

Listening to Christopher

2 AS THE LATEST EFFORTS IN WHAT HAS COME TO be termed "the Mid-east Peace Process" sadly unfold, the divergence between American actions and American rhetoric becomes ever more startling.

These days it is the new American Secretary of State Warren Christopher, PICTURED RIGHT, who is charged with the unenviable task of attempting to keep American fingers in the leaky dike of Mid-east "stability", even as more cracks seem to be emerging all the while.

As was outlined in the first part of this four-part review, among Christopher's most immediate tasks is that of simply keeping the patient "alive" in hopes that somehow modern diplomacy will come up with some kind of real political cure in the future.

In this sense, American Mid-east diplomacy these days is somewhat analogous to contemporary treatment of AIDS. No real cure is available; but if one can just keep the body alive long enough who knows what's coming in the future.

Thus Christopher's efforts can be thought of as a kind of diplomatic AZT — AZT, of course, being the rather expensive non-cure drug that has been used in recent years to prolong the life of patients with AIDS.

What Christopher's efforts should not be thought of as being is any type of real cure for the Arab-Israeli conflict. None of today's practising politicians are even willing to attempt that gargantuan task and there's too much risk of being slapped with a political malpractice suit by those who keep American policy always tilted towards the Israelis.

To look back just a bit: what began just a short time ago in Madrid — what emerged from the destruction of the Coalition War — has always been something of a desperate gamble at best.

In short review, in the aftermath of Iraq's destruction, the US badly needed something diplomatic and forward-looking — partly to deflect attention from what had happened; partly to attempt to capitalise on the historical moment of extreme divisiveness and weakness among the Arabs; partly to assert the image, if not the reality, of "even-

ment to participate in such diplomatic dances.

Now back to the moment and the role of Secretary of State Warren Christopher. For the job of keeping this diplomatic dance ongoing and for soothing the pain when toes are inevitably stepped on falls to those in charge of US foreign policy and thus to the American secretary of state.

And so, at the moment the political doctors are well aware that there simply is no sure cure for the illness that afflicts Israel and the Palestinians. Nothing that is being politically contemplated can with much likelihood bring about a stable and

rent events but no doubt rifling through past US government files in a way a spy could never do.

Samuel Lewis, another of those loyal to Israel, heads up policy planning at the State Department and carefully watches over things for his Israeli friends.

Under these circumstances — and with a president who himself is clearly over his head in dealing with foreign policy issues — it should not come as a great surprise that contemporary Arab-Israeli diplomacy has further degenerated from the very marginal progress many



From



Mark A. Bruzonsky



Washington

Step-by-step Political Seduction

Bosnia rally in US

NILOFAR RIZVI

Special to Saudi Gazette
from the United States

VACANT LOOKS FULL OF UNSHED tears; houses razed to the ground; crude services of mass burial; children shrieking out; and more. The media have kept abreast with the Bosnian Muslims' plight with an underlying message. It is time to act tough now. In the headlines, the unrevoked question looms larger every other day — Who is to act?

Perhaps, this prompted the Bosnia Task Force (BTF) of the US to organise a rally in Washington on May 15, demanding an end to the genocide in Bosnia. The BTF, not an organisation by itself, is an action committee functioning through the collaboration of several Muslim organisations of North America. The BTF has been functioning for about a year aiding the Bosnian Muslims mainly through donations collected in America.

Despite the May 15 rally there may not be any crucial change in the US approach towards Bosnia. There is nothing novel about the demands made by the BTF, as these are already on the cards of the White House. At the most the rally served to secure, perhaps, another official touch to these proposals.

True, the US is not politically obliged to aid Bosnia, rather links with Russia demand otherwise. Yet, it cannot be ignored that Serbian forces have ammunition ten times more than Muslims, enough to last for at least two years. Procrastination of any effective US role in the region through diplomatic shuffling about peace talks, approval from European allies or the Serbian referendum is simply letting the genocide continue. Irrespective of the UN or Nato efforts, as the only superpower, the US needs to act before it is too late. Otherwise, the Balkan crisis could be precedent for any other power to take to the same path in the near future.

