

American Jewish Organizations; Steven Solander, head of the United Jewish Communities of North America; Danny Liebrant, chairman of the Commissioners of Keren Hayesod; and James Tisch of the Jewish Federation of New York.

Lauder, who is the chief financier of Netanyahu's political career, on Oct. 18 called for convening a "world Jewish summit," to be held within two weeks after the Oct. 21 Arab summit. This would be timed just prior to the Nov. 7 U.S. elections.

Palestinians Under Siege

Upon his return from Sharm al-Sheikh, Arafat issued a call to his people to abide by the agreement, but it is feared that the situation has gone beyond his control.

Barak's separation plan drew a sharp attack from Palestinian chief negotiator Erekat, who called it the "gravest step Israel could take." He charged, "This is not a separation plan. It is a plan of suffocation and occupation. It will not be tolerated by us."

The Arab Summit, which will include representatives of 22 Arab nations, will have met in Cairo on Oct. 21 for the first time since 1996, to take up the Palestinian question. Although as of this writing it is impossible to say what decisions will be taken, the summit promises to demonstrate a level of Arab unity not seen in over a decade.

Flash-points for Escalation

Developments in the third week in October offered flash-points that could rapidly internationalize the conflict. The first was the capture of four Israelis by the Hezbollah, including three soldiers who were captured during a clash along the Israeli border with Lebanon. This was followed shortly thereafter by the capture of another Israeli, Elhanan Tannenbaum, a colonel in the Israeli reserves, whom the Hezbollah claim is a Mossad agent. The Hezbollah is demanding that these captives be exchanged with Hezbollah members and Palestinian prisoners held by Israel. While Israel is using diplomatic means to seek their release, Barak has warned, in a not-so-veiled threat to use force, that Israel will hold Lebanon and Syria responsible.

The second point of possible escalation could follow from the bombing of the American warship *USS Cole*, in the Yemeni port of Aden, which killed 17 American sailors. U.S. intelligence sources have informed *EIR* that the damage sustained by the ship would confirm that the device must have involved a sophisticated bomb, either some type of rocket or shaped charge. In any case, it would have required a very high explosive, which would rule out "amateurs" linked to phantom terrorist Osama bin Laden.

It is feared that the attack could serve as a pretext for some wild U.S. attack against Iraq, Sudan, or Afghanistan — as had been done in the past — which would further inflame the situation.

UN Embargo Against Iraq Crumbles

by Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

The sanctions regime imposed on Iraq in 1990, is in the process of deteriorating, without any vote having been taken in any UN body. In a development which epitomizes the new flavor in international relations, certain steps taken unilaterally by certain governments, have established a *fait accompli*, which has utterly undermined the sanctions. What happened was, simply, this: The Russian government decided to send an airplane with political personalities on board, to the Saddam Hussein International Airport, in the Iraqi capital. To accommodate the visit, the Iraqi authorities opened up the airport, and restored its facilities, which had been closed since 1990.

Flying into Baghdad was a forceful way of calling a bluff. That is, since the sanctions had been imposed in 1990, all goods shipped to Iraq had to be approved by the UN Sanctions Committee. Transportation into Iraq had to be organized overland, through Jordan, mainly, as flights into the country were banned. The exceptions were flights organized by the UN itself, which went into Habbaniya Airport, a military airport, 80 kilometers outside the capital.

In addition to the UN regulations, there was an unwritten law, established by pure arbitrary will, whereby passenger flights were also forbidden to land in Iraq. Although the Iraqi government had repeatedly made this known to friendly governments, who were sending in humanitarian aid shipments, and urged them to send in planes, no country dared to challenge the practice.

Russia, France Lead the Way

In August of this year, that changed. Following a visit by Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Dr. Tariq Aziz, to Moscow, in mid-August, arrangements were made for the Russian plane to land in Baghdad. On Aug. 17, the Baghdad Airport was reopened, and made ready for service. On Aug. 19, the first Russian plane arrived.

