

under NATO Secretary-General-elect Peter Carrington and his business partner Henry Kissinger is stepping up efforts to deal with Moscow. First Maggie Thatcher, once dubbed the Iron Lady, found her way to Hungary, then to Moscow, and declared that life behind the Iron Curtain was not so distasteful after all. On her return from Andropov's funeral she led the pack in calling for improving relations between Europe and Moscow. Close on her heels were West Germany's Chancellor Helmut Kohl, French Foreign Minister Claude Cheysson, and his Italian counterpart Giulio Andreotti.

While all these European leaders have swallowed the line that Moscow is now ready to pick up nuclear arms-control talks, it is specifically around the U.S. debacle in the Middle East that they have issued calls for an "independent European policy." It was the French government which proposed to the U.N. Security Council that the currently deployed multinational forces be replaced in Lebanon by a U.N. contingent, despite the fact that the Soviet conditions laid down for such a shift were tantamount to total capitulation. The Soviets demanded, in fact, that the United States withdraw completely, moving its naval forces out of shooting range, and that it vow never to interfere further with internal Lebanese affairs! In short, what the Soviets have brought to the bargaining table is a stacked deck of cards, in a game where the winner takes all.

The rationale of peace

In the middle of the Lebanese crisis, Egyptian President Mubarak and Jordan's King Hussein traveled to Washington for a series of talks with President Reagan. What Mubarak presented the U.S. administration was a peace package which, if acted on, could open the way for global peace in the area (see article, page 34). Emphasizing in his comments to the press that the Lebanese situation could not be adequately dealt with until the "basic problem" of the Palestinian question were resolved, the Egyptian President urged Reagan to recognize the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) as the only legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. Through the painstaking diplomatic efforts of the Egyptians, Yasser Arafat, after his release from Tripoli in December, conferred with Cairo and, according to Mubarak's comments, modified its hard-line position on Israel. Mubarak stated his conviction that the PLO would drop its commitment to destroy Israel, thus laying the basis for mutual recognition of the two parties. The presence of King Hussein in the talks at the same time signaled the fact that Mubarak had previously arranged for the PLO to participate in peace talks alongside the Jordanians.

What Mubarak offered Reagan was essentially a bid to revive the Reagan Plan in a modified form allowing for PLO recognition.

But the administration did not pick up on the offer. Instead, the pullout was given official sanction, Israel cried "treason" at both Reagan and Mubarak, and the dominoes began to fall.

Egypt's Mubarak tries

by Linda de Hoyos

The Reagan administration's reported dispatching of Henry Kissinger to the Middle East on Feb. 16 for negotiations between Syria and Israel on the Lebanon crisis does not bode well for the administration's response to the offer brought to Washington Feb. 14 by President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt and King Hussein of Jordan. Mubarak came with a proposal that could give the United States a way out of the impasse in Lebanon. Instead of focusing exclusively on the Lebanese disaster, the Egyptian president stated, the United States must bring its power to bear to solve the Palestinian question, which, he indicated is the root cause of the Lebanon crisis.

Mubarak's proposal for negotiating the Palestinian issue is based on a July 1982 French initiative which calls for the "mutual and simultaneous" recognition of the PLO and Israel. Mubarak also called for direct negotiations between the Palestinian leadership organization and the United States.

Mubarak is reported to have told Reagan that the United States' response to this initiative will determine whether there is any hope for the moderate Arab countries to withstand the Soviet-sponsored fundamentalist offensive led by Syria, Libya, and Iran.

Mubarak also cautioned that the success of a comprehensive approach to Mideast peacemaking will depend on "Israel as a whole," and the willingness of Washington to break with the 10-year legacy of Kissingerian crisis management. The response from Israel is not encouraging. Israeli Foreign Minister Moshe Arens issued the strongest denunciation of Egypt since the 1979 Camp David Treaty, including an implicit threat to reoccupy the Sinai. Speaking before the Conference of Major American Jewish Organizations on Feb. 16, Arens declared that "Sinai has been turned over to the Egyptians, but whether there is commitment in Cairo for long-term, stable, peaceful relations between the two countries we're not quite sure. . . . Hearing some of things being said by President Mubarak in the last days, as defense minister, I've got something to worry about. I can't discount the large build-up on the southern border."

