

Hear o Israel! Beware o superpower!

(WASHINGTON) — This time Israel struck at the heart of the Arab world — the capital where both the League of Arab States and the Palestine Liberation Organisation are headquartered. Three years ago it was Israel's massive and brutal assault on Beirut which produced shockwaves worldwide. A year before that there was the first strike against an Arab capital not bordering on Israel — Baghdad's French-built nuclear generating plant.

It may pain many to hear, but the State of Israel has become one of the most prominent modern-day international outlaws. Like its de facto ally, South Africa, Israel lashes out, lacking any sense of proportion or compassion, at those forces justifiably believing they are fighting for their own rights and liberation. Unlike South Africa, she does so with murderous airstrikes far beyond her borders and with total refusal to acknowledge either the legitimacy or humanity of her enemy.

Indeed, the current Israeli government is about to pass a law even outlawing discussions between Israelis and anyone associated with the P.L.O.; while even the Whites of South Africa (and Secretary of State Shultz as well of late!) have become aware they must deal with their real enemy, the African National Congress (ANC).

TUNIS ATTACK

Moreover, many believe, with much justification, that Israel's Tunis attack was purposefully meant to force the Arab side (i.e. Jordan and Arafat's part of the PLO) to abort their steps toward direct negotiations with Israel as promoted by the U.S. "There is no case to be made for seeking to engage Hussein and the other more moderate Arabs in a peaceful settlement while giving Israel a green light to ride roughshod across international frontiers anywhere in the Arab world" says the Washington Post's columnist Phil Geyelin. The emotional as well as political

realities of the Arab Middle East have a logic of their own which Israel understands far better than the U.S.

Another thoughtful columnist for the post, Richard Cohen, well understood that the Israeli attack on Tunis was in reality "a clear signal to Jordan". The realpolitik message: either negotiate directly

Israelis the week before in Cyprus. But it still remains unclear if those yachtsmen may have been Israeli agents monitoring sea traffic — for Israel frequently intercepts ships on the high seas between Cyprus and Lebanon. Moreover, the PLO vehemently denied its involvement, Cypriot authorities say they have no proof the PLO was involved

which has increasingly supplied the airplanes, the finances, and the political cover for Israel to act in this way. It is the American veto threat of possible international sanctions against Israel or even expulsion from the U.N., the American \$4 billion plus in yearly give-away aid, the American willingness to indulge the Jewish State one time after the other, that makes all this possible.

Though top-ranking Pentagon officials, including Secretary of Defense Weinberger, were known to have wanted to charge Israel with illegal use of American weapons, the politicians in the Reagan Administration decided to stand squarely with Jerusalem once more. One has to admire their honesty even while condemning their policies.

"Legitimate self-defense" we were told, at first; then when that didn't sell well, the Administration left us dangling with a variety of statements implying approval but disavowing violence. Reagan had to be reminded that it was his own Administration which urged Tunisia to take in the PLO in the first place.

With one American hostage already murdered, thousands demonstrating in the streets of Tunis and Cairo, and American officials in Tunisia already burning drive documents, abstinence in the Security Council then became a rather cynical attempt to prevent a more violent backlash against American complicity with Israel.

PRECEDENT

If this Tunis precedent is allowed to stand, what next — Morocco, Jordan, may be U.N. headquarters? Does the United States truly want to encourage the Arab-Israeli conflict to spread worldwide in this way? As one ranking Carter Administration official who served as Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs confided to me, "To be a cheerleader for Israel on a matter like this is outrageous and very dangerous." Said another, of Cabinet rank during the Carter years, "Nincompoops become Presi-

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By MARK A. BRUZONSKY

with Israel alone for some kind of joint Israeli/Jordanian condominium arrangement on the West Bank, abandoning the PLO of course, or risk Israeli wrath on Jordan, regardless of world opinion. How ironic, indeed, how shameful, that King Hussein, in Washington at the time of the Tunis attack, continued on that very day to speak loudly of direct negotiations and the end to belligerency with Israel. Prostrating himself in this way to Jewish lobby-inspired Congressional restrictions laid down as a condition of further American arms, in doing so he compromised his throne's dignity while assuring both the Israelis and the Americans that for the next few years at least, as new American arms dribble his way, Hussein can be counted on, in the language of the region, to be America's lackey.

