

## Middle East Report by Thierry Lalevee

### Saddam Hussein's folly

*The Iraqi President is openly protecting Abu Nidal, and making foolish, dangerous deals with the British.*

There is something rotten in the kingdom of Chaldea, presently known as Iraq.

This was underlined on Sept. 25 when, in a two-hour press conference held in Baghdad by Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, he announced to a panel of British journalists invited to the capital for the occasion, that the international murderer known as Abu Nidal (his real name is Sabri al-Banna) "maintains an office in Baghdad and is allowed to enter the country freely."

Saddam Hussein stressed that he "would not define Abu Nidal as a terrorist," and that the Iraqi government "welcomes any Arab militant," Baghdad not holding itself responsible for "what such people may do in others' countries."

This is an astounding statement in light of Abu Nidal's terrorist record: most recently the massacre of the Rue des Rosiers this August in Paris, followed in September by bombings and machine-gun attacks against a synagogue in Brussels. Abu Nidal was already known for his role in the assassination of moderate Palestinians, Israelis and Jews alike.

Analysts immediately put forward several explanations of Saddam Hussein's statements.

Some said he was being clever: Abu Nidal is said to mainly live in Damascus, and any Iraqi acknowledgement of ties to him would force the Syrians to look askance, if not get rid of him. Others countered that as part of the ongoing relaxation of tension between Damascus and Bag-

dad, in the wake of the Arab Fez summit, they may have begun to "share terrorists." Others claimed that Saddam Hussein was simply acknowledging the fact that Abu Nidal had never left Baghdad.

In fact, Hussein's statement should be seen as an attack on PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat, who has clearly addressed the issues underlying the massacre of Palestinians in Beirut.

In an interview with *Le Monde* a few days after his meeting with the Pope at the Vatican, Arafat denounced Ariel Sharon and Menachem Begin as "not true Jews," stating: "The crime they committed is against Jewish morality and tradition. The real Jews are those who have refused to be associated with the annihilation of the Palestinian people."

"These are Colonel Geva, Nahum Goldman, [Pierre] Mendes-France, and primarily the scores of thousands of Israelis who have demonstrated in the streets of Tel Aviv. To all these peace-minded people and Israeli democrats, I send the esteem and respect of the Palestinian people, who will never forget their solidarity."

In the same interview, as other Palestinian spokesmen did subsequently, Arafat distanced himself from terrorism, asserting that most of the recent operations in Vienna, Paris, Brussels, and elsewhere had been guided by Israel's Mossad.

In conclusion, Arafat stressed: "But who is Abu Nidal? If not a Mossad agent, a vulgar goon. . . ."

A few days later, according to PLO

sources, it was Abu Nidal's men who abushed the PLO's commander-in-chief, Aka Abu Walid, while he was inspecting PLO troops in the Syrian-controlled region of Baalbek, and murdered him. This was perhaps Abu Nidal's answer to Arafat's declaration.

As for Saddam Hussein, it is perhaps not surprising that at his Sept. 25 press conference, he also praised the good relations between Iraq and its former colonial ruler, Great Britain, and the upcoming conclusion of an important arms deal between the two countries.

This underlined the kind of strategic blunders Baghdad has been making over the past two years in its war with Iran. Baghdad is being manipulated around the idea that it will easily win the new round of fighting with Iran. Two years ago, Baghdad was similarly manipulated into invading Iran by Carter's Zbigniew Brzezinski—duped into believing Khomeini could be toppled from power by Iranian exiles as a result. Instead, Iraq was plunged into a two-year meat-grinder of a war.

Baghdad has failed to expose the "Islamic fundamentalism" of the Ayatollah Khomeini as an Oxford University (British intelligence) creation, choosing instead to play an "Arab versus Persian" card. Iraq is now resorting to strategic dealings with the forces who created Khomeini in the first place—the British Foreign Office and British intelligence.

In that sort of game, Iraq will be the loser, as Henry Kissinger indicated in a recent speech in San Antonio, Texas.

Kissinger said: "I was once asked what I thought about [the Iran-Iraq] war, and I said my only regret was that only one side can lose. . . . to prove me wrong, both sides are proceeding to lose."