



MIDEAST

End of Lebanon War in Sight

Soviets, U.S. Back Egyptian Role in Cooling Lebanon Crisis

Sept. 18 (NSIPS) — The White House and the Kremlin have reportedly reached an agreement to jointly seek an end to the seventeen-month Lebanese civil war, which has cost more than 50,000 lives and virtually destroyed the country. Both the U.S. and the USSR have quietly contacted Egypt, long an opponent of the Syrian invasion of Lebanon, as a mediator in the conflict. A long procession of Lebanese leaders is currently passing through Cairo in efforts to seek a formula to end the bloodshed.

Efforts to arrange a political solution to the bloody conflict are concentrated on the scheduled Sept. 23 inauguration of Elias Sarkis, the Lebanese President-elect. Sarkis, a moderate rightist, is looked upon by virtually all factions in the war as a potential figure around which those in favor of a political solution can rally. Ultra-fascist President Suleiman Frangieh and his sole remaining political ally, Interior Minister Camille Chamoun, are both strongly opposed to the impending Sarkis presidency. With continued backing from the Rockefeller-NATO machine and from hawks in Syria, they have launched a series of dangerous provocations aimed at wrecking the momentum toward peace and thus re-igniting the war.

The overall tendency, however, is strongly in the direction of a workable negotiated settlement to the crisis. An editorial in the Sept. 17 Washington Post entitled, "After Lebanon," stated that "the end of the 17-month war in Lebanon is in sight," and warned Israel against the tactics of delay regarding an overall solution to the Arab-Israeli crisis following the accord in Lebanon. The Post praised "Ford Administration' efforts" in search of peace and did not mention Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, the ringleader of Middle East terrorism, once. Corriere della Sera, the major Italian daily, similarly reported that "behind the prevailing atmosphere of trust and optimism stands the U.S. and the Soviet Union."

Meeting For Peace

Sarkis, Palestine Liberation Organization Chairman Yasser Arafat, and Syrian Air Force Commander Naji Jamil met yesterday in Chtaura, Lebanon — the first serious high-level peace talks on Lebanon since the beginning of the year. The tripartite meeting between Lebanon, Syria and the PLO, which was suspended to allow Sarkis to visit Cairo today, will resume again on Sept. 19. A host of other meetings have also taken place on a lower level in the last few days, including an important meeting between Amin Gemayel, the son of Falangist leader Pierre Gemayel, and representatives of leftist coalition leader Kamal Jumblatt.

The ultra-rightists around Chamoun and Frangieh have determined to make their last stand. In the opening shot of a campaign to sabotage moves toward peace, on Sept. 15, outlaw President Frangieh announced that he had stripped Prime Minister Rashid Karami, a moderate Moslem leader, from his position — and appointed madman Chamoun to the posts of Defense, Foreign, Finance and Interior minister and acting Prime Minister! Karami, who was in Cairo at the time in peace talks with Egyptian President Sadat and other Lebanese leaders, denounced the Frangieh coup d'etat as a "stab in the back," and refused to recognize its legitimacy. Even the Falange party or the Gemayel family denounced the desperate move by Frangieh, and according to the French press, Falangist militiamen engaged in sharp battles with the militia of Frangieh and Chamoun in the north of Lebanon.

The position of Syria is unclear. According to Le Figaro, the Syrians were reportedly "embarrassed" by Frangieh's attempted coup, and do not support the move. But according to other sources the Syrian position has not been finalized, indicating that the Syrian hawks, backed by Kissinger and Saudi Arabia, are continuing to press for Syrian military action to back the Lebanese extremists. The participation of Naji Jamil in the Chtaura talks, instead of Syrian Prime Minister Khleifawi, is an indication of a probable division in the Syrian leadership on peace in Lebanon.

The Role Of Egypt

The Egyptian role in Lebanon represents the most important political shift in the Middle East, and is the result of Soviet and U.S. diplomatic intervention. For the first time Egypt has taken up an active role in mediating the Lebanon crisis. Until now, Egypt has publicly taken a strong position against the Syrian role in Lebanon but has not taken any action.

According to Corriere, the Soviet Ambassador in Cairo delivered a message from Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko to the Egyptian Foreign Minister Ismail Fahmi concerning the crisis in Lebanon. Fahmi cancelled a trip to Belgium to remain in Cairo to take part in the peace talks. In addition, the Washington Post reported that the U.S. put pressure on Sadat to shift the focus of Lebanon talks from Damascus to Cairo — obviously in coordination with the Soviets.