Then, on Sept. 21, a plane from France arrived, with several prominent political figures and intellectuals on board. Although the group organizing the flight was private, made up of leftists generally, Foreign Minister Hubert Védrine gave his blessing to the initiative, by announcing, "A charter plane toward Baghdad proposed by a French group would not nec-



An Iraqi Airways plane is loaded with relief supplies at Arlanda Airport, Stockholm, Sweden, on Nov. 15, 1991.

essarily violate the international sanctions.” On board the plane, were former Foreign Minister Claude Cheysson, former Justice Minister Robert Badinter, and Abbé Pierre, a well-known Catholic priest engaged in humanitarian activities.

Since then, nations have been lining up to fly to Baghdad. Morocco, Yemen, and Jordan were among the first Arab countries to follow suit, along with Algeria, Egypt, Syria, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen. Lebanon and Sudan have announced plans to fly there. Russia has not only continued its flights, but on Oct. 2, the Russian airline Aeroflot made known that it intended to reestablish regular airline service, which had been stopped in 1990. According to a statement by the Iraqi transport minister, “Scheduled flights by Russian planes will start in two weeks, and Iraq requests the planes to fly through Iranian airspace.” Iran responded by saying that it would grant permission. As if to drive home the point, Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharazzi demonstratively flew into Baghdad Airport, for a high-profile visit.

Turkey has also started flights into the neighboring country, and on Oct. 11, announced that it would resume pumping Iraqi oil at full capacity — about 1.6 million barrels per day — through the pipeline from Kirkuk to Turkey’s Mediterranean port of Yumurtalik. The move has manifold implications, not only because Turkey is a NATO member, but because the U.S. and U.K. air raids against targets in northern Iraq, have originated from the Turkish air base at Incirlik. Turkey also called for the lifting of all the sanctions against Iraq.

Most recently, Jürgen Moellemann, a political leader of the German liberal Free Democratic Party (FDP) and president of the German-Arab Friendship Society, announced that

he would soon travel to Iraq, by plane.

U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and U.S. Defense Secretary William Cohen have protested loudly, and registered their complaints directly with some of the governments involved. They have insisted, that such passenger flights violate the embargo—a patent lie. State Department spokesman Richard Boucher put it this way: “A violation of the sanctions regime, and an action that’s inconsistent with the sanctions regime, both amount to the same thing. . . . Unapproved flights [are] inconsistent with the sanctions regime. . . . Syria didn’t notify the Sanctions Committee of the flight. . . . Egypt, in fact, did notify the Sanctions Committee, but didn’t wait for the approval.”

No matter how much the State Department may scream, Boucher and company are facing a *fait accompli*. And there is not much they can do about it, unless they wish to start shooting down Russian, French, and other civilian aircraft flying into Baghdad.

On Sept. 28, after a Jordanian plane touched down in the Iraqi capital, Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz urged Arab states to adopt “airplane diplomacy” and organize more flights to Baghdad. Correctly characterizing the situation, he said, “It is the beginning of the collapse of the sanctions.”

He could have added, it is the beginning of the collapse of global Anglo-American power; for, that is what the airplane diplomacy symptomizes.

Iraq Rehabilitated

The next steps in the “airplane diplomacy,” will be the restoration of regular airline traffic in and out of the country.

In addition to the Russians, the Indians have also reopened their Baghdad offices. Others are expected to follow suit.

Iraq, itself, will move to reestablish its own airline, too. At the time of Desert Storm, in January 1991, a large number of Iraqi Airways passenger planes were grounded, in Algeria, Iran, and Jordan. Due to lack of maintenance over the intervening period, they have fallen into disuse. Iraqi sources have confirmed that the government now plans to purchase up to 20 Airbus airliners from France, as soon as the sanctions have been lifted officially.

The issue of airline travel has always been a test case for the authority of the United States and U.K. to dictate policy vis-à-vis Iraq. In 1991, this author was engaged in a humanitarian aid effort, under the rubric of the Committee to Save the Children in Iraq, which organized several shipments of medicines, hospital equipment, and food into Iraq. The Committee had been set up on the initiative of the Schiller Institute, together with the Patriarchate of the Chaldean Church in Baghdad, and the International Progress Organization, based in Vienna.

