

Interview: Gilles Munier



Hariri Stood For Unitary Nation-State

EIR correspondent Christine Bierre interviewed Gilles Munier, Secretary General of the Franco-Iraqi Friendship Association, on Feb. 24 in France.

EIR: You are an expert of the Western Asia region. Who had an interest in killing former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri?

Munier: Cui bono? Especially Israel and the American neo-conservatives. Rafik Hariri had his drawbacks, but also some qualities, including that he favored a unified Lebanon, while those who killed him wanted the partition of the country. From the moment when he more or less opposed the Syrian presence in Lebanon, he became an obstacle which had to be removed.

I say “more or less,” because he had left a door open to Syria and was continuing negotiations with it. One can not repeat often enough that Syria itself expected to withdraw from Lebanon. But under those circumstances, it became very difficult for the other Lebanese clans, in particular the Gemayel family, to maintain a man in that position who would create problems in the future. He had to be eliminated. It think it’s among those networks that the assassins of Hariri must be looked for.

EIR: It is well known today that Hariri was negotiating intensively with the Hezbollah, with a view toward creating a kind of national unity among all the Lebanese factions, and had led a diplomatic offensive in their favor vis-à-vis the European governments.

Munier: That’s exactly the case. Today, there are even rumors circulating accusing the Hezbollah of murdering Hariri. Quite the contrary, Hariri was in quasi-permanent contact with Sheikh Nasrallah, so that the Hezbollah would not be included on the list of terrorist groups of the European Union. It is clear that a man having that type of vision was in total opposition to the Israeli Likudniks and the American neo-conservatives who want to disarm the Hezbollah.

EIR: But who wants the partition of Lebanon?

Munier: From the standpoint of the intellectual conception, that plan goes back to what we in France call the American Orientalists, notably Bernard Lewis. More recently, the source of this plan is Oded Yinon, a high-level official in the Israeli Foreign Ministry, who in 1982 wrote a document on the partition of the Near East, starting from the principle that Israel’s survival could not be ensured, unless all the Arab

countries were divided into a myriad small emirates, more or less in competition or at war with one another, and that things had to move in that direction.

For him, Lebanon was divided into five provinces, defined along religious and ethnic lines—a province for the Druze, the Maronite Christians, the Sunni Muslims, and all the others. He proposed the same type of organization for Syria, Iraq, and the rest of the Arabian Peninsula.

What we are seeing at this point in Iraq, is a de facto partition of the Kurdish region, and in a certain way, of the Shi’ite region in the South, since there were recently meetings in Basra among leaders of extremist, pro-Iranian Shi’ites around the idea of creating a region/state in the South. All that was already in the Israeli plan, but it took a long time to come into being. Since then, the neo-conservatives have taken these into account, because already back then, Ariel Sharon was in contact with the most influential of them.

The Project for a New American Century also adopted these ideas. Today, this is happening in Lebanon, and clearly they hope to divide Syria also, into I don’t know how many states—an Alawite state, a Sunni state, etc. It’s the whole Middle East which could explode, becoming a puzzle. It’s a truly diabolical project which has been set into motion. Yet, the idea of having the Middle East be a collection of tribes made no sense outside of the Ottoman Empire period, because at that time there was an emperor, the Caliph in Constantinople, leading all that. But unless the Caliph today is George Bush, who wants to rule in place of the Caliph, we are going towards chaos in the entire region. Perhaps not a chaos for everybody, because for those who like to make money over the bodies of others, the oil will still be there.

EIR: In a recent article you accused Elliott Abrams, U.S. National Security Council Director of Near East and North African Affairs, as being on top of the implementation of this plan in the region.

Munier: He’s in charge of the partition of Lebanon into two states. We are no longer under the strict application of the Yinon plan, which called for the division of Lebanon into five provinces. Those people are pragmatic; they take into account the realities of the time, which are no longer the same today. There would be thus a Christian state and a Muslim state, which, if it so desires, could merge with Syria—even though that doesn’t really make sense, because what would then happen to the Druze, for instance? Elliott Abrams is in charge of all that, and he’s a real religious fundamentalist, who must feel close to the Maronite extremists who showed what their conception of politics was when they massacred people in the Sabra and Shatilla camps.

EIR: How do you explain the French policy in this regard? France had courageously opposed the Iraq War, and today it is working hand-in-hand with George Bush on the question of Lebanon, when in reality both agendas are totally different. The Anglo-American project is a plan for dismembering all

the states—the Bernard Lewis “arc of crisis” plan to break up the region’s nations according to ethnic and religious lines.