The increasing isolation of the hard-core right in Lebanon, while bringing peace into focus, also raised the danger that Israel, which has secretly been giving massive support to

Chamoun and Co., will now step up its intervention in Lebanon. Israeli officials have long warned that any reconciliation between Syria, Egypt, and the PLO would pose a "danger" to Israel, and that Israel would take appropriate action. Already there are signs of a growing faction fight in Israel pitting former Defense Minister Moshe Dayan, an advocate of military strength who said that "peace in the Mideast is not imminent" this week, against "doves" led by Abba Eban, a former foreign minister. Eban this week told *Le Monde* that he supports an immediate move by Israel to seek an overall peace agreement with the Arabs at a reconvened Geneva Conference.

Le Figaro:

Hope For A Solution

The following are excerpts from Sept. 16 articles on Egyptian diplomacy in the French daily Le Figaro:

Egypt returns in force into the Lebanese conflict. Several days ago, one after the other, the leaders of the two camps took to the road for Syria; now, after Hafez el Assad, they are in Cairo to meet with Sadat. Does this movement of the center of gravity of negotiations correspond to the 'global and near change' announced in Beirut by Hassan el Kholi, the representative of the Arab League?... The latter has just conferred with the President-elect of Lebanon, Elias Sarkis, whose role presently seems essential... Especially if Syria and Egypt, incited to this reconciliation by the two super-powers, reach an agreement as circles close to President Sarkis have let on...

Lull On The Terrain

For the first time in a long while, yesterday was marked by a considerable lull both in Beirut as well as on the other so-called 'traditional' fronts. Translated in this manner on the terrain, the optimism which has been reigning for 48 hours in the Lebanese capital begins to take on some meaning. It is true that, also for the first time in months, one man, recognized by all sides as having good will, seems to be at the point of cristalizing a consensus awaited for 17 months. This man is Elias Sarkis, the president-elect.

In front of this diplomatic agitation which is being orchestrated in favor of this man in Beirut, Damascus and Cairo, but equally it seems, in the Western chancelleries, one could finally be led to think that everything has been tried so that his accession to the presidency on Sept. 23 will not be just pure form...

Yesterday again, Sarkis scored some points: first, by getting himself invited to Cairo on Saturday, where numerous Lebanese personalities already are. According to a Lebanese daily close to Egyptian circles, the United States have incited president Sadat to take over somewhat from his Syrian homologue Assad in his efforts tending to "normalize" the situation in Lebanon. A broadened front of Arab support — there is a lot of talks about an on-going Syrio-Egyptian rapprochement — can obviously only serve the future of the Lebanese president. In addition, certain observers do not hesitate to affirm that the Americans and Soviets (the latter moderating Syria's intentions for a military intervention) have reached a 'gentleman's agreement' to the benefit, in the immediate period, of the 'reunifier.'" (i.e., Sarkis)

"Sadat Takes The Initiative"

Elias Sarkis' trip to Egypt, on the eve of his taking power as Lebanese chief of state, marks a decisive turning point in the crisis which has been tearing apart this country for 17 months.

Cairo, which had until now been content with welcoming divided Arabs, giving lazy support to the Palestinians who felt abandoned, has intervened in the conflict with a sudden and surprising authority. Sadat has given audiences to Gemayel, head of the Falange, as well as Rashid Karami, the somewhat

forgotten president of the Lebanese Council. He is also expecting the head of the Left, Kamal Jumblatt, and remains in permanent contact with Yasser Arafat who commands the Palestinians.

It is also in Egypt that men who fight each other on the terrain meet, and abandon their machine guns to evoke together the future of a country which is common to them.

And Damascus? The Syrian capital seems somewhat neglected today in this triangle where Egypt seems to hold the important summit. The Syrians are still in force in Lebanon with their powerful army but they have not succeeded in imposing an agreement between those who called for them and those who are opposed to their 'invasion.'

"Their threat of a general offensive to impose peace before the transfer of presidential powers... seems to have petered out. Sarkis manifestly did not want to come to power under the protection of a foreign country. His protest would have been heard less had he not found an ally in Leonid Brezhnev. The General Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party has in effect let the Syrian president know that the USSR did not want Syria to impose a return to calm through force.

