

Reagan's retaliation: who will pay for Marine deaths?

by Judith Wyer

In the aftermath of the Oct. 23 terrorist bombing of U.S. and French forces in Lebanon, President Ronald Reagan has adopted a Middle East policy which would put an end to the game of carving up the Arab nations. In his nationally televised speech Oct. 29, the President put forth a commitment to defend the nations of the region against all foreign aggression and separatist ethnic and Islamic fanaticism. That policy challenges the unwholesome coalition of the Soviet Union, the ruling Likud Party in Israel, Syria, Libya, and Iran—the leading proponents of a sacerdotal extremism as a weapon against the sovereignty of the Arab states.

Reagan became the first head of a leading government to denounce the "Greater Syria" plan of the Soviet-backed government of Hafez Assad in Damascus, a plan designed for control of northern Lebanon and eventually Jordan and Iraq. The same day, the White House released a statement by President Reagan during a meeting with Jewish Republican leaders: "I think the evidence that I have is sufficient that this last horrendous act involved Iranian terrorists and they were facilitated in their entry and in the provision of the munitions by the Syrians."

In an Oct. 27 press conference Secretary of State Shultz had criticized Israel for its sudden partial withdrawal from central Lebanon on Sept. 4, which strengthened Syria's expansionist designs. Shultz's statement insinuated secret collaboration between Israel and Syria to partition Lebanon.

These moves attest that the reassessment of Middle East policy which began last month concluded with a U.S. commitment to strengthen relations with Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Iraq. That entails strengthening the military capability of these countries, particularly Jordan and Egypt, to enable them to protect the Arab oil exporting states of the

Persian Gulf. The appointment of former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld as the new White House Mideast envoy is another sign that the U.S. military presence in the region has become a priority.

This policy goes hand in hand with the administration's stated plan to retaliate for the massacre of 230 U.S. Marines. One option favors Franco-American backing for Iraq to launch deep air raids into Iran to cripple its economy. At Shultz's Oct. 27 press conference following talks with his French, Italian, and British counterparts on reprisals for the bombing, the secretary of state broke the long-standing public stance of neutrality toward the Iran-Iraq war. By praising Iraq as a force for peace in the region, Shultz signalled possible U.S. support for Iraq to bring its long-range bombers into the war. Five French-made Super-Etendard bombers equipped with Exocet missiles were ready for combat at the end of October, according to Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, who told the press on Oct. 23 that Iraq had the right to make deep strikes anywhere in Iran. Shortly before, he had sent a message to Japan that Iraq may attack the massive petrochemical plant Japan is building in Bandar Khomeini near the Straits of Hormuz. Baghdad claims to have already mined the port at Bandar Khomeini and begun air strikes against vessels in the area.

Washington insiders say that other U.S. options under consideration include some form of reprisal against Syria and Libya. Western intelligence sources revealed that the explosives for the bombing were manufactured by Libyan technicians trained in East Germany.

Though the U.S. military investigation into the atrocity is still ongoing, Lebanese government sources say there is solid information on Moscow's role in shipping the explo-

sives via Syria to the Iranian-backed terrorists thought to have conducted the bombing. Houssein Moussavi, the ringleader of Khomeini's Hizba'allahi (Party of God) in Syrian-occupied Baalbek, Lebanon has been named as the perpetrator. Moussavi had taken responsibility for the bombing of the U.S. embassy in Beirut in April.

Even before the Oct. 23 bombing, Iran and its Soviet-armed allies Libya and Syria had repeated that they would drive the United States and its partners out of the area and destroy their Arab allies. Jordan has become their principal target, given its close military ties to the United States. Since the Aug. 20 founding of the Teheran-based Pan-Islamic terrorist organization, the Assembly of United Islamic Movements (see article, page 33), there has been a marked increase in terrorism against U.S.-allied Arab states. Days after the Marine massacre, Jordan's ambassadors to New Delhi and Rome were wounded in terrorist shooting attacks.

Israel's Likud government to fall?

Reagan's posture has caused a further chill in U.S.-Israel relations. The Shamir government in Israel is visibly angered by the Reagan posture—in particular the Pentagon's bid to build up a Jordan-led Arab strike force to protect the Arab oil producers of the Gulf, a task Israel has envisioned for itself. The Shamir government is also unnerved by the prospect of U.S. backing for Iraq in the war with Iran. Since Khomeini took power in 1979, the Likud and Iran have conspired against Iraqi President Saddam Hussein.

