

Over the past two months, a slew of assassination threats against Arafat have led an unprecedented effort to splinter the PLO and replace it with an "alternative" Palestinian movement controlled by Britain, Israel, and British-tained networks in Egyptian intelligence.

Elements of this operation were evidenced in last month's Egyptian commando raid into Cyprus. Notably, the terrorists who raided Israel on March 11 were reported to have come from Cyprus — the notorious center of British operations in the Middle East.

Also noteworthy is that Arafat was not in Beirut during the March 11 commando raid into Israel. There is some speculation that Arafat didn't assent to the operation and that the Fatah's claim of credit for the action may have been the action of British-influenced elements within the organization.

Along the same lines, the Vienna spokesman for the PLO, Ghazi Hussein, stated on March 16 that the guerrilla raid into Israel "did not go according to plan," since "the operation had been aimed at military targets ... the killing of women and children in the raid was regrettable."

Hussein asserted that "the PLO is not fighting a war against women, children, and civilians but against the military occupying power. But sometimes guerrilla operations do not run as planned. Sometimes the campaigns by underground organizations in World War II against the Nazi occupiers also went wrong."

#### *Israeli "Security Lapses"*

The March 11 event was also characterized by what one former Israeli parliamentarian labeled "inexplicable security lapses" on the part of Israel. So great were these lapses that the suspicion must be entertained that

significant elements within Israeli intelligence *wanted* the raid to happen and to result in a bloody mess.

According to France's *Le Matin* of March 15, a faction of Israeli security with special training in counterterror deployments warned the heads of Israel's Defense Forces on the eve of the Fatah raid that such PLO action was imminent. Despite these warnings, *Le Matin* reports, only very sparse security measures were taken and a special armed unit near Tel Aviv was left stranded away from the exposed area because Israeli transport drivers were away for the weekend!

The Israeli parliamentarian speculated that the lapses were in part due to the recent death of Israeli counterterror chief Amilhai Paglin, who died in a car accident late last month.

Circles in Israel have been pushing this week for the formation of a special commission of inquiry to investigate the lapses.

There are questions to be answered about the actions of the Israeli security forces even after the terrorists had hijacked the bus. According to *Le Matin*, the security forces have been criticized for not allowing the bus to ride all the way into Tel Aviv, where reasoned counterterror measures could have been launched, thus sparing lives. Instead, Israeli forces wildly shot at the bus at a roadside cordon, causing the bus to explode and significantly raising the death toll.

Then, three of the terrorists "escaped" from the burning bus and roamed through the Israeli countryside, providing a pretext for a massive seal-and-search operation by Israeli police units; the imposition of the first curfew in Israeli history for 300,000 residents of adjacent areas; and whipping up of the population into even greater intensities of hysterical rage.

## Soviets Hold U.S. Responsible For Middle East Crisis Outcome

In authoritative statements issued after Israel's invasion of Lebanon March 14, the Soviet Union charged the United States with responsibility for arming Israel and approving the incursion. On March 15, the Soviet news agency TASS stated that the operation launched by Israel was possible only by virtue of direct U.S. support.

TASS was empowered on March 16 to state that "what is happening in Lebanon is not a local conflict, but a premeditated strike against the Arab liberation movement and the possibility of a settlement in the Middle East." According to Eastern European radio reports, "TASS demanded the immediate withdrawal of the occupying troops from southern Lebanon. The Tel Aviv government bears sole responsibility for the new dangerous situation in the Middle East."

"In the judgment of the USSR," continued TASS, "the occupation of Arab lands by Israel and its trampling on the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people create a situation conducive to military conflicts and leads to serious consequences."

The radio reports also referred to an article in *Pravda*, charging that the Israeli operation was carried out "with the knowledge and agreement of the United States."

### Soviet Army Paper: Beware of "Nuclear Arms Race" in Mideast

*On the eve of the latest crisis, the Soviet military paper, Red Star, warned that war in the Middle East could mean nuclear war. The article, titled "The Nuclear Ambitions of the Israeli Militarists," appeared on March 11 under the byline of R. Nikolaev.*

The world press has reported more than once that Israel has at its disposal not only the means to deliver a nuclear weapon, but the nuclear weapon itself.

...At the time of the 1973 war, Israel — and this the weekly *Time* confirms — was ready to use the mass destruction weapon it possessed: the atomic bomb. In

other words, at that moment, the Middle East was at the brink of a devastating atomic war....

