

leadership in four days.

— Syria, Libya, Algeria: Soviet Chief of Staff Ogarkov tours these three countries, each the target of a U.S.-instigated threat: Algeria from Morocco, Libya from Egypt, and Syria (and Lebanon) from Israel.

In addition, the Lebanese press reported that Premier Brezhnev is planning to make a tour of the Middle East and Africa in September.

During the course of the week, the Soviet media focused closely on Middle East developments, watching especially the crisis in Lebanon and the Egypt-Libya border, covering developments very carefully. The case of the Egypt-Libya crisis is particularly important since President Sadat has been escalating his suicidal anti-Soviet stand while announcing Egypt's compliance with IMF austerity demands. Although the Czech press, for instance, is harshly anti-Sadat — calling Egypt a tool of reaction and reporting that the U.S., Israel, and the Sudan cooperated to assist the Egyptian war against Libya last month — the Soviet media have been relatively even-handed, perhaps not to upset a scheduled trip by Foreign Minister Gromyko to Egypt in two weeks.

### Columnist Foresees Total Collapse of U.S. Position in Mideast

*The following assessment was given to EIR this week by one of Washington's most renowned columnists, who asked that his name not be divulged:*

**Q:** What is the U.S. intending to do about the unravelling crisis in southern Lebanon?

**A:** As Carter indicated in his press conference this week, we'll do nothing.

**Q:** How will the Soviets take all this? They must be pretty alarmed.

**A:** No, they're cleverly staying in the background, waiting for us to fall flat on our face. Then, as the international oil situation gets rough, you'll find Europe and Japan moving their own way, away from the U.S., and the Soviets getting back into the picture in a big way, consolidating relations with new radicals in power in Egypt and Syria and gaining general strength throughout the area.

Unlike us, you see, the Europeans and Japanese will clearly act on the basis of their own national interest vis-a-vis the Arabs, telling the Israelis, "You're our friends," but we have national interests to develop. This will give them an advantage over the U.S. on the oil front, and on the political question of relations with the Arabs. The less we do about it, the worse it will be for us. This is a very serious problem for us, for every American.

Look at the Europeans: they're quiet, don't make a big public fuss. And, for now, they know that the power to deal with Saudi Arabia and Kuwait lies in Washington. But once the Saudis and Kuwaitis decide that we can't make peace, then a serious crisis will break out within the western industrial bloc, and the Soviets will consolidate in the Arab world, the Europeans will strengthen relations with the Arabs, the Arabs will have new options, and so on.

This future may very well lie in store for us.

## Palestinians Reject Vance Ploy To Split PLO

After two days of consultation in Damascus, the Palestine Liberation Organization Central Council announced on Aug. 26 their refusal to accept United Nations Resolution 242 and denounced the policy of U.S. Secretary of State Cyrus Vance toward the Palestinians as "against Palestinian rights." Khaled Fahoum, the head of the Palestine National Council, the official Palestinian legislative body for which the Central Council operates as an interim decision-making body, announced that a new meeting of the Central Council will soon be held after the leadership of the PLO returns from a visit to Moscow.

The announcement delivers a major blow to Vance's manipulative strategy to catalyze splits and divisions within the PLO by holding out a substanceless promise of U.S. concessions toward the PLO in return for the PLO recognition of 242, a resolution which the organization has always rejected because it treats the Palestinian question as a refugee question rather than one of national self-determination.

During Vance's recent stop in Saudi Arabia, he issued an ambiguous statement about a possible role for the PLO to play in Geneva in return for recognizing 242. But as the Aug. 26 *New York Times* revealed, Vance had made no substantive commitments whatsoever to the PLO nor to the Saudi monarchs with whom Vance discussed the 242 maneuver.

Prior to the Central Council meeting, the Saudis and Egyptians had reportedly pressured the PLO to accept 242 and had won at least the publicly enthusiastic agreement of PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat to the strategy. But it is likely that all along the Saudis had been testing U.S. willingness to publicly make an offer to recognize the PLO in return for signs of PLO "moderation." The Saudis are reportedly now irate that the U.S. showed no such signs at all since the completion of the mid-August Vance trip.

According to Arab journalist sources in Europe Aug. 26, the Saudis are "fed up" with the U.S. attitude on the PLO question, and will now "turn toward Europe" for political support.

Within the PLO itself, Arafat came under heavy pressure from PLO centrists to in the absence of any signs of a quid pro quo from the U.S. PLO Executive Committee member Abu Meizer declared, for example, on Aug. 26 that "there is no reason for us to discuss the 242 Resolution just because we received a Hello from Washington."

The PLO also reportedly came under great pressure from the Soviets and the Syrians to oppose the Vance ploy. According to the Beirut journal *An-Nahar*, the Soviets "advised" Arafat et al. to "not be precipitous" in regard to 242 and to instead "hold out" for an actual revision of the resolution itself.

