

Besides beefing up US-Zionist cooperation, the late November visits of Shamir, Arens and then Amin Gemayel to Washington, revealed the enemy forces' current approach to national reconciliation in Lebanon. A month earlier, the Geneva talks had resulted in resolutions which reflected the gains of the nationalist forces in the September mountain war. The Lebanese fascists and regime had conceded that Lebanon's identity is Arab; the May 17th agreement with 'Israel' is frozen; there is need for reform in the Lebanese state and society.

Afterwards, the enemy alliance set out to reverse the results of this first round of national reconciliation talks. One loophole to be exploited was Gemayel's mandate to consult with those providing troops to the Multinational Forces (MNF), especially the US. The stated aim was finding ways (other than the May 17th agreement) to ensure Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon. However, once in Washington, Gemayel was keen to reaffirm support to this agreement, saying that he and Reagan had explored "the best ways and means not merely to implement the agreement, but going beyond the letter of the law, to set up the most appropriate mechanisms and conditions for the achievement of our common interests and policy objectives". This signified official Lebanese consent to the new imperialist-Zionist plans and attacks against the Lebanese nationalists, Syria and the Palestinian revolution.

In fact, by the time Gemayel arrived in Washington, the die had already been cast by the new US-Israeli agreements. The US position on Lebanon mirrors its stand on Namibia: Withdrawal is left up to the Tel Aviv and Pretoria occupiers, respectively, and is moreover linked to the removal of troops supporting the popular, nationalist forces (Syrian and Cuban, respectively). The US-Israeli discussions had focused on forcing Syria to withdraw, and on ideas aired by Arens about the possibility of future, partial Israeli withdrawals, if these could be coordinated with the Lebanese regime, so as to meet Zionist 'security' demands. (These ideas pertain only to the coastal region and would leave Israeli troops along the front lines with the nationalist forces in the Beqaa Valley.) Accordingly, Reagan pressed Gemayel to increase coordination with 'Israel', so that the Lebanese Army could move into any area to be so evacuated.

Such an approach is obviously unworkable. The September war, and the continuing clashes between the Lebanese Army and the nationalist forces, show that the vast majority of

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Lebanese refuse this army in the absence of political reforms. Moreover, the Israelis themselves continue to sabotage what remains of Lebanon's legal authority, as was again evidenced in early November, when the remaining Lebanese police and municipal officials were evicted from occupied Saida's city hall.

The real reason for Reagan to wave these hopes of Israeli withdrawal in front of Gemayel's nose is to activate the Lebanese regime's role in pressing for Syrian withdrawal, and to push it into new, direct talks with the Israeli occupiers. This in effect nullifies the other US advice to Gemayel: to broaden the political base of his regime. Reagan's formula for national reconciliation is for the regime to make some gestures at power-sharing intended to coopt the nationalist leadership. This should ease the task of passifying the masses, isolating Syria and breaking the broad Lebanese nationalist-Palestinian alliance. It is also within this framework that the regime resumed high level contacts with Syria, while imperialism and Zionism made new military strikes with the aim of intimidating Syria into withdrawing its troops.

US imperialism's prescriptions, coupled with its continuing military intervention, can only deepen the Lebanese regime's isolation. In reality, the US regards Lebanese national reconciliation as a political sideshow used to divert from its real priorities: converting Lebanon into a NATO base and a gateway for spreading Camp David. Thus, it is no surprise that the second round of national reconciliation talks have yet to be held. This meeting should focus on reform in the Lebanese state and society. This is an issue which

neither imperialism nor the Lebanese fascists wish to tackle in any meaningful way, for fulfilling the popular and nationalist demands would rule out the fascist hegemony considered pivotal for implementing the enemy plans. Though President Gemayel has started consultations on forming a national unity government, he has thus far only spoken with members of the outdated and always unrepresentative, confessional parliament. He is still delaying acceptance of Prime Minister Wazzan's resignation, which was a main demand of the National Salvation Front and thus a prelude to any national unity government.

## Escalating intervention

Typically, Reagan's only concrete move was promising Gemayel more US aid to the Lebanese Army and the formation of a US-Lebanese joint military committee. All in all, it is not surprising that the most decisive events in Lebanon continue to be those in the battlefield. While clashes continue, pitting the Lebanese Army and fascists against the nationalists in the Beirut and mountain areas, imperialist intervention escalated and became more systematic. At a mid-November meeting of MNF military leaders on a US warship off Beirut's coast, US commanders aired plans for "massive and exemplary anti-guerilla operations" (Livia Rokach, *Al Fajr*, Nov. 25). This signalled heavier Marine aggression on the southern outskirts of Beirut. Marine statements about limiting "retaliation" to spare civilian casualties became a cruel joke in view of their use of "beehives", shells that emit thousands of flying steel darts (as documented by NBC on Dec. 2nd). These anti-personnel weapons were used in Vietnam. Now their destruction is turned on the poor of southern Beirut. Meanwhile, barrages from US warships

US A-6 Intruder downed by Syrian forces, Dec. 4th.

