fire near Kaukaba. In February 1979, Haddad declared the independence of the area under his command, the Security Belt, and called it "Free Lebanon".

Footnotes to Chapter XIX :

*1. See the full text of the Memorandum of Understanding in the Appendix.

*2. see Colonel Salvan : Liban 1978. Les Casques Bleus de la France. , Eric Baschet Editions, Paris 1979, Limited Edition. Picture captioned "Tentative d'Infiltration des Fedayins". Text : "Le colonel Salvan explique au major Tamraz, officier de liaison de l'OLP, les circonstances d'une action qui a coute deux morts au fedayins". No page number.

*3. In 1982, the presence of UNIFIL forces on the bridge could not stop the IDF advance.

*4. Elazar Papers , No. 4, p.62

*5. The village of Kaukaba had been abandoned by the PLO but had not been occupied by the IDF. Haddad entered the village at the head of a convoy consisting of his own forces, two IDF vehicles and a Swedish unit under Colonel Lindgren.

*6. Within a short while, all these positions were evacuated and moved to other locations outside the Security Belt.

*7. During one of the many future periods of tension between UNIFIL and Haddad, for example, a Sherman tank took up position about 50m from the main gate of UNIFIL HQ, its guns and machineguns trained at the windows of General Erskine's office. The tank stayed there for many weeks

completely unnerving and demoralizing the HQ staff.

*8. see Salvan, Liban 1978 .

*9. Elazar Papers , No. 4, p.62

*10. Tape, Meis a-Jabel , 13 June 1978

*11. ibid.

*12. ibid.

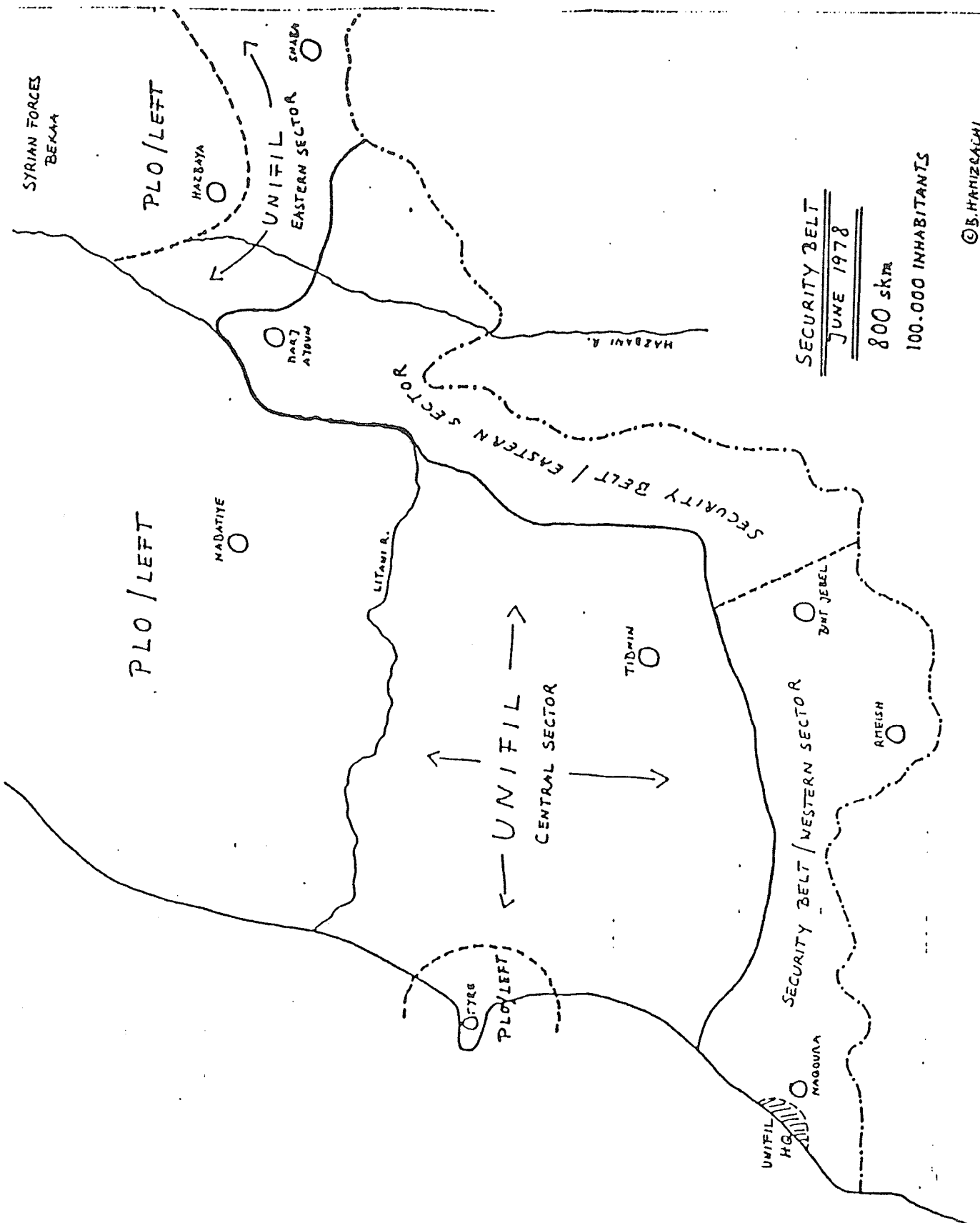
XX. Conclusion

On 14 January 1984, Major Saad Haddad died of cancer at his home in Marj Ayoun. His death was accompanied by a dramatic wave of announcements which in the usual way of Middle Eastern rhetoric reflected the opinions of the opposing sides.

