

Carter trip seeks axis vs USSR

Administration goes for confrontation over Mideast

To the sound of press raves about his "boldness" and "courage," President Carter this week opened the newest phase in his hapless Middle East policy — a Henry Kissinger-style shuttle to Cairo and Jerusalem which the London-centered architects of U.S. foreign policy hope will result in a tripartite Washington-Cairo-Jerusalem military axis against the Soviet Union and against oil-producing Arab states.

What the American press has chosen to ignore in its endorsement of Carter's trip is what is known to all inside circles in Paris, Bonn, Riyadh, and Moscow. The shuttle — and any "treaty" it may produce — has no chance at all of bringing the Middle East closer to general peace — *nor is it intended by its architects to achieve that purpose.* Instead the visit will trigger a wave of unrest, leading either to a direct U.S.-Soviet showdown or to a catastrophic loss of American influence and credibility in the Middle East.

Saudis: Carter Strategy a "sham"

This is evidenced, first, by the Arab reaction to the Carter trip. Not only did the Palestine Liberation Organization, Syria, and Iraq issue attacks on Carter's aims, but Jordan's King Hussein, an erstwhile American ally, warned on March 8 that the trip would only fuel instability and polarization throughout the Middle East. From the Saudi ruling elite, Prince Mohammed Feisal, during a March 6 speech in New York, called Carter's

strategy a "sham," because it avoided, rather than aided, a comprehensive Middle East settlement. The March 7 English-language Saudi Arab News editorialized that Carter's "framework" for a settlement in the area "simply ignored most of the basic ingredients in a permanent and meaningful settlement."

The dangers of Carter's trip are indicated secondly by heat-up of crisis points in the Middle East, particularly Lebanon and the Yemens.

On the eve of Carter's March 5 announcement of his trip, the Israeli Defense Ministry revealed, according to the March 6 New York Times, that Falangist militia fighters in the South were officially being put on the Israeli payroll! This revelation occurred as fighting with heavy artillery and tanks broke out between Syrian peacekeeping forces and Falangist militias in Beirut after a months-long lull. France's *Le Figaro* March 8 reported growing concern among French commanders of the United Nations forces in southern Lebanon that an Israeli-led Falangist force is about to drive north to join the Falangists in central Lebanon, provoking renewed civil war throughout the country. *Le Figaro* linked this danger to the newest developments in American Middle East policy.

Manipulation over Yemen

In the sensitive Red Sea-Horn of Africa region, a superpower crisis is being rigged in order to draw the Saudis into approval of Carter Ad-

ministration diplomacy out of "fear of the Soviets." Yet, despite a State Department "get tough" attitude toward the Soviets over Yemen, including the dispatch of the carrier *Constellation* to the Arabian Sea area as, in the formulation of State Department sources, "back-up" for Saudi action in defense of North Yemen against "Soviet-backed" South Yemen, the Saudis are refusing to become embroiled in a superpower showdown. They are trying to mediate the crisis through the Arab League and, through Iraqi and Syrian good offices, directly with the Soviets.

But neither the loss of U.S. credibility nor the growing chances of U.S.-Soviet war are dissuading Carter from manically pushing on his course. Both the *Baltimore Sun* and *Christian Science Monitor* of March 8 report from Washington that Carter and his retinue — which includes Defense Secretary Harold Brown and National Security Council head Zbigniew Brzezinski — are seeking to develop a "regional security plan" which not only includes potential U.S. bases in the Sinai area and at the Israeli port of Haifa but also the establishment of U.S. basis in Bahrain, Dubai, and Masirah Island in the Persian Gulf — three historical staging areas for British policing operations in the Persian Gulf.

These bases would serve as the stopping-points for a mooted U.S. "Fifth Fleet" that is to be created to police the sensitive Indian Ocean region.

— Mark Burdman