On the eve of the Central Council meeting the Syrian government-controlled press called for the PLO to take a hard line toward the United States initiative. According to a State Department observer, "the Syrians are very suspicious of activities to bring about PLO recognition of 242," since the PLO would be "playing a very strong

card" — i.e. de facto recognition of Israel for the first time ever — "in return for very little."

With the 242 maneuver of Vance shelved, the PLO will now seek an official United Nations Security Council *amendment* of 242 to have it recognize Palestinian national rights. According to *Time* magazine, Arafat will come to the United Nations next month to offer official recognition of Israel in return for an amended 242. *Time* claims that the Soviets have thrown their weight behind this initiative by armtwisting the hardline "rejection front" — which publicly opposes any recognition of Israel under any terms — into backing up Arafat's chosen future diplomatic initiatives.

A correlated PLO move, undoubtedly with Saudi backing, will be to seek European support for a change in 242 as well as official European recognition of the PLO as

a "statal" body. Reliable sources report that the French are now organizing within European Economic Community circles to bring about an alteration of 242 within the next days.

Simultaneously, according to the Aug. 25 Italian daily *Corriere della Sera*, the PLO has mounted a "political-diplomatic offensive" in Rome to end the "unjustified delay" in Italian recognition of the PLO. *Corriere* reports that the cross-party Italian-Arab Friendship League is asking for an "urgent" meeting with Italian Foreign Minister Forlani at the beginning of September to push for PLO recognition.

In a related development, a British government official, Ambassador Craig in Damascus, for the first time ever held a meeting this week with a top-level PLO official. Craig met with Fahoum, and will reportedly soon meet with Arafat.

## Kissinger And Dayan Raise Spectre Of New Lebanon Civil War

During the last week Lebanon has experienced the worst violence in the ten months since the official ceasefire halting the civil war.

Syrian Foreign Minister Abdul Khalim Khaddam and his Lebanese counterpart Fuad Butros met this week in Chtaura, Lebanon to work out a new ceasefire. The meeting was preceded by the sudden eruption of fighting between the Falange and leftists in the Chouf region, southwest of Beirut, the first serious violence there in

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months. At the same time, Falangist forces, backed by Israeli heavy artillery and air support, launched the strongest assault to date against several Palestinian positions along the Israeli-Lebanese border. *Radio Israel* reported that the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) has massed 6,000 troops in southern Lebanon, and quoted southern Lebanese villagers that the Palestinian guerrillas are "digging in." Troops from Iraq and Somalia have entered the area to support the PLO. A "preemptive" Israeli invasion and a Syrian-Israeli showdown are not unlikely.

The outbreak of fighting occurred just as a carefully worked out agreement between Syria, Lebanon, and the PLO — known as the Chtaura Accords — was about to be used to ease the unresolved tensions in southern Lebanon. The deterioration of the Lebanese truce has all the markings of the mastermind of the Lebanon civil war, former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, and his networks in Lebanon.

The French daily *L'Aurore* questioned the timing of the new round of fighting as an agreement was nearing completion between Lebanese Muslim leader Saeb Salem and hardline Maronite warlord Camille Chamoun to back up the Chtaura Accords. Such an agreement would have deactivated Chamoun's ties to Israeli military intelligence, a key controlling factor in the volatile southern Lebanon situation. As the Conference of

the Lebanese of the Maronite Front was to convene to consider acceptance of the Chtaura Accords, the battles in Chouf and southern Lebanon broke out.

The acceptance of the accords by Chamoun, and his National Liberal Party, would have guaranteed their implementation.

#### *Bait for Israeli Preemptive Strike*

The fighting in the Chouf has, for the time being, stopped, following the deployment of Syrian peacekeeping troops into the region. But following its outbreak both Falangist leader Pierre Gemayel and Chamoun hardened their positions. According to *Agence France Presse* today, Chamoun has given the Lebanese government a "24 hour ultimatum" to crack down on both the Palestinians and the Lebanese left. "Otherwise, we will launch our militias," said Chamoun in a warning to Lebanese President Sarkis. The leader of the Falange militia, Bashir Gemayel, endorsed the Chamoun threat.

The warfare on the border and the threat of renewed bloodshed in the tense Chouf sets a dangerous trap for Syria. Any direct intervention by the Syrian troops would pit them against the Israeli-allied Falange, risking a retaliatory preemptive strike by Israel. Syndicated columnists Evans and Novak warned Aug. 22 of a probable 24 to 48 hour Israeli lightning attack into Lebanon "to protect the Christians." According to French press sources a major topic on the agenda at the Aug. 21 Israeli cabinet meeting was the military situation in Lebanon.

Both *Radio Moscow* and the Cuban press have noted the increasing military role that Israel is playing in supporting the outnumbered Maronites in southern Lebanon. For six straight days, the town of Nabatiye, on the Israeli border, has been shelled by Falange and Israeli artillery. According to the Cuban wire service, *Prensa Latina*, the border town of Marjayoun has also been the center of intense fighting. Israeli fighter jets have provided air cover for stepped up shelling from Israel.