

## Middle East Report by Robert Dreyfuss

### British push Saudi option

*Despite the pressure, the Saudi Arabians may not play along with the latest London-choreographed peace effort.*

**G**iven the failure of the Reagan administration to come up with a foreign policy approach for resolving the long-festering Middle East problem, the British are tripping over themselves to seize the initiative in the region.

British efforts center on inducing Saudi Arabia to cooperate with a new, London-choreographed "peace effort." The goal, however, is not peace. Rather, it is to knock out Saudi Arabia as a source of abundant oil and financial aid for the Third World and at the same time to prevent the Saudis from linking up with growth-oriented West Germany and Japan against the International Monetary Fund's drive to impose worldwide austerity.

Working in cahoots with its ally Secretary of State Alexander Haig, Britain's method is to lure the Saudis into playing along with Anglo-American military and diplomatic scenarios for the region.

"The answer is to get the Saudis involved," said one well-placed U.S. intelligence source. "Suck them into managing crises. That's the key. Look at Lebanon. The whole purpose of this latest Lebanon crisis had very little to do with Lebanon. The purpose was to get Saudi Arabia involved. And that is exactly what has happened. First, the Saudis got involved in the Zahle ceasefire. Then they were drawn into joining the quadripartite committee to resolve the Syrian missile

crisis. Now they have helped in mediating the Palestinian-Israeli ceasefire.

"Get them involved, I say. Break their resistance. And eventually you'll find a few things start to happen. Saudi oil production will be cut, prices will go up, and step by step the Saudis will accept the idea of the need to station U.S. troops in Saudi Arabia. This is [Defense Secretary] Weinberger's plan. Haig's too, except that Haig sees his as some sort of Pax Americana encompassing Turkey, Pakistan, Israel, Egypt, as well as Saudi Arabia."

Egyptian President Anwar Sadat is doing his utmost to facilitate this scenario. Before arriving in Washington Aug. 3, Sadat stopped in London to meet with Queen Elizabeth and other British officials. The topic: Britain's role as current head of the European Community (EC) and its efforts to expand the moribund Camp David process to include other states, namely, Saudi Arabia. The method: building on the current Lebanon ceasefire.

"The Jordan option is dead," said one Washington source. "It would be suicidal at this time for the little king to act like Sadat did and embrace the Israelis. The Jordan option was even dropped as an issue in the Israeli elections. The Saudi option is what must be pushed. And then maybe Jordan and others will follow."

In London, Sadat effusively

praised British Foreign Secretary Lord Carrington's pro-Arab, pro-Palestinian policies. He also made a point of lauding Saudi Arabia.

"Saudi Arabia did a right thing" in prevailing upon the Palestine Liberation Organization to accept the Lebanon ceasefire, Sadat said. "I consider this a turning point in the Middle East. I think the proper approach now should be to build upon this ceasefire and work toward mutual and simultaneous recognition by the two sides. This will open the door to the comprehensive settlement we are after."

Sadat called it a "very good omen" that Carrington had taken over the EC presidency, saying he showed a "detailed grasp of the problem" in the Middle East.

The British press is unanimously pushing for Carrington's approach. An Aug. 5 *Guardian* editorial, for example, stressed that "Saudi Arabia and its more intimate Arab friends can, if they wish, bring a realism about the recognition of Israel into the counsels of the PLO."

Will the Saudis play along? It is highly unlikely. "It's one thing to help mediate a ceasefire," said one source. "It's a much different thing to widen that ceasefire to bring about a peace arrangement that, in all candor, will just be a bigger version of Camp David."

Part of this plan is to use the Israelis to blackmail the Saudis and other Arabs into submission. "Philip Habib told us to lay off Begin," said one European diplomat at the United Nations. "Because if we condemn Israel in the Security Council, the Israelis may use this as a pretext to break the ceasefire. And then the Arabs will be in real trouble."