

# Prospects for Mideast peace depend on the outcome of Weinberger's visit

by Thierry Lalevée

The next four years of American foreign policy toward the Middle East will be defined in the immediate weeks before the Jan. 21 inauguration of the new Reagan administration. These are the stakes in the trip of Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger to the Middle East, his second in less than two months, which began on Dec. 6 in Saudi Arabia. Since his last trip, there has been a flurry of regional diplomacy. At that time, he visited Tunisia, which plays an important role in the stability of the Maghreb and Mediterranean region, troubled by the antics of Muammar Qaddafi. Later he went to both Egypt and Jordan.

Weinberger's itinerary and agenda have not yet been publicly defined. However, there is little doubt as to the issues on the table. Indeed, much was set into motion by his last trip, which intersected the process of reconciliation between Jordan and Egypt. Responding to Egyptian President Mubarak's visit to Jordan at the beginning of October, Jordan's King Hussein came himself to Cairo on Dec. 1 to address the Egyptian parliament. Similarly, despite all odds, Palestine Liberation Organization Chairman Yasser Arafat succeeded in holding in Amman the last week of November one of the most important Palestinian National Councils yet, which expelled the radical factions associated with Syria. Also, the United States and Iraq re-established diplomatic relations on Nov. 26 after months of efforts, which may go a long way toward solving the five-year-old Gulf war.

It is no secret that most Arab moderate regimes had bet on the re-election of President Reagan in the expectation that he would make a new peace initiative. Moderate Arab countries such as Egypt, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia, as well as the PLO, began to gather, giving the United States a position of strength in the region it has not had for years, at least since the 1979 Iranian "revolution" of Khomeini. Cooperation between the United States and these countries in the fight against international terrorism has been notably upgraded, with the PLO reported to have played an essential role, with Iraq, in dismantling the al Jihad network in Rome. That such a new level of cooperation has not been easy is an understatement, but it also challenges the United States with the issue of what has to be America's policy toward Israel, and how to bridge the gap between the new Israeli government of Shimon Peres and the Arab states.

The State Department has made it clear that it doesn't want to consider a comprehensive peace settlement, but wants to stick to Kissinger's old game of step-by-step diplomacy. This was most bluntly put by Lawrence Eagleburger, the ex-undersecretary of state who is now president of Kissinger Associates. He told an Israeli audience on Nov. 28 that there could be "no comprehensive negotiations" as long as Israel's economic problems are not settled. The statement was in direct opposition to those in the United States and Israel who think that peace is ultimately the best recipe for solving such an economic crisis. Since Henry Kissinger advises Secretary George Shultz at least several times a week on foreign policy, Eagleburger's statement had a semi-official nature.

Then on Dec. 5, the State Department announced it was sending Undersecretary Richard Murphy to the region, ostensibly to work on the Lebanon-Israeli negotiations. However, as insiders revealed, Murphy's real mission is to keep a close watch on Weinberger's talks, and not from a friendly standpoint. The official reason given for Murphy's mission merely underlined the fundamental difference in approach. While Weinberger will be reviewing the broader regional issues, Murphy is working to make Syria, a country which has been an open U.S. enemy in the region, the key Arab negotiating partner of the United States—flouting longstanding U.S. allies Egypt and Jordan.

In recent weeks, the State Department began to even exceed diplomatic sabotage to reach the level of outright treason. This was the case on Dec. 4, when State announced flatly its rejection of the Jordan-Egyptian communiqué announced the day before, even before anyone in Washington had had the time to consider it. Within the framework of Egypt's commitment to Camp David, the communiqué called for a broader conference of all parties in the Middle East under the United Nations to impose a solution to the Palestinian problem, which they correctly contend is the root of all conflict in the region. For the United States to carry this out, it must dump Kissinger—Egyptian President Mubarak had asked just that in a letter to President Reagan earlier this year.

State's outright rejection played into the game, not only of the Soviet Union, but also of the Socialist International which, under the leadership of Willy Brandt, Olof Palme, Andreas Papandreu, and François Mitterrand, is wooing

Israelis and Arabs alike to dampen any new U.S. initiative. This became clear when Mitterrand, the man who ganged up with Papandreou and Qaddafi against Chad and many other African nations and who had a mere week earlier declared in Damascus that he exonerated Syria from involvement in international terrorism (see p. 45), announced on Dec. 6 that Paris would be ready to sell nuclear technology to Israel. It was a purely cynical and demagogical gesture aimed at driving a wedge between the Israelis and the United States in a delicate period.