The notion that the US is not showing the interest it should or ought to as a superpower, probably stimulated certain concerned individuals to express their demand through the Bosnia rally. The rally may not have been initiated, had the Balkan crisis not come in quick succession to the Operation Desert Storm. The fast and decisive American move in the Gulf has apparently led most of the world to expect similar US action in the Balkans; irrespective of the political, economic and geographical differences

Political mobility of American Muslims is mainly due to the recent influx of Muslims from the largely plural societies of South Asia. Intermixing for them has not been limited by any religious differences, leading to probably an increase in social mobility and political activity of Muslims in North America

Change in the attitude of Muslims in America

Nothing probably has been ignored or presented with any bias against the Muslims. What then motivated the organisation of the Bosnia rally? In all probability, the conscientious Muslims and their friends could not sit still and they came out to further intensify public opinion and build pressure for the US to play an "effective" role.

With thousands streaming in from various directions, each moving on if only to add another number to the strength gathered there; one can, perhaps, go beyond the goal of the May 15 rally. Irrespective of its immediate success or failure, the very idea of the rally is suggestive of a significant change in the attitude of Muslims settled in North America. A generation ago, or even ten years ago, the idea may not have even been conceived, or if conceived it may not have been implemented. Apart from the message on the placards about the action needed in Bosnia, another one cannot be ignored. That is, perhaps, asking others to give another look to the Muslims in America; at those gathered in Washington at his or her own ex-

pense; to join a rally which reportedly had no backing from any rich Muslim countries.

They, Muslims, being a part of the American society, are exercising their right to take a stand on an issue. An underlying message being that their voice, their presence as Muslims, should not be linked with images of terrorism or potential terrorism.

Ten years ago, such a rally may not have been possible because neither the American society nor the Muslims had opened to each other as much as they have now. Each viewed the other through a glass tainted with preconceived notions: if one is a Muslim he/she must be a fundamentalist; or any non-Muslim American must be too forward to open to. This particular gap has been bridged partly by the new generation raised in this country with some inhibitions being shed from both sides.

Secondly, in the recent years there has been an influx of Muslims from the largely plural societies of South Asia. Intermixing for them has not been limited by any religious differences, leading to

probably an increase in social mobility.

To a degree, however, the tendency still prevails to misrepresent the religiosity of Islam by using labels such as "Islamic" terrorism or fundamentalism for any anti-social activity allegedly committed by Muslims. What is important is that not only have the media become aware of this point, the Muslims have also begun to raise their voice against it. That the Muslims have begun to make their presence felt is suggested not only by the rise in the number of mosques here, but also by the recent wave of nearly simultaneous media coverage probably all over the US focusing on the Muslims in America.

The Bosnian rally could be a watershed as regards the image of Muslims in the American society. The focus of the participants is definitely the condemnation of atrocities on Bosnian Muslims, and the demand for a US action. However, it also goes a long way in conveying an underlying message:

"We, the Muslims are a part of this society, and Islam should not be linked with terrorism and/or simply oil wealth."

Proof that Hitler Didn't Die in His Bunker



handedness"; partly because America's Arab allies kept insisting.

The Israelis too, whatever the loudly expressed protestations of Yitzhak Shamir, wanted and needed some way to deflect attention from the Intifada, to further divide and confuse the Palestinians, as well as to allow the Americans some deceptive semblance of "even-handedness" even while so much money and armaments continue to flow from the American empire to the Jewish mini one.

The pro-American Arab regimes too — nervous as a result of what remains a conundrum that pits Muslim "fundamentalism" and Arab nationalism against the contemporary Arab order — desperately wanted to initiate some kind of diplomatic process that would command the headlines and be portrayed as hopeful.

And then the Palestinians — the most directly affected party of all.

It took an awful lot of cajoling and diplomatic arm-twisting, but the Palestinian "establishment" — battered and mislead for so long, politically shell-shocked and emotionally wreathing in the wake of the Coalition War — finally succumbed and agreed to play the diplomatic game. Of course there were benefits that were dangled before the Palestinians, financial and personal rewards that often accompany agree-

lasting peace for the long term; thus everything taking place in short term.

