

NEW SOLIDARITY INTERNATIONAL PRESS SERVICE

Mideast Report



Stage Set For Soviet Lead Intervention Into Lebanon

July 25 (NSIPS) — The revolutionary Lebanese left, backed by the Palestine Liberation Organization, this week announced the formation of a provisional government for the areas of Lebanon controlled by the Unified Command of the left-PLO forces. Leftist leader Kamal Jumblatt said that “central political councils” would be established for Tripoli, western Beirut, Sidon, Tyre, and south-west Lebanon by the alliance of socialist and Communist parties.

This announcement by Jumblatt follows a series of political and military actions by the Soviet Union to warn the U.S., NATO and Syria to halt the genocidal war in Lebanon or face a Soviet military show of force to defend the alliance of leftists and Palestinians. The most direct statement came in a sharply worded July 11 letter from Soviet Party leader Brezhnev to Syrian President Assad and published in the French daily *Le Monde* this week; a letter demands an immediate end to the Syrian military invasion and its attacks on the Lebanese left. Brezhnev's warning was backed up in a series of articles and commentaries in the Soviet press critical of Syria and warning the U.S. and NATO to stay out. Sources at the State Department concurred that it is a valid assessment to consider Jumblatt's action as a first step to create a legal basis for a direct intervention into Lebanon by the Soviet Union and Iraq. Such an action by the USSR, which would be necessitated if the widely feared Syrian-Falangist offensive materializes, could place the Soviet Union and the U.S. in a direct nuclear confrontation.

Despite the risks involved and in total disregard of the Soviets' warnings, Kissinger is moving ahead with the staging of his war provocation. In a speech that must be interpreted as his answer to Brezhnev, Assad told a Damascus political rally this week, that he intended to stay in Lebanon as long as he wanted and that none was going to intimidate him. Assad's bravura is matched only by that of the insane circle of top advisors of the U.S. Secretary of State. This article has abandoned what touch with reality they had, choosing to ignore the Soviets warning, even going so far as to deny that the Soviets have any interest whatsoever in what goes on in Lebanon.

By week's end some of this crowd had begun to feel a little uneasy about the developing situation, conceding that, yes a Soviet intervention was possible, but still not likely. The best conception these fellows can come up with about what an ensuing Soviet-U.S. confrontation would look like is “another Cuban Missile Crisis” — during which many are quick enough to point out, “the Soviets backed down.”

A Soviet intervention into Lebanon would put Kissinger and his cronies on the spot: will they first try and then be able to manoeuvre President Ford in a “Cuban Missile Crisis” game of chicken with the Soviets or will they themselves be attacked by a draining case of diarrhea? The odds are 50-50, “pick-em.”

There are other factors emerging which should make the “diarrhea option” more likely.

There are strong indications that the Soviets and Egypt, long a satrapy of the Rockefeller banks, are considering taking an action as equally devastating to the Dollar Empire as a Soviet

military action in Lebanon: joint action on declaring a debt moratorium on Egypt's \$18 billion foreign debt. The recent victory of the New York banks in Peru, which capitulated to Atlanticist threats and blackmail, has made Egypt's enormous debt the primary location of the international fight for debt moratoria. A suspension of debt service by Egypt — which would create a wave of similar actions throughout the Third World — would seriously destabilize the world Rockefeller machine now coordinating the Lebanese war, and would decisively shift the balance within the Arab sector against Syria by drawing Egypt into a bloc with Iraq, Algeria, Libya, and the Arab left.

Sadat: Tilting Toward Moscow?

The first indication of the possible shift in Egypt's usually violent anti-Soviet stance came in a July 23 speech by President Anwar Sadat commemorating the anniversary of the overthrow of King Farouq by Sadat's predecessor, President Gamal Abdel Nasser. During the three-hour address, Sadat demanded the withdrawal of the Syrian invasion force from Lebanon, and urged the Soviet Union to render its support for the Arabs into practical steps which would increase the capability of the Arabs to confront aggression.”

