

LaRouche warns: Shubeilat case is part of scheme to break Jordan

The trial on charges of sedition against Jordanian parliamentarian Laith Shubeilat "is part of a strategic shift dictated by the United States in concert with the Israelis and certain British forces," independent presidential candidate Lyndon LaRouche stated Oct. 26. It is "an Anglo-American policy, primarily a U.S. policy, involving a shift by the government of Jordan into alliance with Saudi Arabia and the United States against Baghdad."

Jordan's King Hussein had been one of the few Arab heads of state to maintain ties to Iraq during the U.S.-led war against Baghdad in 1991. The current U.S. operation against Jordan entails forcing the king to shift policy and align Jordan with Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Israel in operations to bring about the overthrow of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, and to prepare new atrocities against Palestinians in the Occupied Territories and elsewhere. The verdict and sentencing of Shubeilat, expected on Nov. 10, could well be the trigger which sets off such a chain of events. Among the expected mid-term results of such developments is the destabilization of Jordan itself, long an Anglo-American/Israeli objective.

On Oct. 26, the London *Financial Times*, quoting "palace sources" and "diplomats" in Amman, predicted that King Hussein would "dissociate himself publicly from Saddam Hussein, while continuing to express support for the Iraqi people." According to unconfirmed reports, the Anglo-Americans plan to establish the regional headquarters of the Iraqi opposition forces on Jordanian soil.

Why Shubeilat?

Shubeilat was not only a strong and popular opponent of the U.S. war against Iraq—the war in which Egypt and Saudi Arabia were leading participants—but has also been a strong advocate of the cause for a Palestinian homeland. Shubeilat, who has fought against Jordan's obeisance to the austerity demands of the International Monetary Fund, is now on a hunger strike, in repudiation of the "secret sessions" held by the prosecution and the judge on Oct. 17, at which no defense counsel was present. The trial, which is being held before the military-run state security court, has been rife with such irregular actions on the part of the prosecution, and the government "star witness," a convicted agent of the Israeli Mossad, recanted his testimony against

the Jordanian member of Parliament.

Typifying the coercive environment in which the show-trial is being held, Maj. Gen. Mohammed Mango, the court's public prosecutor, told reporters in a prepared statement on Oct. 25 that he is considering prosecuting a group of 11 parliamentary deputies, together with trade unionists and political activists, for their public criticism of the prosecution of the trial.

The trial ended Nov. 4, one day after the U.S. presidential election (see accompanying interview).

The strategic context

Shubeilat was arrested on Aug. 31, when King Hussein was in the United States receiving treatment for cancer. While he was convalescing in the United States, Egyptian President Mubarak mediated a meeting between King Hussein and Saudi Arabia's ambassador to the United States, Bandar bin Sultan. Rumors have since circulated that King Hussein will meet Saudi King Fahd when the Jordanian monarch makes his expected visit to Saudi Arabia later this year. The summit would mark a full rapprochement between Jordan and Saudi Arabia, an event many Jordanians would object to.

The pressure for such a summit has been steadily mounting. On Oct. 14, King Hussein visited Cairo and met with President Mubarak. In the last week of October, King Hassan of Morocco conducted a whirlwind tour of Jordan, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and, probably, secretly, Israel. Hassan, a backer of the war against Iraq, met with King Hussein on Oct. 28, to arrange the Hussein-Fahd summit. A related purpose of the meeting, and of Hassan's tour, was to put the finishing touches on a new Camp David-style deal among Israel and Syria and Jordan.

In addition to such strong-arming, talks with the London Club of creditors for rescheduling part of Jordan's \$7 billion debt, which is 181% of its Gross National Product, collapsed in September. With an economy 78% dependent upon trade, Jordan's current account deficit stood at \$704 million at the beginning of this year.

Prior to the war against Iraq, Jordan had received substantial Saudi grants, as well as remittances from its workers in the Persian Gulf oil fields. These workers, and hundreds of thousands of Palestinians employed in the Gulf, have been

returned or fled to Jordan, boosting unemployment to over one-quarter of the work force. Moreover, the continuing blockade on Jordan's only outlet to the sea on the Gulf of Aqaba, allegedly to prevent neighboring Iraq from evading the United Nations embargo, is destroying the Jordanian economy. Iraq had been Jordan's largest trading partner by far, prior to the war.

