

Lebanon partition danger mounts

by Thierry Lalevée

When Malcom Kerr, the president of the American University of Beirut, was shot and killed on Jan. 18, he was the latest victim of the appeasers in Western Europe and in the United States who are giving the Middle East to the Soviet Union under the cover of "bringing the Soviets in for a dialogue." Ongoing investigations suggest that, although the murder was claimed by the Iranian-created "Islamic Jihad" sect, the murder was a professional East bloc intelligence operation. This coheres with earlier reports that Soviet and East German agents were directly responsible for recent terror actions, using an Islamic or other covers. Kerr's murder was Moscow's latest signal to President Reagan that, unless he backs down now, the Soviet Union and its allies are ready to push the Mideast crisis to its limit, as part of their planned global confrontation.

This had been made clear a few days earlier in Damascus where the "Palestino-Soviet Friendship Association" was convened on Jan. 16 under the leadership of the Soviets. The meeting, which assembled the Palestinian radicals opposed to the leadership of Yasser Arafat, was chaired by Libya's Major Jalloud, who predicted that life for the American and French multinational forces (MNF) in Lebanon would become an inferno. As Jalloud was speaking, the MNF came under intense artillery bombardment from the Shi'ite and Druze militias of Walid Jumblatt, who had just arrived in Damascus from an extended visit to the Soviet Union, requesting more military support. The shellings were also Soviet ally Hafez al-Assad's answer to his meeting with U.S. Special Envoy Donald Rumsfeld, to whom al-Assad had delivered an ultimatum a few days before, urging that the American troops withdraw and that Washington recognize Syria's historic rights over Lebanon.

The European appeasement crowd

What has made the Soviet Union and its Middle East satraps so arrogant is their belief that they can rely on important political farces within Western Europe to side with them against the United States, and their conviction that Secretary of State Shultz can be relied upon to amplify to Reagan the pressures coming from these European allies to force an American capitulation. At the core of this conspiracy lies a secretive, recently created group called the "European Study

Group on Middle Eastern Affairs." The group is based primarily in Great Britain and West Germany, around the aging Lord Caradon, a British Arabist; Udo Steinbach, director of the Hamburg-based "Orient Institute" and a long-time corporate associate of the Club of Rome; and Rudolf Hilfe, who serves as an adviser to the Bavarian government of Franz-Josef Strauss. In discussions, Lord Caradon, the "father" of the U.N. 242 resolution—the internationally recognized U.N. resolution for solving the Middle East refugee problem—has been adamant on the "need to oppose American policy in the Middle East. These policies are simply unacceptable. We need to bring the Soviets in for a dialogue." But the real concern of the "European Study Group," as revealed by Rudolf Hilfe in an article published on Jan. 13 in the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* and in subsequent discussions, is not peace in the Middle East, but the opportunity to "use the Middle East as a lever to decouple Europe from the United States."

Attempting to accomplish that has been the task of Britain's Foreign Secretary Lord Geoffrey Howe, who recently visited Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Syria—but not Israel. On returning, Howe emphasized that he was now in a position to mediate between the United States and Syria, as well as between Washington and Moscow, a topic, which, according to Lord Caradon, Howe immediately discussed with Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko in Stockholm.

What this mediation will mean was shown by several demands for an immediate withdrawal of the MNF and its replacement by a United Nations force. Such a replacement, U.N. Secretary General Javier de Cuellar asserted, should be organized through another U.N. sponsored Middle East conference, bringing together the United States, the U.S.S.R., and others parties to the conflict. It is obvious that the MNF's replacement by a U.N. force will simply mean the official partition of Lebanon between Syria, controlling the north, and Israel, controlling the south, with various sub-enclaves. Major East Coast establishment banks in the United States, such as Morgan Guarantee Trust, Continental Illinois, and First National Bank of Chicago, are backing such a process, and most have already pulled out of Beirut in recent weeks, most likely advised to do so by Shultz's State Department. Shultz himself, while visiting Britain and meeting with Foreign Secretary Howe and NATO Secretary-General-designate Lord Carrington, has reportedly sent a letter to Syria's Hafez al-Assad recognizing Syria's historical rights to Lebanon. In Shultz's wording, Syrian occupation of Lebanon is "different from Israel's"! Assad's reply to the letter was the murder of Malcom Kerr.

At the same time, the British government has released its 1953 papers, including notably letters from its Beirut embassy emphasizing that "Lebanon is not a nation; it is a small municipality." If these papers contribute to the present push for a Lebanese partition, this fact also underlines what many Lebanese have known for some time—that Britain has been fostering such a policy all along.