

Von Amerongen, who in past months has been noted for his "Gorbymania" and his reckless zeal regarding German investments into the Soviet Union, suddenly became a cold calculator when it came to Poland. He warned against too great impatience. German businessmen deal with hard figures, and it would be a great risk to invest in an unstable system, he said after his discussions with Solidarnosc. He therefore called upon the German federal government to expand the Hermes letters of credit, which would be predicated on "restructuring" through IMF recipes.

A spokesman for the foreign department of the German Chamber of Industry and Commerce (DIHT) stated that one thing has to be clear: The healing of the Polish economy will proceed "only *within* the International Monetary Fund, and not *without* it. Other countries have already had to learn this." Once again, "austerity." But he did concede that this could be carried out by the Polish regime only with great difficulty—if at all.

In other words, it is already been pre-discounted that the austerity plan demanded by the IMF, the reduction of state subsidies, drastic budget cuts, harmonizing the interest rates with the market level, devaluation of the zloty, and the like, will necessarily further destabilize the Mazowiecki government. It has to be added that the identical IMF policy has already ruined all the developing sector economies wherever it has been imposed.

The overthrown Polish Communists and the Kremlin must be laughing up their sleeves over the attitude of the DIHT. All they have to do is sit back and wait, and the IMF prescriptions will so rapidly discredit both Solidarnosc ministers for economics and finance as well as the premier, that they will be easy to topple. The Communist unions in Poland have already announced they plan to constitute the "new opposition." The scenario of "social conflict" in Poland will be played like "ethnic conflict" in the Captive Nations of the Baltic and Moldavia, where the KGB supports Russian strikes and unrest with the goal of returning to power.

### A fateful question

Should we drive Poland to catastrophe, by making all cooperation dependent on brutal IMF-style austerity? This question has to be posed to every German industrial spokesman who wants to do something for the highly fragile "new Poland." The alternative is to help the Solidarnosc movement, to join us in building a unified Christian Europe, as Walesa said during the Mass in Essen with Bishop Hengsbach. This is different from Gorbachov's "common European home." It means a Europe to which America belongs, too, as Walesa stated in his Düsseldorf press conference.

There, he spoke out on the unity of Poland's destiny with Germany: Whenever the two nations have cooperated with one another, something good has come out of it; and whenever Poland and Germany have become divided, catastrophe has always followed.

---

## Interview: Abdallah Bouhabib

---

# U.S. retreats from hands initiative to

*Mr. Abdallah Bouhabib, the Lebanese ambassador to the United States, was interviewed in Washington, D.C. by William Jones on Aug. 28.*

**EIR:** Since we last spoke some weeks ago, the Syrians have launched a major offensive on the Christian positions, and there were attacks on a variety of fronts, which clearly indicate that, in spite of the efforts of the Arab League and others to resolve the situation in Lebanon, the Syrians are going all out for the military extinction of the nation. What have the effects of the Syrian offensive been in Lebanon? What do you think are the overriding goals of these latest Syrian moves?  
**Bouhabib:** There is no doubt that the intention of the Syrians toward Lebanon is to enforce Syrian hegemony. We are talking about ending any potential of Lebanon being a free and democratic country. This is the aim of the Syrians. I think in their attack on the enclave, they lost a lot of people, and we think that the attack taught them the lesson that the enclave is not easy to penetrate.

They continue their war of attrition. This war of attrition is worse than a penetration, worse than an invasion. In an invasion, even if they succeeded on one front, we know that they cannot stay in because the people would resist. But the war of attrition is a continuous war, killing people, destroying homes, destroying people's life savings. If you have 100 shells a day, it is a peaceful day. You are talking about big shells, 240 millimeters, the same size shells as are used in airplane bombardment. The intention of this is genocide, to finish off the last enclave of resistance against Syrian occupation in Lebanon. The occupation and fighting have exhausted the country, it has been ruthlessly exploited, the spirit of resistance has been weakened. And now we have this enclave which is still resisting. And they are now attempting to finish off the resistance there also.

**EIR:** There have been discussions that the Syrian military not only conducted an extraordinarily brutal military offensive, but that there were also atrocities against civilians of a

---

# Lebanon, the Soviets



brutality which goes far beyond the purely military needs.

**Bouhabib:** A country which kills 20,000 of its own people in 1982 in one city, you don't expect them to be tolerant of you. That's what they did in Hama in 1982. The suffering of our people continues and they're trying their best to finish us off, but they shall fail.