Moreover, the radical experimental treatments that some are advocating — such as a major shift in US-Israeli relations involving a major cutback or even suspension of US support — are outside the boundaries of what the political medicine-men are willing to consider.

But it's more than this.

And this needs to be always underscored in any discussion of US involvement with matters Mid-east in the Clinton years.

In short, the Clinton White House and State Department are more appendages of Israel on matters relating to the Mid-east than any American administration has ever been before in history. The reality is that American rhetoric, as expressed by the secretary of state who himself only got his job after agreeing to take Israel's appointees into key Mid-east positions, is being conceived and written with intimate Israeli involvement at every level as never before.

Rahm Emmanuel, just a few years ago a captain in the Israeli army, sits a few doors from the president, intimately aware of every move and in a key position to influence events.

Martin Indyk, a man who owes everything he has to the Israel-Jewish lobby, heads up the National Security Council efforts on the "peace process" and is not only influencing cur-

(though not I) claimed the Bush-Baker people were making.

"We can only go so far in this endeavour. It's up to the parties as to whether or not they want our help. We'll be there if they want our help but we can't do it for them," Christopher intoned as the latest "round" of talks concluded with no progress.

Worse yet, in a lengthy interview with *The New York Times*, and then a formal White House press conference, the president uttered not a single word about either the "peace process" or the still deteriorating situation in the occupied territories where conditions of life for the Palestinian internees are worse than ever.

Why should he?

But for those who closely follow matters relating to Israel and the Palestinians the very fact of the talks has given the impression that these matters are under control. Hence, no one even bothers to ask the president about these issues — and will not until some crisis of one form or another evolves or explodes.

The basic problem that the Arab side is going to have to face sooner or later, and which the Palestinians continue to overlook at immense peril for the very survival of their cause, is precisely that they have been listening to the words of Secretary Christopher — just as they did before him to secretary Baker and before him to secretary Shultz — while allowing Israeli and American actions to go on quite unchecked.

Such words coming from those charged with protecting the interests of the Empire are always carefully choreographed, carefully seductive, carefully crafted to take into account the psyche and fears of just who is listening.

Indeed, the very job of the American secretary of state when it comes to matters involving Israeli and the Palestinians has evolved into one of soothing pacification (*to name it nicely*) or duplicitous deception (*to put it more crassly*).

And so this is the overall context in which it is necessary to more carefully scrutinise Secretary Christopher's recent much-touted appearance before a large Arab American audi-

ence. The collapse of the Soviet Union has propelled this expectation further. The main cry being, why not? What is the alternative? Nato is lying low. Muslim countries do not have the capability.

No American wants the atrocities being committed to continue. The American media have put forward heart-wrenching pictures of burnt bodies, injured children, gang raped girls, with message demanding action to cease it.



Turkey faces hard choices

MOUNIR B ABOUD

Saudi Gazette Correspondent in Beirut

TURKEY's undeclared war against Kurd separatists in the southeastern part of the country has placed the government in Ankara in difficult dilemma both domestically and internationally. On the home front, the credibility of the government and the army is being widely questioned. Externally human rights organisations are making repeated criticism of the government's way of dealing with an ethnic community aspiring for independence.

For several months now Turkish armed forces have been conducting a campaign aimed at quelling an armed rebellion led by the Marxist-Leninist Kurdish Worker's Party (PKK). The war has been going on for eight years and cost at least 4,500 lives. Some 15,000 well-trained mountain guerrillas are commanded by Abdullah Ocalan, a firm admirer of Ho Chi Minh and a disciple of Mao Tse-tung.

Around 150,000 Turkish troops, backed by tanks and warplanes, have been deployed since the beginning of the year to counter the insurgents. The deceased Turkish president Turgut Ozal initially was in favour of acknowledging limited cultural rights for the estimated 13 million Kurds in his country. His attitude changed after a marked escalation in PKK violence against Turkish army positions and guerrilla operations against towns and villages in the mountainous terrain of eastern Turkey.

