

CONFIDENTIAL

MR COLES

LEBANON

1. This has been a bad week in the Lebanon, but it is not without its plus points and it provides some opportunities:
 - a. we have our forces safely out;
 - b. we have kept broadly in step with the Americans;
 - c. we now have a chance to look at policy afresh and realistically.
2. We must recognise that the Lebanon is going to remain highly fragmented, with Syrian presence/influence in the North, and no doubt some Israeli presence in the South. Whether Gemayel survives or not is uncertain, but if he does it will have to be on the basis of larger concessions to Muslim groups, ie a loosely-knit more "cantonised" Lebanon. The latest JIC assessment is that under hard-line Christian pressure he will refuse such concessions.
3. We have an interest in avoiding further chaos in Lebanon, in particular Syrian/Israeli hostilities, but there is very little we can do directly. Any pacification efforts should now be via the United Nations, which means recognising Syrian and Soviet interest. The latest telegrams from New York suggest some softening in Syrian and Soviet attitudes on UN involvement.
4. I am afraid this will all mean some divergence from the Americans. But now that we have extricated our forces we should not allow ourselves to be involved in some anti-Syrian action or hopeless efforts to extend the authority of a government that is rapidly becoming a purely Christian faction. We have already signalled our disquiet to the President about the shelling by the New Jersey and I suggest we speak frankly to Vice President Bush this weekend to avoid any possible US misunderstanding of our future position. The immediate object will be to avoid any public UK/US disagreement while engaging in intensive consultation with them on future policy.

u.
PERCY CRADOCK
9 February 1984

CONFIDENTIAL