

After what the *Financial Times* termed "intensive" talks between Arafat and Saudi King Khalid and Crown Prince Fahd, in preparation for Fahd's upcoming talks with Carter on the Mideast, Arafat, accompanied by Kaddoumi, departed for Warsaw.

The PLO is also showing new signs of expanding its support for liberation movements in Latin America. In an unusual meeting recently, Arafat extended his support to the Argentine guerrilla movement, the Montoneros. Like the Third World nations of the Mideast and Africa, Argentina has also come under the destabilizing gun of Rockefeller's banks.

Egyptian Left Calls for Arab Common Market

Representatives of Egypt's left National Progressive Union and Nasserists met in Rome this week and denounced the regime of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat. Among the participants of the meeting was Lutfi Kholi, the former editor of *Al Talia*, the newspaper of the Egyptian Communist Party; Khalid Moheiddine, the chairman of the National Progressive Union (NPU); and a journalist from *Al Ahram*, Mohammed Sid Ahmed.

Moheiddine called for the creation of a front of workers, socialists, intellectuals, and the "productive" national bourgeoisie against Sadat, and announced that the NPU now has 100,000 workers. He called for closer Arab links with the Soviet Union and for the establishment of an Arab front of progressive states and parties.

Kholi warned that the current situation in the Mid-

east is growing more dangerous because the U.S. is seeking to gain direct control over the Arab oil fields in the Persian Gulf. He called for an independent Arab Common Market, "not like the fake one pushed by the USA, but a real one whose purpose would be to use revenues from oil exports for industrial development."

Syrian Communist Party Statement On Sadat

The situation on the Egyptian-Libyan border is worsening. The Egyptian authorities threaten to undertake military action against Libya, with their press and radio broadcasting false reports against Libya, its political system, its policies in the Arab world and in Africa as well as against the friends of Libya and above the Soviet Union and the Socialist community.

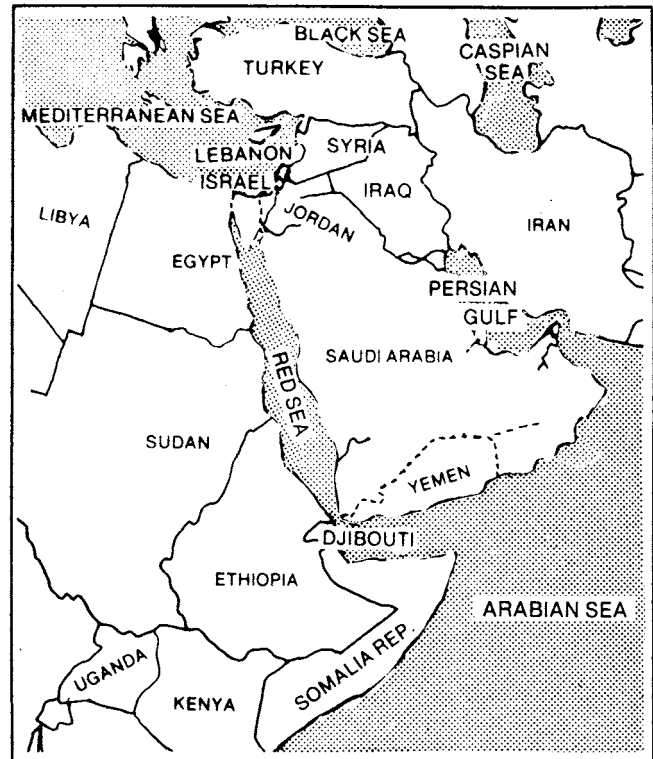
The leadership of the Communist Party of Syria condemns the efforts of the Egyptian authorities to undertake some kind of military action against Libya and calls on the governments of progressive and national liberation forces of the Arab countries to take measures without delay against the danger.

Red Sea: 'Lots Of Scenarios For War'

A possible trigger that could set off a Middle East war is the unsettled situation in and around the Red Sea and its crucial passageway, the Bab el-Mandeb straits at the mouth near the Indian Ocean. A number of sources indicated this week that should the crisis along the Red Sea reach its peak, the Arabs might be provoked into closing down the Bab el-Mandeb straits to Israeli shipping, which in turn would provide Israel with a pretext for going to war against the Arabs — including Saudi Arabia — to break the blockade. In 1967, the closing of the Straits of Tiran near Israel touched off the Six Day War and Israel's preemptive strike.

