

that Syria should play a basic role in an Arab solution on the basis of maintaining Lebanon's territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence. Internationalization would only complicate the Lebanese crisis further.

Only France has come out in direct support of Aoun. French officials have publicly demanded the withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon, and urged the US and Western Europe to join France in helping Lebanon's «beleaguered Christian community,» disregarding the fact that this community is beleaguered as a result of the suicidal projects of Aoun and his ilk who claim to represent the Christians. French President Francois Mitterand said, «The Christians' lives are in danger... whoever the threatened minority might be, we don't accept that it is the victim of this situation.» French Foreign Minister Dumas stated, «I called on UN Secretary General Javier Perez De Cuellar concerning the need for convening the Security Council if the six-man Arab committee has failed in its efforts.» In accordance with this view, the French government sent ships to Lebanon with the intention of aiding only those in East Beirut where Aoun rules. This provided the excuse for French officials to issue threats, as when the French envoy to Lebanon, Jean-Francois Deniau, warned that opening fire of French ships «would be an act of war against France.»

France's dispatch of two ships loaded with fuel, food and medical supplies to East Beirut caused the nationalist and progressive forces to accuse France of

After 15 years the civil war continues.



bias towards Aoun's project, and to warn against these ships docking. Acting Prime Minister Hoss expressed shock at France's biased position, and demanded that this position be clarified and balanced before France delivered aid to Lebanon. As a result of mounting criticism, and the failure of other powers to support internationalization moves, Mitterand was forced to modify the French stand, stating on April 12th, that France wants to be the friend of all the Lebanese people, and that the humanitarian aid is meant as a sign of friendship and solidarity with the Lebanese people.

Whatever the intentions of the French government, its position has objectively served to encourage Aoun to carry on his criminal war.

CEASE—FIRE?

The situation in Lebanon appeared at a deadlock in the latter part of April, and there was almost a week of calm until April 25th, when Aoun's forces resumed their shelling of the nationalist areas on the eve of the Arab League foreign ministers' meeting in Tunis. The meeting adopted resolutions calling for an immediate, lasting cease-fire and lifting the blockade of the ports, airport and land crossings. For an interim period not to exceed three months. The six-man Arab committee will work to find a lasting solution for the crisis in cooperation with all Lebanese parties. The resolutions also called for setting up an observer force drawn from Arab armies to monitor the cease-fire, the lifting of blockades and the opening of crossing points between East and West Beirut.

Though both sides have nominally accepted the ceasefire, its success remains uncertain. Surely Aoun's acceptance of the cease-fire is tactical, decided in the light of his failure so far to achieve concrete gains, despite having unleashed a war of unbearable hardships on the Lebanese people. In early May, the ceasefire did go into effect, but only to be disrupted by four days of murderous shelling, until being reestablished on May 10th. However, the real test will come when the discussions about a more lasting solution get underway. The war can be renewed at any time since the positions of the two contending sides remain basically the same - Aoun having not relinquished his sectarian project, and the rest of Lebanon still refusing to submit to sectarian domination.

#### THE ISRAELI ANGLE

Aoun's war harmonizes with the plans of the Zionist state to keep Lebanon weak and divided through continuing sectarian wars. Israel is the prime benefactor of Aoun's sectarian project which serves to prolong de facto partition. The war in Lebanon serves to divert attention from the Palestinian uprising in the occupied territories, and from the continued Zionist occupation in South Lebanon and daily aggression on the people there. The ongoing struggle of the Lebanese National Resistance against the Israeli occupiers and their allies in the South Lebanon Army, is thus part of the efforts to oppose Aoun's sectarian project. Accordingly, efforts to resolve the Lebanese crisis must be directed towards ending the Israeli occupation, while enacting democratic reform in the Lebanese political system. At the same time, it is difficult to imagine a really just, lasting solution for the Lebanese crisis isolated from a comprehensive solution to the Middle East conflict. Thus, creating a democratic Lebanon is one aspect of the ongoing struggle against the plans of imperialism, Zionism and reactionary forces in the area, and this struggle must be based on the unity of the nationalist and progressive forces. ●

Sources for this article include the Lebanese daily *Al Safir*, the Palestinian weekly *Al Hadaf*, the Arabic magazine *Al Mostaqbal* and AP news bulletins.