Until the 1973 war, Tel Aviv officially denied any reports by the foreign press on Israel's development of a nuclear weapon. However, the October 1973 war showed that by ordinary means the Zionists could no longer achieve a clear superiority over the Arab armies. That is why the Israeli "hawks," not wanting to give up their

## Soviets Warn Carter Policy 'Threatens Buildup Of Tension'

The Soviet Union harshly denounced President Carter's March 17 defense policy speech at Wake Forest University that same day, in a lightning-fast response which termed Carter's comments "alarming." The official Soviet news agency TASS declared the speech incompatible with Carter's earlier expressions of peaceful aims, and warned that the U.S. President was moving from a policy of detente to a policy of "threats and a build-up of tensions."

In a separate response to the ominous prominence of National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski in the making U.S. foreign policy, *Pravda*, March 16, issued a new, authoritative article warning the U.S. to stop delaying the SALT negotiations. According to summaries in the *Baltimore Sun* and on East German radio, *Pravda* said that U.S. foreign policy appeared incoherent and deplored the "contradictory statements made of late in Washington, including the White House." This mention of the White House is significant, because until yesterday's denunciation of Carter and this pointed attack, *Pravda* was confining its chief criticism to National Security Advisor Brzezinski.

*Pravda* commented that if U.S. officials "merely pretend that the U.S. is in favor of (SALT), while in reality having quite a different purpose, such a stand cannot be maintained for long, for the truth will be revealed.... The U.S. will be fully responsible for the consequences of a further delay of the SALT agreement.... The U.S. should understand that the patience of the Soviet Union is not without limits and that the U.S. should understand what is at stake if there is a further delay of the SALT agreement." *Pravda* specifically attacked the linkage of SALT to African affairs.

Soviet ambassador to the U.S. Anatoly Dobrynin has flown home to Moscow for consultations.

In another *Pravda* article March 15, the Soviets predicted that with the failure of the "Ogaden operation" on the Horn of Africa (referring to the ongoing border dispute between Ethiopia and Somalia) the "hot spot" focus would shift to the Eritrean rebels within Ethiopia. The article signals that Moscow is not going to pull its advisors out of the area until the situation is completely stable.

expansionist policy in relation to Arab land, stopped hiding their nuclear ambitions.

The nuclear-missile preparations of the Israeli aggressors, encouraged by American circles, cannot but call forth the most serious apprehension from Arabs as well as the whole world. The Soviet government warned of these dangers in a statement on the Middle East, published April 29, 1976. It said, in particular, that "Israel is continuing to accumulate weapons on an enormous scale. The United States of America is sending there various modern weapons, including missiles capable of carrying both conventional and nuclear warheads. In this connection, the reports that Israel is creating or has already created its own nuclear weapon are alarming."

But deliveries of American arms, some of which are potential carriers of nuclear warheads, are continuing. It is evident that the introduction of the atomic element into the Middle East crisis not only does not bother Washington, but actually corresponds to long-term American plans in the region. There is no doubt about the goals of the U.S.-Israeli nuclear intrigues: to intimidate the Arab states and compel them to give up on the liberation of the extensive territories occupied by Israel....

But playing with nuclear weapons is playing with fire, a dangerous game. Tel Aviv's atomic pretensions, relying on support of their overseas patrons, could turn the Middle East into an arena for a race of nuclear weapons, which would avert for a long time to come the achievement of a long-lasting, firm and just peace in the region.

## Arabs Stress International Help In Solving Mideast Crisis

The Arab world has made a carefully calculated response to this week's invasion and massacre of Palestinians in Lebanon. While universally condemning the raid, the Arab nations have made it clear that they want not revenge, but an intervention to restore order in the Mideast by the international community, especially the Soviet Union and the United States. In the case of the Egyptian response to the incursion, that country continued to stress that it was not bowing to pressure to sign a separate deal with the Israelis.

Syria's restraint in responding directly to Israel's invasion of southern Lebanon should be viewed as a signal by the Soviet Union to the U.S. that it should exercise its political leverage inside Israel. To date, the Soviet Union remains Syria's closest ally and protector, as a result of the mutual defense pact signed in Moscow recently by Syrian President Hafez Assad and Soviet head of state Brezhnev. Immediately following the Lebanon invasion, the Syrian government summoned the ambassadors of France, West Germany, the U.S., the Soviet Union and China to the Foreign Ministry to demand that their governments, the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, "take the necessary steps to end the Israeli invasion."

Syrian radio also announced that it had put "air defense units at the disposal of the Arab peacekeeping

forces in Lebanon." In addition, Syria's 30,000 troops in Lebanon, which make up the bulk of the peacekeeping forces commissioned by the Arab world to maintain peace there after the 1975 Lebanese civil war, were put on a state of high alert. Assuring Syrian firm support for the PLO, Foreign Minister Khaddam sent a message to PLO head Yasser Arafat detailing his country's backing for the Palestinian population.

