

# America dirties its hands

A huge car bomb exploded last March in Beirut. Its target, the radical Shia leader, Mohammed Fadallah, escaped; but 80 innocent Lebanese civilians were killed and 200 injured. Just another case of random Lebanese mayhem? Not this time.

The car bomb was planted by Lebanon's military intelligence agency, the shadowy Second Bureau. And who was funding and training this group that has long terrorized Lebanon by kidnapping and murder? None other than the CIA, according to revelations this week in Washington.

This is not a story of CIA wickedness but rather of the relentless stupidity of Secretary of State George Shultz. A year ago, Shultz convinced President Reagan to authorize "counter-terror" operations in Lebanon against Moslem and leftist groups fighting against what they saw as the American and Israeli occupation of their country.

The CIA objected strongly to Shultz's "get tough" policy against terrorists; it was one thing to fulminate in Washington and quite another to go and kill suspects in Lebanon. The CIA was overruled and ordered to finance and aid the Second Bureau, a Christian Maronite group long hated and feared by the nation's Moslem majority.

In March, the Second Bureau reportedly staged the Beirut car bombing, using hired killers to do the job. The CIA admits some links to the Second Bureau but denies any links to the car-bomb attack. Other informed sources in Washington and Paris insist that the CIA was, in fact, closely linked to the bomb attack that caused 280 casualties.

Whatever the degree of linkage, there is no doubt that the U.S. must take a good deal of responsibility for the actions of its hired assassins in Lebanon. What we are seeing here, in terrible irony, is another version of the 1982 massacres of Palestinians at Shatilla and Sabra. There, Israel's Christian

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allies staged killings reminiscent of the SS at its worst. The Israelis admitted "indirect responsibility" for the massacres, now so must the U.S.

Shultz now has the blood of 280 innocent civilians on his hands, a fitting outcome for the administration's chief proponent of "eliminating terrorism." He refused to heed warnings from the CIA and Pentagon that innocent civilians would inevitably be killed in any such operations. And he resolutely refused to comprehend that in Lebanon, "terrorism," in large part, was the reaction to American-Israeli attempts to rule that nation, not some isolated manifestation of evil.

Now that America has apparently been caught dirtying its hands in Lebanon, the question arises: How much more of this has gone on without public knowledge? Who has been approving such activities — in clear violation of U.S. law? How can liberals moan about Nicaragua and condone murder in Lebanon?

I don't want to see America, which stands for human dignity and the rule of law, supporting groups that perform the most cowardly and filthy of all atrocities, the car bomb. I think that American leaders who make these compacts with foreign gangsters should stand trial: They are terrorists just as surely as the people they seek to destroy. They now expose Americans everywhere, by their actions, to terrorist attacks.

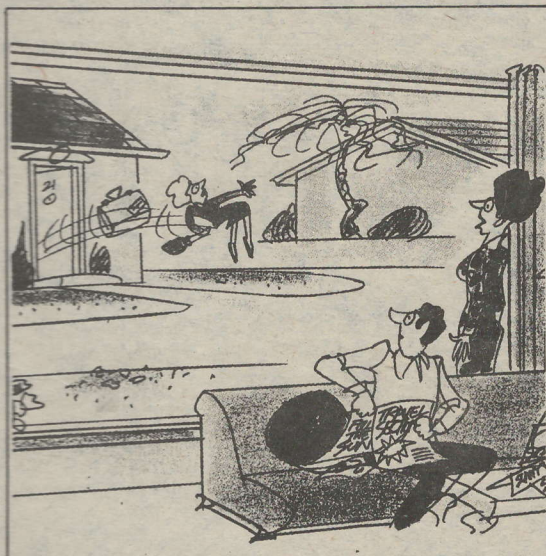
Almost as bad, Shultz and his White House allies have dealt another serious blow to the CIA. They forced the CIA to take action opposed by its professional officers and will now without doubt let the CIA men take the heat for this latest bloody fiasco. The CIA's many enemies in Congress will use the Beirut bombing to further curtail the activities of America's only weapon against expanding Soviet subversion.

So much, as well, for American moral posturing. Lebanon has had a terrible quality of revealing truth in its most shocking form. Israel lost its moral superiority in Lebanon: Shatilla, Sabra, car bombs and the shattered villages of southern Lebanon showed a new and disturbing side of Israel. The Israelis, at least, had some business in next-door Lebanon; but the Americans, aside from imperial ambitions, had none.

If these reports are true, and I have no doubt they are, then America has been deeply shamed and betrayed by its public servants. The Reagan administration originally encouraged Israel to invade Lebanon and must bear equal responsibility for the ensuing carnage. Yet the lesson has not apparently been learned.

After all the killing and futility, Shultz keeps dragging the U.S. — and its reputation — deeper into the bloody slime of Lebanon.

## Punch



"I'm afraid Jane has gone on and on once too often about the romance of travel."