

Middle East Report by Robert Dreyfuss

Superpower entente or a 'new Yalta'?

Potential U.S.-Soviet cooperation for a lasting peace is up against a 'spheres of influence' drive.

President Ronald Reagan overrode his foreign policy team this week by personally intervening in the Lebanese crisis. In so doing, Reagan has solicited the cooperation of Moscow to avoid a full-scale Arab-Israeli war over Lebanon.

Washington sources report that underlying the superpower cooperation to stabilize Lebanon is a more subtle process of maneuvering for a new round of negotiations to resolve the longstanding Arab-Israeli conflict. The question is whether Reagan and Brezhnev can extend their collaboration to reach a consensus on the form of future Mideast peace talks.

The announcement this week that King Hussein of Jordan will make his long-delayed visit to Moscow this month is one indication that, as intelligence sources report, both superpowers are putting out diplomatic feelers that could lead to cooperation on Mideast policy.

Jordan, a strong U.S. ally, was the first Arab country to officially endorse Brezhnev's call earlier this year for an international conference on the Mideast. Kuwait, which also endorsed the Brezhnev call, sent a high-level delegation to confer with Soviet leaders this month.

Arab sources reveal that the Kuwaiti team had the nod from Saudi Arabia, which has no official relations with the U.S.S.R. The traditionally conservative Saudis are said to be open to the idea that the Soviet Union should be brought

into future peace talks, to ensure that any general Arab-Israeli agreement is a lasting one.

Hussein began a tour this week of Persian Gulf Arab states, including Saudi Arabia, in preparation for his Moscow trip. His brother, Prince Hassan, last week addressed the Institut Français des Relations Internationales in Paris, where he reiterated Riyadh's argument that long-term stability for the Mideast necessitates a solution to the Palestinian problem. Further, Hassan repeated Jordan's endorsement of Brezhnev's call as being the most effective framework for the Palestinian problem.

According to Lebanese sources, U.S. Secretary of State Alexander Haig "was furious" that President Reagan took over management of the Lebanese crisis. Late last week, when it was apparent that White House Mideast envoy Philip Habib was making little headway in staving off an Israel-Syria war, Reagan invited two Middle East leaders to the White House for consultations. Bashir Gemayel, a leader of the Lebanese Falangist sect, and Prince Turki al-Faisal, head of Saudi intelligence, arrived in Washington for talks within 24 hours.

Haig was outraged at Reagan's initiative because the President effectively got in the way of a plan Haig and certain elements in the Soviet KGB had cooked up to partition Lebanon between Israel and Syria following a limited war. Ac-

ording to this plan, carving up Lebanon would precipitate a polarization of the Arab world between U.S. and Soviet allies, setting the preconditions for what has been called a "new Yalta" agreement between the superpowers over the Mideast.

Israel's Menachem Begin and Libya's Colonel Qaddafi are principal figures in this Haig-KGB ploy. Begin's Nazi-like drive into Lebanon and Qaddafi's backing for guerrilla resistance to Israel (including luring Syria into the Libyan camp) are creating the conditions for a Lebanese blowout and eventual partition.

Over the last two weeks, Shimon Peres, Begin's opposing candidate in the June elections, and Peres's supporters, have been denouncing Begin for fueling the Lebanese crisis as a campaign ploy. This week, Peres demanded that he, Abba Eban, Yitzhak Rabin, and Generals Bar-Lev and Gur form a five-man committee to formulate a bipartisan policy toward Lebanon. Begin has not responded.

But the pressure on Begin to temper his stance toward Lebanon seems to have been fruitful, as Begin called an unusual mid-week cabinet meeting, telling the press later that "we won't start a war, and we don't want war."

As for the pro-détente Brezhnev faction, Soviet Communist Party information chief Leonid Zamyatin was recently quoted in the Kuwaiti press as saying that détente is not Yalta; Zamyatin then condemned a Yalta approach.

Arab sources report that a "new Yalta" would foment further Mideast instability to prevent Reagan and Brezhnev from solidifying détente.