Under those circumstances, Egypt could take the initiative with new formulas to propose solutions to a war which is devastating Lebanon but also increases the divergences in all the Arab world.

State Department:

U.S. Policy in Mideast Hasn't Changed

Sept. 17 (NSIPS) — The following interview with Alfred Atherton, Assistant Secretary of State for Middle East Affairs, was conducted by a reporter who passed a copy to NSIPS. The interview was conducted after the French newspaper Le Figaro reported on what seemed to constitute a sharp change in U.S. foreign policy, that the U.S. and the Soviet Union were apparently collaborating to force Syrian President Assad to sit down in Cairo to negotiate a settlement of the Lebanese civil war, under the good offices of Egyptian President Sadat.

Q: Mr. Atherton, what is American policy regarding the Mediterranean and peace in the Middle East, in particular, Lebanon?

Atherton: On the first, that is more likely to be answered from our European desks, and on the second, I don't think there is anything new in the U.S. policy. We have always stated we are for an over-all peace settlement and condemn any foreign intervention.

Q: Let me say that according to European sources, there is news that the U.S. is putting pressure on Sadat to play a mediating role in the Middle East to cool down the Lebanon situation; that Israeli Ambassador Simcha Dinitz met with Mr. Rumsfeld (U.S. Defense Secretary — ed.) last week for the first time, and this is in conjunction with stronger than ever Soviet warnings in the Mideast; only today they sent a message to Assad to normalize the situation or else. Doesn't this add up to a slight change in U.S. policy?

Atherton: Well, I wouldn't attach too much importance to the Dinitz meeting. The Israeli press says Dinitz has been asking for a meeting for a long time.

Q: Well, when you view the Dinitz meeting in terms of the overall situation, noting that there are differences between Mr. Kissinger and Mr. Rumsfeld. . . .

Atherton: No! This meeting doesn't have anything to do with the overall situation. The Soviets have been more vocal these days because they want to prevent the destruction of the Palestine Liberation Organization. . . and the U.S. maintains the position

of an overall settlement to prevent a wider outbreak of the conflict.

Q: Since the Colombo Non-Aligned meeting, the Arabs seem ready to dump the dollar and move into gold. What is U.S. policy towards this?

Atherton: I can't answer you on that.

Q: Egypt is under great pressure to declare debt moratorium along with other Third World nations. What will U.S. policy be?

Atherton: I'm ignorant on that. You should talk to our press office.

Washington Post: "After Lebanon"

Sept. 17 (NSIPS) — The following is excerpted from an editorial in yesterday's Washington Post entitled "After Lebanon."

Crossing one's fingers tightly, one can now say that the end of the 17-month war in Lebanon is within sight. The more savage right-wing Christians may wish to get in a few last licks, which will mainly fall on civilians; and the more fanatical Palestinians, rather than cutting their immense losses, may wish to accumulate more. It seems likely nonetheless that the fatigue and better judgement of the parties, reinforced by outside pressure, especially Syria's (and even Russia's), is producing a ragged cease-fire on the physical lines that have been established for some months. It should take effect in conjunction with the seating of the new president, Elias Sarkas, next week...

In brief, the threat of Arab-Israeli war has not appeared more remote in years. All four contiguous Arab states are in the most peaceful and open relationship to Israel that they have ever known...

Unquestionably, the temptation is strong, and not just on the Israeli side, to stand pat. Israelis lean that way because of the evident short-range convenience and because it fits their pet theory that peace can be achieved only as trust is built by contact and coexistence over time. This is well known. But on their part, some Arabs, even while professing impatience with the status quo, seem reluctant to enter a further stage of negotiations...

We believe strongly, nonetheless, that it would be the height of folly to stand still. Syria will have cut the PLO down to size in Lebanon in vain if it does not now, after the American elections, move on in the Egyptian fashion toward a settlement with Israel. Egypt, having absorbed the Sinai agreement on partial disengagement, has good reason to go the rest of the way. Jordan, too, is not likely to get into a better bargaining position. The Palestinians, however they manage now to organize themselves, surely have learned that the one realistic alternative available to them is a West Bank-Gaza state accepting, under negotiated terms, Jordan and Israel alike. The Israelis, so quick to insist they will not negotiate under pressure, have no legitimate excuse for refraining from serious negotiation now that they are not under pressure. Serious negotiation means, in this context, the return of Arab land captured in 1967 and coming to mutually acceptable terms with the Palestinians. In return, the Israelis have every right to demand, with strong American backing, a comprehensive settlement on terms that guarantee them genuine security.