Chirac’s agenda for Lebanon was inspired, as sources report, by a sense of responsibility for Lebanon, inherited from the time of de Gaulle, and was an agenda for reestablishing Lebanon’s sovereignty and national unity. Rafik Hariri who is said to have inspired this plan, was to be the leader of a coalition of Druze (Walid Jumblatt) and Maronite Christians (Gen. Michael Aoun), acting possibly with at least the tacit agreement of the Hezbollah. How could France possibly believe that it could move with Bush on that project, and do you think that Rafik Hariri’s murder has shown the utter failure of that policy?

Munier: I think this is indeed the case. In that project, France was leaning entirely on Hariri, due to the personal and political affinities between Jacques Chirac and Hariri. I think that France has a wrong perception of the American policies, and of what George Bush really is all about. Perhaps France also is under the impression that the Anglo-Americans will respect whatever is left of the Sykes-Picot agreement, evaluating that Iraq is one thing, but that concerning Syria and Lebanon, France has more rights. France is totally wrong on that, because for the Bush Administration, France has no more rights than any other state in the world; it has no rights at all. The only right that exists for them is the right of the mightiest, that of the neo-conservatives and their interests.

Unfortunately, with the death of Hariri, we are going towards chaos in Lebanon. If Syria withdraws, there is a Lebanese army, but all the Lebanese clans give the impression of just waiting for the Syrian withdrawal in order to start fighting one another. I think we are moving towards chaos in this region.

EIR: Even if the overall objectives of Hariri’s murder are clear, do you think it possible that Syrian factions opposed to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, could have given a hand to that murder?

Munier: The only participation by Syria would be the stupidity of individuals who don’t know what they are doing. But I do not think the Syrians could have set up this attempt. According to experts, very sophisticated means, which the Syrians don’t have, were necessary to carry out the attack. . . .

EIR: What is your evaluation of the vast military reorganization carried out in Israel these last days: Chief of Staff Moshe Ya’alon was replaced earlier than is customary, by Dan Halutz, a close collaborator of Sharon, known also as “Bomber Halutz,” because he dropped a one-ton bomb on a house in Gaza, which killed one Hamas activist and 14 members of his family. Sharon also replaced the heads of three of the most important commands, the northern command on the Israeli-Lebanese border, the ground forces command, and the head of military intelligence. Speculation was that they had been replaced because they were hard-liners and opposed to the Gaza withdrawal. But upon closer observation, they turn out to be harder and closer to the American neo-cons than the

others. Do you think that this military reorganization is due to a coming war against Syria and surgical attacks against the Iranian nuclear research laboratories?

Munier: The new chief of staff is also a specialist in information electronics and precision-guided weapons. I mention that *en passant*, because he would be precisely the type who could have set up the attack against Hariri, which required great precision like the one you need to target a specific house in Gaza, or to direct a missile against Sheikh Yassin.

These are hawks, and for these people, the priority today is the explosion of the region, and also the destruction of nuclear research sites in Iran. There is also a plan to partition Iran, because in Iran there are also Persians, Kurds, Azeris, and Arabs in the South. It’s the Arabistan where one finds the oil fields which interest the Americans so much. If one believes the King of Jordan, certain groups would also like to create a Shi’ite crescent. The southern part of Iraq, the Arabistan, and the north of Saudi Arabia, which is the oil region of that country, could constitute a Shi’ite region. During the first oil shock, back in 1974, Kissinger, who at that time led U.S. foreign policy, had envisaged partitioning the north of Saudi Arabia.

EIR: Let us talk now about the role the Russians could play presently in this region.

Munier: It would be a real defeat for Putin if he dropped Syria. It would create internal problems, because many have already reproached him for the loss of Ukraine and Russia’s loss of influence in Eastern Europe. Tomorrow, it could also be Belarus, because that is also one of the objectives announced by George Bush; in his speech in Brussels, the objective was also the “democratization” of Russia.

If Putin drops Syria, it would be a big loss for Russia’s Arab policies, because Syria is also very important for the Russian Navy. Aside from the Black Sea, the ports which are closest to Russia are the Syrian ports, not the Turkish ones. So, we hope that Putin will go all the way, and in an intelligent fashion, because the realities of Syria today are not those of former President Hafez al-Assad. It’s a country where a full revolution is ongoing with a rejuvenation of the party cadres. A sort of pre-*glasnost*, if you will.

EIR: In one of your recent articles, you stated that the murder of Hariri could unleash the fourth Gulf War. Could the parallel rather have been to the murder of Franz Ferdinand at Sarajevo, which unleashed World War I? Do you think the world situation is orienting towards a Third World War?

Munier: My article was limited to the Middle East; that is why I warned against a fourth Gulf War. But all this can indeed unleash a new world war, a war of civilizations like the one Bernard Lewis was talking about, because there is a Russian element in it, and because China can no longer let things go without intervening. Until now, China was only interested in Asia, but it will not be able to eternally remain distant from the rest of the world.