Sadat's speech, according to *Le Figaro*, was favorably covered in the Soviet government newspaper *Izvestiya*, and a State Department source said worriedly yesterday that Sadat was “floating a trial balloon” to the USSR for the Soviets to provide more military and economic aid to Egypt, and to discuss Egypt's debt to the Soviets. The July 22 issue of *Pravda*, the Soviet Communist Party newspaper, reported from Cairo that Egypt's debt had passed \$18 billion — over two-thirds to Western commercial banks — and criticized Saudi Arabia, Egypt's chief financier, for attempting to set up a commission to control the Egyptian economy.

The Egyptian newspaper *Rose al-Yousef*, which reflects left-Nasserist sentiment in Egypt, this week quoted liberally from *New Solidarity* on the fingertip NATO control over the Falangists in Lebanon, and says that according to the U.S. Labor Party, the goal of NATO forces in the Middle East is to “test the readiness of the Soviets to defend their leftist allies in the Middle East.” This acknowledgement of the USLP, while significant in itself, is an important signal that ICLC material on debt moratoria is widely in circulation among key pro-socialist Egyptian layers.

The potential that Egypt, the Soviets, and the ICLC will converge on an active strategy for dumping Egypt's debt has terrified Atlanticist bankers and the press. Yesterday, for instance, the fascist West German daily *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* praised Syria's massacre of Palestinian “terrorists” in Lebanon, and coupled with an attack on Sadat for lack of “courage.” Not only has Sadat refused to lend public support to Syria in Lebanon, but according to several sources, Egypt has begun to ship desperately needed food supplies into Lebanon via the southern port of Sidon.

Brezhnev To Assad: Withdraw Syrian Troops From Lebanon

July 21 (NSIPS) — The following are excerpts of a July 11 letter written by Soviet General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev to Syrian President Hafez Assad. The letter was released yesterday by the Soviets for publication in the French newspaper *Le Monde*.

"Who can be happy about the events in Lebanon? Of course, the imperialists. . . We were both sure that the Palestinian resistance movement is one of the most important forces in the fight against the Israeli aggressors and imperialism. We both considered the leaders of the resistance movement as friends and as patriots who represent the Arab people of Palestine.

"However, what's going on now? We can see that there are attempts to destroy the resistance and the national Lebanese movement. Who are the aggressors? They are the right-wing Lebanese forces with the help of the Syrian Army. How can we evaluate the situation any differently when we see that Palestinian and Lebanese forces are under siege, that the Syrian Army is imposing a blockade against the (Lebanese) harbors? . . .

How could we interpret the situation in another way when you have so far not given to the Palestinians and the Lebanese the medical and food supplies which were offered by the Russian Red Cross? . . . We know that the resistance and the national Lebanese movement demand an immediate ceasefire, and that your forces are against an end to the struggles. . . We understand neither your behavior nor your goals in Lebanon.

"It is in friendship that we speak to you with such confidence. Besides, who else but us could speak to you in that way? It is your duty to think about the near and distant future. Should Syria continue on in the way it has chosen, then it would give to the imperialists and their collaborators the ability to control the Arab peoples, progressive movements, as well as Arab states with progressive regimes. We look fearfully at the positions and orientations of Syria on the international scene. We urge you to be prudent. We demand that the Syrian leadership do everything to end the military operations against the resistance and the national Lebanese movement. The first step in this would be an immediate cease-fire. You can contribute to that by withdrawing your forces from Lebanon. . .

"It is clear that we are always ready to consolidate friendship between our two countries and to overcome difficulties provoked by the fluid situation in Lebanon. In that case, the stable friendship of our country towards yours is ensured, unless Syria behaves in a way which would cause a break in the relations between our two countries."