One of the substantial diplomatic achievements of the Ford administration has been to establish the United States as a generally trusted and effective mediator of both Arab and Israeli interests...

Pravda:

Sarkis' Ascension An Opportunity

The following are excerpts from a Pravda article on Elias Sarkis, who will assume the presidency in Lebanon Sept. 23:

For several months, now, life has been virtually paralyzed in the Lebanese capital. Business and commercial activity is at a minimum. There are shortages of fuel and water, and electricity is irregular. . . .

Many politicians consider that the Sept. 23 assumption of office by President E. Sarkis will create an opportunity for stopping the bloodshed and beginning the process of a political settlement of the crisis. In this connection, political contacts in Lebanon have been stepped up, as have trips abroad by Lebanese leaders.

Israeli Consulate:

"That's Politics"

Sept. 16 (NSIPS) — The following is an excerpt of a conversation with an official at the Israeli consul's office concerning the reported collaboration between Israel and the Lebanese Falange.

NSIPS: The U.S. Labor Party's Presidential candidate LaRouche and we are very concerned about recent evidence that Israel is now openly supporting the Falangist militia in Lebanon. Israeli newspapers, as you know, have printed photographs of such meetings in southern Lebanon. What we find incredible is that Israel, a state which was founded on the basis of the holocaust under Hitler of the six million, could cooperate with the very same individuals like Falangist leader Pierre Gemayel, who is an admirer of Hitler and who was a Nazi agent during the 1930s and 1940s.

Official: I know, I know. What you are saying is true. But look at (Egyptian President) Sadat — he, too, was a collaborator of the Germans then. Do you say we shouldn't talk with him? Look — that's politics!

Peace And Two Profiles Of Moshe Dayan

The following are excerpts from an article by Lord Chalfont, spokesman for British Intelligence right-wing circles, entitled "Moshe Dayan's road to peace in the Middle East" and appearing in the Sept. 14 Times of London.

His (Dayan's-ed.) own plan for the Middle East is ... based upon a general feeling of optimism about the immediate future. . . . He believes, too, that the military power of the PLO has been neutralized by the events in Lebanon. Like the Jordanians in 1970, the Syrians and the Lebanese have now recognized that they cannot allow the Palestinians to maintain an independent military force on their territory. . . .

He therefore believes that there is now time to move gradually towards a settlement in which Egypt, Syria and Jordan will all be involved, although possibly through the agency of the United States rather than in direct agreement with Israel. It would have to include a formal end to the state of war with Israel although Dayan regards recognizable measures "on the ground" as more important than formal agreements.

. . . Dayan believes that Israel should be prepared to make military withdrawals designed to remove real or imagined

causes of grievance with the Arab states. . . .

So far as Jerusalem and the West Bank are concerned, he believes that these problems can best be solved without redefining existing occupation areas, in the context of a gradual rapprochement with Jordan. He dismisses plans for partial withdrawal from the West Bank or for any formal change in the status of Jerusalem — if only because such partial measures would be entirely unacceptable to the Arabs.

According to a report in the Sept. 16 New York Post, Dayan, speaking before 300 members of the United Jewish Appeal in New York City the night after the Chalfont article appeared, reported that "real peace with the Arabs is not imminent" and that Israel is "better and stronger than ever before." Dayan omitted any reference to the Palestinian question, the Post said.

Allon's 'Peace Plan' Revived

The following is excerpted from a Sept. 17 New York Post article headlined "Israel's Borders: The Allon Plan."

Israeli Foreign Minister Yigal Allon today offered a detailed outline of the borders Israel would accept in a peace agreement with the Arabs.

In an article in the current issues of the quarterly Foreign Affairs, Allon said that Israel could return most of the West Bank and the Sinai Peninsula to Arab control and still retain defensible borders.

But his article and an accompanying map indicated that Israel would insist on keeping all of Jerusalem, most of the Golan Heights, most of the Gaza Strip (all but the city of Gaza itself), a "security corridor" between the populated sectors of the West Bank and the Jordan River, and a long, narrow strip of land on the Sinai border with Israel, running from the Mediterranean Sea all the way down to and including the strategic Sharm el Sheikh promontory guarding the Strait of Tiran entrance to the Red Sea. . . .

