

Helmut Kohl warns of new Mideast wars

by Joseph Brewda

German Chancellor Helmut Kohl used unprecedentedly harsh words criticizing the present Israeli policy in a background briefing to a session of the Christian Democratic parliamentary group on foreign policy in Bonn, on June 14.

According to the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* of June 15, Kohl said that Israel is expecting 1 million immigrants from the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in the next three years, and that the Israeli government sent him a letter with a request for German aid. Kohl declared that he is not willing to give aid to an area where a war is definitely pre-programmed. He'd rather support a "mini-Marshall Plan" for Israel, but this needs the premise of peace. So far, however, Israel has always prevented a European initiative in the Middle East. This, Kohl said, he considers to be a political folly.

An Israeli invasion of Lebanon to wipe out the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) is an option being seriously considered in Washington and London these days as the next phase of "Operation Desert Storm." Ever since they created Israel following World War II, the U.S. and British governments have dominated the Mideast through keeping it in a state of near-war, or at war.

In mid-June, the United States, according to accounts in the U.S. press, directly threatened Lebanon that it had until the end of June to disarm the PLO militias. The targeting of Palestinians is also evident in Kuwait, which is, after all, under U.S. military occupation: Palestinians are being railroaded to cruel punishments in daily show-trials, for alleged collaboration with the Iraqis.

Setting up an Israeli-Syrian conflict

Since the Feb. 28 cease-fire with Iraq, the U.S., British, and Israeli media began condemning their erstwhile ally, Syrian President Hafez Assad, as the "new Hitler" of the region, with accompanying attacks on Syria's military build-

up. This was the same technique used against Saddam Hussein and Iraq, in order to prepare for the Gulf war, a year before. The propaganda escalated following the signing of a Syrian-Lebanese friendship treaty in May, which all but formalized Syria's annexation of Lebanon. U.S. support for the annexation was one of Syria's conditions for joining with the Anglo-Americans in the Gulf war.

On June 4 and 5, Israeli jets bombed at least three Palestinian camps in southern Lebanon, killing at least 20 people. These events, and the massing of Israeli troops on the border, led PLO chairman Yasser Arafat to warn, in an interview with *Al Hayah* newspaper published the next day, that a large-scale Israeli military operation into Lebanon might soon be at hand. "It is possible that the Israelis intend to reach the al-Awwali river," Arafat said, "in order to undermine the talks and efforts for peace in the region," and also in response to the recent treaty.

Speaking to the Israeli Knesset, or parliament, on June 5, Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Arens commented on the raids, and, in allusion to the Lebanese-Syrian treaty, said, "We believe it is important that Lebanon should again be a free and sovereign state . . . we hope that the process of Syria's takeover of Lebanon will eventually be halted."

A June 6 article in the Israeli daily *Hadashot* elaborated on Arens's statements. "An aerial bombardment is one of the acceptable languages in Lebanon," the paper said, and the bombardment was a "clear signal" to Syria. Syria has only three options to respond, it said.

The first option is "to make a lot of noise at the U.N. and in Arab capitals," which would not do much. The second option is to ask Lebanese President Elias al Hrawi (a Syrian puppet) to invite the Syrian army into southern Lebanon on the basis of the recently signed treaty. "Such a step could lead to direct military friction between Syria and Israel in Lebanon," the paper threatened. The third option is for Syria

to "implement the clause in the treaty with Lebanon calling for the disarmament of the PLO militias concentrated in southern Lebanon."

From the point of view of the U.S. and British governments, an Israeli invasion of Lebanon, possibly as early as this July, could serve the following functions. It could wipe out the PLO militias in Lebanon, caught in the crossfire of the two hostile armies of Syria and Israel. These PLO militias are the only regular PLO military units remaining in the region.

The war could also serve as an alibi for the failure of the Bush administration's supposedly sincere effort to achieve an Arab-Israeli peace. Despite four trips to the region since the Gulf war by U.S. Secretary of State James Baker, the U.S. has no desire to secure a resolution of the Palestinian issue, and U.S. posturing on the issue is largely intended to lull the Arabs, who increasingly realize that the Gulf war was hardly to their advantage. Since there is a widespread delusion among Arabs that the U.S. cannot control Israel, and even that the Zionist lobby controls the U.S., a Lebanese adventure by a "defiant" Israel, destroying the possibility of any near-term settlement, would let Bush off the hook.