Meanwhile, Israel's excuses for her lawless actions have grown tiresome beyond their often fallacious nature. In 1981 Iraq was said to be readying nuclear weapons — but the actual time by which Iraq might have theoretically produced nuclear weapons was far off; and besides Israel herself is known to have the weapon in some quantity.

In 1982 the by then misnamed Israeli Defense Forces were said to be making a limited, 40-kilometer "incursion" along the border area in southern Lebanon in retaliation for an alleged PLO assassination attempt against the Israeli Ambassador in London — except it was anti-PLO Arabs who carried out the attack and the British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher herself, who publicly confirmed that fact.

Now Israel's assault on the PLO near Tunis is said to be in retaliation for the killing of three

and, as too often in recent years, Israel has presented no solid evidence.

THREE MOTIVATIONS

Whatever Israel's explanation, her credibility has steadily diminished so that her stated rationales are now usually suspect. Among Middle East experts it seems far more likely that there were three basic, however complex, Israeli motivations for attacking the PLO in Tunis.

1) To block the Jordanian-Palestinian peace initiative begun on February 11th and which gave too many indications it was leading to an American meeting with a joint delegation of Jordanians and Palestinians followed by a loud call for direct negotiations with Israel.

2) To assassinate Yasser Arafat, thus preventing him from joining King Hussein in taking further steps toward such direct negotiations with Israel; steps which would force Israel to squirm for but another excuse to avoid negotiations with the Palestinians. Or, if the assassination failed, at least to make it impossible for Arafat — and indirectly the U.S. — to continue on this diplomatic course.

3) To buttress the credibility of the Shimon Peres/Yitzhak Rabin government with the increasingly militant, pre-fascist trend in Israeli politics — the Meir Kahane Phenomena, if you will, whose party, according to current public opinion polls, could become the arbiter of the next Israeli government.

Whatever the explanation, the complicity of the United States has become naked. It is the U.S.

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Hear O Israel! Beware O superpower!

dent very easily, don't they!"

A more thoughtful American policy would have reassured our moderate Arab friends that the United States is truly an "even-handed" interlocutor in the peace process willing to stand up to Israel when there is the need. A more thoughtful American policy

would have let the Israelis know that though we are a solid friend both their lawlessness and their duplicity have limits, whatever their stated provocations -- and ever if the all-powerful Jewish/Israeli lobby still dominates Capitol Hill and is capable of intimidating most politicians as well as many journalists.

But thoughtfulness in dealing with the Middle East is not among the visible traits of the Reagan Administration.

What could have been and might still be done?

1) Arms shipments could still be suspended, pending a full Congressional investigation, because Israel has again grossly violated American law by using these weapons in a clearly offensive manner.

2) We could have joined the overwhelming U.N. majority in condemning Israeli actions of this kind; rather than abstaining in the face of otherwise unanimous opinion in the Security Council.

3) We can (and should) immediately meet with the Jordanian/Palestinian delegation and discuss with them their side of this ever more dangerous conflict. They have, however, naively and unwisely, taken incalculable risks so far to meet American conditions. Continuing American obstinacy can only make them reconsider or face increasing scorn from their own constituencies.

4) We could publicly warn Israel that from now on actions of this type may call into question important aspects of the special relationship that has grown between our two countries. Doing so might at least prevent an Israeli attack against the PLO in Jordan, the likelihood of which grows daily the closer we get to the next Israeli election campaign.

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5) We could let the PLO know that we are honestly opposed to terrorism whether the perpetrator be Palestinian or Israeli. Furthermore, we could return to the thoughtful Carter Administration policy of not opposing self-determination for the Palestinian people and welcoming exchanges of views with Palestinians so long as it is understood that Israel's independent statehood is not open to debate.

