

First of all, a major government shakeup in Iraq has placed Iraq's Saddam Hussein, always the guiding force behind Iraq's prodevelopment policies, in control as president of the republic, with the resignation of President Ahmed Hasan al-Bakr. In the major reorganization that followed last week, some housecleaning was done, including the expulsion of A.H. Mashhadi from the Revolutionary Command Council. Mashhadi was accused of having secret contacts with networks of Ayatollah Khomeini and the Muslim Brotherhood.

Immediately, the Iraqis launched a major attack on the U.S. and British oil multinationals. Said the Iraqi oil minister, "The oil shortage in the world market is a fabrication created by the oil monopolies to create confusion and to put the blame on OPEC. ... The OPEC countries' current production exceeds that for the same period last year by 1 million barrels a day." He then called for the elimination of the multinationals and the creation of state-backed oil companies for state-to-state deals.

In Mexico City, the Iraqi ambassador there stated that, as far as he is concerned, the Arabs should support President López Portillo's call for world action on oil-for-technology deals. Until now, the Arabs have mistakenly looked with some suspicion on Mexico because of its traditionally close ties to the United States. Observers now expect Saudi Arabia, the world oil giant, to begin moving more closely in cooperation with Mexico.

The European connection

With Saudi blessings for the Iraq-Syria unity talks, the Arabs are also strengthening their relations with Western Europe. In the past week, French Prime Minister Barre visited Iraq; then French Defense Minister Bourges visited Saudi Arabia; and finally, President Giscard of France stopped over in the United Arab Emirates.

In Baghdad, according to French sources, the Iraqis told Barre that France should launch its own Middle East peace initiative to counter the disastrous Camp David fiasco which has brought the area to the brink of confrontation again.

But, at the same time, the Arabs are aware that without the participation of the United States, any Euro-Arab initiative on the Middle East will likely be ineffective. An Egyptian military source, who is opposed to the policies of President Sadat's Camp David pact, said that the key question is: "What can Egypt and the Arabs do to get LaRouche into the White House?" The Europeans, he said, "cannot defeat the United States and its Middle East policy by themselves." If LaRouche and his campaign get moving, "the Zionists will start screaming," and that will open the way for much greater European leverage in the Arab-Israeli conflict, concluded the Egyptian officer.

—Robert Dreyfuss

Arabs growing wary of Aspen Institute

The usually secretive Middle East-related activities of the Colorado-based Aspen Institute are beginning to come under public scrutiny, months after the U.S. Labor Party circulated a memorandum indicating Aspen's key role in events surrounding the assassination of Saudi Arabia's King Faisal in 1975.

On July 17, the *New York Times*'s Washington bureau reported that the key funding conduit for Aspen's Middle East seminar, the California-based East-West Foundation, has been applying intense pressure on the Aspen board to break ties with certain key Israeli intelligence-connected agencies. The *Times* noted, for example, that East-West has tried to prevent a certain Colonel Menachem Milson from participating in the seminars; although the *Times* neglected to mention the point, Milson is known as an important Israeli intelligence specialist suspected of involvement in numerous dirty-tricks activities for Israel's Mossad intelligence service.

While the *Times* piece was written from the standpoint of "outrage" by the Aspen board over East-West's "anti-Israel meddling," the central fact is that the controversy is now out in the open, and Aspen's ability to delude and manipulate key Arab policymakers will be severely constricted.

According to an informed Arab source in Washington, "The story is very significant, it shows that the Arabs are beginning to take a close look at these types of institutions, at Aspen, at the Heritage Foundation, at the Bilderberg group. A new attitude is developing, in the wake of the Muslim Brotherhood activities in Syria and related events, to look twice at what are known as the 'Anglo-American policymaking institutions.'"

According to the source, special interest is being aroused in the Arab world by the just-concluded two week Aspen Middle East seminar, which had the title, "The shaping of the Arab world." "The question is being asked," the source stressed, "Why the word 'shaping' in the title? Is this yet another case of a policy-planning conference outlining the 'balkanization' of the Middle East?"