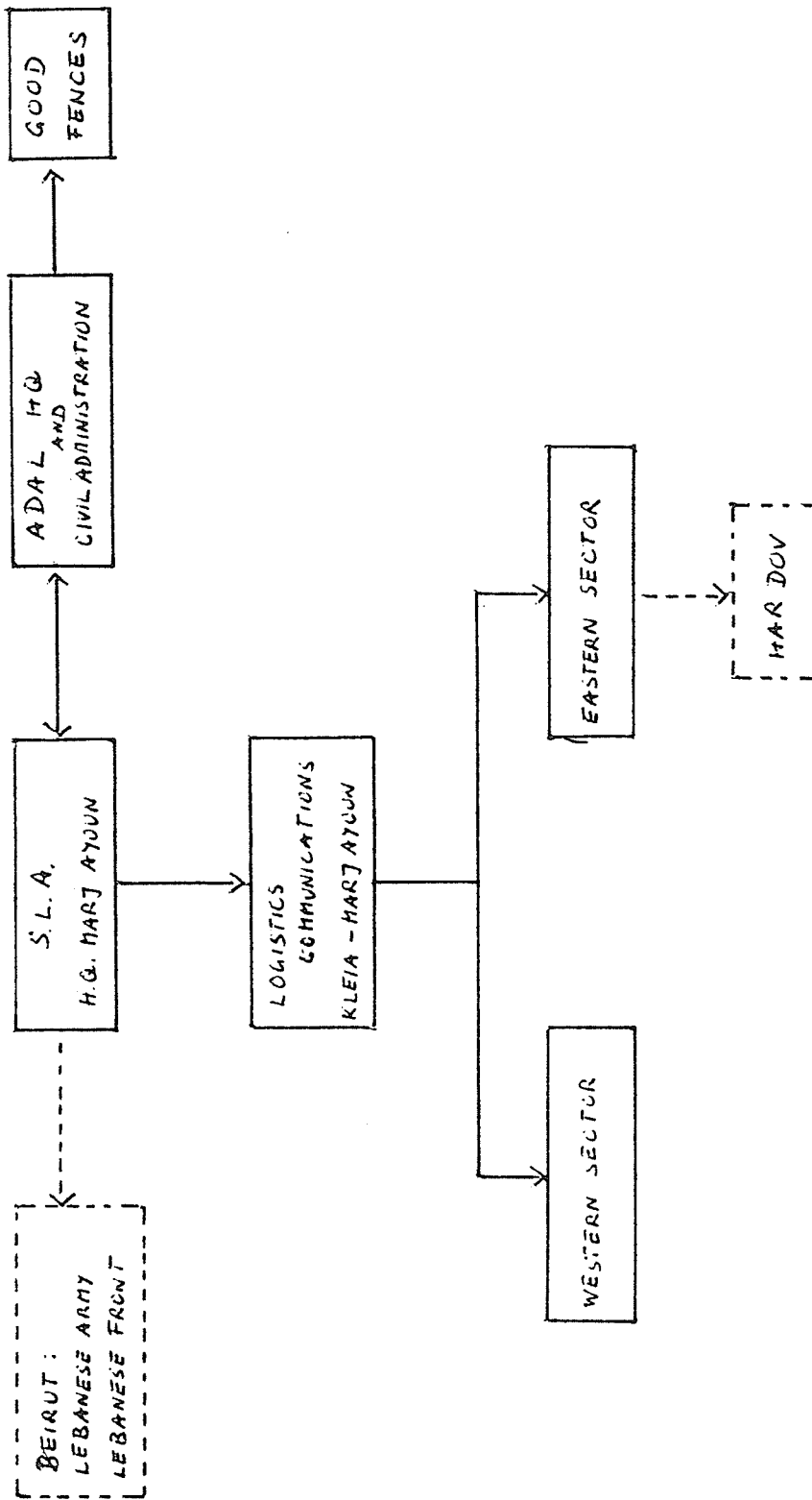
Haddad was neither a "great patriot" as Israel's Minister of Defense Moshe Arens claimed nor was he a "traitor" as published in a PLO communique the same day. Haddad was neither a charismatic military leader nor a political figure admired by all the people of Lebanon. The truth as shown in this thesis lies somewhere in between.

As a son of South Lebanon, Haddad's heart was first and foremost with the region he grew up in, with the town which was his home. Nowhere else in Lebanon could he have gained the same importance as in the south whose people, their interaction and their problems he knew and understood. Only in this area which bordered on the State of Israel could the special conditions create Israel's Security Belt and Haddad's "Free Lebanon".

In 1975, Haddad's main loyalty still lay with the Lebanese army though he had been increasingly irritated and disenchanted by the continuous erosion of the army's prestige, especially in the wake of the events of 1973. When the Marj Ayoun battalion collapsed, he rejected the proposal of the Kleia soldiers to desert and to collaborate



ORGANIZATION OF THE S.L.A. 1978 (SECURITY BELT)



with Israel. Instead, he left through the lines of the PLO and LAA to Beirut leaving his family behind. He did not actively participate in any stage of the civil war but kept to a neutral army camp. He agreed to return to the south and take over its defense when the offer came from an official source, the Lebanese Commander in Chief, thereby accepting what he had earlier rejected : the collaboration with Israel. Haddad preferred to carry out orders of an official source, of a higher authority. He preferred to be told what to do, instead of making an independent decision for himself. He continued this trend also during his relationship with Israeli officers and politicians.