What the U.S. should not have done was precisely what we did do. Not only did we stand by and acquiesce one more time, but President Reagan actually encouraged the Israelis in their short-sighted belief that only they are allowed to lash out beyond their borders with immunity. We did something similar to this when Israel invaded Lebanon some 3 years ago; and our policies there eventually cost us many dead, much humiliation, and a near total withdrawal of Americans.

What we have done in endorsing Israeli conduct only further implicates our great country as Israel's partner, come what may, rather than as honest peace broker aware of our great power status and responsibilities. Having become Israel's formal partner in a strategic cooperation arrangement during the Reagan years, we are now intimately and formally linked as never before with the Israeli military. Under these circumstances, it should come as no great surprise when so-called "radical" elements in the Arab world take us at our word and treat us as Israel's ally and partner, as well as protector.

When the U.S. New Jersey unleashed its 16-inch guns in 1983 into the hills overlooking Beirut it was foreseeable that both the American Marines and American institutions would become targets; no matter how much trouble those in our government (as well as many in the American press) have in under-

standing cause and effect in the Middle East.

American connivance with Israel in such actions as the Tunis attack cannot but stimulate further assault on American interests and persons. Who can believe any longer that it is not the U.S. which makes it possible for Israel to act in this way. And who can believe that with our worldwide radar and listening posts, as well as the presence in this case of the Sixth Fleet right off Tunisia's coast, that the U.S. was unaware of (or possibly even involved in) such a large air operation by Israel -- one involving numerous aircraft including gigantic tankers for air refueling -- over the Mediterranean sea.

Israel has lashed out in a fit of confused desperation at a time of still growing militarism. The victims are many -- the P.L.O., the state of Tunisia, the tenants of international law, the already crumbling "peace process", and, may be most of all, American credibility.

Unless the United States now undertakes a basic reexamination of both its alliance with Israel and its chicanery in proclaiming a peace process that in reality is only a mirage there are sure to be further attacks on American symbols in the Arab Middle East. In truth, America has been tempting fate ever since Secretary of State Alexander Haig and General Ariel Sharon plotted together to remake the Middle East map through Israel's blitzkrieg to Beirut. One day, may be soon, the slow to arouse Arab world will cast off the hesitations, weaknesses and shackles of its current leadership and repay its enemies with their due.

That is the day American leaders should be working right now to prevent. Since the Iranian revolution, the Marine defeat in Lebanon, and the numerous American hostage takings, the U.S. has received warnings galore. But one has to wonder if the American

polity has actually taken notice of the messages inherent in these linked, though complex, events.

Time is fast running out. Further Israeli actions of the kind the world has experienced since 1982 could become the catalyst for far greater assaults on American interests and institutions; and could render today's comatose peace possibilities to be buried forever.

Whether friend or foe of Israel the time has come to let the Jewish state know that it seems to have lost all perspective and must rethink its ways. The Arab world will not remain impotent forever. The peace with Egypt is becoming paper thin. The emotions of many are becoming impassioned in an escalating vortex of rage.

If America were a true great power and a true friend of Israel it would send precisely these messages of warning, rather than continuing to align itself with Israeli militarism and lawlessness. But whatever Israel's fate; the U.S. should now consider how events of the past years have linked the two countries together not only for purposes of trade and strategic alliance, but possibly also for purposes of future retribution.

As things look right now, it is a despairingly bleak future in the Middle East we are all likely to witness.

Hear O Israel! And beware O Superpower!

Saudi crude output rises

LONDON, Oct. 19: Saudi Arabia's crude oil output rose to around 3.75 million barrels a day in the second week of October after falling to two million barrels a day a month ago, according to reports, reaching oil analysts here yesterday.

The reported recovery in production followed a decision by Saudi Arabia to abandon its official sales price in favour of a reduced charge calculated on the basis of prices of refined products. --AFP