



SPECIAL REPORT

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P.O. Box 1972, G.P.O.
New York, New York 10001
Editorial (212)279-5950
Customer Service (212)564-8529

THE MIDDLE EAST CRISIS

Jan. 17 (IPS) -- The explosive Middle East war crisis escalated dramatically this week, fueled by provocative military actions by Henry Kissinger's agent cliques in Israel and Lebanon. In Lebanon, the CIA-backed Christian-extremist Falangist militia and their allies in the Lebanese army pushed the civil war in that country to extremes of violence in what is increasingly an open effort to use the full force of the army and the right-wing militia to crush the Lebanese left and the Palestinian movement based in Lebanon. The Lebanese civil war, which was triggered ten months ago on orders from Kissinger, now threatens to provoke both Israeli and Syrian military intervention and spark a U.S.-Soviet nuclear showdown.

In Israel, a "practice" mobilization of Israeli troops and reserves took place Jan. 14, raising an atmosphere of war emergency in Israel's cowed population.

A day earlier, Israeli jets screamed over the skies of Beirut, raising tensions in war-wracked Lebanon to the breaking point. In response to the Israeli provocation, the fascist-controlled Lebanese army was placed on alert, and rumors of a Christian-extremist military coup in Lebanon circulated widely.

At the same time, however, a full-scale factional battle is raging within Israel and the United States over continued American support for Kissinger's step-by-step diplomacy and the intransigent Israeli refusal -- backed by the State Department -- to deal with the Palestine Liberation Organization. This internal struggle within U.S. and Israeli policy-making circles, which reflects a broader conflict within key bourgeois layers over detente and the imminent threat of nuclear war stemming from the Mideast conflict, threatens to break the control exercised by the Rockefeller interests over the Middle East war machine.

In particular, pressure is rapidly building for a sharp change in the nature of Israeli-PLO relations, with both the U.S.-based so-called "Jewish lobby" and Israeli politics already beginning to reflect that shift. Abba Eban, leader of the Israeli doves, arrived in New York yesterday for an extended stay in the U.S. for consultations with U.S. government and American Jewish community leaders.

Within top U.S. policy circles, a strong reaction is building to the Kissinger policy of inciting civil war in Lebanon, which, as

those circles know, is pushing the Middle East to the brink of thermonuclear war. Increasingly, the weight of leading U.S. political figures and editors is being thrown behind an alternate strategy of attempting to strike a "deal" with the USSR that would preserve the remains of U.S. interests in the oil-rich Middle East. The Kissinger policy, formalized in the disastrous Sinai pact of September 1975, is to seek the exclusion of the Soviets from the Middle East through a personalized "shuttle" diplomacy backed by nuclear brinkmanship. A top editor of one of the leading U.S. bourgeois daily newspapers admitted to IPS that he has come to favor the creation of a Palestian state on the West Bank, however risky a policy that may be, because Kissinger's insistence on destroying the PLO and backing the Israeli warhawks may lead to nuclear war "within days or weeks."

LEBANON: OVER THE BRINK

In Lebanon, Air Force jets yesterday bombed and strafed military positions held by the Lebanese left-Palestinian coalition. The Air Force attacked also several Palestinian refugee camps including the besieged Tal Zaatar camp in eastern Beirut. In carrying out the air raids, the Air Force acted against the orders of Prime Minister Karami, who is also defense minister, confirming that the right-wing Christian junta led by President Frangieh, Interior Minister Chamoun, and Falangist leader Pierre Gemayel has taken over effective control of the Christian-dominated Lebanese army, and is preparing an all-out assault to destroy the Palestinian presence in Lebanon.

Throughout Lebanon, the most intense fighting of the ten-month civil war occurred this week, with the week's casualty toll rising to as many as 1000 killed and many more wounded. Food supplies are extremely scarce as regular means of transport have ceased to exist and Lebanon's main port and industrial center in Beirut has been demolished. Major factories and warehouses have been set on fire by looters and terrorists, and a dangerous threat of famine looms across the country.

The air attack ordered by Chamoun puts intense pressure on the 20,000-man armed contingent of Palestinian commandos in Lebanon to join a counterattack, a move that is certain to draw the entire Lebanese army into the war. Earlier this week, PLO chief Arafat warned that the Middle East was on the verge of a "total explosion" as a result of the escalating Lebanese crisis.

The unprecedented deployment of the Air Force in the Lebanese war came only hours after a visit to Lebanon by the Syrian Chief of Staff and former head of Syrian Military Intelligence, Mikmat Chehabi. Chehabi, as a member of Syrian dictator Hafez Assad's "inner circle," is one of the key coordinators of both sides of the Lebanese conflict. Through ties to the Falangists and Frangieh, the Syrian leadership coordinates continual provocations throughout Lebanon, and supplies arms and information to Lebanese Military Intelligence, whose director, Jules Bustani, has been named by Iraq and by the Lebanese left as the chief organizer of both "left" and right-wing terror. On Jan. 19, President Frangieh will visit Damascus for talks with Assad.

