

Israelis extend the occupation of Lebanon: analysis of a murder

by Theirry Lalevée, Middle East Editor

Whoever killed the Lebanese President-elect, Falange leader Bashir Gemayel, had a very precise purpose: to foster chaos, first in the country itself, and as a result in the entire Middle East. Indeed, a few hours after Gemayel's death, this purpose was in full implementation. Under the pretext of restoring law and order, the Israelis moved into that part of Beirut which even during three months of siege they had never captured: western Beirut. Similarly, sowing the seeds of a new civil war, from all sides, countries and organizations were named as potentially responsible for the Falangist leader's death. According to Israel, the Syrians, the Palestinians, the left Nasserite Mourabitoun or even the rival Christian clan of the Franjehs were potentially responsible. For others who had watched a growing rift developing between Bashir Gemayel and the Israelis, Israel itself was not to be excluded as a party in that mass-murder. Summing up all feeling, the leading daily French-language newspaper *L'Orient le Jour* headlined: "Bashir Gemayel is dead! Syria and Israel will partition the country."

Tragic in consequences for Lebanon, the death of Gemayel is a "link in a chain of conspiracies" as Lebanese Prime Minister Wazzan put it. Gemayel was not killed merely because he was about to become the President of Lebanon on Sept. 23. In a way he was killed more for the effect of his death rather than to eliminate him. Why? To answer that complex question it is necessary to consider that the various "peace plans" now being presented, such as the Kissinger-drafted "Reagan peace plan," and others, have no other purpose than to ensure a certain control over the region's resources, both its human and raw-materials potential. As one observer commented, there is an element of black humor in the present proliferation of "peace plans," coming from the United States, the Soviet Union, and potentially from France and Great Britain, while the entire region is subjected to blood and fire. Indeed, these plans have nothing to do with peace in the region or with an economic development perspective which would give reality to diplomatic agreements. At the root is a war presently waged for the control of the Gulf oil fields and related revenues.

Gemayel was killed as a mere pawn—a role he had accepted by acting as a tribal chief rather than a statesman committed to the development of the entire region. His death

should show Mideast politicians that the era of byzantine maneuvers is over. There is "a new ballgame" in the Middle East, as Reagan's special adviser Richard Pipes expressed it recently; and that means the only way to survive is to begin breaking the ancestral rules of the Levant's diplomacy, in which the British especially are so expert. For Lebanon this means that only a leader with the courage to name the names of the present conspiracies can lead that country and the region toward survival and growth.

The Kissinger-Bernard Lewis Plan

To understand the *cui bono* of Gemayel's murder, one has to draw the consequences for the nation the *London Times* described Sept. 16 as "a pit of snakes."

Israel's move into western Beirut is clearly the first step of a new military adventure in the country and in the region. Next are expected an Israeli move into the Bekaa Valley, presently controlled by the Syrians, and a move toward the north and the region of Tripoli controlled by the Franjeh clan. To enlist support from the remaining Falangists in such adventures, such Israeli government spokesmen as David Kimche, Director-General of the Israeli Foreign Ministry, didn't hesitate in a short press conference in Bonn to point the finger at the Franjehs as Gemayel's possible murderers. The message was clear: the Falangists are seeking revenge; they will have it if they join with Israel in its new crusade aimed at "cleaning out all terrorist elements from Lebanon," as Radio Jerusalem underscored.

Unfolding as a classically evil RAND-Corporation scenario, such moves will produce a direct confrontation with Syria, provoking either an all-out Arab war against Israel or a partition of Lebanon between the two occupying powers. Meanwhile, Israel will be bogged down in Lebanon.

In sum, Gemayel was killed on behalf of the realization of that plan denounced by the Lebanese themselves in early 1976 as the "Kissinger Plan," a blueprint for the partition of the country between its two major neighbors. Promulgated in the early 1970s, that plan was refined in 1976-77, and came to be known as the Bernard Lewis Plan, after the British intelligence professor based at Princeton University who radically envisaged such plans of partitions and balkanization for the entire region, as *EIR* has detailed.

More recently this plan has been the subject of a series of tripartite meetings between Israelis, Syrians, and Anglo-American representatives. One such meeting was held in July at the State Department between Undersecretary Nick Veliotes and representatives of the Syrian Socialist National Party (SSNP), Syrian President Hafez Assad's intelligence and public-relations branch in the United States. At that meeting, Veliotes is said to have agreed to give Syria territorial concessions in Lebanon in exchange for continued Israeli control of the Golan Heights, if Damascus would assist the evacuation of the PLO from Beirut. A few days afterward, Assad announced his willingness to receive Palestinian refugees and guerrillas, after having stalled all negotiations on the subject for weeks.

