

Will the U.S. and Israel change policy tracks?

by Thierry Lalevée, Middle East Editor

It may be only a matter of weeks until Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin and Defense Minister Ariel Sharon are forced to step down and be replaced by a Labour Party-dominated coalition or even a National Salvation government, as some have already advocated. This will be the ultimate consequence of the September massacre of more than a thousand Palestinian women and children in the camp of Chatila in Beirut which has led not only to a crisis between Washington and Israel, but also a crisis between Israel and the Jewish communities in Western Europe and the United States.

The role played by the Israeli government in that horrendous massacre—which can only be compared to the Second World War activities of the Brandenburg division of the German Abwehr's Abteilung II on the Eastern Front—was followed by the Israeli government's refusal to even consider the creation of a commission of inquiry. The Reagan administration which, until now, had still considered Israel's Begin and Sharon as its best allies in the Middle East, now must insist that "heads have to roll" if it wants to maintain its credibility not only in the Middle East but worldwide. It has to impose the removal at least of Ariel Sharon, the man who together with Chief of Staff Rafael Eytan, "knew or should have known," and who are considered the masterminds behind both the assassination of Lebanese President-elect Bashir Gemayel, and the massacre less than 24 hours later.

This massacre had no other purpose than to spark anew the seven-year-old Lebanese civil war. Just as Bashir's murder gave Sharon the pretext to swiftly occupy western Beirut, a new outbreak of civil strife would have given him the ultimate pretext to impose the presence of Israeli troops all

over Lebanon, de facto partitioning that country. If a civil war had started following the news of the massacre, Lebanon could well have ceased to exist already; and if steps are not taken against those responsible, the crisis may well engulf the entire Middle East.

Sharon and the massacre

There is no doubt that one of Sharon's main targets over the past few weeks has been President Reagan and the U.S. administration, whose ill-fated "peace plan" was seen as running counter to Sharon's aspirations to a de facto Israeli empire in which the partition of Lebanon was to be the first step toward the overthrow of the Hashemite dynasty of Jordan and the establishment of a puppet "Palestinian state" there, sparking a wave of terror and of social upheaval in the rest of the Arab world. Judea and Samaria would become permanent parts of Eretz Israel.

Sharon's plan in giving the green light for a Palestinian massacre was to create a situation in which the United States, would have had no choice but to support Israel as the only stabilizing factor in Lebanon, among the numerous warring factions. Indeed, this nearly worked out: until Saturday evening, Sept. 18, the Reagan administration was still convinced that Israel's drive into western Beirut had been "prompted by attacks from leftist militia" against Israeli forces—a rationale that even the Israelis, who knew better, didn't utilize.

This quickly fell through as it became clear that the massacre had been a cold-blooded operation. Sharon's miscalculation, as Lebanese sources have pointed out, was to have moved too late. Should such a massacre have occurred on the night the death of Bashir Gemayel was announced, it could

have been represented as an emotional vendetta organized by "uncontrolled elements." Twenty-four hours later, no such excuse could be mounted. As reports later indicated, in Israel and elsewhere, the operation had been the work of Israeli-controlled forces of Major Haddad—his personal participation being still a question mark—and of Israeli-controlled breakaway factions of the Falangist Party headed by militia leader Dib Anastase. Anastase, the deputy commander of the Falangist security force, has since been arrested for having been involved in the actual murder of Bashir Gemayel.

The massacre began on the night of Sept. 15, a few hours after Israeli troops had moved into western Beirut and imposed a curfew on the whole area to "avoid bloodshed." That afternoon, scores of militiamen had been airlifted in Israeli helicopters to Beirut airport, then loaded into trucks and dispatched to the Palestinian refugee camps. During the early evening, the first massacres occurred. A few hours later, as reported by the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz*, Israeli soldiers guarding the camp were told by Palestinian women about the butchery inside. Making their reports to their commanders, the soldiers were instructed "not to worry, everything is under control." Israel's army was meanwhile launching flares to illuminate the camp and facilitate the work of the militia.