At the same time, Syria is giving overt support to the countermoves of the Moslem establishment in Lebanon, including Karami and Kamal Jumblatt, leader of the Progressive Socialist Party.

Syria's aim is to force either partition or outright annexation of Lebanon by Syria. Until now, Lebanon has given free rein to Arab socialists and communists who, through their connections with opposition forces in Syria, have so far prevented Assad from consolidating his shaky domestic rule sufficiently for him to pursue a "Sinai"-type agreement with Israel via Kissinger's diplomacy. The Assad government is seeking to smash the chief source (other than Iraq) of domestic opposition: the Lebanese left and the Palestinian movement.

As a result of Syrian intervention, the possibility of a "Christian" state being formed in central Lebanon and "Moslem" state with Syrian military backing in the north and west has become very real -- with the threat also that Israel would seize the opportunity to occupy part of southern Lebanon. On Jan. 16, the East German Communist party newspaper Neues Deutschland charged that the Lebanese civil war was being fomented by imperialist forces "who seek to distract attention from the necessity for a fundamental solution to the Middle East conflict." These forces "at the same time are seeking to deal a decisive blow to the Palestinian resistance ... and with reactionary Christians set up a separate state."

The threat that the Lebanese civil war might provoke Syrian and Israeli involvement, raising the immediate danger of a U.S.-Soviet confrontation, was expressed nervously this week by a former leading supporter of the Kissinger Middle East policy.

Writing in the Jan. 14 New York Times, C.L. Sulzberger warns terrifyingly that if no solution is found, "Israeli tanks will slice across southern Lebanon to destroy the refugee camps and head for Syria, or Syrian tanks will rumble over the Hauran passes and push toward Haifa." Sulzberger also noted with admiration recent efforts by Gaullist leader Maurice Couve de Murville to regulate the Lebanese crisis, and then -- in an indirect attack on Kissinger-- notes that the agreements worked out by Couve in December collapsed after an "unusual bombing raid by Israel" and a series of suspicious provocations of the Lebanese sects.

Falangist leader Pierre Gemayal is rabidly seeking to provoke a crisis that would force a "total explosion." According to L'Humanite, newspaper of the French Communist Party, the Falangist press in Beirut has said bluntly, "Lebanon is where the Palestinian resistance will die." Gemayal reportedly said that his forces will not halt provocations "until the Palestinians are disarmed and the army is in control of the camps."

ROCKEFELLER'S "JEWISH CONNECTION" UNDER FIRE

The raging civil war in Lebanon and the debate at the UN have catalyzed anti-Rockefeller forces into efforts to consolidate the dove wing of Israeli political stratum and liberal American Jews into a pro-peace coalition headed by Abba Eban.

On the U.S. side, the Rockefeller machine is under attack. Philip Klutznick, a leading Chicago businessman and a personal friend of Abba Eban, was yesterday named co-director of the presidential campaign of Sargent Shriver. Shriver, who is closely tied to the Kennedy wing of the Democratic party, has thus become a key link connecting pro-peace forces in Israel to anti-Rockefeller capitalist circles in the U.S. Eban, who is in the U.S. for several weeks, is expected to meet with his supporters in the American Jewish community.

Simultaneously, the rabid right-wing Israel Miller was ousted from his position of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, the general staff of the Israel lobby in the U.S. Miller, who strongly backed the policies of Kissinger and the Israeli warhawks led by Moshe Dayan and Defense Minister Shimon Peres, was replaced by Rabbi Schindler, who is known to be much more conciliatory on the issues of the Palestinians and the Arab territory occupied by Israel in 1967.

At the same time a full-scale press attack has opened up on Sen. Javits (R-NY), well known as a leading ally of the Rockefeller oil interests who gives consistent support to the Dayan-Peres hardline position. Javits is being ousted by the press for his wife's employment at \$67,000 a year as a registered foreign agent for the Iranian national airline. The charges were initially leaked in the New York-based Village Voice by Jack Newfield, an open worshipper of the Kennedy clan.

ISRAEL: DOVE EBAN CONSIDERED FOR GOV'T; PERES UPS TERROR

Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin this week publicly revealed his consideration of former Foreign Minister Abba Eban, widely known as an advocate of Mideast peace, to the post of Deputy Foreign Minister. Rabin's announcement is a deliberate attempt to hold together his now splintering government under heavy pressure from the left wing of the Labour Party to break Israeli intransigence on the Palestinian question. At the same time, Moshe Dayan and Defense Minister Shimon Peres have escalated a terrorist campaign aimed exclusively at provoking the conditions for the imposition of a military government to drive the Israeli population into war.