A few weeks later both Israeli Defense Minister Ariel Sharon and Assad's brother Rifaat arrived in Washington, officially for totally different purposes. As *EIR* exposed at the time, a joint meeting was held at the Walter Reed Military Hospital in Maryland to seal the arrangements. The premise was that increased tensions in Lebanon would lead to a limited confrontation which could give Assad new credibility, and provide Sharon and Assad with the final pretext to maintain a de facto occupation of the country.

The U.S. 'peace initiative'

It is thus no wonder that when on Sept. 1, President Reagan revealed a new initiative for the Middle East, neither Lebanon nor the Golan Heights was mentioned. Lebanon was to be treated totally as a separate issue, because the team of foreign-policy advisers who, under the guidance of Henry Kissinger, had drafted that new plan considered the issue 'settled.' The Palestinians had been expelled from the country and crisis-management negotiations on an Israeli and Syrian withdrawal could drag on for a long time, amidst military skirmishes between the two countries.

At the core of the new Kissinger plan is the idea that Israel could trade off Lebanese territory for some compromises, in the form of Palestinian autonomy in the West Bank as British intelligence sources have mooted. Through such a deal Israel would keep part of Lebanon while Jordan joined a Camp David "Phase Two," allowing Washington to appear as a real "peacemaker" in the region. Based on blackmail of Jordan and Saudi Arabia under the threat of "Palestinian radicalization," the whole tricky plan is aimed at giving some pretense of satisfaction to the Saudis while extending the "strategic consensus" limited-war military relationship that Camp David really represents.

While Israeli Defense Minister Sharon was apparently ready to accept such a deal, Begin never had intended to trade off southern Lebanon for territories which he looked at through mystical lenses: "Judea and Samaria." Evidence of a direct deal between Kissinger and Sharon includes reports that, but for the early release of the "Reagan Plan," Begin was about to give Sharon the sack for his repeated violation of the Israeli cabinet's recommendations. The U.S. proposal came just in

time to force a national-unity paranoia which re-cemented the Begin-Sharon team against the "common enemy."

In turn, reacting to the Israeli rejection of the plan, the U.S. administration floated the line, widespread in the corridors of this month's Arab summit in Fez, that should the Arabs make a step toward peace, Washington would ensure the arrival of Labour Party Chairman Shimon Peres in power in Israel. Similarly Washington began to increase its pressures for an early Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon. All of a sudden, Bashir Gemayel was not to be considered the leader of the Maronite community aimed at ruling over a divided "Mount Lebanon" type of entity, but as a President destined to rule over a united country.

And when Mr. Reagan underlined in a speech that Washington was committed to Lebanon's national integrity and to an early withdrawal of "the present foreign forces," the Israeli press commented that this warning was not aimed at Damascus but at Tel Aviv. Consequently Bashir was dubbed an "American agent."

Gemayel's maneuvers

Perhaps the key to understanding recent events was the complicated relationship developed between the thuggish Bashir Gemayel, the Saudis, and Shimon Peres. Following the Fez summit, the Saudis pressed for a Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon, giving Assad an additional \$15 billion on behalf of that effort. And, as much to contain Palestinian radicalism as to meet a commitment with Syria, the Saudis offered financial and political support to Gemayel should he refuse to sign an immediate peace treaty with Begin. As part of the deal, Gemayel would be free to sign such a peace treaty should Peres reach power. While the Israeli government was drawn into playing Sharon's game with Major Haddad (their proxy in southern Lebanon) against Gemayel, Gemayel himself reactivated his old connections with Shimon Peres. The level of tension between Gemayel and the Israelis was increasing on the day of his death, when Major Haddad warned that if the Lebanese government failed to sign a peace treaty, he would "first extend my territory over a 30-mile line. If things turn bad, I will extend it to the whole of the country"—a direct challenge to the authority of the President-elect.

Haddad was only one means of pressure for the Israelis; they had other allies inside Gemayel's own camp such as the Kaslik group of priests. When a delegation led by Kaslik leader Father Mouwanes went to Israel a few weeks ago, not only did they call for a peace treaty but also a friendship alliance along the lines of the old relationship between Phoenicia and Israel—Phoenicia being the codeword for those priests or politicians which want to break Lebanon from the rest of the Arab world. Referring directly to that problem, businessmen close to Gemayel were on the contrary insisting that in these days "it is better to be Arab, and not to speak about Phoenicia." Indeed the Saudi connection may have proven more useful for business than the Israeli one, which, in business terms, primarily benefited the Israelis through

their sale to the southern Lebanese population of the food and construction materials they had seized from the Palestinians in July. In such trade, the Israelis have made already more than \$40 million in a few months, more than the usual trade with Egypt and certainly an incentive to keep the "good fence" wide open.

