



Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

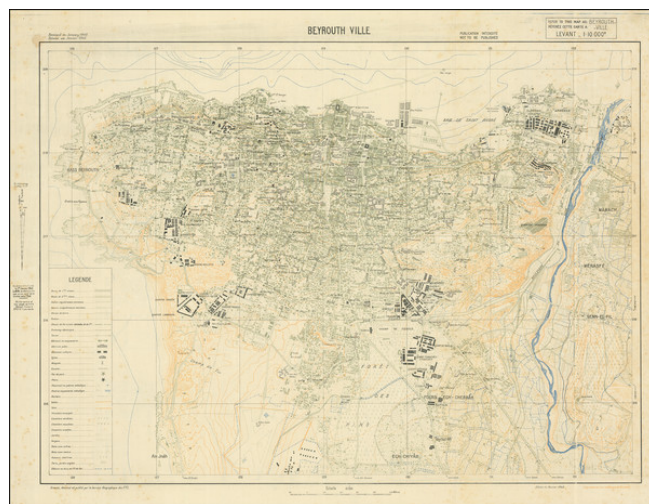
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(World War II - Free French Forces Mapping) Beyrouth Ville [Beirut City] [on verso:] Lattaquié [Latakia]

Stock#: 88805
Map Maker: Service géographique des forces
françaises libres
Date: 1945 February
Place: n.p.
Color: Color
Condition: VG
Size: 29.5 x 22 inches
Price: \$ 1,200.00



Description:

The French Overstaying Their Welcome in the Middle East

Wonderfully detailed and scarce plan of the City of Beirut, published just before the end of the Second World War by the Geographical Service of the Free French Forces in the Middle East.

The map declares that it was revised in January 1945 and that this edition was published in February of that year.

The verso includes an equally detailed map of Latakia, the fourth-largest city in modern-day Syria.

Beyrouth and the Aftermath of the Second World War

Following the Syria-Lebanon Campaign in 1941, in which British and Commonwealth troops had taken Syria and Lebanon from Vichy France, the countries were turned over to the Free French Forces (FFL). The FFL, at that time, supported the independence of both of these Middle Eastern nations. Four years later, at the twilight of the second world war, Lebanon declared war on Germany in February 1945.

The timing of this map (also made in February of 1945) is noteworthy because of Lebanon's declaration of war on Germany but also because of France's postwar plans in the region. By that time, it was obvious that Germany would be defeated very soon. France was simultaneously rethinking its position on the independence of Lebanon and Syria. The Gaullist leadership started to imagine that France could retain its



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pre-war colonial stature and maintain governance over large parts of the Middle East.

In May of that year, France violently suppressed nationalist demonstrations in Damascus, sparking the "Levant Crisis." Following a French attempt to arrest members of the Syrian parliament, Churchill sent British forces to Syria to confine French troops to their barracks and eventually speed their exit from the region.

The seeds of a French attempt at re-occupation had already been planted when this edition of the map was produced. Anti-French demonstrations are recorded in Lebanon from January 1945, and the Arab League would be founded by Syria in March. As there was no chance of Axis confrontation in Lebanon in 1945, it is unlikely that the FFL would have wasted efforts on remapping an area that they intended on evacuating a few months later. As such, it is likely that this map was founded with the seeds of the Levant crisis in mind.

Detailed Condition:

Minor foxing.