At the latest by Thursday morning, Sept. 16, most of Israel's senior commanders, including Eytan, were perfectly aware of what had happened the night before, and what was still happening. Israeli military reports during that period described them as a "joint operation to seek out terrorists" in the camps. By the morning of Sept. 17, *Haaretz's* military correspondent Schiff had himself informed Transport Minister Zippori that something horrendous was happening in Beirut. Zippori also informed Israeli Foreign Minister Shamir, who later was to claim that as of Friday, he had received no confirmation of such events. Indeed until midday of Sept. 18, Israeli officials claimed to "be aware of nothing particular," a statement which provoked an uproar. Later, it was stated that "something was known on Friday," that "Israeli troops tried to prevent what was happening," and had killed three militiamen in retaliation!

Speaking in the Knesset on Sept. 22, a week later, Defense Minister Sharon acknowledged that 1) the Israelis allowed the militiamen into the camps; 2) that these troops were assigned to seek out terrorists; 3) that Israel could not predict that these troops would engage in a massacre; and that 4) Israeli troops had intervened as soon as it was known that something was going on (two days later). Finally, what Sharon considered his most important argument: 5) "We used the militias because we wanted to spare Israeli blood"—an explanation which stands without further comment.

To cover any Israeli responsibilities into this massacre, Sharon as well as other ministers insisted that Major Haddad's troops were *not* involved. Sharon didn't hesitate to blame the Lebanese Falangists, an accusation aimed at breaking the fragile national unity created around the presidential election of Amin Gemayel a few days later.

A moral revolt

The Israeli population now faces its gravest decisions since Independence. As news of the massacre spread by Sept. 18, crowds of demonstrators gathered in front of Begin's office, denouncing him as a "Nazi" and a "murderer"—an unprecedented scene which, far from being the work of a radical minority, has received nationwide support as the news media one after another began to unveil the truth, and began to call for Begin and Sharon to resign. If Begin wants to remain Prime Minister, wrote both the *Haaretz* and *Yedioth Ahronoth*, he has no choice but to immediately sack Sharon and Chief of Staff Eytan.

To this moral revolt inside Israel was soon added a revolt by the worldwide Jewish communities, who, in the words of one leading British Jew, accused Begin of having "tarnished the proud name of the Jewish people. For that we shall never forgive you." On Sept. 20, the American Jewish Congress called for an immediate break between Israel and Major Haddad's force, or else, it stated, "Israel will lose all moral credibility to denounce the PLO as terrorist." Only a few days before, Diaspora Jews had protested the meeting between Arafat and the Pope, only to find a few days later that, in the words of the conservative American Sen. Barry Goldwater, "Begin makes Arafat look like a Boy Scout."

On the West Bank and in East Jerusalem, from Sept. 20 on, a general strike was organized by shopkeepers. Israeli Arabs followed suit, roads were blocked, and fights with the police occurred. By Sept. 22, the Begin government was forced to accept an emergency debate in the Knesset on two resolutions: one calling for Sharon's immediate resignation, another calling for the immediate establishment of a commission of inquiry, a demand made worldwide by individuals, organizations, and governments alike.

Begin succeeded in rejecting both demands, only to concede that in the upcoming two to three weeks, an investigation may occur, but not by a full-fledged commission. Modai, a former energy minister, screamed to Radio Jerusalem that "the establishment of such a commission is a hint that Israelis may have been involved. That hint is criminal!" As of this writing, new defections from within the ruling coalition are under way. Following the Knesset vote, Energy Minister Berman resigned in protest and took with him two other members of the Knesset "liberal" faction of the Likud. They are expected to form a new Center Party under the leadership of former Defense Minister Ezer Weizmann. The National Religious Party, the most important party of the coalition, is threatening to resign, too, under the leadership of Interior Minister Burg and of Education Minister Hammer, who both want a commission of inquiry. Even the ultra-right-wing Takhya Party of Yuval Neeman, like rats leaving a sinking ship, advocates the creation of such a commission.

The battle will not be easy; both Begin and Sharon are reported to intend to stay in power by any means. Begin waited 28 years to become Prime Minister, and he will not relinquish that office easily. Sharon and Eytan are reportedly

maneuvering to crush all opposition. With an army 95 percent of whose officers corps is composed of members of Kibbutzim, Sharon has no chance—even if he was thinking about it—to use the army as his power base, but he still has the capability to create new military crises. In turn the army may well have to move one day, against Sharon.

