

creating a parallel institution to the ministry which is located in West Beirut.

While Aoun is taking concrete steps to cement Lebanon's partition, Geagea is working to consolidate the hegemony of the Lebanese Forces over the Phalangist Party and the Lebanese Front, which groups all the right-wing Christian organizations, because in the foregoing period these were more closely aligned with Amin Gemayel. Geagea's militiamen have been taking over the military posts held by soldiers loyal to Gemayel in the North Metn. Geagea was the inspiration behind the Phalangist Politbureau's recent decision to replace the general director of the *Voice of Lebanon* radio station, and the editor-in-chief of the party newspaper *Al Amel*, both of whom had been aligned with Gemayel.

All these moves demonstrate that the Aoun-Geagea alliance aims to confront the Lebanese people with a fait accompli, forcing them to accept the continuation of the sectarian system which guarantees class privileges. According to this plan, Lebanon would be split into two entities, the first consisting of the areas controlled by Aoun's part of the army and Geagea's Lebanese Forces in the North and the areas under Israeli occupation and Lahd's South Lebanon Army in the South. The second entity would be the rest of Lebanon, living under the constant threat and provocation of the first entity. Such an arrangement would keep Lebanon as a whole subordinated to the imperialist West, and would give 'Israel' free reign to interfere in Lebanon.

In line with these aims, Aoun has rejected all suggestions for merging the two governments, refusing to give up his right to the presidency on the basis that he was 'constitutionally' appointed by Gemayel. Aoun has asserted that he will only consider such a solution after prior recognition of his military government. The Lebanese Forces have also rejected merging the two governments; they reject any new government unless it gives them direct representation and control.

While this isolationist camp and their fascist plan of partition is the first threat to Lebanon, 'Israel' represents the second threat, both enjoying support from US imperialism.

US ROLE

While the US role does not appear to be the most prominent in determining current developments in Lebanon, imperialist policy - today and in the past - has contributed decisively to the current impasse. In line with Phalangist thinking that «Lebanon's strength lies in its weakness» as was articulated by the party founder, Pierre Gemayel, it is in the interests of US imperialism to keep Lebanon divided and weak. Accordingly, the US funded the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, and was pivotal in the imposition of Phalangist Bashir Gemayel as president. The US sponsored the negotiations which finally led to the May 17th agreement. However, with the abrogation of this treaty and the general Israeli-rightist failure to passify Lebanon in line with imperialist interests, the US today prefers to keep Lebanon a prisoner of its own turmoil. Thus, the Reagan Administration had a role in subverting the Lebanese presidential elections, leading to the constitutional vacuum that prevails today.

In late August, the Lebanese newspaper, *Al Safir*, and other Arab newspapers revealed that Washington had sent a secret memorandum to a top Lebanese official. This memo contained the US administration's formula for a different kind of Lebanon, raising the possibility of two or more governments, and then a form of confederation between them. This bears evidence to the duplicity of the US role in the negotiations that preceded the aborted presidential elections. On the one hand, the US reached an agreement with Syria on a presidential candidate; then it worked to undermine this same agreement.

The US aims are very clear - to prevent the establishment of any nationalist government in Lebanon, that would enact meaningful reforms in the sectarian political system. Since such reform is imperative for maintaining the unity, sovereignty and Arab identity of Lebanon, the implications of US policy are in fact a divided Lebanon. Thus, US policy aims to give 'Israel' a free hand in Lebanon to serve the Zionist plan of uprooting all Palestinian and Lebanese nationalist activity, and thus isolating the uprising in the

occupied territories from support from the surrounding countries.

It would, however, be inconvenient for the US to openly state such policy aims. For this reason, the Reagan Administration has not formally recognized the Aoun government. Rather, the US is following events from a distance, alert to any chance to strengthen its influence in Lebanon as part of tightening its hegemony in the region. Thus, the US administration appears to keep all doors open. One day, US spokesmen reiterate that the Syrian-US agreement on a consensus candidate for the Lebanese presidency still applies. Another day, there are statements to the effect that the Lebanese themselves should agree among themselves, which is really just leaving the door open for the Aoun-Geagea alliance to block a solution. On yet other occasions, US statements say it is «unfortunate» that the Lebanese parliament was unable to elect a new president or speaker, and that Lebanon's partition has become a bitter fact.

'ISRAEL' BENEFITS FROM PARTITION

'Israel' is taking advantage of the current disarray to enlarge its so-called security zone, further subjugate the South and increase its attacks on Lebanese and Palestinian patriots. By supporting the partitionist forces in East Beirut, 'Israel' enlarges the scope of its influence.

In coordination with the South Lebanon Army, 'Israel' has beefed up its presence in the occupied 'security zone.' In addition to the approximately one thousand troops it has permanently stationed in this zone, 'Israel' brought in 1,800 more soldiers and 160 armoured vehicles to the areas adjacent to Metullah, plus 700 soldiers and 45 armored vehicles close to the West Bekaa Valley; it established two new barracks at Ayshia and Koukaba. There are many indications that these steps are more than preparations for 'retaliation' in the face of increased Lebanese and Palestinian nationalist resistance. Rather, 'Israel' appears to be preparing for a major military operation to enlarge its self-declared security zone and uproot Lebanese and Palestinian nationalists.