The Israeli role

The Shubeilat trial also takes place against the backdrop of continuing U.S.-orchestrated talks between Israel and represented Arab nations. On Oct. 26, the Israelis underscored their recalcitrance with a series of heavy attacks into southern Lebanon. With one tank column moving north of the Israeli so-called security zone, the Air Force carried out repeated air strikes against Palestinian villages and camps in Lebanon. The attacks were in retaliation for attacks on the Temple of the Patriarchs, allegedly by Islamic fundamentalist terrorists. It is said that the Israelis have repeatedly threatened to launch hot pursuit strikes against Jordan.

On Oct. 29, Jordanian negotiators at the "peace talks" in Washington announced a "breakthrough" in their negotiations with the Israelis, one day after King Hassan met with King Hussein.

Reportedly, a common statement on the agenda required to achieve a Jordanian-Israeli peace has been accepted. The document states that the aim of the negotiation is to reach a formal peace treaty with Israel, as Egypt had done in 1978. Although the document calls for a comprehensive Arab-Israeli settlement, it does not mention the issue of Israeli-annexed East Jerusalem, nor does it explicitly require the Israelis to withdraw from the Occupied Territories before a settlement is reached.

Predictably, 10 Palestinian factions based in Damascus, Syria, led by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and Hamas, denounced the breakthrough as "destructive," and called on popular forces in the Arab and Islamic world to "hold the Jordanian regime responsible." By discrediting itself through such deals, Jordan is being set up for an Israeli-linked destabilization further down the line. Israel asserts that Jordan, not the West Bank, is the proper location for a Palestinian homeland.

"The entire Israeli intelligence pack" is behind the operations against Jordan signaled by the trial of Shubeilat, said LaRouche in his Oct. 26 memorandum. "This has essentially made the Kingdom of Jordan, at least for the moment, virtually an Israeli strategic pawn, together with the Saudi Arabian royal family, which is very much a part of this operation, whether on its own, or because of its relationship with the Israelis." From the United States side, said LaRouche, the operation against Jordan "also has to do with the fact that a Clinton administration is more Zionist in this respect than is Tel Aviv or the Israeli government in Jerusalem."

Interview: Maître Claude Pernet

'Shubeilat trial is a travesty of justice'

Maître Claude Pernet, a prominent Paris trial lawyer and professor of international law, traveled to Amman, Jordan on Oct. 5, accompanied by Mrs. Muriel Mirak-Weissbach of the Schiller Institute. As observers, they watched several days of proceedings in the trial of Laith Shubeilat, the Jordanian parliamentarian who was arrested on Aug. 31 and charged with conspiring against the state (see previous article).

On Oct. 31, the State Security Court prosecutor Maj. Mohammed Hijazi wrapped up the case, reviewing evidence produced by state witnesses, and calling for a guilty verdict against all four defendants. Major Hijazi pointed out that some of the charges carry the death penalty, but said he would leave the sentence up to the court, i.e., the three military judges.

Hijazi surprised the court by omitting reference in his summation to the "secret" witness who purported to be the bag man bringing \$200,000 from Iran to Shubeilat. It was in protest against this Syrian witness that the attorneys for Shubeilat and defendant Yacoub Qarrash, also a member of Parliament, had walked out. Both rejected their court-appointed lawyers, and began a hunger strike on Oct. 17. Hijazi refused to comment on his omission of such an important witness. He tried to prove that Shubeilat is the leader of the secret insurrectionary organization, by referring to a policy paper of the group, in the handwriting of defendant Ahmad Ramzi Al Ayoubi. Ayoubi had testified that Qarrash had dictated it to him, but he believed Laith to be the author, "because the sheikh is not so smart."

Lawyers for defendants Ayoubi and Hamid Sadeq Dkedik said their clients were guilty of belonging to the group, but intended to fight in the *Intifada* (uprising) in the Occupied Territories, "which is legitimate." Shubeilat had no legal summation in his defense, as he had rejected the court-appointed lawyer, who asked to be excused from the case as a result. The prosecutor instead ordered him to present a summation when the court reconvened for its final session on Nov. 3. Then the court recessed; a verdict is expected on Nov. 10.

Extraordinary security measures were introduced at the