

Lebanon fighting tarnishes Mid East jewel

DUART FARQUHARSON
Southam News Services
BEIRUT — The return of war to south Lebanon has once again dashed hopes of rebuilding this city that was the jewel of the Middle East.

Contrary to optimistic reports about signs of postwar recovery, the commercial heart of Beirut remains a wasteland a year after the Lebanese civil war was supposed to have ended.

With the end of indiscriminate killing perhaps a million refugees did return. Shops along nice fashionable Hamra Street, never much damaged in the fighting, reopened. This fall, after a cholera scare proved unfounded, the schools also opened their doors.

But the semblance of a return to normalcy is destroyed with a visit to any of the areas that were directly affected by the war.

There are ships back in the harbor but, with the exception of a grain elevator which receives Canadian wheat, several square miles of port facilities have been wiped out. Nothing is left, and little that is substantial is going up.

The seaside luxury hotels remain pock-marked monuments to a deadly sea-battle. A swimming pool is open on the waterfront beside the St. Georges. The hotel itself is in-entirely.

The main commercial district remains block after block of blackened concrete looking more like Swiss cheese. The physical devastation of the empty streets is so overwhelming that one forgets there is also a human dimension.

"We Lebanese remember that it is our people, not the buildings, who pay the price," says a local editor.

The Souk vendors whose markets everywhere were destroyed now crowd the appropriately named Martyrs Square between east and west Beirut. The buildings are rubble.

Vast numbers of dispossessed poor, who returned to find their homes razed, have occupied houses in other districts. Once smart high rise apartments have become ghettos and heavily damaged buildings overcrowded tenements.

The "Gold Coast" beach area, where princes and tycoons used to frolic, has become a slum.

The people who have not returned, except to gawk in dismay, are the rich with the financial access to rebuild Beirut.

"The banks won't lend the money," complains a Lebanese leftist leader.

"The Lebanese won't yet take a chance," says an American banker who claims he has the money to lend.

Lebanon's rich Arab neighbors have yet to come forward with any significant portion of the billion dollars it is estimated will be needed to rebuild the city.

The Lebanese government appointed a high-level board eight months ago to supervise reconstruction. There is as yet no master plan. The board has only just begun to hire professional staff.

"So far it has been a patchup operation," says a western diplomat. "Strictly day by day firefighting. When something essential breaks down, it is fixed up."

Local hopes that Beirut could re-emerge as the nerve-centre of the Middle East have been based on the weaknesses of its would-be replacements.

During the nearly two years of civil war no other Arab capital was able to offer Beirut's special combination of business facilities, banking secrecy, local skills and pleasant living conditions.

With the end of the war in most of Lebanon, international business was more than willing to give the city, long the commercial crossroads between east and west, another chance.

The problem was one of lack of confidence by the Lebanese themselves. Until there was a political solution acceptable to Christians and Moslems, Palestinians and Syrians, not to mention Israelis, few were willing to give peace a chance.

The Syrians were able to halt the fighting between Christian rightists and Palestinians allied with Moslem leftists in all but the southern part of the country where the Israelis forbid them to come close to their borders.

The ceasefire finally imposed in the south Sept. 26 was only that. There was no disposition in Beirut to go ahead with investment until political agreement had been reached on the future of Palestinians, Lebanese Christians and Israelis in the south.



Purge supporter

Han Suyin, a Chinese-born novelist and historian, shows off in Montreal Tuesday, a medallion struck in Paris, France, to honor her work. She said in an interview the purge in China last year of the so-called Gang of Four, saved the country from civil war.

SOUTH AFRICA

Churches demand action

OTTAWA (CP) — An inter-church group demanded on Tuesday that the government take economic action against South Africa to help bring an end to racial discrimination in that country.

The group, representing Roman Catholic and Protestant church organizations, said in a brief that Canada should end Commonwealth trade preferences favoring South Africa.

The government should also publicly discourage further investment in South Africa by Canadian companies and establish a code of ethics and employment guides for Canadian firms now operating in South Africa and Namibia, said the group.

The brief was submitted to External Affairs Minister Don Jamieson. Members of the group include the Anglican Church of Canada, the United Church, the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Lutheran Church in America (Canada Section), and the Canadian Religious Conference of Ontario.

An aide to Jamieson said after a meeting with the group that the minister touched on Canada's strong criticism of South Africa's recent sweeping arrests and banning of black organizations and newspapers. The aide said the minister indicated he was concerned about the tax credit issue and other economic problems, but said it would be futile

for Canada to act on its own without general economic sanctions against South Africa.

The group's brief noted that Canada has taken a stand against South Africa's apartheid policy and has refused to ship arms to South Africa.

The Canadian policy in other areas, particularly economic, have helped maintain the South African regime in power, the church group said.

