
THE ISRAELI DIMENSION

Unholy alliance with the KGB's Arabs

by Mark Burdman

Evidence has mounted that a faction within Israel's Mossad intelligence service has effectively struck a deal with a Soviet KGB faction to heat up the Lebanese crisis. The aim of this emerging arrangement is to heighten tensions throughout the Middle East, and, most immediately, to secure Menachem Begin's re-election when Israelis go to the polls on June 30.

The KGB partners in this deal, who belong to the Soviet "Comintern" group headed by Central Committee members Boris Ponomarev and Mikhail Suslov, are promoting Begin's re-election because his cabinet's annexationist policies toward the West Bank and other areas guarantees the radicalization of the Palestinians, Syrians, and other Arab elements, thereby increasing KGB influence in the region.

By contrast, a solid victory by Begin's challenger, Labour Party chief Shimon Peres, opens the possibility that Israel will embark on a program for "regional economic cooperation to combat fanaticism and terrorism," a program enunciated by Peres in a March 25 interview with the Jerusalem Domestic Service and reiterated in an April 21 interview with the *Washington Star's* Georgie Ann Geyer. Peres's offer to Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, and other Arab nations would serve to isolate radical KGB networks in the Middle East.

Lebanon enters into this electoral game in the following way. By all reliable estimates, Begin has no chance of winning the election without a military crisis in the region. Despite recent signs of slippage in the pre-electoral polls, the Labour Party is universally expected to gain at least a plurality in the June 30 vote. In the words of an Israeli source in Washington, "If I were Begin, I'd escalate the Lebanese crisis for purely electoral considerations, leaving aside the strategic reasons. The tension in Lebanon at a lower level of fighting has already hurt Peres. A full-fledged confrontation involving Syria would be the best thing in the world for Begin."

PLO endorses Begin

The KGB-Begin deal is being carried out on the Soviet side through KGB activation of its Arab assets into a hard-line anti-Israel, anti-Western posture. Individuals in Begin's high command have proceeded to use

this posture as a pretext for proposing to invade Lebanon.

Thus, at the recently concluded biannual Palestine National Council meeting in Damascus, decisions were taken to reintegrate the proterrorist Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine into the Palestine Liberation Organization and to reject the Middle East peace overtures from the Western European countries.

Vis-à-vis the Israeli elections, the PLO foreign minister, Farouk Kaddoumi, told the April 6-12 issue of the Beirut weekly *Monday Morning* that the PLO has an "advantage" in Begin's being in power. "Before Begin's victory [in 1977], the Israeli Labour Party was able, to a certain extent, to hide its fascist activities in the occupied territories. Begin did us a great service by exposing Israel as an expansionist, fascist entity and an advance post for international imperialism in the Middle East."

According to Shalom Cohen, the correspondent for France's daily *Le Matin*, superhawks in Begin's cabinet are responding in kind to the PLO profile.

On April 21, Cohen reported that a spokesman for the Israeli Army "justified" Israel's growing number of raids into Lebanon on the basis of the "intransigence of the PNC meeting" just concluded in Damascus.

No sovereignty

According to Cohen, Agriculture Minister Ariel Sharon heads a significant cabinet faction that sees the current moment as "a time as never before" to destroy the infrastructure of the PLO in Lebanon.

The Sharon grouping, Cohen asserts, is actively considering "preventive war" with Syria, ostensibly to stop a massive Syrian arms buildup projected for between now and 1985. Sharon's advocacy of such a strategy, of course, promotes the opposite effect; it will increase the Soviet KGB and military presence in Syria while generating an even greater arms buildup in the country.

Sharon is echoed by key leaders in the Israeli high command. The Hebrew-language newspaper *Davar* on April 19 published an interview with Northern Forces Commander Gen. Avigdor Ben-Gal, who is responsible for many of Israel's raids into Lebanon. Ben-Gal, a close ally of Chief of Staff Rafael Eytan, proclaimed that Israel should support the Lebanese Falangist militia "in the hope that they would take over the entire country." Should this "war of liberation" destroy Lebanon's present national structure, Ben-Gal noted, Israel would deal with "the something else" that would rise "from the ruins."

Ben-Gal was backed by Israeli General Even, who proclaimed on April 17 that "we are on the offensive. We are the aggressors. We are penetrating the so-called border of the so-called sovereign state of Lebanon, and we will hit [the PLO] where they hide."