(The plan) is not in itself new. . . .

The Allon article makes no reference at all to the Palestine Liberation Organization, and assumes that the returned West Bank territory would be part of a "Jordanian-Palestinian unit," rather than form a separate state.

Why Sadat Needs Peace

The following are excerpts from an interview with freelance journalist Trude Rubin, formerly with the Harvard Center of International Affairs and a former resident in Egypt and Lebanon.

NSIPS: What do you think are the prospects for a Mideast peace settlement at this time, and how do you see Egypt's role in moving toward such a settlement?

Rubin: There is a real possibility of settlement in general developing now, the reconvening of Geneva. The PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization) won't be destroyed in this context because everyone needs it to exist. There can be no big negotiations without the PLO, without something called the PLO . . . whether it is with a leadership somewhat newly created after Arafat, under stress from the current setbacks, is internally overthrown, or under a different form. I foresee a reconvening of Rabat; the PLO could be broadened, now it is weakened, and might be more amenable to a solution.

Egypt **desperately** needs a solution. . . . The New York Times article on the World Bank and the Saudis pressuring Sadat to withdraw subsidies made that certain for me, since nothing could be more quickly fatal to Sadat than withdrawing sub-

sidies. The one thing that stands between Sadat and the ferment of the early 1950s is the removal of subsidies. As poor as Egypt is, if you go into the villages of the Nile Delta, you don't see people as in India with distended stomachs. . . . That is because of the subsidies for bread, tea, oil, sugar. If you removed subsidies, people living on the edge of subsistence would fall over.

In the Egyptian delta, people are passive, but this could change. The Communist Party of Egypt has made a comeback. This expresses itself in several ways, in very small groups of students. . . . On the surface there is no threat to the government, as the leading Communists under Nasser have been co-opted — these are the intellectuals from Al-Talia. One, an incredible character, is a man named Taha who was in prison for 13 years. He's now in the parliament, from the so-called Red District, along the Nile — a very militant area, largely due to him. I wouldn't say he'd been exactly co-opted, but now he's in the parliament. His area could be a scene of conflict.

There are also underground Communists. Since I left Egypt in early 1975 I've heard about underground cells. . . .

You can't do anything political in most situations, but if you remove subsidies, things could go. . . . So Sadat **desperately** needs to get some show on the road toward peace, so he would have something to show to his people, some territory and so on, as the economy collapses.

So from one standpoint, Egypt doesn't publicly say what Egypt wants, since Egypt privately would be backing the Syrians in taming the PLO. But when it comes to the Sept. 23 events that are being floated around, **everybody** would want to move heaven and earth to prevent Syria from doing what it has long talked about and now seems bent on doing. . . .

No one else want the PLO exterminated. Syria would pay an enormous price to do it. Sadat is against it. If the PLO is butchered, it would be impossible to have Hussein or anyone else speak in their name. No one could adopt the mantle for the Palestinians, they would be martyrs. From the PLO's position, they'll try to build on this. They're playing their own version of Russian roulette — hold out till you force things to go your way. The best the PLO will hope for is that in the end Syria won't dare go through with what they are now threatening.

The following are excerpts from an interview with an official knowledgeable on Middle East affairs at Bankers' Trust.

The problem with Egypt is the vast poverty of most of the people. But the Egyptian leadership really wants to carry out the IMF's program, including subsidy cutbacks. They'll be hesitant without promises of substantial aid, but that question will be taken up at the mid-December World Bank-IMF meetings in Paris, with other Arab countries and Egypt.

Egypt wants to do it, but it's difficult. The first big step was supposed to have occurred in June, when they were supposed to float the pound, but this is now indefinitely postponed. They are now trying to figure out a way they can afford to carry out the IMF's reforms. . . . The subsidies maintain a problem in Egypt, the large non-productive sector. But Sadat is moving to correct this. . . .

But if you cut off subsidies . . . people need that extra penny for bread. I'm fairly confident that something will be done to help Sadat out. . . . But the first step will be ugly, there's no avoiding this. It's almost unbelievable. There will be an astronomical rise in the foreign debt if the currency floats, for example. Now, we calculate that Egypt's total external debt is \$14 billion, \$7 billion for short term repayment. The IMF's revaluation will bring the total debt to over \$20 billion quite quickly, as short-term debt will rise to \$12-14 billion almost immediately. But hopefully something can be worked out.