His Answer To Brezhnev

Assad Vows To Stay In Lebanon

July 22 (NSIPS) — President Hafez Assad of Syria gave a three hour speech July 20 to a political meeting in Damascus in which he answered critics of his Lebanese military intervention. The following are excerpts put together from various U.S., Western and Eastern European sources.

"We will not back down to any Palestinians...if the Lebanese want it, Syria will support them in every way. From the farthest northern part of Lebanon to the very southern part, no matter what the repercussions will be, no matter what Israel intends to do about it....

"Historically Syria and Lebanon formed one country and one people. We shall cut off the hand which tries to undermine the integrity of this great Syrian people....

"The Palestinians have no business being in the Lebanese

mountains where they are joining with the leftists in confronting Syrian forces....

He concluded his speech to wild applause while he said "The minute I feel that I have lost the confidence of the people, I shall quit."

Sadat Bids Soviets Aid Arabs

July 23 (NSIPS) — Following are excerpts from Egyptian President Anwar Sadat's July 22 speech delivered at the headquarters of the Arab Social Union on the occasion of the 24th anniversary of the overthrow of King Farouk. The report is taken from the Paris daily *Le Figaro* of Today.

Sadat urged the Soviet Union "to render its support for the Arabs into practical steps which would increase the Arabs' ability to confront aggression...The withdrawal of the Syrian troops from Lebanon is imperative after the failure of their role... They should be replaced by the Arab League's peacekeeping forces.... The Palestinian resistance and the Lebanese nationalist forces are being hit....Is this the way to serve the Arab cause? Doesn't this adversely affect the Arabs' march towards liberation?... We will continue to support the Palestinian resistance movement so that it may be capable of confronting this conspiracy...

"But there is no doubt that Israel will act to realize its dream if the scheme of partitioning Lebanon sees the light. I thereby warn Israel and all those who are involved in this horrible scheme which is aimed at all of us."

Sadat also said Egypt is ready to provide the Arab League's peacekeeping force with arms and material "so that they may be capable of defending themselves against any foolishness that may be directed against them." He urged buffer zones in "sensitive areas" in Lebanon which would "thus contribute to ending the bloodshed."

Soviet Press Grid On Lebanon

July 22 (NSIPS) — The following are excerpts of significant Soviet press coverage of the Lebanese developments. (*Red Star*, military paper), July 18:

"...Syrian troops north of Tripoli have been firing with artillery on the city and the adjacent Palestinian camps According to the Beirut press, the Syrians have delayed the withdrawal of their units from various regions of the country. Saida is an exception — where they pulled back 15 kilometers to Jezzine."

Pravda, July 20:

"... one of the leaders of the Palestine Liberation Organization F. Al-Kaddoumi stated that the full withdrawal of Syrian forces from Saida and Sofar is the indispensable condition for the start of any Palestinian-Syrian dialogue. He noted that in the present situation it would be premature to speak of a visit of a Palestinian delegation to Damascus for meetings with the Syrian leadership

In recent days the rightist Christian forces have succeeded in seizing individual regions which allow them to unify the territory controlled by them into a single mass. It is stressed here (Beirut) that such actions on the part of the rightists aim at creating a separate "state," leading to an actual division of the country and destruction of its territorial integrity."

Trud, (trade union daily), July 20:

There have been reports of withdrawal from Saida and several other regions of the country of the Syrian forces which

were brought in in early June. It should be recalled that that act of Syria, as well as the disagreement that has arisen between Syria and the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization ... fed the optimistic hopes of those forces which are interested in prolonging the Lebanese crisis and the bloodshed.

At the end of last week, there was a meeting in Beirut of the leadership of the national-patriotic forces of Lebanon and the Palestinian Resistance Movement. The matter of normalizing relations between Syria and the PLO were discussed. At this session, it was indicated that reconciliation will be possible only after Syria has withdrawn its troops from Lebanon. But the withdrawal of Syrian troops is still going extremely slowly."