Rabin, the Gerald Ford of Israel, hopes that by bringing Eban into the government he will rally a pro-peace base behind his regime and forestall the possibility of an early election which would topple the government.

Israel, under heavy fire internationally for stalling any progress towards peace in the Middle East, is now faced with political isolation which only exacerbates its crippling economic situation. Burdened with a 38 per cent inflation rate and a \$4 billion deficit, its social and economic fabric is rapidly unravelling. In such a situation many Israelis are seeing the necessity of a Middle East Peace as an urgent precondition to solve those overwhelming economic problems. The Jan. 13 Washington Post reported that the Palestinian issue would determine the results of an election if held at the present time.

In a number of interviews conducted by IPS this week, well informed sources, shared the consensus that the move to bring Eban into the government is calculated by Rabin to undercut an early election which "would be swept by a peace program," and would finish off the Rabin government and the long standing Israeli war machine.

What holds Rabin back from moving ahead on a settlement with the Palestinians, one source confirmed, is the threat of chaos in Israel leading to civil war, triggered by the Dayan-controlled right-wing fanatic religious gangs such as Gush Emunin and Likud thugs. Only under such conditions, he indicated, could Dayan, severely discredited for his role in the Yom Kippur war, "ride like a knight on a white horse" to take over the government.

Dayan-ally Defense Minister Peres, a more "formidable" opponent than Dayan, has launched a bid for the premiership with Dayan's soon-to-be-published private newspaper as the covert vehicle for the Peres offensive.

In the last week a number of suspicious bombings and fires, as in the bombing of a Jerusalem supermarket, have provided the pretext for a massive step-up in domestic security and militarization of the country. A few days before the Jerusalem bombing, Israel's crack border guard was redeployed to Tel Aviv and Jerusalem in expectation of Arab terrorist attacks. Similarly yesterday security was tightened at both city's airports. Such operations are designed to exacerbate Israeli paranoia of Arab guerrilla attacks and under cut any moves towards peace.

However, criticism of Israel's hard line which both Peres and Dayan most clearly represent has emanated most unexpectedly from former Military Intelligence director Harkoby, a known leading reactionary, and former intelligence officer General Aharon Yariv who recently stated that Israeli intransigence may impair U.S.-Israeli relations affecting U.S. arms deliveries.

MOYNIHAN BOMBS AT UN DEBATE

At the United Nations Security Council debate on the Middle East, Britain, France, Japan, and Sweden have formally joined the Arab states and the USSR in supporting the "rights of the Palestinians," thus completing the isolation of the U.S. position in the Council. Israel is boycotting the UN debate entirely and the U.S. delegation has let it be known that it will veto any resolution that contradicts the Israeli position of not recognizing the PLO.

The isolation of the two countries has given a sharp spur to the forces in both which are seeking to break with the Kissinger-Dayan clique.

War-mongering speeches by the U.S. and Israeli representatives challenged the opening of the Security Council debate, which began in New York Jan. 12. By a vote of 11-1, with only the U.S. delegation opposed, the Security Council decided to invite the PLO to participate in the debate. Israel, which is boycotting the debate, defiantly charged that Syria and the PLO are using the Security Council talks as "a preparatory arena for a future war."

In an effort to sabotage the UN talks -- which the Soviet Union and the Arab states say will create the preconditions for convening the long-postponed Geneva Peace Conference -- U.S. Ambassador Daniel Moynihan denounced the Security Council debate as reflecting a "totalitarian conspiracy" to replace negotiations by "the rule of an extra-legal, semi-secret apparatus." While Moynihan did not mention the Soviet Union by name, it was clear that he was referring to that country.

Soviet UN Ambassador Yakov Malik answered Moynihan's provocations by characterizing the attempts to sabotage a Mideast peace as "gangsterism in politics."

As Moynihan spoke, a powerful bomb was discovered and defused outside the Iraq Mission to the UN. Three other bombs -- the work of the FBI-controlled "Jewish Defense League" -- were also defused in the UN complex itself.

Such crude efforts by the besieged Rockefeller brothers and Henry "Black September" Kissinger are far from sufficient, however, to forestall the growing international motion for a settlement of the explosive Middle East crisis. Both within Israel itself, where the fanatic Zionist warhawks around Dayan and Peres are under strong attack, and in the U.S., growing opposition to the Rockefeller policy in the Middle East has almost reached the necessary critical mass necessary to collapse the hardline Israeli military government and force the U.S. Administration to support the Soviet call for a Geneva parley.

In a statement that was obviously addressed to the Ford Administration as well as to Israel, the Soviet newspaper Izvestia noted the growing sentiment in Israel for a peace solution. "If in Tel Aviv they think that they can delay indefinitely a solution of the question of a peaceful settlement in the Middle East," wrote Izvestia Jan. 10, "then they are severely mistaken ... This must be understood and seen also by the most thick-headed among leading Israelis."