**EIR:** To what do you attribute the somewhat weak Western response to the Syrian atrocities in Lebanon? In 1958, as General Aoun has made reference to, President Eisenhower acted directly and decisively by sending the Marines there—not that that would necessarily be the solution for today's situation. At present, aside from the efforts of France and the Vatican, most Western countries have been fairly indifferent to the butchery in Lebanon.

**Bouhabib:** You should know the reason better than I. You come from the West, I come from Lebanon. But I think that there is some kind of pacification in the Western world, that there isn't any spirit to go and fight for what you believe in, for democracy and freedom, which used to be the case in the past. Most of the Western countries have hostages in Beirut taken by the Iranians and the Syrians, and they're always afraid that one of the hostages will be killed by these gangs in Beirut. They look at the symptoms of the situation and ask themselves, "How can we save the hostages?" rather than "How can we stop them from taking hostages?" There is no doubt in my mind that, in addition to the decaying spirit of freedom and democracy in the West today, most Western countries are really themselves hostages to the 25 or so hostages held by the Syrians and Iranians, whose lives we value very much. But they are not the cause, not the reason for what is happening. They are not responsible for anything that's happened. They are symptoms of the illness which has been the result of the Lebanese freedom fighters not getting enough support from those who champion freedom and democracy around the world.

**EIR:** Although the Assad regime, characterized by its cru-

elty and brutality, has not changed much over the years, there has been a shift, here in the United States and perhaps elsewhere. Syria was earlier categorized by the U.S. State Department as a terrorist nation. In practice, it seems that Assad has attained a legitimacy he didn't have several years ago. And thus the recognition of the legitimacy of the Assad regime has led to a decisive shift in overall U.S. policy in the Middle East. Do you feel that Syria, earlier regarded as a terrorist nation, is now accepted as a legitimate government?

**Bouhabib:** To the best of my understanding, Syria is still recognized as a terrorist state; Syria is still a state that is trafficking in narcotics, according to the State Department's annual review of countries that sponsor terrorism and drug running. There is no doubt that despite that, nobody is taking any measures in accordance with that official position. If there is a report that says that a certain country is a terrorist country, then you should do something about it. In this case, nothing is being done. That is certain. And not only that. But most countries that believe that Syria is a terrorist country do have ambassadors in Damascus, and they deal with Syria as a state that is not a terrorist state, as a state which has stopped harboring terrorism, as a state which is not protecting terrorism in our homeland Lebanon.

**EIR:** The Israeli reaction has been to some extent cautious, but very watchful. There were reports today that the Israelis have made an attack on a Hezbollah camp in Lebanon. Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir has stated, at least on one occasion, that they do consider that there is a trip-wire in Lebanon, that is, that there are certain things that Syria could do in Lebanon which would put them in direct military conflict with Israel, though not indicating exactly where that trip-wire lay. What do you think of the Israeli reaction? Do you feel that if there is no resolution to the situation in Lebanon, there could develop a much greater conflict in the Middle East?

**Bouhabib:** Let me say this. I am not in charge of the Israeli security. That is their responsibility and they know their own interests best. But I say this, that Israel's behavior in this last six months and Israeli policy has not been helpful to peace. I don't mean the bombing. Israel has been systematically encouraging the situation in Lebanon, continuing to think that it is in their interest that Arabs are fighting Arabs. But I think this is a mistake, and any encouragement of this policy I don't think would be in the interest of peace in the region, if Israel wants peace in the region.

**EIR:** It is quite distinctive in the Middle East that Lebanon consists of both Christian and Muslim populations, with many Lebanese Muslims supporting the Christian Defense Forces as the unifying force in the nation. If Syria were successful in eliminating the Lebanese nation, it would mean that the only effective Christian or ecumenical enclave in the area would be eliminated. Would this not tend to aggravate the more fundamentalist elements in the Assad regime and would

this not also be a threat against Israel, the other major non-Muslim entity in the area?

**Bouhabib:** I agree with you. I would, however, like to point out that the fighting in Lebanon has regional dimensions. There are countries in the region which have been supportive of Lebanon, not only Iraq, but also most Arab countries are supportive of Lebanon, and they want the Syrians out, they want an immediate cease-fire, the lifting of the blockade, and the Syrians out of Lebanon. And they want Lebanon to live in coexistence. I agree with your observation that any victory for the extremists in Syria is not good for peace in the region. And if Israel seeks peace in the region—and we hope that we can reach peace and all peoples there can live happily, which I think we deserve—the direction Israel has been moving has not been helpful.