Pravda, July 21:

"...According to the progressive press, individual units of Syrian troops are acting on the side of the rightist forces in the Tal Zaatar region and in mountainous areas of the country. L'Orient-Jour writes that Syrian troops are supporting the actions of the right-Christian forces in the Tripoli region as well and continue artillery bombardment of the Palestinian refugee camp Nahr el-Barid which is located there.

The withdrawal of Syrian troops from Saida made it possible to renew food and fuel supplies to Beirut."

Investia, July 21 ("Partition Repaired"):

The past few days have been marked by a new sharp activation of rightist forces in Lebanon. Having received a good deal of military aid including tanks and heavy artillery from Western powers and Israel through their control of the port of Jounieh, they have gone on the offensive nearly everywhere in the country.

The basic objectives of their attacks, as in the past, have been the Palestinian camps. National-liberal Party leader Chamoun announced that there will be no settlement until the Palestinians are driven out of Lebanon.

Answering ceasefire and settlement proposals with stipulations known to be unacceptable, the rightist leaders have launched broad offensive actions aimed at capturing regions of Lebanon which are of economic and strategic importance.

The correspondent of the British paper *The Observer* J. Pritchett, who had been in one of the rightist-controlled regions, notes that the leaders of Lebanese reaction "are now eagerly considering the question of a prolonged partition of the country and its "regionalization" for an indefinite period." "The Tal Zaatar operation, directed towards capture of the Mkaless industrial region," he writes, "is part of this idea." The Falangist organization Dar Amal is de facto becoming the government — it is responsible for defense, security, information, industry, health, and financial affairs, stresses the British journalist. Gemayel and Chamoun, the two rightwing leaders, hear appeals on death sentences. It is planned to build a deep-water port, an airport and a telex communications system. The Falangist leader Gemayel and his son recently visited Europe to negotiate arms purchases.

All this indicates that Lebanon reaction, supported by the imperialist countries and Israel, intends to continue to sabotage settlement of the crisis, in order to weaken the national patriotic forces of the country and the Palestinian Resistance Movement. The Israeli military's recent seizure in international waters of a cargo ship under Egyptian flag sailing for the Lebanese port of Sour (Tyre) and loaded with military supplies for the Palestinians, once again confirms that there exists the closest sort of cooperation between Israel and the Lebanese right. The Beirut progressive press remarked in this regard, that this act of piracy by Tel Aviv clearly plays into the hands of the right Christian forces in Lebanon, which in the last few days have stepped up their offensive against the national patriotic forces of the country and the Palestinian units.

British Banker: "It's A Permanent Sarajevo"

LONDON, July 24 (NSIPS) — On Monday, July 19th, NSIPS discussed the Kissinger-directed coup in Peru and the threat of an impending Chilean-style bloodbath in that country with a top executive at a major merchant bank here. NSIPS presented the Peruvian situation as the leading example of the international policies to which Kissinger and his Wall Street associates are committed in their efforts to guarantee the value of all outstanding Atlanticist-held international debt. This was his response:

"It's a permanent Sarajevo. Sadat is very shaky. Egypt has no foreign exchange whatsoever to repay any debt. They will have no means to repay their debts... It's a situation worse than the Bay of Pigs. A bloody flashpoint. A single catalyst suffices, like for Sarajevo. One fine day, someone will press the button and we're all up in ashes... (On West German Chancellor Schmidt's call for economic attacks against the Soviets and his statement of economic blackmail against Italy) My reading of Helmut Schmidt is that he is very,... extremely dangerous... (On Peru) The market will not give the new government any money but will wait and see if the regime lasts. Only those with immediate stakes will, if they're foolish enough."

Brookings Mideast "Expert": "Henry Would Be Very Pleased About Lebanon"

July 24 (NSIPS) — This July 21 interview with State Department advisor Barry Blechman, an expert on U.S.-Soviet confrontation at the Brookings Institution in Washington, D.C., was made available to New Solidarity International Press Service by an independent journalist:

Q: Given the current situation in the Middle East, who do you expect will intervene into the Lebanese war?