"We do not consider Arafat a moderate," was the tack taken by Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir. The presence of Henry Kissinger in the region can only contribute to the intransigence coming from Jerusalem.

Excerpts from the interview conducted with President Mubarak in the Washington Post Feb. 15:

to reverse disaster

Q: Egypt has not seemed to play an active role in the Lebanon crisis. Is the outcome there of no special interest to Egypt?

A: The point is, this crisis in Lebanon was started by the Israeli invasion. I told [former Israeli defense minister Ariel] Sharon and the Israelis several times: Don't ever think of invading or rendering an attack on Lebanon. I told them this will not come to an end.

Q: What was their response?

A: They said there were terrorists—you know, the same words about terrorism and terrorists. But I advised them several times, told them please make a good estimation, an evaluation, otherwise it will be a disaster. They didn't listen.

I told the Americans, at that time Secretary [of State Alexander] Haig, it will be the greatest mistake if you didn't persuade the Israelis not to invade Lebanon, and if there is any terrorist action this should be dealt with independently; but an invasion of Lebanon, this will never solve the problem. Look what has happened now.

Q: Do you think the Americans gave the Israelis a green light?

A: I can't tell you that they have a green light or not, but it's a mistake. The invasion is a mistake.

Q: What needs to be done right now in respect to Lebanon?

A: I think the first thing is an initiative from Israel to withdraw completely. I said when [former prime minister Menachem] Begin was in power, I told him that I was told by some elements that they are considering to make an initiative to withdraw to the international border. This will be a good help.

There should be a starting with the Palestinian problem, which is the core of the whole problem, after finding a way with the linkage between [Jordanian King] Hussein and [PLO chairman Yasser] Arafat.

And this shouldn't be delayed until we solve the Lebanese problem; it's all one package deal: complete withdrawal, starting to move on the Palestinian problem, finding a way for the decreasing of the settlements because that's going to complicate the whole thing. Then the Syrian presence should be dealt with among the Arabs. They should be persuaded to ask Syria to withdraw also from Lebanon.

Q: And you think that will work?

A: With the cooperation of all efforts, I think this would work.

Q: Is there still a necessary role for the American multinational force in Lebanon, and did you discuss that with President Reagan?

A: The withdrawal of these forces now would be a disaster. You are going to lose the confidence of all your friends in the area. You should be an umbrella—withdraw and replace your forces with the UNIFIL [United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon]. A complete Israeli withdrawal, I said, a move in the Palestinian problem, strengthening the Lebanon armed forces and in this way you could bring in the United Nations forces instead; it will be a good approach.

Q: To bring in the U.N. requires the cooperation of the Soviet Union. Does that now seem to you to be possible?

A: I think at the beginning the Soviet Union didn't agree. But nowadays, the head of the Soviet Union agrees, on some condition. But a dialogue with the Soviet Union could come to a good conclusion for replacing the multinational forces with UNIFIL.

Q: Did you and President Reagan think about this the same way?

A: I talked with the administration. I think they have the same thought. . . .

Q: You received PLO chairman Arafat last month and you have been urging the United States to meet with him. Why should the United States meet with him if the PLO does not first recognize Israel?

A: Have you read the Fez resolution of the Arab summit? Article Number 7. Do you remember what it says? It's a recognition of Israel, co-existence with Israel.

Q: By shadows, implicit, not by words. Did you find Mr. Reagan sympathetic to your urging him to meet with the PLO?

A: We discussed the whole thing, but this depends upon the Israelis as a whole. You know, Kissinger has stated some commitments not to make contact with Arafat some time ago. I think the United States is stuck to this. Without a dialogue with Arafat, it will be very difficult to come to a resolution.

Q: Is Mr. Arafat ready, as Egypt earlier was ready, to sit down with Israel and negotiate a peace?

A: I think the PLO is ready, in a delegation with King Hussein, to negotiate the problem. This is what we discussed with Mr. Reagan. King Hussein is going to coordinate with Arafat so as to come out with a joint delegation for negotiations.

Q: How is that initiative proceeding? Because when I was in Amman a few days ago, I found that the PLO was being very careful, avoiding decisions.

A: I think they're going to meet with King Hussein in the very near future. We will try to help in this. I think Hussein is doing his maximum just to make this coordination with Arafat. This is the only way now.

Q: Did you find President Reagan sympathetic to this initiative?

A: President Reagan wanted this kind of coordination. He listened to our views.