Defense Minister Moshe Arens, considered the closest U.S. ally in the cabinet, told the press during the last week of October that the United States was "distancing itself from Israel." It was announced that Shamir's November visit to Washington would not occur; Arens will visit Washington without Shamir in December. Undersecretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger arrived in Israel on Nov. 1 to discuss U.S.-Israeli differences over the Jordan plan and Lebanon, but Israeli officials say that the talks are tense, and the Shamir government accuses Reagan of having sent "the wrong man."

Eagleburger's visit bears on the Lebanese National Reconciliation talks with President Amin Gemayel, Syrian Foreign Minister Abdul Khalim Khaddam, and a coterie of Lebanese warlords. Syria has forcefully demanded that Lebanon pull out of the May 14 U.S.-mediated Israel-Lebanon agreement. Israel has replied that should Gemayel concede to this demand Israel will stay in south Lebanon indefinitely.

Since Menachem Begin took power in 1977, Israel's policy has been to destroy its U.S.-allied Arab neighbors, whose leaders would otherwise be inclined to make peace. The legacy of the Begin regime was its alliance with Ayatollah Khomeini's Muslim Brotherhood. Former Israeli Defense Minister Ariel Sharon has publicly admitted that Israel is selling arms to Iran to enable it to continue its war against Iraq. After weakening its Arab neighbors, the Likud government put Israel forward as the only "stable" military ally of the United States. But that policy has now proven a disaster for Israel.

Israel's invasion of Lebanon last year, contrived by Sharon, was the culmination of that scheme, which Democratic candidate Lyndon H. LaRouche correctly identified as "Israel's Vietnam." Today Israel's continued occupation of southern Lebanon will probably collapse the six-year-old Likud government.

That occupation is costing Israel's crisis-ridden economy over \$1 million a day. Israeli troops are the targets of ongoing terrorist attacks, costing Israeli lives and spurring public opposition to the occupation; yet Shamir cannot get Israel out of Lebanon without admitting that the entire invasion was a mistake, and thus probably shattering his shaky coalition.

Arens, the mastermind of a plan to make Israel the United States' only nuclear-armed ally in the Mideast, is said to be very upset over the Pentagon backing for a Jordan-led Arab Rapid Deployment Force and associated plans to strengthen Egypt and Iraq. A wave of press reports of sensitive information on the U.S. efforts to build a Jordan-commanded regional strike force is reported to have been leaked by Israel to embarrass Jordan's King Hussein.

The Likud government has also resorted to other tactics. Its mouthpiece Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-N.Y.) submitted a Senate resolution calling for blockage of funding of the three-year-old strike force project unless full disclosure of its details is made. On Nov. 1, the Senate Appropriations Committee removed the \$220-million-plus funding for Jordan's military, as a result of maneuvering by Alfonse D'Amato (R-N.Y.) and Mark Hatfield (R-Ore.).

Opposition Labour Party leader Shimon Peres, however, declared in a radio broadcast in mid-October that he would not object to the U.S.-Jordan military scheme. That week another Labour Party leader, former Foreign Minister Abba Eban, called for Israel to resume talks on the West Bank with Jordan. These statements reflect the fight within Israel not only over the succession to Shamir, but over what future policies Israel will adopt.

Meanwhile the possibility of a direct U.S.-Syrian confrontation increased. The Nov. 1 *Washington Post* announced bluntly that the Syrians were holding joint naval maneuvers with the Soviet Union in the eastern Mediterranean in a move which may be the first step toward attacking the U.S. warship taskforce off the coast of Lebanon.

The unacceptable demands posed to Lebanon by Syria and its allies regarding the Geneva conference on National Reconciliation may be aimed at creating the climate for another major atrocity in the region. A reception held on Nov. 1 in Gland, a residential suburb between Geneva and Lausanne, was attended by Syria's allies, Walid Jumblatt and Sami Franjeh, Lebanon's former president, at the house of a close business partner of Hans Albert Kuntz, director of Dreykott corporation. Kuntz has been a friend of Nazi International coordinator François Genoud of Lausanne since the mid-1950s, and has been named as a key connection to Italian fascist Stephano della Chiaie, responsible for the August 1980 Bologna bombing, as well as to terrorist controller and Propaganda-2 Grand Master Licio Gelli.