Blechman: For the Soviets to get involved would be insane. The Soviets don't care about the Palestinians. No one does. Their calculations are where their interests are with the established governments of the region, and more so with Syria than with Iraq. In the past the Soviets have acted more cautiously when far more was at stake. It is not clear now what they can do.

Q: What about the Soviet deployment of their aircraft carrier Kiev into the Eastern Mediterranean today?

Blechman: The Kiev is one small ship, with a vertical take off air-power, which would be easy picking for Syria's Soviet aircraft. It's only for local air defense. The situation is no incentive for them to put themselves out on a limb for (Palestine Liberation Organization leader) Yassir Arafat. It would be crazy.

Q: Is (Syrian President) Assad being controlled or dictated to by the Soviets?

Blechman: Assad is acting on his own. As with most client states they are doing what they please. The Soviets are very annoyed.

Q: Are the Iraqis ready to invade Syria? They have troops on the Syrian border.

Blechman: I don't think so, though I wouldn't be surprised if they did anything. They are very unpredictable. Militarily they are in bad shape. Their divisions are miserable and got decimated by the Israelis. No. Iraq will stay out. Remember in 1970 (the Black September massacre) Iraq had divisions in Jordan, but they got out before the going got bad.

Q: It seems as though the Shah of Iran may be persuaded to begin open fighting against the Iraqis. What do you think of this possibility?

Blechman: I think the Shah will stay out.

Q: How does Henry Kissinger view the present situation in Lebanon?

Blechman: Henry would be very pleased right now. The wiping

out of the PLO makes his step-by-step diplomacy look better. The more the Palestinians destroy themselves, the better Henry's over-all settlement policy. He must be very pleased. The only thing Henry is worried about is what the Soviets might be doing. He tends to put things on a global, marco-field. As long as the Soviets only issue statements however, they will not intervene militarily in Lebanon.

Q: What about a nuclear confrontation in the Middle East?

Blechman: A nuclear attack — I cannot imagine that happening.

Mideast "Think-Tanker": The Soviets Won't Move Militarily In Mideast

July 24 (NSIPS) — The following are excerpts from an interview this week with Earl Ravenal, a professor at the School of Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore. Mr. Ravenal is considered an expert on Mideast affairs by State Department circles.

NSIPS: We are looking into the chance of a military confrontation in the Mideast. Do you see a possibility for direct military intervention by the Soviet Union?

Ravenal: The Soviets find themselves on both sides of the conflict, supporting (Syrian President) Assad and (Palestine Liberation Organization chief) Yassir Arafat. I'm not sure of all the details on the military front, but we know there are two stories — one that the Soviets are going to react militarily, or, if you are thinking like (Secretary of State) Henry Kissinger does, then you hope that the Soviets will back down under pressure from the U.S. From Henry's standpoint, the beauty of the situation is that it does not require U.S. intervention, and that there is a confluence of interest and that the U.S. has the silent acquiescence of Western Europe as well.

NSIPS: You see no chance of an escalation toward nuclear showdown?

Ravenal: As for possible military action by the Soviets, the Soviets themselves are not of one mind on this. They are playing the part of the PLO. They will use diplomatic warnings before they take up arms. They can also unseat or neutralize Assad from within using their political forces. Just the threat of that might give Assad some thought. One very interesting thing is that arms are being tilted to one side. The threat that the Soviets might supply the other side plus political activity, might be enough to keep the pot boiling.

NSIPS: But the Soviets have said they will not stand by and see the left wiped out.

Ravenal: If the Soviets have two or three cards to play they will not intervene militarily. I would agree that in some cases the U.S. could play its role in standing up to the Soviets. Remember (the Arab-Israeli war) of 1973? Who knows what could have happened if the fighting went on for another twelve hours. On the other hand, if the Jordanians get involved — and remember that some of the same commanders from (the Black September massacre of) 1970 are still around and are interested in getting the Palestinians — anything could happen. This is what the Soviets fear. They fear getting shut out of the situation and finding themselves superfluous.