Canadian trade had been growing with South Africa in recent years and Canadian investment in that country was continuing.

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SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 1977

BECOTT, Monica Marguerite

Secty./Treas.



Money unrelated to reactor sales

OTTAWA (CP) — A former president of Atomic Energy of Canada Ltd. (AECL) said Tuesday the \$50,000 he received as a consulting fee from an Italian company had nothing to do with the sale of a nuclear reactor to Argentina.

J. Lorne Gray, AECL president for 16 years before his retirement at the end of 1974, said the money came from Finmeccanica which hired him as a consultant to make a marketing survey in Canada.

Finmeccanica holds 25 per cent of the shares in Italimpianti of Genoa, AECL's partner in the sale of a reactor to Argentina. It was Italimpianti that arranged for AECL to pay \$2.5 million in an agent's fee and now refuses to name the agent involved.

But Gray failed to convince opposition members in his appearance before the Commons public accounts committee that there was no connection between the sale and his later employment as a consultant.

"It's going to take quite a bit to convince me that there was no connection between the two," Allan Lawrence, Progressive Conservative MP for Northumberland-Durham, said following the meeting.

Gray said he did not mention the money during a committee meeting last January because "I didn't think it was relevant." He said at that time he thought he was being asked questions about how much he would earn from Finmeccanica in 1977 and told them "between \$5,000 and \$10,000."

He said he received the money in three payments — \$10,000 in the fall of 1975, \$15,000 in February of 1976 and \$25,000 later in 1976.

The first two payments came directly to Canada, but the last was placed in a Swiss bank account he holds because, Gray said, he thought incorrectly that he would not have to declare it as taxable income if it was not brought into the country.

"I didn't believe that," Lawrence said later. He felt a

man in Gray's position would have known about the tax laws.

Gray told the committee he still has no idea who got the \$2.5 million AECL paid in fees on the sale. He said Italimpianti president Lucien Sicouri arranged the agent and told him "the less you know about it the better."

The money was paid into a Swiss bank account on the instructions of Sicouri, who now refuses to tell AECL the name of the agent.

Lawrence said the money had been "buffered and filtered" through European bank accounts and added "this deal to Argentina was a crooked deal, with crooked money and crooked people."

But he added later that he was referring to the payment of the \$2.5 million, not specifically to Gray.

Gray, who gets a \$38,000 annual pension from AECL, said anyone who understands the consulting business would realize the money he received was not much for the work he had carried out.

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BOB PARRIS

(Community Development Worker)

FOR ALDERMAN and Regional Director

November 19, 1977

PRINCE GEORGE ISSUES



COTTONWOOD ISLAND Our waterfront areas close to the downtown core should be developed for park, recreational and tourist use.

COMMUNITY PLAN People should agree on how they want the city to develop and then council should act accordingly.

LAND AND HOUSING INFLATION There should be a 100 percent tax on unearned profits in land transactions in order to eliminate land speculation, which is one of the main causes of high land and housing costs in the Prince George area. Lot sales policy needs revision.

NEW LIBRARY A new library is badly needed for Prince George.

TOURISM Tourists need more camping facilities and better encouragement from Prince George.

CLOSED-DOOR MEETINGS OF COUNCIL Should be eliminated.

REGIONAL DISTRICT ISSUES

REPRESENTATION Rural residents need more consideration from the city directors.

THE MCGREGOR RIVER We should reduce our energy and resource demands by 15 percent rather than dam the McGregor, which would reduce the Fraser River salmon fishery by 15 percent among other consequences.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS Supervised the 1976 Census of Northeastern B.C. and the Yukon. Persuaded City Council to make its agendas available to the Press in advance of Council meetings (Sept./74). Researched the history of Fort George, providing part of the material for a book used in the School District (1974). Assisted the Citizens for A Clean River Committee in getting more than 8,000 signatures for a petition which resulted in secondary sewage treatment for Prince George (1971).

ARTICLES AND BRIEFS (Copies available on request) "Rare and Beautiful" (Cottonwood Island) - 1971; "Our Lost Waterfront" (Cottonwood Island) - 1977; Brief to the Ministry of Urban Affairs (Habitat - 1975); "Industrial Development in the Bulkley-Nechako Region" - 1975.

EXPERIENCE Eighteen years in office management, inventory control, and accounting. Five years in community development work — for the Cottonwood Island Residents Association and the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs.

EDUCATION Five years of university — business, economics, social sciences, and philosophy.

AFFILIATIONS Canadian Association in Support of Native Peoples, McGregor Action Group, Prince George Concert Association, and the Society of Industrial Accountants of B.C.

PERSONAL DATA Age 44, family man, good health, Prince George resident since 1968.

*Please write to Bob Parris, 1732 Gorse Street, Prince George, B.C.

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