A limited Syrian-Israeli war is another option. If the Anglo-Americans want to strengthen the Israeli-Syrian axis—the two countries have secretly collaborated for years—a limited war would first be necessary to give Assad the cover he needs in the Arab world to negotiate a comprehensive peace settlement with his secret allies.

A new Iran-Iraq war?

One indication that the Anglo-Americans are preparing a new division of the region is their insistence that U.N. sanctions against Iraq continue, despite the widely reported onset of epidemics of cholera and typhoid fever, in addition to famine. This genocide will tend to shatter the Iraqi state, allowing Iran's reemergence as a dominant power in the Arabian peninsula for the first time in centuries. Although the U.N. sanctions committee voted to let member countries unfreeze Iraqi funds to buy food if they wished, the U.S. and Britain, which hold most of these assets, have refused to do so. As long as the U.N. sanctions continue, especially the restrictions on the export of food and medicine, millions of Iraqi lives are at risk.

Even before the U.S.-led land war started with Iraq, the Iranian government infiltrated thousands of its cadre into Iraq, in coordination with the U.S. and Israel. The resulting "civil war," led by these Iranian units against the Iraqi military, ensured the increased destruction of Iraq. Since then, U.S. and Iranian propaganda outlets have repeatedly denounced the Iraqi government's supposed repression of the Shiite-dominated population of the south.

This propaganda was revived in the middle of June when the Iranian government issued a diplomatic note to the U.N. Security Council calling for "immediate measures" to protect

hundreds of thousands of southern Iraqi Shiites supposedly threatened with an Iraqi military offensive. Tehran claimed that some 100,000 Iraqi troops were readying an offensive, and that some bombing of the region has already begun. U.N. Secretary General Javier Pérez de Cuellar told the press in Geneva on June 12 that he was studying the Iranian note, and was "worried."

The German foreign ministry reported on June 12 that it had also been provided reports of "unimaginable cruelty" against Iraqi Shiites. The reports came from an Iranian-based Iraqi Shiite delegation that met with German officials earlier that week. German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher had earlier sponsored the European Community resolution that called for putting Saddam Hussein before a war-crimes tribunal, as a favor to the Anglo-Americans.

Also on June 12, Austrian President Kurt Waldheim gave a joint press conference with Iranian President Rafsanjani in Tehran, on the first visit by a Western head of state since the 1979 revolution. Rafsanjani ranted that the Iraqis were planning to "massacre the people," and called for the U.N. to intervene. According to the Iranian news agency, Waldheim, a former U.N. secretary general, stated that "it is the duty of the international community and the Security Council to solve the issue."

According to one scenario put out in Europe, a limited Iran-Iraq war, triggered by the suppression, would be followed by U.N. Security Council sponsorship of an Iranian-dominated "Shiite enclave" in southern Iraq similar to that created in northern Iraq allegedly to protect the Kurds. This scenario is intended to lead to the destruction of Iraq as a functioning nation, and its de facto division into the northern, central, and southern regions that existed prior to Iraq's existence, when the Ottoman Turkish empire maintained sovereignty over the Arabian peninsula.

To prepare this scenario, or in any case to keep the pressure up against Iraq, U.S. and British government media outlets have begun to talk again about Iraq's nuclear bomb. According to the tale, an Iraqi nuclear scientist defected to the U.S. in June, and announced that Iraq is hiding enriched uranium in secret bunkers in northern Iraq that were untouched by the war. Actually, over recent weeks, U.S. forces have fanned out over practically every square inch of the region where that material is supposedly hidden.

The charges first emerged publicly on June 11, in a front-page article in the *Washington Times*, a paper frequently used as a CIA mouthpiece. Two days later, the charges were repeated in the London *Financial Times*, which serves the same function for British intelligence.

In an interview with the *Financial Times* on June 14, Sen. John McCain (R-Az.) said that the report raised "very serious concerns. We already know that the Iraqis have cheated on inspections, and we now must insist on a new and thorough inspection. If this is not possible we will have to explore other options, including military options."