The Algerian newspaper *El Moudjahid* declared March 14 that "Israel was seeking the genocide of the Palestinian people and intended to pit the Lebanese against the Palestinian population." In messages to Lebanese president Elias Sarkis and PLO head Yasser Arafat, Algerian President Houari Boumediene affirmed Algeria's full support for the Lebanese and Palestinians.

#### *No Separate Peace*

Meanwhile, official statements from the Egyptian government indicate that President Sadat is not leaning in the direction of a separate peace with Israel and is instead pursuing a course of action similar to Syria's. Egyptian Foreign Minister Kamel denounced Israel's actions against Palestinian citizens as "organized genocide" and aggression that harmed Cairo's peace efforts. Speaking to a group of reporters, Kamel said that "the Israeli invasion aims at the complete annihilation of the Palestinian people" and was a "flagrant violation of Lebanon's sovereignty." He then called on France, West Germany, the U.S., and Great Britain to intervene immediately "to stop Israeli aggression." The Foreign Ministry also issued a statement in which it condemned the Israeli action as "a new and dangerous escalation of events in the Middle East."

In his first public statement issued after Israel's raid into Lebanon, Sadat delivered a stinging denunciation of the attack "with even more vehemence" than his condemnation of the Palestinian terrorist raid of March 11. According to the March 17 *New York Times*, "Egypt has left the impression that it would adopt a much tougher policy if the Israelis held onto the border strip seized in the invasion." While calling for an emergency session of the Egyptian Security Council, Sadat said: "In this Arab-Israeli conflict, Israel should know that force will not provide security, others' land will not provide security, others' sovereignty will not provide security."

Egypt's open criticism of Israeli actions indicates that Israeli Foreign Minister Moshe Dayan's latest offer has been flatly rejected. According to Dayan's gameplan, the "Fatah" raid in Israel was to be used to bring about a definitive break by Egyptian President Anwar Sadat with the PLO. Sadat's relations with the PLO have been strained after that organization was implicated in the fighting between Egyptian commandos and Cypriot national guardsmen last month at Cyprus's Larnaca airport.

#### *The Saudi Response*

The Saudi response has brought into relief the crucial role which the Carter Administration must play in curbing Israel's actions. Hinging on Carter's willingness to intervene to stabilize the Middle East is whether Saudi

Arabia can continue to support the dollar and assure the United States an unlimited and price-controlled supply of oil.

The Carter Administration also faces the important decision to sell Saudi Arabia a series of the advanced F-15 jet fighter. Saudi Arabia has let it be known that it would consider any delay on the part of the Administration to be a negative response and would go elsewhere for the planes. King Khaled addressed his call directly to President Carter to "influence the Israelis to end their attack," and said that the Israelis launched their operation in "direct challenge to Mr. Carter's advice and disregard of his efforts to reach a just and lasting peace in this sensitive part of the world." The Saudi Arabian ambassador to the U.S., Ali Abdullah Alireza, said, "The Israeli invasion of Lebanon must be viewed with great concern" and that "such actions can only escalate violence and disruption in the region."

#### **Italian, West German Press Denounce Invasion**

The European reaction to the Israeli invasion of Lebanon has been either to condemn the invasion outright, as did the Italian and certain West German newspapers, or to adopt a wait-and-see attitude while gauging American reaction. In no case, it should be noted, did any European institution praise the invasion.

The Italian Foreign Ministry, on Mar. 16, issued a communiqué stating: "Israel's military action in southern Lebanon elicits maximum preoccupation. Such a deplorable initiative into the territory of a sovereign state which is a member of the United Nations introduces further obstacles in the already difficult task of national reconstruction and reconciliation courageously undertaken after the tragic episodes of 1976 by the Beirut government."

*L'Unità*, the daily of the Italian Communist Party (PCI), on Mar. 15 called the invasion "a large-scale operation conducted with the cooperation of the right wing in Lebanon.... United States Secretary of State Vance was trying to persuade the Israeli Ambassador in Washington all day Monday not to go ahead with the invasion."

The Federal Republic of Germany as of Mar. 15 had not issued an official statement on the invasion, but sources in the West German Foreign Ministry said, "we are watching the events carefully and with worry, with the rest of our European partners." However, the same source expressed his inclination to accept Israeli justifications for their invasion at face value, referring to Israeli Defense Minister Weizman's statement that the invasion was just a "limited operation and that we hope that Syria and the world will understand that."

The Schmidt government, however, refused Israel's demand that PLO representatives in Bonn be ejected from the BRD.