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the Coalition War have played a major role in deteriorating the situation in southeastern Turkey. All of a sudden, Turkey found itself

faced with two principal responsibilities. One requiring it to deal with an insurgency that could, if prolonged, drain its human and material resources, and the other requiring it to lead a democratic movement in the newly independent republics in Central Asia after the downfall of the Soviet Union.

The government is now seen in Turkey adapting two different attitudes towards the Kurds. On the one hand, it seeks to maintain good relations with the Kurds in northern Iraq, and on the other, it is cracking down on the Kurds in its own territory.

After a meeting in Ankara with the former prime minister, now President Suleyman Demirel, two prominent Kurdish leaders from Iraq announced their willingness to help the Turkish authorities to stop cross-border raids into Turkey by the PKK guerrillas operating from Iraq.

Massoud Barzani, leader of the Kurdish Democratic Party and Jalal Talabani, leader of the Kurdish Union Party, agreed that PKK guerrillas should disarm and leave northern Iraq. Barzani said this should be done by force if necessary, but Talabani preferred to use persuasive means, arguing that

PKK guerrillas who wish to stay in northern Iraq must be allowed to do so on condition that they be disarmed.

Iraqi Kurds regard Turkey as the main outlet for their commerce, trade, political and information activities. It's in their interest to keep good relations with Ankara, even though Turkey is opposed to the idea of establishing an independent Kurdish state.

In fact, Barzani and Talabani have repeatedly stressed that their movement does not seek an independent Kurdistan separate from Iraq. This is in direct

contradiction to the PKK goals which include the revival of Kurdistan. PKK leader Ocalan blames "the French and British colonialists for partitioning his country, giving parts of it to Iraq, Iran and Turkey.

Whether is true or not, Ocalan believes, that the only way to revive the Kurdish nation is through the armed struggle. He strongly criticised Barzani and Talabani for their less ambitious plans, accusing them of being "stooges" in the hands of imperialists.

Both Barzani and Talabani have toured a number of Western countries, including the United States, and met with their leaders. In a recent statement, Talabani admitted: "We have been told that no one would support the creation of an independent Kurdish state".

In the meantime, Turkey is bogged down in a protracted war for which no end is in sight. Turkish politicians often refer to the country's constitution which they say rejects categorically any discussions of a multi-national state. The Turkish nationality is the one and only on Turkish soil, they emphasise. They also refuse to discuss the concept of a federal state or the concept of autonomy.

The lack of tangible progress on the battle-front has also added a heavy burden on the government, which is under pressure from the military to act more decisively against the insurgents. There is a sense of frustration and anger among senior Turkish generals who demand tougher military action to quell the rebellion.

Ozal believed the problem could be solved peacefully. Although he had limited executive powers, Ozal thought that stopping the fighting could pave the way for certain steps but he would not elaborate. He had said he was preparing a report for his prime minister Demirel whose government has vowed to crack down on the PKK, apparently seeing no end to the conflict until the guerrillas had been smashed.

How will Demirel, now president of the country, move about the issue is yet to be seen.

The PKK finds sympathy and support of the 22 Kurdish representatives in the Turkish parliament. At the time of their swearing in as legislators, they decided to take the oath of allegiance in their own Kurdish language, stirring a big uproar in the house and among Turkish public opinion.

Some 18 seats in the Grand National Assembly belong to the Kurdish based People's Labour Party, but the party had no organic link with the PKK, although the two have relations. The People's Labour Party said the PKK did not come from the moon, that they are also the children of this country and that the PKK must be legalised so it can lay down its arms and engage in political struggle.

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Part 3 next week

Deceased president Turgut Ozal believed the Kurdish problem could be solved peacefully, while the government of his prime minister, now successor, Suleyman Demirel, *PICTURED ABOVE*, had apparently seeing no end to the conflict until the guerrillas had been smashed. How will Demirel move about the issue is yet to be seen