The question of Camp David

The ball is in the camp of the Reagan administration and in the hands of President Reagan himself. Duped for several months by Sharon, he reacted with great anger at the revelations of the massacre and went on American television on Sept. 20 to announce that, together with France and Italy, the United States was sending its Marines back to Beirut to secure the situation as well as to ensure a speedy Israeli withdrawal from the city altogether—and not merely the western part of it. One of the American Marines' tasks will be to promote a quick restoration of the powers of the Lebanese armed forces in the region. And coupled with the diplomatic process engineered by "special envoy" Habib, an overall Israeli withdrawal from the country should be secured while Washington is already mooted its own "American plan for Lebanon."

But the task is enormous and requires political steps that Reagan has thus far refused to consider. It requires a total review of America's Middle East policy and of the inheritance left by the Carter administration—the so-called Camp David Peace Treaty. Lebanon's present agony is a direct product of that treaty, based as it is on some kind of interim peace agreement between Israel and Egypt, as former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger advocated years ago.

As necessary as it is for the American administration to support demands for the removal of Ariel Sharon, it is equally necessary to sweep out the Kissinger network in Washington which has been drafting Reagan's recent Middle East proposals. As a matter of fact the Reagan plan was nothing but a formula written by Kissinger himself and sold to Reagan via George Shultz and his adviser Joseph Sisco. The new "Kissinger Plan," as *EIR* has reported, has no other purpose than to enlarge Camp David, but ran counter to Begin and Sharon's plans, since they have no intent of making any compromise on the issue of the West Bank. Indeed while Begin and Sharon are out to destroy the Arab states to the extent possible, Kissinger et al. think it is better to reinforce their own control over such states and their eventual dismemberment—hence the need for some kind of compromise and "interim solution." So long as President Reagan doesn't break with such policies, the reconstruction of Lebanon will never happen, the United States—having sent its troops into Lebanon—may be led into the same quagmire as the Israelis. Mr. Reagan's only solution is to go for a comprehensive settlement stabilizing the entire Middle East, including a settlement between Israel and the PLO, whose chairman, Yasser Arafat has now received—partly thanks to Sharon—an increasing recognition. After his meetings with the Pope, he is expected to soon meet with French President Mitterrand

and Chancellor Schmidt in West Germany. To Kissinger's recent call for a "new order to emerge out of chaos," Reagan should respond with a categorical refusal to play the card of chaos, and encourage those Israeli political forces which have risen above the present crisis to constitute a real leadership. Israel's President Navon, bypassing his merely ceremonial role, has been intervening repeatedly into the situation, to call for a commission of inquiry to be forced in Israel as well as in Lebanon, and making unprecedented overtures to the Israeli Arabs. Expected to resign soon from his post as President, Navon would be the best Prime Minister Israel has had for some time. President Reagan should also secure closer relations with Egyptian President Mubarak—and stop those in Washington who want to overthrow him in favor of Defense Minister Abu Ghazala. A comprehensive American initiative should include an all-out effort to foster the economic development of the region through high technology and infrastructural investment. As *EIR* founder Lyndon LaRouche has put it, Reagan should break with the "blood and soil" diplomacy established in the Middle East by more than a decade of Kissinger's step-by-step diplomacy, and look to the example of President Dwight Eisenhower, who, when he confronted an Israeli government in the 1956 crisis, also had a comprehensive economic development package for the region.

A final chance for Lebanese politics

by Thierry Lalevée

The assassination of a president-elect, and the massacre of more than a thousand Palestinian refugees in the Chatila camp, have not succeeded in reducing Lebanon to civil war once again. On the contrary, the general horror provoked by these events has had the effect of strengthening what little potential for national unity Lebanon had. Bashir's brother, Amin Gemayel, was chosen by the parliament in a 77 to 30 vote to succeed the slain Bashir; he was sworn in Sept. 23 at a ceremony attended by foreign dignitaries including Reagan envoy Philip Habib, a ceremony that passed without incident.

This was an incredible show of national unity and restraint under the circumstances. It is far from ensuring Lebanon's future as a sovereign state, however.

Israeli and Syrian designs on Lebanon notwithstanding, the immediate threat comes from the numerous political and sectarian elements that have repeatedly reduced the nation to civil war in the past seven years. Most of these forces, however, have foreign backing of one sort or another, a fact once again proven not only in the assassination of Bashir, but in the ensuing massacre.