### **Moscow-backed terror upsurge**

The State Department's increasingly open factional war against Weinberger and the Arab moderates is even more criminal when one considers Moscow's present activities in the region. Moscow's most direct answer to Weinberger's moves has been an unprecedented wave of terrorism both against American targets and Jordanians, Palestinians, and Egyptians. On Dec. 4, a Jordanian diplomat was killed in Bucharest, Romania, a country which has been playing the role of Trojan horse for the KGB in the West for decades. Earlier, on Dec. 2, an attempt had been made against another Jordanian diplomat, this time in Athens, capital of a country whose prime minister, Papandreou, wants to transform Greece into a Soviet "popular democracy." Assassination attempts against Arafat have been countless in recent weeks and only the close cooperation of Jordan, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia has prevented them from succeeding. However, Egypt became the target of new Islamic fundamentalist riots, while it is reported that Iranian and Syrian terrorists cells have been activated in Saudi Arabia. The hijacking of a Kuwaiti airliner on Dec. 4 was a direct expression of the threat looming over Gulf countries.

As was revealed by President Mubarak and former Libyan Prime Minister Bakoush (see interview, page 34), what is at stake are potential assassinations of heads of states in operations jointly sponsored by the Soviet Union and those Western forces around Henry Kissinger and McGeorge Bundy who put Qaddafi into power in 1969. There is little doubt that Moscow will otherwise use its favorite weapon to sabotage any peace initiative it cannot control—a new Middle East war. There are more and more intelligence reports of a major Soviet military buildup in Syria, and intelligence analysts are predicting that such a buildup has the sole aim of paving the way for a new war between Israel and Syria, a war wanted by both the Syrian leaders and the Ariel Sharon faction inside Israel. This will be one of Weinberger's key topics of discussion with the Israelis, as the secretary is well aware that time is running out.

On his ability to defuse this crisis, despite the mischief of the State Department, will not merely depend peace in the Middle East over the next four years, but the issue of whether or not the Kissinger faction can be driven out of power in Washington.

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## **Interview: Abdul Hamid Bakoush**

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# **'World must finally act against Qaddafi'**

*This telephone interview with Mr. Abdul Hamid Bakoush, former prime minister of Libya now living in Cairo, was conducted by Thierry Lalevée for EIR on Dec. 5.*

**EIR:** Can you first tell us what has happened to you in recent weeks?

**Bakoush:** As a matter of fact, nothing happened to me, although something very dangerous could have happened. Thanks to the Egyptian security officials, the plot hatched by Qaddafi against me was foiled. I was informed at a very early stage that mercenaries were planning to kill me. Hence, guards were put around my house. I was then asked to play a certain role to make it appear as if these mercenaries had succeeded in killing me. Egyptian officials took photos of me to convince the plotters that I had been killed, and that succeeded. I was very happy about it because, first, there were no Libyans involved, which shows that no Libyan wants to work for Qaddafi anymore; second, Qaddafi himself was convinced of the success of the operation and confessed his role publicly in a radio broadcast.

My life is not very important, but this proved to the entire world that Qaddafi is nothing but an international terrorist who hires the mafia around the world to perpetrate crimes. Under his leadership, Libya has become an institutionalized form of crime, nothing else.

I would like to call on the Arab countries, on the countries of the Third world, on the countries of the civilized world to finally act against Qaddafi; not in a spirit of revenge because of the plot against me, but because of the many plots that Qaddafi is hatching against many heads of states, prime ministers, and leaders of countries. I want to call on the whole world to finally take a positive attitude toward actions against Qaddafi!

I believe that Europe and the United States have a special responsibility for Qaddafi's crimes. He is only able to hire the mafia because of his money which comes from the sale of his oil. Libyan oil should be boycotted. It represents only 3% of OPEC production. It would have no economic effect. Six months ago, the price of oil was \$32 dollars a barrel, now it is at \$26. A boycott of Libyan oil may bring the prices up to \$27 or \$28. But Qaddafi has no other resources; if he loses his money, he loses power. Libya under Qaddafi has lost its qualification as a state. It should be excluded from the United