

Will the Soviets be allowed to carry out the Bernard Lewis Plan in the Mideast?

by Nora Hamerman

With the largest concentration of navies in the eastern Mediterranean since World War II, the crisis in Lebanon is rapidly turning into a showdown between the Soviet Union and the United States. At issue is the existence of Lebanon as a nation, to which White House policy is committed—or its division into ethnically defined sacerdotal enclaves under a revived “Ottoman Empire” arrangement, the policy being fostered by the Kremlin.

On Sept. 22, President Reagan and Secretary of State Shultz stated that the American task is to get all foreign troops out of Lebanon, and that the Syrians—acting as Moscow’s surrogates—are the obstacle. These U.S. attacks on Syria, by far the strongest to date, came after several rounds of fruitless talks by White House envoy Robert MacFarlane with the Syrians and their Lebanese allies headed by the Druze sect. The Druze-Syrian forces continued unrelenting their drive to seize the strategic mountain town of Souk Al Gharb from the Lebanese Army, the stepping-stone to taking Beirut.

The United States is concentrating on building up the Lebanese national army. If that army can gain sufficiently in strength to defeat or absorb the dozens of warring militias currently ravaging the country, the war will be won.

This is the context for the testimony Shultz gave to joint hearings of the Senate Foreign Relations and House Foreign Affairs Committees Sept. 22, where he pointed out: “Israel has stated its unwillingness to withdraw totally [from Lebanon] as long as Syrian forces are there; thus Syria is in the ironic position of keeping Israeli forces in Lebanon. At the same time Syria is using its leverage in Lebanon to obstruct the process of national reconciliation. Indeed, Syria has instigated and organized political opposition within Lebanon and has armed several factions engaged in military actions against the legitimate government of Lebanon.” President Reagan then told a meeting of regional broadcast journalists that the participation of the Marines in the multinational force in Lebanon “is absolutely crucial” to efforts to end the “Soviet-sponsored aggression against Lebanon” and to give diplomacy a chance to establish a secure government in Lebanon.

It was on Sept. 22, as well, that the U.S. effort to defend

the Lebanese nation became an *alliance*, when the French and Italian governments were forced to side with the United States, after the Soviet-backed militias and the Syrian army attacked both the French and Italian installations in Lebanon. The change brings home the reality that it is not diplomacy which is now shaping the eastern Mediterranean crisis—but the rules of war.

Only five days after French Foreign Minister Claude Cheysson on Sept. 18 had publicly castigated the United States for its military involvement in Lebanon, France deployed eight Super-*Etendard* bombers over Syrian-Druze positions well behind their lines, hitting their gun batteries at Sofar. The French bombers reportedly fired on a position far north of the combat zone, a Syrian stronghold where there are numerous Soviet advisers. Italy deployed warplanes to Cyprus ready for use in Lebanon, and has a destroyer and a frigate offshore Lebanon.

French Defense Minister Charles Hernu issued a stern warning that French commanders in Lebanon are there “to make use of our right to legitimate self-defense and to reply against the batteries which have taken French objectives as targets in Beirut.”

On the other side, the Syrians are making no secret of their aim to turn Lebanon into a Muslim state—a plan which in the short term satisfies the “Greater Syria” ambitions of the Assad regime. Nor is there anything disguised about the scale of Soviet backing for this game, which is leading straight toward more bloodletting in Lebanon and the emergence of an “Islamic Republic” like Khomeini’s infamous Dark Ages regime in Iran, also being shamelessly backed by the Soviets.

The Syrian daily *Tishrin*, which often speaks for the Damascus regime of President Hafez al Assad, greeted the Shultz and Reagan statements of Sept. 22 by declaring that the United States and Syria are now headed for a military confrontation. Syrian operations are being conducted under the direction of 500 Soviet advisers, including a Soviet general. The Soviet Union has established an airlift to Syria to step up supplies and another airlift between Libya and Syria not only for supplies but for troop reinforcements, according to unconfirmed reports. A Kuwait press source said that the Soviet airlift includes the possibility of moving up to 52,000

Soviet troops to Syria. And three Soviet warships are reported to have crossed the Bosphorus straits into the eastern Mediterranean along with two Soviet submarines, all headed for the Lebanese coast, during the week of Sept. 17.

However, U. S. intelligence sources say that Washington has made it clear to Moscow that should it take such action in support of Syria, Damascus will face a full-scale attack.