The first major shipment occurred in summer 1991, through an arrangement with the United Nations Inter-Agency Humanitarian Programme for Iraq, Kuwait, and the Iraq/Turkey and Iraq/Iran Border Areas, which chartered a Russian cargo plane to fly supplies directly into Iraq. The mission, which originally was to leave over a month earlier, was systematically sabotaged, and postponed, ostensibly through bureaucratic red tape, but actually, through high-level political interference, from the United States, the U.K., and, at the time, Russia. One leading reason for the sabotage, was that the Committee's initiative was correctly identified as associated with Lyndon LaRouche, the only prominent American political figure to denounce the war and embargo against Iraq. To give just one indication of the sabotage, on July 1, television anchorman Ulrich Wickert used his debut on German national television, to air a slander against the Committee to Save the Children in Iraq, and its organizers. Wickert claimed that it was a swindle, and had nothing to do with humanitarian work. The following day, after weeks of political infighting, the Aeroflot Ilyushin left Frankfurt airport and landed in Habbaniya Airport, outside Baghdad.

During that and subsequent visits to Iraq, members of the Committee arranged with Iraqi authorities to have groups of children, who had been wounded in the war, sent to Germany and the United States for treatment and surgery which, due to the sanctions, they could not receive in Iraq. To transport the children out, again, planes were required. Through the Office of the Executive Delegate of the Secretary General, the first group of 30 children was sent by plane to Frankfurt. A second group, destined for the United States, had to be flown to Amman by propeller plane, and thence by normal carriers to Frankfurt and Washington.

As contributions in kind—food, medical equipment, and

medicines—continued to flow into the Committee from all over Europe and the United States (including massive donations of milk powder by American farmers), the Committee sought further air transportation. Since the Iraqi Airways planes were grounded through the hostilities, some planes were abroad and could be used.

Iraqi Fleet Idled

The fact that Iraq had so many civilian and cargo planes available, and, at that time, in good shape, meant that one could have utilized them for humanitarian shipments, as well as routine travel for UN personnel involved in humanitarian work. In August 1991, en route from Iraq to Europe, this author proposed to the UN Executive Delegate, that Iraqi Airways planes might be used for all such transportation. The Executive Delegate, after studying the idea, drew up an official proposal to this effect, whereby Iraqi Airways planes would be mobilized. The proposal cited the fact that “the lack of regular airflights to and from Iraq, represent[ed] a major constraint in the timely delivery of relief equipment and in the transportation of international staff.” At the time, about three UN chartered flights were being operated monthly. The new proposal contemplated two regular rotations of flights, Amman-Geneva-Baghdad-Geneva-Amman, plus one off-rotation, per month. Iraq would supply the planes, maintenance, and crew, and the UN office would supply the funds.

The UN Sanctions Committee shot the proposal down, even though it originated from the Office of the Executive Delegate. The reason was simply, that even such controlled use of the Iraqi Airways planes, would have been interpreted as a weakening of the sanctions regime.

The Committee to Save the Children in Iraq went ahead nonetheless, and independently organized a flight with an Iraqi Airways cargo plane, from Stockholm, in November 1991. Following a tortuous bureaucratic fight with the UN Sanctions Committee, the Committee to Save the Children in Iraq finally succeeded in acquiring a permit to have one such plane fly a large load of hospital beds, and other equipment, and medicines. The UN Sanctions Committee refused to allow the plane to fly into Iraq, but let it land in the Jordanian capital, Amman. From there, the cargo was transported to Baghdad overland.

That was the first, and last, Iraqi Airways plane to be used for humanitarian aid missions.

This background case (which had not been made public until now) highlights the extreme sensitivity of the matter of airline travel into Iraq, for those in the United States and U.K., who believe they can maintain a pariah status for Iraq.

Now, with the advent of “airplane diplomacy,” the authority of the United States and U.K. is being rendered irrelevant. It is one more indication that the would-be gods of Olympus, who arrogantly believe they can dictate behavior to the rest of the world, to suit their whims and prejudices, will soon be gathering dust on a shelf in a dimly lit museum, somewhere.