The political chances for such a scenario to occur are discussed below in a series of interview with experts on the area. It should be kept in mind, however, that there exist a number of possible variants on this basic theme. A source close to Zbigniew Brzezinski's National Security Council put it succinctly: "There are a thousand scenarios."

The central idea regarding this possibility revolves around the upcoming independence of the French colony of Djibouti, nestled between Ethiopia and Somalia near Bab el-Mandeb. Together with the unfolding civil war in the Ethiopian province of Eritrea — where nationalist guerrillas backed by Egypt and Sudan claim to be close to achieving "independence" — the Djibouti situation could provide a handle by which Brzezinski and Co. will destabilize the entire area. What provides the dangerous



aspect in the situation is that unbridled Arab nationalism, manipulated by the NSC and Interpol, could easily lead the Arabs into a foolish anti-Israeli adventure in blockading the Bab el-Mandeb.

On May 9, a referendum is scheduled to take place in Djibouti as the first stage of that territory's gaining independence from France. But the French, who have emerged as the policeman for Carter's Africa throughout the continent, have assembled a massive deployment of naval and air force units off the coast of Somalia, and have doubled the size of the French garrison in Djibouti itself from 5000 to 12,000 men. Among the French naval forces are 18 warships, including aircraft carriers, and several squadrons of Mirage jet fighters in a state of combat readiness.

'Israel Worried About Red Sea — Might Hit Saudis'

The following is an interview with John C. Campbell, the Middle East specialist at the Council on Foreign Relations in New York:

Q: Would Israel consider an attack on Saudi Arabia if the Bab el-Mandeb straits were shut down?

A: I think Israel is worried about the Red Sea. They had counted on Ethiopia as an ally, and now Ethiopia is turning to the USSR. Israel takes the area quite seriously, and if the Bab el-Mandeb straits were closed down, since there is very little that they could do about it, they might consider taking action against the Saudis and other Arabs.

Q: Is Saudi Arabia a confrontation state with Israel?

A: If somebody went to war, Israel might certainly consider Saudi Arabia as part of the war. The distance to the oil fields is quite large, but in a military showdown there is no telling what might happen.

Q: Might the U.S. back the Saudis?

A: Israel does have a problem. There would certainly be dissuasion from the U.S. if the Israelis tried moving against Saudi Arabia. The fat would really be in the fire. If we *didn't* stop them, the Saudis would probably hold us responsible. If the Israelis were threatened, they might do it anyway."

'Israel Might Just Lash Out'

The following is the evaluation of a former colonel in the U.S. Army, who now works with a private research company that does defense contract work outside Washington, D.C.:

"The Israelis could blockade the Suez Canal in response to a closing of the Bab el-Mandeb straits. They might just lash out. Assume that — and this is far-fetched — the Territory of Afars and Issas (Djibouti) becomes independent, and then Somalia, which has claims to the area, takes it over. This would worsen the Eritrean situation. If the whole thing runs into trouble then the Arabs might seek a scapegoat — Israel — for their problems, and close Bab el-Mandeb.

"Israel of course would come screaming to the United States, saying 'You gave us guarantees!' — but the U.S. would say, 'We'll think about it.' So Israel's southern access would be closed, and the other Arab states would say, 'Tsk, tsk.' This crisis could even be linked to a breakdown of the Geneva Conference.

"Israel could not do anything militarily to unblock the straits, since it doesn't have the capacity — the distance is too great. Anything can happen. You name it. It's wild!"

'That Would Mean a World War!'

A former U.S. Middle East diplomat, well briefed on the current situation in the area, gave the following interview:

Q: Could the Arabs' closing the Bab El-Mandeb straits lead Israel to attack Saudi Arabia?

A: It might. But closing the Bab el-Mandeb straits?! That would mean world war. No one can contain a Middle East war. Who could close the straits? The Arabs would never do it. They know it would mean the end of the world.

Q: But couldn't the Arabs do it anyway, not seeing the wider consequences?

A: No, no, no, no. Never. They understand the situation very well. Including the Saudis.