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Mideast Newsletter

Ford-Soviet Geneva Drive Eases Kissinger's Mideast War Threat

June 26 (NSIPS) — President Ford and the Soviet Union, having narrowly averted a nuclear confrontation threatened by the assassination of U.S. Ambassador Francis Meloy in Lebanon last week, have launched a coordinated effort to reconvene the Geneva Middle East peace conference before the November elections. The Ford initiative, involving contacts with Britain, France and Middle East leaders including Egyptian President Anwar Sadat, has set September as the date for a full-dress meeting at Geneva.

The Ford effort is proceeding despite continued sabotage from the insurrectionary National Security Council and Henry Kissinger, the organizer of Meloy's murder. The Rockefeller forces, led by Kissinger, have begun a final effort to wreck the Ford-Soviet push for Geneva, and have unleashed the bloodiest battles in Lebanon's 15-month civil war this week. Crazy right-wing Lebanese Christians, controlled by Interior Minister Camille Chamoun and President Frangieh, have stepped up a murderous assault on three Palestinian camps in eastern Beirut, an offensive whose only purpose is to provoke a military intervention into Beirut by Syria, Israel, and NATO.

A top-level adviser to Kissinger expressed his rage at Ford for having so far successfully blocked any U.S. military action in Lebanon. "Ford is a bumbling idiot," he said. "His policies are like the twitching of a moron. He thought his Lebanon evacuation was foreign policy, so now he wants a conference." Ford, he concluded, "is too stupid to have a policy. Everyone knows that there can be no settlement in the Middle East without the extermination of the Palestinians."

The suppressed story of Ford's moves to organize the concerned parties to Geneva was reported June 24 in the Chicago Daily News. "Israeli policy makers now confidently predict that the U.S. will take new steps to resolve the Israeli-Arab conflict before the November elections," the paper reported. According to today's New York Times, Ford will meet tomorrow with French President Valery Giscard d'Estaing and British Prime Minister James Callaghan to discuss the Mideast situation. It is held likely that Ford will propose that France and Britain join the U.S. and USSR at a reconvened Geneva parley, which was initially proposed by Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev in February.

According to Le Monde, Ford and Egyptian President Sadat were in close touch by phone during the evacuation of U.S. citizens from wartorn Beirut on June 19 and 20. Through Sadat, a meeting was arranged between a U.S. diplomat in Cairo and an official of Yasser Arafat's Fatah organization, an unprecedented occurrence viewed by political observers as possibly signalling Ford's willingness to soften the U.S. position towards the Palestinians. Le Monde reports that this U.S. Fatah meeting coordinated arrangements for the peaceful, seaborne evacuation of Americans from Beirut,

during which armed units of the PLO and Fatah provided security for departing U.S. citizens.

The presence of the Palestinian security forces covered Kissinger with ridicule. Days before, the Secretary of State — whose mercenary terrorists in Lebanon murdered the U.S. diplomats — told a Congressional committee that Palestinian guerrillas were responsible for those assassinations.

Arab Unity

Parallel efforts to establish the basis for a Geneva parley were underway this week in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, where delegations from Egypt, Syria, and Kuwait met to resolve the longstanding dispute between Egypt and Syria. According to Radio Israel, the prime topic on the agenda of the meeting was the Geneva conference, and "how peace with Israel can be reached." Sadat, who has worked closely in recent weeks with Ford, is a known advocate of a Geneva solution, and said in a Persian Gulf press conference June 24 that Geneva "must be held this year, before the U.S. elections, because all the conditions have been met." Neither Egypt nor the conservative oil sheikhs in Saudi Arabia want to see the region's fragile stability upset by a war.

In fact, the usually Rockefeller-controlled Saudis have apparently refused to go along with the NSC-ordered Syrian military crusade against the Palestine Liberation Organization. A reliable source reported that Saudi Arabia suspended aid to Syria three weeks ago because PLO chairman Yasser Arafat has close ties to the Saudi royal family, who resented the Syrian attacks and feared that Syria's actions would touch off a wave of radicalization throughout the Middle East.

Even Iran has endorsed the Geneva push. In a joint communique with Sadat this week, the Shah of Iran called for an immediate convening of Geneva, and Sadat and the Shah condemned "irresponsible foreign intervention into Lebanon," a reference to the Syrian invasion. On June 21, the Shah revealed that Iran's embassy in Beirut worked with the Egyptians and the PLO in providing assistance to the U.S. evacuation by sea organized by Ford after Meloy's murder.

Lebanon Crisis

The convergence of key political forces on the urgent necessity to convene Geneva has not yet eliminated the threat of a Rockefeller-provoked thermonuclear showdown sparked by the Lebanon crisis.

Kissinger has been trying mightily all week to get something going in Lebanon behind the backs of the Ford Administration.

The June 22 French Communist paper L'Humanité reports that a special representative of Henry Kissinger met with Syrian President Hafez Assad in France last weekend and "gave Assad the green light" for a renewed military assault on Lebanon. Then, amid reports that the Ford administration was reevaluating U.S. Mideast policy and would seek an

overall settlement and immediate resolution of the Lebanon crisis, Kissinger announced in Paris today that no U.S. peace initiative would be forthcoming, and that the U.S. policy of absolute refusal to deal with the PLO remains unchanged. According to Radio Israel, Kissinger added that he fully supports French President Giscard's NATO-authored plan for a French military intervention in Lebanon.