The road to Islamic Lebanon

The tactical aim of Moscow and Damascus in concentrating on Souk al Gharb is to control the mountains overlooking the Lebanese capital of Beirut, and from that position of power to force the U.S.-backed president of Lebanon, Amin Gemayel, to resign. Syria has already chosen the puppets it wants to install, probably including former Lebanese President Suleiman Franjeh, one of the Maronite Christian warlords, and former Prime Minister Rashid Karami. Moreover, Druze leader Walid Jumblatt, an eccentric mystic, is expected to be brought into such a regime, and the largest religious minority in Lebanon, the Shi'ite Muslims, would take on a larger role.

The shift in ethnic balance in fact warrants a change in the composition of the Lebanese government; indeed, the United States has been quietly pursuing such a shift in talks with Syria and other parties. But Syrian domination of the Lebanese government will accelerate the process of radicalization already afoot. The Ayatollah Khomeini, another friend of the "peace-loving" gentlemen in the Kremlin, is prepared to use his 1 million fellow Shi'ite Muslims in Lebanon to extend his influence there. With the additional aid of Libya's Qaddafi, Lebanon would rapidly become the staging ground for a *jihad* (Islamic holy war) against Israel, its southern neighbor.

It should not be thought that the Kremlin has suddenly converted to the faith of Mohammed. Rather, the resurgence of the "blood and soil" cult of Holy Mother Russia, led by the powerful Russian Orthodox Church, is reinforcing the ancient imperial practices of the Byzantine Empire, which spawned the Orthodox Church in the first place, and its Islamic copy which took over Constantinople in the 15th century, the Ottoman Empire. The imperial system is based on destroying all nations, and instead setting up priests who maintain control over local tribes through artificially created cult ideologies. The various brands of "Islamic fundamentalism" are perfect for this purpose, as the rising star of Yuri Andropov's appointee to the Soviet Politburo, First Deputy Prime Minister Gaider Ali Reza Aliyev, indicates.

Aliyev, a descendant of Persian Shi'ite Muslim believers, is the master player of that "Islamic card" which wicked Western policy-makers like Carter National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski and their dupes thought they could deal to make religious unrest spill over from the southwest Asian "Arc of Crisis" into the southern flank of the Soviet Union. Under Aliyev's guidance, Moscow has shaped its propagand

da in the Arab world to increasingly show sympathy for the "Muslim cause." For the first time in three years, Moscow has started to use Soviet Muslim leaders to strengthen ties with its neighbors, sending the highest-ranking Soviet Muslim to Syria in the middle of September.

In this light, the observation made by Arab journalists to *EIR* that the Arab media have become more and more fascinated with the Crusades cannot be accidental. Evoking the "holy wars" of the 11th through 14th centuries, in which Muslim, Jew, and Christian slaughtered one another after being whipped up to "kill the Infidel" to control the territories now called the Middle East, is simply the corollary of the Soviet media's revival of the vile Dostoevsky, and the rise of the especially violent Russian anti-Semitism in a recent issue of the Soviet military paper *Red Star*.

According to several European journals, which report that Aliyev aims to reassert Soviet influence in the Middle East to a level surpassing the high point of the Khrushchev-Nasser friendship, one of Aliyev's biggest problems is Afghanistan, where the continued presence of Soviet troops has alienated the Muslim government from Moscow.

One option he has is to side with the Muslim rebels challenging the Soviet military presence. A second approach—highly risky but not out of keeping with the terrorist recklessness of the downing of the KAL 7 jetliner on Sept. 1—would be to use Afghanistan as a permanent base to extend Soviet influence into Pakistan, through provoking a secession of Baluchistan, an ethnic region which spills from Pakistan into Iran. This would open the way for extending Soviet influence all the way to the Persian Gulf, but would require the overthrow of Pakistani dictator Zia ul-Haq, who is armed by the United States.

There are signs that Aliyev and Andropov are tempted by this risky second option. On Sept. 9 Radio Moscow broadcast a commentary on the Persian language radio, National Voice of Iran. The commentary endorsed the Movement for the Restoration of Democracy, a coalition behind the anti-Zia demonstrations in Pakistan, and referred to Zia's form of Islam as manufactured by Western imperialism. The same broadcast announced Moscow's intention to build a front in Iran that would encompass the extremist core of the Muslim Brotherhood, the Fedayeen: a step toward disintegrating Iran.

The Soviets have thus emerged as the major backers of the so-called Bernard Lewis Plan, a British intelligence scenario for chopping up the Middle East into tribal entities to be controlled by an Anglo-Saxon world empire. Ironically, Britain's Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher was the only European head of government to endorse the U.S. policy in Lebanon until Sept. 22, when the Syrian-Druze forces stepped up their assault on the U.S.-led multinational force, causing seven French casualties and destroying the Italian arms depot. If that violence was intended to play into Moscow's strategy of frightening Europe into splitting off from the United States, it has backfired.