

Middle East Report by Robert Dreyfuss

Behind the crisis in Lebanon

Sheikh Yamani points to the strange bedfellows who are escalating the regional war potential.

An important clue as to what is happening around the Lebanon crisis was provided by Oil Minister Zaki Yamani of Saudi Arabia in a startlingly forthright address delivered on April 23 in New York before the Foreign Policy Association. Yamani declared that Israel's Menachem Begin and the Soviet Union are working jointly to destabilize the Middle East.

"The educated among the Saudis are fully alive to the fact that it is Israel that is the opening through which the Russians slip into the Arab world," said Yamani.

"The more support the United States gives to Israel," he continued, "the better is the climate for the Russians in the region. We believe that Russia stands to gain from the present situation and that Israeli policies, particularly those of the current government, are at one with Russian policies."

Yamani's strong statements cohere with intelligence received by *EIR* of ongoing covert collusion among the Israeli government of Menachem Begin; radical Arabs such as Syria's Hafez Assad and Libya's Muammar Qaddafi, who are operating under the control of the anti-Brezhnev antidétente faction of the Soviet KGB intelligence service; Secretary of State Alexander Haig; and British intelligence.

The current crisis in Lebanon is a product of this collusion.

From Israel, Begin is intent on

triggering a war with Syria over Lebanon in order to reverse his otherwise certain defeat in Israel's June 30 national elections.

From Syria, Assad is also facilitating this scenario, partly to focus internal discontent away from him toward Israel, and partly to ensure Begin's re-election. Assad, Qaddafi, and other Arab and Palestinian radicals actually view Begin as the candidate of choice, since his extremism is useful for winning sympathy for the Arab cause and for justifying extreme Arab acts against Israel!

Begin's extremism has the obvious effect of worsening the potential for violence and driving the Syrians and Palestinians further into the arms of the KGB.

A key target in this operation is Saudi Arabia, whose oil pricing and production policies as well as relations with France and West Germany have angered the British. Intelligence sources confirm that the British Secret Intelligence Service, working with the Israeli Mossad and the KGB, have joined hands with Palestinian terrorists in an attempt to destabilize the Saudi Arabian regime and force it to reverse its policies.

According to one source, a Lebanon blowup will be used to ignite an "unprecedented political crisis in Saudi Arabia." A palace coup would topple the stability-minded old guard of the Saudi monarchy led by Crown Prince Fahd, and

bring into power a radical clique of young, anti-Western princes working in concert with a motley crew of tribal leaders.

Aleksandr Belchuk, an official of the KGB-linked IMEMO think tank in Moscow, has meanwhile published an analysis predicting "social explosions" in the oil-producing countries.

The KGB-Begin interface into the operation to use Lebanon to radicalize the Persian Gulf is being closely examined by several Arab intelligence services.

"Look at Lebanon," stated one Arab intelligence source. "Israel's policy there is one of calculated provocation. This increases Soviet leverage in the situation. For example, the Kuwaitis have gone to Russia to discuss how Russia can influence Syria. The question of KGB moles in the Mossad is a serious one."

Sources indicate that former Israeli Foreign Minister Moshe Dayan may somehow be tied up in this game, a possibility borne out by his wrecking operation against Begin's main opponent in the upcoming election, moderate Labour Party leader Shimon Peres.

Unfortunately, Peres has maintained a strange silence on Begin's Lebanon escapades, a silence that may cost Peres the election.

Over the past several weeks, the Saudis have quietly indicated their interest in cooperating with a Peres-led Israel. Parallel feelers for "regional economic cooperation and joint efforts against fanaticism" have been extended by Peres.

But all these possibilities for peace in the region could be shattered overnight if the Begin-Assad extremists and their British-KGB string-pullers have their way.