

# Who Benefitted from the TWA Highjacking?



The mid-June highjacking of an American civil aircraft coincided with serious developments in Lebanon and internationally. In Lebanon, the highjacking occurred at a critical time, diverting the attention of the local and international media from the massacres being perpetrated by the Amal movement against Palestinians in the Beirut

camps. In the international arena, the Reagan Administration, left out in the cold since the May 17th accord was abrogated, grabbed the highjacking as a badly needed pretext for resuming interference in Lebanese affairs. Reagan also used the incident to intensify his campaign against communism and national liberation movements around the world.

The story began when a group of armed youth, believed to be followers of Hezbollah (Party of God), highjacked the TWA plane after it took off from Athens airport. Following a trip between several airports, the TWA landed up in Beirut airport which was under the control of the Amal movement. Initially the highjackers put forward a long list of demands including the release of the 750 Lebanese citizens abducted to 'Israel' by the occupation troops; full and unconditional withdrawal of all Israeli invasion forces from all Lebanese territory; the withdrawal of Lahd's puppet forces from Lebanese territory. The immediate objectives were far more than the release of the Lebanese detained in Atlit prison in 'Israel'. The

demands amounted to a political manifesto addressed to international public opinion, focusing on the atrocities committed in Lebanon by 'Israel' and made possible by the strategic alliance between the USA and 'Israel'. The message was that the US was held responsible for all the crimes and terrorist acts committed in the area.

## The operation takes a sharp turn

At the time, the Amal movement was bogged down in its war on the Palestinians. In order to divert attention from the besieged camps, Amal adopted the demands of the highjackers as soon as the TWA touched down on the Beirut runways. Thus, it seemed to some that Amal was undertaking a paramount decision to confront 'Israel' and the USA. Yet Amal's real motive soon became clear: After three days of psyching up public opinion and refocusing attention, Amal started to curtail the demands to be met for the release of the American hostages on board the plane. All the demands were dropped but one: the release of the Lebanese jailed in

Atlit prison in Israel where the Zionists have held Palestinian and Lebanese detainees illegally transferred from Lebanon.