**EIR:** Do you see any positive effects of the increased Soviet involvement in the Middle East? It is argued that if pressure were put on the Soviets, they could use their influence on Assad to get him to pull back.

**Bouhabib:** Why put pressure on the Soviets? The Soviets are taking the initiative. It is the absence of America and the lack of American will to move around the world which is making itself felt. The Soviets are taking the initiative. And since we want peace, and since we want the Syrians out of Lebanon, and the Soviets understand this message, we welcome the Soviet initiative. We would have liked to have seen the United States to have taken this initiative, but unfortunately this is not the case. The United States is not moving, is not doing anything, and in its absence, to fill this vacuum, the Soviets are moving and we welcome it.

**EIR:** The Pope, who was the first major political figure to publicly condemn the Syrian actions as genocide, has also said that he wanted to go to Lebanon to focus greater attention on the situation, which he considers extremely grave. What effect do you think such a visit would have?

**Bouhabib:** We welcome the Pope's visit. We think a visit by an international leader, a noble leader like the Pope, would enhance the prospects of peace in Lebanon. There are those apologists who think that the Pope's visit would be comparable to the visits of the Crusaders, during the Muslim-Christian wars. But this is not the case. We have Christians in Lebanon. We have Muslims in Lebanon. I think most of the population wants the Syrians out. Secondly, the Arab world is supporting Lebanon and is defending Lebanese sovereignty, and they want the Syrians out. So there is no danger of such a kind of a thing and the only two countries in the Middle East which are against the visit of the Pope are Syria and Iran—Iran, which is not an Arab country as you know. For their own political reasons and because they are extremists, they don't like forces of coordination in Lebanon. The Pope, the Holy See, stands for a united Lebanon, a Lebanon of coexistence between Muslims and Christians. Therefore, there

is no reason that the Arab world would rise against the Pope's visit. Moreover, the Holy See is the only Western political entity that does not recognize the State of Israel, and the Arab world, except for Syria, knows this and appreciates it.

**EIR:** So you believe that the Arab world would also see the Pope's visit as a very important step?

**Bouhabib:** I believe so. Of course, the Arabs would like to solve the problems themselves, but they have said that it is very difficult and they accept international support for solving this problem. I think the Pope's visit would be seen in the light I mentioned. Because the Arabs have great respect for the Pope. I know that the Pope, of course, has no divisions or battalions. The visit is a moral visit, and it is a visit which is not calling for the separation of Lebanon or the partition of Lebanon. It is a visit to promote the unity of the country.

**EIR:** With regard to the situation which has been foremost in the minds of most Americans recently, the question of the hostages, it seems that to the extent that Lebanon, or portions of Lebanon, are effectively under Syrian control, portions of Lebanon are like an outlaw territory, where terrorism runs rampant, but where no entity can officially be held responsible. If one confronts the Syrians or the Iranians, they say that they have no responsibility for what the Hezbollah or other terrorist groups do, since it is not under their national jurisdiction.

**Bouhabib:** I think it is the worst of worlds where one does not want to take measures against terrorism, that accepts that there is no one responsible in Lebanon. There is a country which is responsible for the area from which terrorism is emanating. It is Syria. Syria has control of the north of the country, of the Bekaa Valley, and of West Beirut, where terrorism and narcotics are emanating. It is the West which is refusing to hold Syria responsible. If the Syrians claim that they are not responsible, let them get out. If they want to stay there, it means they are responsible for terrorism. It is simply the cowardice of not facing the real issue of the Western world, which again takes us back to the first question.

**EIR:** I wonder if you could comment on the reports that indicate that the Lebanese Defense Forces, with their intimate knowledge of what was going on also on the Muslim side, have earlier been willing to let the United States know where the hostages were being held, but for diplomatic reasons, because of the new relationship being nurtured with Syria, the U.S. did not want to make contact with the Lebanese Defense Forces on the issue.

**Bouhabib:** If the United States wants to know where the hostages are, there will be no problem of knowing, whether it be through its own intelligence services or through the intelligence of the Lebanese Defense Forces. They can easily find these things out. My feeling is that they don't want to know. If you know, you must act, and they don't want to act.