Although Haddad never produced the written order of General Hanah Said and Sleiman Franjiyeh which he claimed had sent him to the south, there was never any evidence of its non-existence. In fact, the Lebanese army command throughout the years covered in this thesis accepted Haddad's presence and activities in the south and stayed in continuous contact with him.

The term "traitor" fits neither Haddad's position nor his behaviour. Lebanese military and political personalities before and after him have collaborated with various organizations, states and parties, and even with Israel. In the Lebanese context, the term "traitor" is rather vague, has no long-lasting impact and is easily forgotten. Even within the Lebanese army, Haddad was not the first officer to cooperate with Israel and seek her

support. Others established their own military organizations which were politically and ideologically opposed to the legitimate army. Nevertheless, while their allies were mainly the Palestinians and the Syrians, Haddad dealt with an unusual ally. Haddad's strong and consistent objection to the Palestinians was the result of his distrust of Moslems in general and of his conviction that the military presence of the Palestinians in Lebanon posed a threat to his country's existence, at least to the "status quo" which had kept it functioning for so long.

Haddad was never an outstanding military leader whose personal courage was an example to his men. He made many mistakes on the tactical level, and without the help of the Israeli officers was often unable to organize, motivate and sometimes to control his men. The strategic planning for the south and resulting decisions were made by Israel based on her own security needs. Haddad had very little input.

Though the IDF never saw in Haddad an outstanding military leader, it created the image of a tough fighter in the minds of the Israeli people who developed a special fondness for this man on the other side of the border who talked their political language and fought their battles. The main reason for this phenomenon was the media whose persistent and continuous interest in Haddad taught him valuable lessons on his way to a positive media personality. The media lifted him from an obscure town square politician to the position of an international

(and especially Israeli) media celebrity. The IDF, who knew better, actively supported the development of this image; a weak and obscure Haddad could only have been counterproductive to its interests and efforts.

The defeat of Taibe took place at a time when Haddad was still an unknown factor in Israel and therefore of no special importance to her public. At the time of Operation Cooperative, only a few months later, a success was already of great importance to the people of Israel, they wanted their ally in South Lebanon to win. Accordingly, neither the Israeli politicians nor the IDF could allow something to go wrong and taint the picture the public had created for their champion. The Litani Operation on the other hand had been the result of an Israeli government decision; Haddad played no part in it, just as he played no part in the expansion of the Security Belt.

Haddad's pro-Israeli stance was supported by the majority of his people who relied on Israel's Good Fence policy not only in terms of economic, medical and personal gains but also in terms of their own security. Used to the Lebanese system of give-and-take, they accepted Israel's demands of a local security shield in the south in return for the protection of their villages and their land. If the price for the benefits of the open gates was the cooperation with Israel in terms of their and her security, most Lebanese and Israelis in the border region were ready to pay the price.

It should be remembered though that Israel's main allies in Lebanon were not the Christians of the south but the political elite of the Christians in the larger Beirut area and the Chuf Mountains such as the Gemayels, the Chamouns and at the beginning the Franjiyehs. While the South Lebanese played an important role in Israel's immediate local security policy, the Christian leadership in Beirut was part of a long-term plan whose objectives reached far beyond the "here and now" of Israeli politics. When in 1982 the Israeli Likud government pushed the IDF to Beirut and established a direct land link to the Lebanese Forces in Juniah, the Christian leadership there refused to play its part.

During the period principally discussed in this study, Israel's Defense Minister Shimon Peres identified the Labour government's Lebanon policy in a less ambitious way : to help the Lebanese to help themselves. While the Labor government was in power, the activities of the small ADAL unit and the military ties with the Lebanese on the other side of the "Good Fence" were kept secret. Only the humanitarian aspects like the Good Fence clinics and trade, for example, were made public. This changed with the election victory of the Likud Party in 1977. Prime Minister Begin, whose political style stood in stark contrast to that of his predecessor, Yitzhak Rabin, immediately boasted of the military support Israel granted to South Lebanon. From this time on, the South Lebanese began to be seen more and

more as proxies of Israel, merely carrying out her policies.

Though Prime Minister Begin's new approach towards South Lebanon seemed to indicate the government's firm grip of the situation, developments in the different sectors of South Lebanon were usually not the result of direct government initiative. Initiatives on the local tactical level very often were the result of decisions made on the spot by ADAL officers according to the special demands of the moment. The decision making process often also depended on the personal relations between the ADAL field commanders and the Chief of Staff or the DC Northern Command. Within this triangle, interpretations and reactions were worked out on a personal basis instead of through normal administrative channels which usually demanded time and patience, two characteristics the type of warfare in South Lebanon did not have.

More direct government intervention came only after the Litani Operation. The international dimensions of the area were changed through the creation of the Security Belt and the arrival and deployment of UNIFIL which brought with it international pressures through the respective governments and their allies such as the USA, who addressed issues concerning South Lebanon to the Government of Israel and its civilian branches such as the Foreign Ministry. This new situation changed the rules of the game also for the Ministry of Defense and the IDF General Staff, which began

to monitor more closely the activities of the Northern Command and ADAL in South Lebanon.