NSIPS: Are you saying that if this happened, the U.S. would then take over hegemony in the Mideast from the Soviets?

Ravenal: Some people think this is already happening, that the U.S. is pulling the strings in Damascus and Tel Aviv. One has to look for Soviet moves to restore the balance and keep the situation simmering. This will give a chance for a comprehensive settlement. If the Soviets have another card to play they will continue playing.

NSIPS: Of course this is true. No sane person wants nuclear confrontation.

Ravenal: A nuclear incident could happen. Assuming that the Soviets are rational, they could go for a nuclear showdown, but

not now. I can see countries loaded with nuclear arms going for a showdown.

NSIPS: What about an Iraqi military invasion of Syria?

Ravenal: An Iraqi invasion of Syria is a very interesting element in the situation. Lately the Iraqis have been moving economically and commercially close to the U.S. Of course, the Soviets could manipulate Iraq as a diversion. There are two ways the Soviets could arrange this...but my crystal ball is getting cloudy. It is not out of the question that Israel is giving arms to the Christians (in Lebanon) and they are not terribly adverse to allowing the Libyans to supply the left and keep this going. Israel does not want to see the right (in Lebanon) victorious. They are counting on the trouble continuing and Syria not coming out too well. How does your publication see the Lebanese situation?

NSIPS: We understand that the Middle East situation is being used by Kissinger as a springboard to thermonuclear showdown between the U.S. and the Soviet Union.

Ravenal: You are probably correct. There are two things I would look into if I were you: the ultimate interests of the Israelis in this and what the Soviets might do in Damascus.

RAND Spokesman Denies Lebanon Is Soviet "Tripwire"

July 24 (NSIPS) — A source close to the Rand Corporation made the following comments on the Middle East situation to an NSIPS reporter on July 21:

NSIPS: What would a Soviet intervention into Lebanon do to U.S. foreign policy?

A: First of all, it would be an unprecedented development for the Soviets to send actual combat troops into the Middle East. I would expect an October 1973-type (date of Arab-Israeli War-ed.) alert or maybe higher. The 82nd Airborne (U.S. Army) would be placed on high alert, of course, and the Sixth Fleet would make threatening moves. But — I would look elsewhere, to the NATO-Warsaw Pact balance in Europe. You're mooting a major international crisis, and nobody here is going to sit by and watch the world strategic balance be shifted in that war.

NSIPS: Could the Soviets otherwise change the situation in Lebanon?

A: The Soviets might work through intermediaries. But the problem is that their intermediaries are weak, and a weak intervention, or one that fails, is a risky business.

NSIPS: What about Iraq?

A: While I was in Washington, I learned that the Syrians do not take the Iraqis seriously, although there are six Iraqi divisions on the Syrian border.

NSIPS: How would the Israelis respond to an Iraqi intervention?

A: The Israelis would see an Iraqi move as a threatening one, and they would probably bomb the hell out of the Iraqi forces long before they reached (Syria's capital) Damascus.

NSIPS: How long can the Soviets sit by and do nothing?

A: I assume that (Secretary of State) Kissinger would recognize that there is a point at which the thing should be calmed down. I'm not convinced that Kissinger wants the Syrians to go much further. I found in Washington that there are mixed feelings about this. Kissinger, I think, ultimately feels this. Of course, you understand, the Syrians are not our agents.

NSIPS: A escalation of the Middle East situation represents the tripwire for a Soviet first nuclear strike against NATO.

A: What? You're crazy! The Soviets are perfectly capable of sitting, waiting, backing down waiting for the pendulum to swing their way again. The difference between you and them is that you're an ideologue and they're not. I'm certainly glad that you aren't in the Kremlin, or have any power buttons to push. The Soviets have much larger concerns than Lebanon.