Although most of the West German press is crippled by the printers' lock-out, a few regional dailies closely connected to West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt's ruling Social Democratic Party were published, with severe criticism of the Israeli operation. The March 16 *Mannheimer Morgen* asks: "Why did Israel decide to

make this intervention? It should be generally well known that (PLO Chairman) Arafat does not have the international reputation he had before. A political intervention to establish peace in the Mideast would have been more suitable than this military action which may only lead to higher levels of confrontation. It is up to Israel to make positive steps now."

The March 16 *Ruhr Nachrichten* in Dortmund wrote: "What Israel is doing in Lebanon can only lead to further escalations and may have consequences like what we

know from Mideast confrontations in the past."

The *Südwestpresse*, in the Stuttgart region, published the strongest condemnation of Israel to come from West Germany in many years: "By its invasion of Lebanon, Israel went far beyond what otherwise could be justified as a mere retaliation for the terrorism. By this invasion, Israel is fueling tensions which may lead to general war in the region, as soon as the Arabs are driven into a hard line position by the invasion."

## Israel Massacres Palestinians In Lebanon

Reports from Lebanon are fast confirming Egyptian Foreign Minister Mohammed Ibrahim Kamel's charge that the Israeli military incursion into the country is nothing less than "organized genocide".

The Israeli invasion—the largest military action since the 1973 war—began as a three pronged attack, with Israeli forces moving toward Naqura on the Mediterranean coast, Rmeiche on the south central border, and the eastern Arkub region near Mount Hermon. After seizing a strip four to six miles wide along the 60-mile border, Israeli troops concentrated their attacks on the key port city of Tyre and into the Arkub, to further extend their positions to the south. Heavy shelling of Nabatiye, situated several miles north of the Litani River, was also reported as another sign of Israel's intentions to continue the offensive.

In launching the operation into Lebanon, Israel announced that "special Palestinian operations centers" as well as refugee camps would be targeted, giving the invading Israeli forces license to massacre the population at will.

The Israeli attack was hardly limited to the south. Israeli jets bombed and strafed population centers as far north as Beirut, leaving hundreds dead or wounded. A particularly vicious assault was carried out on Damur, a town located 10 miles south of Beirut on the Tyre-Saida-Beirut coastal highway. Badly destroyed during the 1975-76 Lebanese civil war, Damur nevertheless was home to thousands of the survivors of the Christian siege of the Tel Zaatar refugee camp in the summer of 1976.

At noon on March 15, a flight of two F-15 fighter bombers and three Mirage jets made three bombing runs completely destroying the city in 40 minutes. Thousands of refugees fleeing on the coastal road were also bombed and strafed. According to an eye witness report from Agence France-Presse reporter Ignace Dalle, the road was littered with bodies. "It is impossible to know how many victims there are," he reported. Automobiles packed with refugees were transformed into "mountains of charred metal." Dalle continued: "The inhabitants are fleeing without knowing where they are going... The anguish that a new raid may follow is fanning the panic..."

Women, covered with tears and dragging terrorized children, are hurling themselves to the highway trying to hitch a ride."

The Israeli jets then dropped heavy bombs on Uzai, a residential area outside Beirut, adjacent to the Beirut Airport, flattening 300 to 400 yards of one and two-story houses. Of the 40 killed in the raid, none were reported to be Palestinians. Many people were buried alive.

In both the Damur and Uzai bombing raids, several civilian centers were hit, including a hospital. In an interview with Associated Press correspondents, Dr. Fathi Arafat, brother of PLO leader Yasser Arafat and a physician at a Beirut hospital, pointed to a wounded woman and two white sacks containing the bodies of children and stated: "Do these look like military targets to you? They rocketed the camps indiscriminately."

In the south, Tyre remains a prime target of the Israeli forces. Blockaded from the sea by Israeli gunboats, Tyre is being bombed from the air, shelled from the sea, and attacked from the south. March 15, panic-stricken inhabitants fled to the north along the coast road, only to find Israeli fighter bombers striking at the northern urban centers that Israeli leaders had pledged to spare. Several Palestinian refugee camps near Tyre were also attacked. A doctor at an hospital in Tyre criticized the Israelis for deliberately obstructing access to the Rash-diye refugee camp for more than one hour.

In the towns and villages strung along the border region, heavy house-to-house fighting took place, with strong resistance put up by Palestinians at Bint Jbeil. "We are not going to let ourselves be annihilated," said one Palestinian soldier, as the Israeli troops moved into isolate and wipe out "pockets of resistance", later defining these "pockets" as "anything to do with the Palestinians — bridges, houses, vehicles, as well as military installations." Before moving into the region, the Israeli Air Force conducted heavy air strikes, followed by artillery barrages lasting in some instances for as long as eight hours without pause, clearing the way for tank-led assaults.

—Nancy Parsons