Israel's interest in South Lebanon and in Haddad was the result of the deteriorating security situation along the border which since after the Six Days War 1967 had turned the area from a quiet into a "wild" north. While for a time both the Israeli and Lebanese armies were engaged in the same war against the same enemy it soon became clear that the Lebanese army, small, ill-equipped, poorly trained and subjected to political pressures from within, was incapable of maintaining law and order and the inviolability of the border. The authority of the national army was further undermined by the creation of politically motivated militias whose manpower numbers soon surpassed those of the army and changed the balance of power in the country. The 1. Battalion in the barracks of Marj Ayoun did not escape this fate. Subjected to political pressures and subversive activities from the Left and the PLO, it disintegrated. With it collapsed all the instruments of government and of law and order, and forces hostile to Israel took over their place. The Good Fence policy was Israel's answer to the collapse of law and order, the disintegration of the Lebanese army in the south, the rapid growth of the PLO and leftwing forces in the area and the danger of having to face the Arab Deterrent Force, especially the Syrian army, on the other side of the Lebanese border. Israel's Lebanese Good Fence agent was Major Saad Haddad, but the shots were called

by Israel through the IDF, its Northern Command and the ADAL unit.

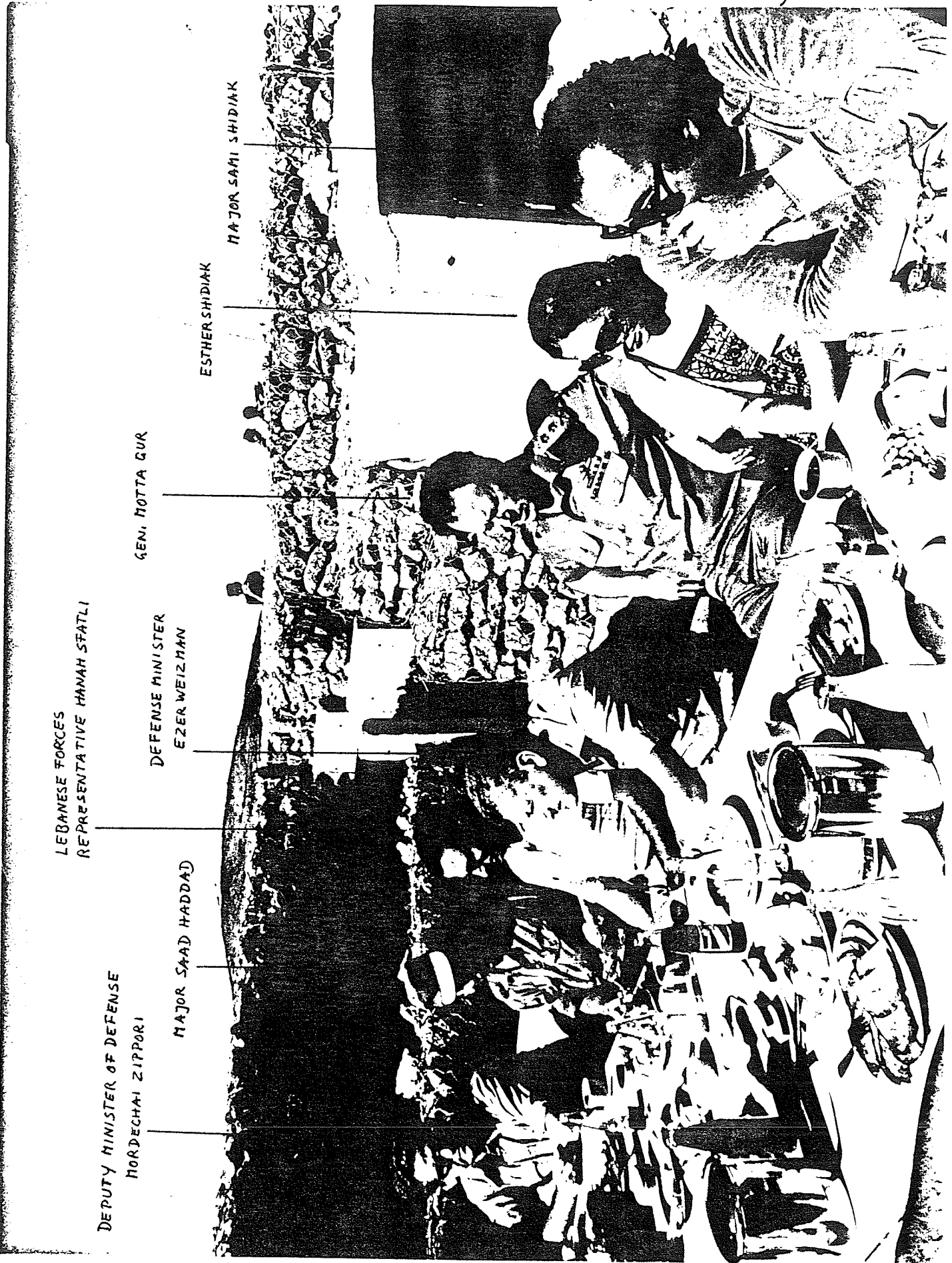
MAJOR SAAD HADDAD WITH B. HAMIZRACHI
MARJ AYOUN 1977



FOREIGN MINISTER YIGAL ALLON MEETS WITH HADDAD
AND FUAD DURING THE NABATIYEH CRISIS.

