

Israel Occupies Southern Lebanon, Threatens Shaky Ceasefire

Oct. 23 (NSIPS) — A pact signed mid-week in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, between representatives of several Arab states and Lebanon has brought the brightest prospects for peace in Lebanon since the beginning of the long crisis there. For just this reason, the men who pull the strings of U.S. Democratic Party presidential candidate Jimmy Carter, U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, Israel's warhawks, and the leaders of Lebanon's fascist Falange are now conspiring to upend the Lebanon truce and to maintain the region as the flashpoint for U.S.-Soviet showdown by early 1977. Israel, whose fanatic war factioners have carried out a provocative near-occupation of a substantial portion of southern Lebanon, including combat and logistical support for Falange militiamen and allied fascist extremist groups is the centerpiece of the conspirators plans.

The Mideast war threat has opened an intense political battle in Israel itself. The Oct. 22 Washington Post reported that several Israeli papers, including known right-wing journals, backed up Brown's comments, insisting at the same time that Israel was also a key strategic aspect of U.S. foreign policy. One Israeli cartoonist this week depicted Jimmy Carter's face superimposed over a mushroom cloud, and the Post commented that growing numbers of Israelis are distressed by the U.S. presidential campaign's heavy emphasis on the military aspects of U.S.-Israeli relations to the exclusion of more substantial bilateral relations.

Israel's involvement in Lebanon's south has become the focus of growing international publicity and opposition. The Italian Communist Party issued an Oct. 21 appeal in the Italian Parliament for the Andreotti government to intercede diplomatically to halt the Israeli incursion, while both the Soviet sector and Cuban press focussed on the Israeli actions as the key remaining stumbling blocks to a Lebanese settlement. Similarly, much of the western press, especially in West Germany, has carried front-page articles detailing the magnitude of Israel's actions. Reporters for the British Broadcasting Corporation have broken Israeli censorship regulations to report the details of Israeli-Falangist collaboration and on Oct. 21, the French news daily Le Figaro labeled southern Lebanon the potential "flashpoint for an Arab-Israeli war."

Riyadh Pact and Truce

For almost the entirety of Lebanon north of the Litani River, a largely successful ceasefire has prevailed over the country since the morning of Oct. 21, in accordance with the provisions of an Oct. 19 agreement arranged in Riyadh amongst the heads of state from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Egypt, Syria, and Lebanon, and Yasser Arafat, the head of the Palestine Liberation Organization. The agreement followed two days of negotiations initiated by Saudi Arabia, whose conservative sheiks threatened to

cut off the flow of oil and petrodollars to the Syrian leadership if the latter refused to halt its military campaign against the PLO.

Reliable reports indicate that the Saudis were motivated to act by fears that Egypt, beset by financial difficulties and a growing threat to the shaky regime of President Sadat by the impending slaughter of the mass-based forces by Syria and the Falange, was about to intervene militarily in collaboration with the radical Arab states of Iraq, Algeria, and Libya on the side of the PLO-left alliance. According to Arab diplomatic sources, immediately after Sadat-initiated attempts to organize French government intervention into Lebanon failed, last week, due to sabotage by Kissinger and French President Giscard d'Estaing, Sadat readied 10,000 troops at the Egyptian city of Port Said for transfer to the Lebanese port of Sidon to aid the PLO.

Once the Riyadh agreement was arranged, the Lebanese combatants welcomed the ceasefire, with the exception of the hardcore Falangist Nazis, who vowed to fight until the country was "liberated" of Palestinians. Yesterday the Falange formed a "Committee for the Liberation of the South" to militarily defeat the Palestinians, in collusion with Israeli forces.

Lebanon's leftists and Palestinian leaders have objected to aspects of the Riyadh accord, especially its ambiguity concerning the role of Syrian forces in the projected formation of 30,000-man Arab League force. The Iraqi government released an official statement, which has received coverage from Soviet sector media sources, attacking the Riyadh pact for ignoring the Syrian role and the Israeli incursions in the south and for its implicit attempts to divide the left from the Palestinians.

Israel: Tanks for the Falange

By mid-week, Israeli aid to the Falange included active combat support for the Falangists in the battle to take the left-held city of Marjayoun and the supply to the Falange of U.S.-made Sherman tanks. In the period immediately following Riyadh, the consensus of the Israeli press was that the Mideast is moving inexorably toward a Geneva conference that would force Israeli concessions in an overall settlement. Israeli hawk sources have therefore indicated a commitment to sabotage the Riyadh arrangement and have opened intensive debate in Israeli political and military circles over the extent of future Israeli involvement into Lebanon.

Israeli determination to hold onto occupied territories provoked an Oct. 21 appeal from the Egyptian government to take United Nations Security Council for firm action to force Israel to negotiate and compromise. Strategically key Egypt has recently expressed a willingness to move closer to the Soviets in order to bring about a swift reconvening of the Geneva Conference. Egyptian Foreign Minister Ismail Fahmi is expected to go to the Soviet Union this week for discussions with the Soviet leadership on closer Egyptian-Soviet relations.