The civil war is fast reaching a decisive stage in Lebanon. For four days, a 4000-strong force of Christian rightists has laid siege to Palestinian positions in eastern Beirut, including the vital camp at Tal Zaatar. At least 600 people — and probably many more — have died in four days of extremely bloody fighting, and in the past 24 hours the Unified Command of leftists and Palestinians has launched a counteroffensive into the Ain Rummaneh district of Beirut and along the road to Damascus, and has set up an impenetrable defense perimeter around Tal Zaatar. A Lebanese military source observed that the Christians had set themselves up for a major strategic setback, unless the Syrians or Israel and NATO come to their rescue.

The attack on Tal Zaatar broke an extremely shaky ceasefire which had been in effect until June 22 while the Arab League and Libya attempted to seek a political solution to the conflict. Reports that the Arab League had successfully defused the crisis and that initial units of a pan-Arab peacekeeping force had arrived in Lebanon turned out to be a dangerous fraud, with the 1000 troops of the first truce force contingent made up almost entirely of Syrians, with Libyans numbering only "in the tens" according to a bewildered Libyan Premier Jalloud in Damascus. Why Jalloud lent his name and the League's to the Syrian-controlled "peace force" remains unclear, especially since the Iraqi press and even the London Times revealed that "pan-Arab colors" were simply a cover for Syrian military transports.

The domestic political risks of a Syrian escalation — especially in the face of the Soviet moves — were underlined by a report in *Humanité* today that before Assad's June 17 trip to Paris, over 1000 Syrian officers held a meeting in Damascus to "demand an end to the Syrian invasion." The meeting, endorsed by the regional leadership of the Syrian Ba'ath Party, demonstrates how fast the Assad regime is losing control over the armed forces, with growing threats of a nationalist, pro-Iraqi coup by officers opposed to the Lebanon atrocity.

The Kissinger circuit has accordingly begun to prepare the way for a renewed escalation of the Lebanon crisis. New York Times trenchcoat journalist C.L. Sulzberger foamed today that the entire Lebanon crisis is a Soviet plot, citing "those in the U.S. Government" — i.e., Kissinger and Co. — "who are persuaded that a concatenation of pro-Soviet forces decided to get together and precipitate a coup de force." Sulzberger claimed that Arafat, Lebanese leftist Kamal Jumblatt, and the chairman of the Syrian Communist party

"deliberately decided to seize power." At the same time, Kissinger charged in London that under cover of its "nuclear umbrella" the Soviet Union was now ready to launch a series of regional wars!

Another pig at the Kissinger trough is Israeli Foreign Minister Yigal Allon, who paid a quiet visit to West Germany this week, coinciding with Kissinger's stay there. Allon snorted, "We would never think of intervening in the domestic affairs of any of Israel's neighboring countries, but it seems to me that in Lebanon the situation is much beyond purely domestic affairs." This threat was compounded by Allon's warning that Israel will not tolerate "the destruction of Lebanon's Maronite Christian people."

But continued Soviet warnings on the consequences of Allon's policy of military action in Lebanon, and the rapid collapse of the Syrian invasion of Lebanon, have eased the immediate threat somewhat. Columnists Evans and Novak reported yesterday that "Far sooner than expected, Syria's flawed attempt to impose peace on bloody Lebanon through military power has produced what Syria and its enemy, Israel, want least: new prestige and political power for Yasser Arafat's PLO."

The Soviets, who have explicitly stated their determination to defend the PLO, issued the strongest warning to date against the Syrian invasion. "More and more circles are saying that Syria is seeking to annihilate the PLO in Lebanon," said Moscow Radio yesterday. Meanwhile, the Syrian army is up in revolt against the U.S.-ordered butchery in Lebanon, and Syrian President Assad is on the brink of a coup. At the same time, the Soviet Communist party newspaper *Pravda* charged yesterday that the murder of U.S. envoy Meloy "was a provocation to give NATO circles an excuse to consider the possibility of their open military intervention in Lebanon" — an insane option which, says *Pravda*, is still being considered in Washington and Tel Aviv.

On June 21, a Radio Moscow report gave the first Soviet confirmation that they had begun direct shipments of badly needed food and medical supplies into Beirut and other Lebanese cities, citing PLO Foreign Minister Kaddumi on Soviet support to the Palestinian revolution.

More bluntly, a Soviet correspondent to the Czech Communist Party paper *Rude Pravo* reported that "The Soviets will not permit the liquidation of the PLO," adding that the USSR and "the capitals of Syria and Iraq" are well aware of Western rumors about Israeli nuclear weapons. Underlining this resolve, Turkish sources reported that a Soviet troop ship with tanks and artillery, capable of landing Soviet forces, joined a flotilla of 68 Soviet warships in the eastern Mediterranean this week.

Heightened PLO diplomacy intersected this Soviet show of political support. PLO chairman Yasser Arafat completed a tour of eight Arab oil-producing countries in Iraq this week, while PLO representatives held high-level meetings in East Berlin and Moscow, where the Palestinian organization was granted semi-diplomatic status on June 22