METULA, JANUARY 1977





LEBANESE FORCES
REPRESENTATIVE HANAH SFATLI

DEFENSE MINISTER
EZER WEIZMAN

MAJOR SAAD HADDAD

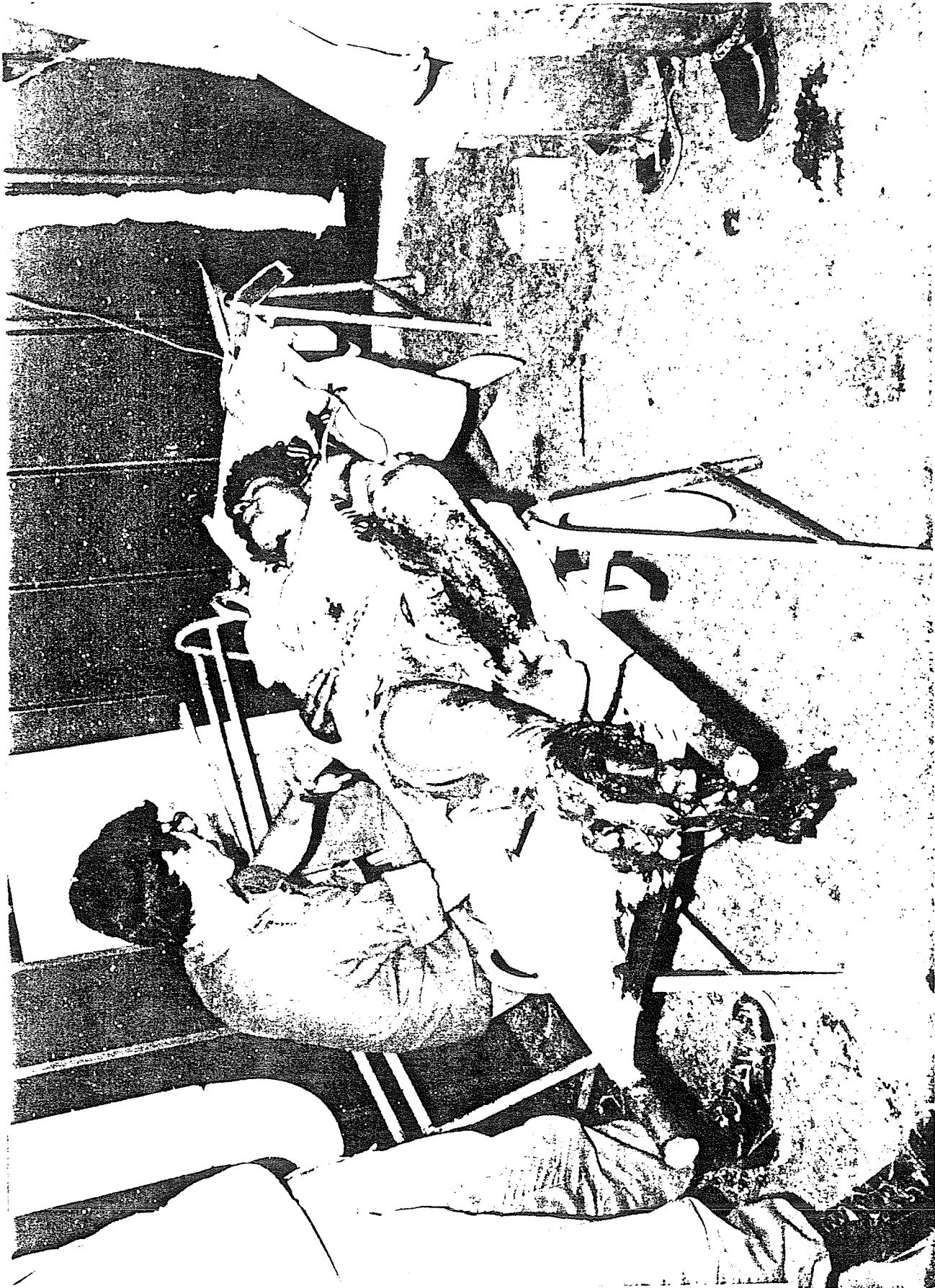
DEPUTY MINISTER OF DEFENSE
MORDECHAI ZIPPORI