Most happy about that situation have been the British proponents of a "Third Way," who expect that Gemayel's death and the subsequent chaos will render ineffective any serious attempt by President Reagan to stabilize the area. With that perspective, the British government has been sending to the Middle East a heavy diplomatic squad, involving Defense Minister John Nott, Foreign Office number-two man Douglas Hurd, and a parliamentary delegation. Going from Jordan to the Gulf, Saudi Arabia and Egypt, these British representatives have been advocating that no one but Britain can best "mediate" in the present situation, and try for example to bridge the gap between the American proposals and the Fez peace plan. A similar thing was said to Egyptian President Mubarak when he visited Paris this month, with the French government underlining that both Paris and Cairo had an interest in "not being crushed either by the Pax Americana or by the Saudi-sponsored peace plan."

For these circles, chaos in Lebanon is good news as it means troubles for America and growing pressures for its allies in the region, especially the Saudis. Whether they had a direct hand in Gemayel's assassination is another matter.

Hence the perspective for the region is quite bleak. If Israel follows the suicidal path opened by the duplicity and the deals of Sharon, Lebanon will become its Vietnam, and could engulf Israel entirely into a war that no one can win, but only lose in the most degrading way. Three months of Israel's presence in Lebanon have already shown that.

Only two powers can keep the situation under control. First the United States—if its foreign policy is made by President Reagan and not by Kissinger. Following the administration's forceful denunciation of Israel's occupation of western Beirut, Reagan would have to intervene in Lebanon against all foreign powers to establish Lebanon's sovereignty and independence, including against those Lebanese leaders who, like Camille Chamoun, represent interests located in London.

A most important role is being played by the Vatican, as underlined by the Sept. 15 meeting between the Pope and PLO Chairman Arafat; a meeting which could pave the way for an ecumenical reconciliation in the region based on the Vatican encyclicals *Populorum Progressio* and *Laborem Excercens*, both of which are dedicated to peace and development in the world. The Vatican may attempt to launch a dialogue in the Middle East based on *Laborem Excercens*; the Vatican also has cards to play within Lebanon. For Lebanon, as we have underlined, the only potential capable President seems to be Raymond Edde, one of the rare Lebanese leaders not bought by foreign powers. The alternatives to these preliminary steps are blood and fire throughout the region for decades.

Politics inside Israel: while the Labourites

by Mark Burdman

Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin dropped what the Israeli press described as a "bombshell" on Sept. 8, by calling for early elections for the country's parliament and national leadership positions to be held in 1983, two years earlier than the expiration terms of office begun in 1981.

The "bombshell" effect lay in the fact that Begin was setting forth a challenge to the parties and leaders of Israel at a highly sensitive moment in Israeli history: will his policies, evident in the Lebanon war and other characteristic extravaganzas of the recent period, be affirmed by the Israeli electorate, or can an alternative to these policies coalesce in an effective way during the next weeks and months? This question only underscores the profound nature of the strategic, economic, and moral dilemmas Israel's population must confront as a consequence of the ongoing Vietnam-style quagmire that Israel now faces in Lebanon—a quagmire that *EIR* founder and contributing editor Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr. warned would develop in a widely circulated statement issued soon after the Lebanon war began.

Begin's immediate calculation in calling for early elections is that he thinks he can rally the population over "national unity" and "national independence" against the so-called "Reagan Plan" for the Middle East, which might better be termed the "Shultz-Kissinger Plan," and which indeed is constructed to destabilize Israel—and its Arab neighbors—in the coming weeks. Begin's mood for this campaign was evidenced in a Sept. 9 speech in which he blasted the United States for planning to overthrow him and caustically commented, "Israel is not Chile and I am not Allende."

By adopting the role that one Israeli observer described to me as the "populist playing to the mobs," Begin calculates that he can win enough support to ensure that his Likud Party will be the first in Israel's history to win an absolute majority in the Knesset, or parliament.

With such a mandate, Begin thinks he can move toward effective annexation of the occupied West Bank (or, in Begin's words, establish "eternal rule over Judea and Samar-