

U.S.S.R. is the winner in Israel's latest war

by Judith Wyer

There is every reason to believe that the failure of the United States to halt Israel's bloody invasion of Lebanon will cost the United States the influence it has enjoyed in the Arab world. Following an open admission by Secretary of State Alexander Haig this month that the Reagan administration has been arming Ayatollah Khomeini through Israel, the United States has now doubly discredited itself as a superpower by allowing Israel to chop up Lebanon.

Facing both Arab extremism and Israel's expansionism, the so-called moderate Arab states—most emphatically Saudi Arabia and the other oil-producing countries of the Persian Gulf—are looking for guarantees of security. Only two countries are militarily capable of providing security: the U.S. and the U.S.S.R.

"With every advance Israel has made into Lebanon, the Soviets are gaining a greater hold," observed a Mideastern journalist. "Throughout the Middle East there is a growing lack of confidence in the United States. Arab leaders say to themselves, 'Look how Washington treated its close ally, the late Shah of Iran, and compare that to the Soviet backing of Syrian President Hafez Assad.'"

A message from Moscow

A stern message to President Reagan in Bonn on June 9 affirmed Moscow's commitment to uphold its military treaty with Syria. The warning came after Israel had engaged Syrian troops in combat in Lebanon and had bombed a village in Syria eight miles west of Damascus. The Soviet intervention visibly backed Syria

against apparent plans by Israeli Defense Minister Ariel Sharon to destroy Syria's military and industrial installations. How far the Soviet Union was prepared to go in defending Syria is not known; but American intelligence sources say that the Soviets had already begun airlifts of additional arms to Syria and had put its forces on alert in Czechoslovakia, in Afghanistan, and on the Iranian border.

Over the past month Moscow has been quietly mediating the war between Iran and Iraq. It was the only big power to have issued a stern warning to Iran not to invade Iraqi territory, after Iraq withdrew its forces from its Iranian stronghold of Khorramshahr last month, marking Iraq's defeat in its 21-month battle against Khomeini. Alongside their effort to end the Gulf war, the Soviets are working to overcome longstanding differences between Iraq and Syria, in order to create a sphere of influence in the region centered around Iran, Iraq, and Syria.

On May 26, Ivan Archipov, the First Deputy Chairman of the U.S.S.R., began a three-day visit to Damascus in what observers believe was devoted to resolving Syrian-Iraqi differences. A week later, on June 6, Iraq's Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz arrived in Moscow for talks with Archipov. On June 9 the Baghdad government announced a unilateral ceasefire with Iran in order to commit its forces to Syria in the event of an all-out Syrian-Israeli war.

Though Iraq also has a military agreement with the U.S.S.R., since 1978 Baghdad-Moscow relations have been cool as Iraq attempted to move closer to the

United States. But over the past two months, Tariq Aziz has repeatedly stated that Iraq was prepared to upgrade its ties to the U.S.S.R. given Washington's support of Khomeini.

So outraged is the Lebanese government at the U.S. refusal to restrain Israel that the Lebanese Foreign Minister Wazzan on June 8 told *L'Orient de Jour* that Lebanon should "rupture" all links with Washington. Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak has sent two strongly worded messages to President Reagan since the beginning of Israel's June 6 invasion, warning Reagan about the consequences if the United States continues to be humiliated by Israel's actions. On June 8, Mubarak announced that he would boycott all future Palestinian autonomy talks until Israel withdraws from Lebanon. Less than one week before, he had refused an invitation to come to Washington to meet Begin and Reagan to renew the stalled autonomy talks mandated by the Camp David accords between Israel and Egypt. That day Egypt's parliament voted to break all trade relations with Israel, and Arab sources say Egypt could break relations with Israel altogether and scrap Camp David.

On June 5, Egyptian Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Butros Ghali had reiterated Egypt's readiness to take Egyptian-Soviet relations out of the deep freeze, beginning with resumed economic and technical relations.

Even the Saudis

Saudi Arabia, too, has begun contacts with Moscow through third parties, including Kuwait and Jordan. Saudi Arabian Interior Minister Nayef made a surprise visit to the Marxist People's Republic of South Yemen on June 6. After Kuwait, it is the only Arab Gulf state to have official relations with Moscow, and he arranged a reconciliation between the PDRY and its neighboring adversary, the Yemen Arab Republic, a Saudi Arabian ally.

According to a Kuwaiti reporter, "the failure of the United States both economically and diplomatically" in the Arab world has created a new situation in which understandings with countries allied to the Soviet Union are being reached as a matter of regional security and war avoidance." He noted that (complementing the reconciliation between the two Yemens) Sudan, a strong ally of Saudi Arabia, is now holding talks with Marxist Ethiopia.

Immediately after the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, the Saudi government called upon *both* superpowers to work together to end the crisis. The statement reflects the awareness in Riyadh that in the long run only East-West cooperation can support stability. But if Saudi Arabia sees no other alternative, it will turn to Moscow to guarantee stability in the region.

The dismemberment of the Lebanese nation

by Nancy Coker

Israel's invasion of Lebanon came as no surprise to Middle East watchers and readers of this journal. For months now, Ariel Sharon, Israel's maniacal defense minister, had, at the behest of his British intelligence collaborators, been gunning for a full-scale military strike to reorganize Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and even Saudi Arabia.

On June 6, Sharon got his way, ordering tens of thousands of Israeli troops into Lebanon to carry out the "final solution" of the "Palestinian problem" there—the liquidation of the Palestine Liberation Organization as a political and military force, and the partition of the country.

Sharon had one other goal: to emerge from his military adventures as Israel's new war hero and the assured successor to Prime Minister Begin.

There is a difference between what many Israelis hope to achieve by the Lebanon caper and what in point of fact will be achieved. Firstly, the PLO problem will not be solved. Sharon's invasion was calculated to further radicalize the Palestinian movement, and to set the stage for terrorist "Black June" retaliations that will make those of the "Black September" group pale in comparison.

On the strategic level, Sharon's actions are intended to radicalize the moderate Arab world and wreck America's position and credibility in the Middle East. Arab moderates will find themselves caught in a pincers between Israel on the one hand, and Israel's Islamic fundamentalist allies in Iran on the other. They will be forced—as indeed is already happening—to turn to the Soviet Union for protection.

Three-way split

Israel's plan for Lebanon is to dismember it. In *the south*, Israel envisions a Maronite Christian micro-state measuring roughly 25 by 30 miles under the nominal leadership of Israel's Lebanese puppet, the pathetic Maj. Saad Haddad. It was to Haddad that Begin, with such fanfare, turned over Beaufort Castle in southern Lebanon, captured from the Palestinians on the second day of the war.

Another deal with the Maronites is planned for *central Lebanon*. Bashir Gemayel, the leader of Lebanon's Falangist militias—the Lebanese outgrowth of Europe's fascist movements—is to consolidate his con-