GEN. MOTTA GUR

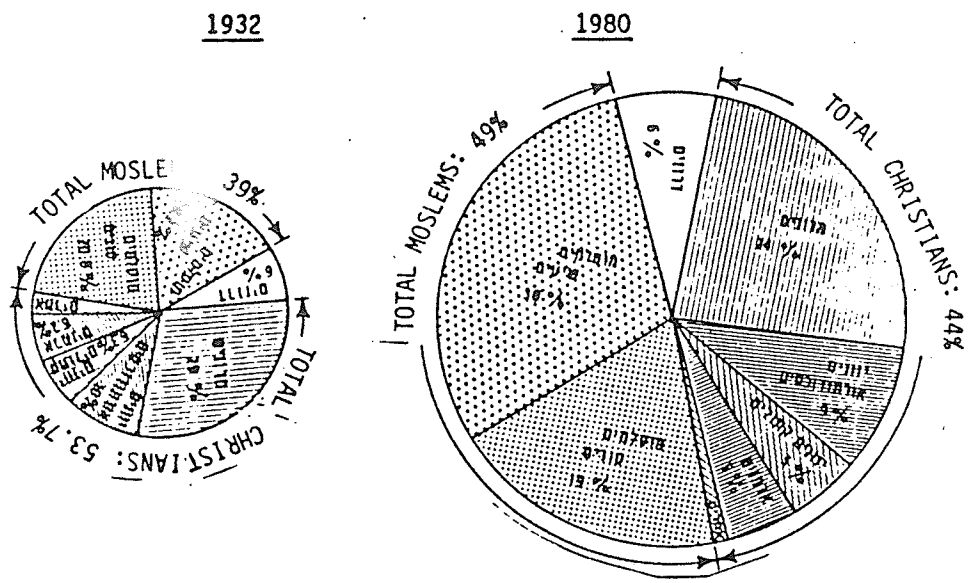
ESTHER SHIDIAK

MAJOR SAMI SHIDIAK

S.L.A. SOLDIER WOUNDED BY MINE. GOOD FENCE CLINIC, METULA 1976



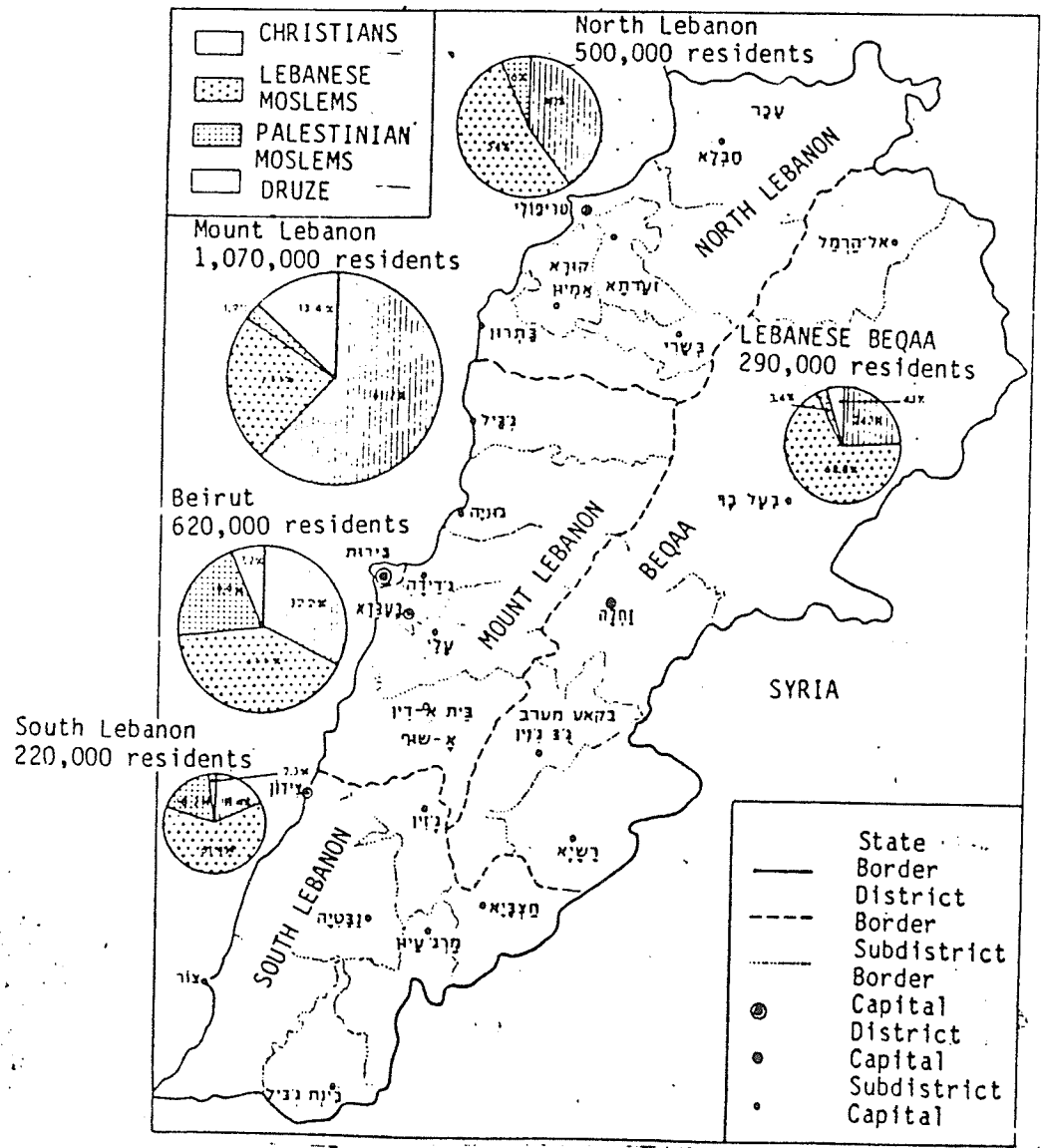
361
PERCENTAGE BREAKDOWN OF LEBANESE POPULATION
ACCORDING TO RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION



Total residents (SURVEY)
794,000

Total residents (ESTIMATE)
2,600,000
(without Palestinians)

LEBANON -- BREAKDOWN ACCORDING TO DISTRICTS



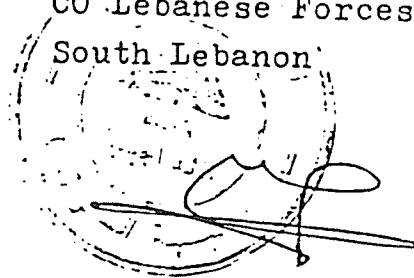
Headquarters
of the
Lebanese Forces
Marj-Ayoun Area

1st July 1977

To whom it may concern

This is to certify that Mrs Beate Hamizrachi,
journalist, of Metulla has been appointed as
liaison officer between the Lebanese Forces in
South Lebanon and the international press.

Major-Saad Haddad
CO Lebanese Forces
South Lebanon



ראש הממשלה

ירושלים, יז' באלול תשל"ז
31 באוגוסט 1977

לכבוד
גברת בת-עמי האזרחי
מ ט ר ל ה

גברת האזרחי היקרה,

קבלי-נא את תודתי הלכבית על שהואלת לשגר
לי תמונות שצילמת בעת ביקורי במטולה לפני מספר שבועות.
הן יישמרו אצלי כמזכרת נאמנה מביקור מרגש ורב-ענין בגדר
הטובה ליד מטולה.

בברכת שנה טובה,

מ' כנין

The Prime Minister
Jerusalem, 31 August 1977

Dear Mrs. Hamizrachi,

Please receive my heartfelt thanks for having sent me the photographs you took during my visit in Metula a few weeks ago. I shall keep them as an authentic memento of an emotional and interesting visit at the Good Fence near Metula.

With New Year Greetings
M. Begin

Letter from Eitan Barak, 10 April 1986

Brigadier-General Eitan Barak was Assistant Director of the General Staff Branch.

Translation :

Saad Haddad was an army man with great patience (in spite of the crises he had to go through) who served as the local leader of the people of South Lebanon.

He did not decide on the tactics and the strategy of everything that happened in South Lebanon. He carried out the duties the IDF asked of him. It is closer to the truth to see him as the liaison officer of South Lebanon and her population to the field units of the IDF.

In my opinion, the fact that he was the local leader (without too much charisma) made it possible for the population to cooperate with the IDF - Israel - which before 1976 had been an absolute tabu.

His power of survival and his stubbornness helped the continuation of the relations since he was the only one on the northern side of the border who was a stable factor in the area (and with time he gained experience and knowledge) while south of the border (Israel) defense ministers, chiefs of staff, commanders and officers who were the link between the IDF and Haddad, frequently changed.

עיריית קריית שמונה



THE MUNICIPALITY

067-413334/5167
קרית-שמונה 10200

לשכת ראש העיר

בע"ה, יג' באייר תשמ"ד
15 במאי 1984

תאריך
מספר: ע-31

Yoram Hamizrachi
Ave
Winnipeg Man
Canada

יורם היקר,

שמחתי לקבל מכתבך שהיה בסימן העלאתך מהאום עכורי.

אינני במנה על יודעי הכל בכל הקשור לחדר אך די במה שאני יודע כדי להוריד את הכובע לכבודו עם הזכרת שמו.

כמו במקרים רבים - "רק עם העלמו הרגשנו בחסרוננו"...
חדר סימל עבור תושבי קרית-שמונה את הערבי/הלכנובי איתו ייחלנו לשלום ועימו רצונו לקיים יחסי שכנות של שני עמים המכבדים זה את זה וששים לקשור גורלם האחד עם השני.

האיש גר בעירנו קנה בחבוינותו התחכנו בו ברחוב ובסופרמרקט והרגשנו כלפיו כאחד משלנו.

בימים הקשים ידענו שיש לנו בן ברית בדרום לבנון השומר בין השאר על זכותנו לחיות בשקט בגליל ואף מקריב הרבה על מזבח מטרה זו.

הערכנו אותו כאדם פשוט, ישר ובאמן למולדתו לעמו ולארצו וכידיד לעם ישראל. משלחת בכבדים ותושבים גדולה מקרית-שמונה השתתפה בהלווייתו ובין השאר בטענו חורשה על שמו בעיר בטכס שיוחד לו ואף פתחנו חשבון בנק על שמו להנצחת זכרו.

אוכל לכתוב עוד הרבה אך ברור לי שאחזור על דברים רבים הידועים לכל והמצויים בידיך. הצטרפו על מותו ובמשיך להזכירו מידי שנה.

אשמח לארח אותך כ"שתתגלגל" לאזורנו. שמור על עצמך.

ב ב ר כ ה

... ספר אזור
ראש העיר

פא/כב

Municipality of Kiriat Shmonah

Mayor's Office

15 May 1984

...To the population of Kiriat Shmonah, Haddad was the symbol of the Arab/Lebanese with whom we could hope for peace and who was ready to keep good neighbourly relations between two peoples who respect each other and want to tie their fate to each other.

He lived in our town and bought in our stores. We rubbed shoulders with him in the streets and in the Supermarket, and we saw him as one of our own.

During bad times, we knew that we had an ally in South Lebanon who protected our right to live quietly in Galilee and who sacrificed much for the sake of this purpose.

We saw him as an ordinary honest man, loyal to his birthplace, to his people and to his country, and as a friend of the people of Israel. A large delegation of dignitaries and inhabitants of Kiriat Shmonah took part in his funeral. During a ceremony in his memory we planted a park in town carrying his name, and we even opened a bank account in his name for the perpetuation of his memory...

We were sad over his death and we will continue to hold a memorial service every year...

With regards

Prosper Aznan

Mayor

האוניברסיטה העברית בירושלים
THE HEBREW UNIVERSITY OF JERUSALEM

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES מפקולטה למדעי הרוח

YIGAL YADIN, M.A., Ph.D.
Eleazar L. Sukenik Professor of Archaeology

פרופ' יגאל ידין
הקתרה לארכיאולוגיה ע"ש אליעזר ל. סוקניק 20.6.84



למר המזרחי שלום רב,

עם שובי מארה"ב מסיור של חודשים מצאתי את מכתבך.

לא הכרתי אישית את רס"ן חדאד ואף לא נפגשתי עימו מעולם. לכן לא אוכל לכתוב לך שום התרשמות אישית אודותיו. עם זאת, תמיד הערכתי אותו ביותר כאדם אמיץ, כמדינאי שקול וכפטריוט של ארצו. תרומתו לבטחון ישראל היתה חשובה ביותר ובפעולותיו ללא ספק זרע את הזרע לקשרים הכנים וארוכי הטווח בין לבנון ובין ישראל.

ב ב ר כ ה ,

יגאל ידין

...I did not know Major Haddad personally and never met him. Therefore, I cannot write any personal impressions of him. Nevertheless, I have always seen him as a courageous man, a balanced politician and a patriot of his country. His contribution to the security of Israel was most important. There is no doubt that his activities sowed the seed for sincere and long-lasting ties between Lebanon and Israel.

With regards
Yigal Yadin

(Yigal Yadin was Deputy Prime Minister in the first government of Prime minister menahem Begin.
He was the second Chief of Staff of the IDF.)

TOP SECRET

Memorandum of understanding 12th June 1978

Following are the main points agreed upon between the UNIFIL commander, Gen. A.E. Erskin and the commanders of the eastern and western sections, South Lebanon, Maj. Saad Haddad and Maj. Sa my Shidiak.

The following points ~~xxx~~ were agreed upon during a meeting between the above mentioned and in the presence of OC-Northern Command, I.D.F., Maj.-Gen. Avigdor Ben-Gal ("Janosh").

1. UNIFI L's intentions are to assist the establishment of security and Lebanese sovereignty south of the Litani.
2. The deployment of UNIFIL of the 13th of June is in areas under the command of Lebanese Army officers representing the legitimate government of Lebanon.
3. The deployment of new UNIFIL forces is to prove that the force has accomplished the deployment process and will, subject to the approval of the local commanders, patrol the area and maintain OPs and small contingents also close to the Israel-Lebanon border.
4. It was declared by Gen. Erskin that UNIFIL will not fight, establish roadblocks, disarm legitimate Lebanese forces or put any obstacle before the activities and freedom of movement of forces under the command of Maj. Haddad and Maj. Shidiak in areas which are now under their command and control.
5. A Lebanese officer of the Haddad/Shidiak forces will act as liaison officer to UNIFIL at Nakura.
6. A joint committee will meet at least once a week to coordinate and to continue negotiations for future co-existence.

7. UNIFIL will patrol the South-Lebanese road along the Israeli Lebanese border with independent patrols which will be fully authorized and coordinated by the local military commanders and escorted in an agreed distance by independent Lebanese patrols, or between agreed Lebanese checkpoints. The amount, size, equipment and timing of UNIFIL patrols will be decided upon in the committee meetings (see point 6).
8. UNIFIL officers, accompanied by representatives of the Lebanese force commanders, will after coordination be able to visit any place in the areas held by Maj. Haddad and Maj. Shidiak.
9. UNIFIL officers accompanied by representatives of the Lebanese force commanders will be allowed from time to time to inspect the Good-Fence gates.
10. Gen. Erskin gave his word of honour and made a commitment not to act by any means against the Good-Fence gates or policy.
11. Maj. Haddad and Maj. Shidiak will coordinate and execute a similar system of sending official military representatives with UNIFIL forces to any area under UNIFIL responsibility.
12. Official Lebanese Gendarmes now under the command of Maj. Haddad and Maj. Shidiak will act in the area as a legitimate police force.
13. The good services of the I.D.F. representative will be used when necessary during the process of the developing relations or in times of crisis.
14. Maj. Haddad and Maj. Shidiak will hand over to UNIFIL OPs, positions and control of villages according to the following list :

- a) the hilly area between Kfar Hamam and Mazrat Islamiya (OP)
- b) Nabaa Abel (OP)
- c) Tel Akush (OP)
- d) Khreibe (position)
- e) Dair Mima monatsery (OP)
- f) Biat - north (OP)
- g) Tel Shakhrub / Kila area (OP)
- h) the position on the Khula-Shakra road (platoon)
- i) the village of Muheibeb (platoon)
- k) a hill north-west of Aityroun (OP)
- l) Bint-Jebel (small delegation)
- m) Beit Jahoun (platoon)
- n) Atiri (platoon)
- o) Jibin road junction (OP)
- p) Shikhin (OP)
- q) Kal'at Sham'a (platoon)
- r) Ras Bayiada (platoon)
- s) Khamra bridge

- 15. UNIFIL will strengthen existing OPs on the Israeli Lebanese border with an infantry squad at each base.
- 16. The Irish batallion CP will be based in Tibnin.
- 17. There will be no change in the deployment of Maj. Haddad's and Maj. Shidiak's military units.
- 18. Changes will be agreed upon during future meetings and negotiations.

SOURCES :Personal Diaries , 1975-1982Work Diaries , 1975-1982Interviews with Saad Haddad , Tapes 1-30, 1976-1980Interview with the Commander of the Irish Battalion, UNIFIL , Tapes B and C, Summer 1979Declaration of Free Lebanon by Saad Haddad , Tape D, April 1979Interview with Defense Minister Ezer Weizman , Tape E, April 1979Interview with Arik Sharon , Tape I, Autumn 1977Ceremony in Meis a-Jabel , Tape N, 13 June 1978Press Conference with Major Saad Haddad and Major Sami Shidiak , Summer 1977Interview with Francis Rizk , Tape O, August 1985Fahima Nashash , Tape P, 1977Abraham Broshi , Upper Galilee Regional Council, Tape R, 1984Bibliography :Abingdon Dictionary of Living Religions , edited by Keith Crim, Abingdon Publishing, Nashville 1981Abu Iyad with Eric Rouleau : My Home, My Land : A Narrative of the Palestinian Struggle , Times Books, New York 1981Adams Schmidt, Dana : Armageddon in the Middle East , The John Day Company, New York 1974Ajami, Fuad : The Vanished Imam. Musa al Sadr and the Shia of Lebanon , Cornell University Press, Ithaca 1986Allon, Yigal : The Making of Israel's Army , Universe Books, New York 1978The Almanac of World Military Power. Lebanon , Gay Hammer-Editor, Presidio Press, California 1980

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