



SPECIAL REPORT

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The Mideast: The Search for a New Policy

Jan. 31 (IPS) — Western political-military strategists began groping this week for a new NATO policy toward the Middle East in the wake of a narrowly averted thermonuclear confrontation between the U.S. and the Soviet Union over the Rockefeller-provoked Lebanese civil war. Over the next six weeks, the New York Times reported Jan. 27, President Ford “intends to develop a new policy on how to proceed in the Middle East.” Ford is reportedly planning a five-nation tour of the region in March or April, which would include visits to Israel, Egypt, Syria, Jordan and Saudi Arabia.

The reports of a new Administration policy toward the Middle East came amid widespread recognition in the press that the famed “shuttle diplomacy” of Secretary of State Henry Kissinger has come to an end. According to the West Germany daily, the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Ford is planning to take personal control of U.S. Middle East policy, signifying the President and his backers were determined to end the manipulative role played by Kissinger since the October 1973 Arab-Israeli war in deliberately maintaining tensions in the area. As a representative of the Rockefeller interests, Kissinger had pursued a consciously provocative policy in the Middle East aimed at — in the words of pro-NATO investment banker George Ball — “humiliating” the USSR and seeking to replace Soviet interests and influence in the Middle East with an imposed “Pax Americana.”

The philosophy of the new Ford policy was articulated in an article by Ball in the February 1976 issue of the Atlantic Monthly. Ball, a former undersecretary of State who is a spokesman of the now hegemonic, non-Rockefeller faction of the Atlanticist cabal, writes in an article entitled: “Kissinger’s Paper Peace — How Not to Handle the Middle East,” that the U.S. should replace Kissinger’s scenario for U.S.-Soviet confrontation with an effort to draw the USSR into jointly policing a “stable” Arab-Israeli truce. This policy is also backed by the Kennedy-Shriver wing of the Democratic Party.

However, neither Ford nor Ball nor the Democrats have openly announced their intention to begin the process of dismantling the network of warhawks and extreme nationalists on both sides of the Arab-Israeli ceasefire lines that for a generation has served as puppets of the Rockefeller oil cartel. Led by the right wing of the Israeli military establishment headed by former Defense Minister Moshe Dayan, the fanatic Falangist party of Christian extremists in Lebanon, the Syrian military junta led by Hafez Assad, and the Saudi royal family, a deeply ingrained Rockefeller machine stands continually ready to launch yet another bloody Arab-Israeli war at the behest of its new desperate masters.

This reality was dramatically underlined this week with the revelation in the Chicago Sun-Times Jan. 28 that Israeli Defense Minister Shimon Peres and his allies in the Dayan wing had proposed a plan for an Israeli invasion of Lebanon last week at a secret meeting of the Israeli cabinet held during the height of the Lebanese civil war. According to correspondent Thomas Ross, the plan was “personally blocked” by Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. IPS later learned that Ross received the story directly from Rabin’s closest aide following the prime minister’s arrival in the U.S. Jan. 27. Rabin, who is here to meet with Ford and with Israeli dove leader Abba Eban, also in the U.S., thus intervened at a critical moment to block a war move by the Rockefeller-allied Dayan-Peres gangsters.

Last week, IPS reported that a war was narrowly averted in the hours following the Jan. 19-20 invasion of Lebanon by Syrian-backed right-wing Palestinian commandos, during which key Christian fascist leader, Lebanese Interior Minister Camille Chamoun, demanded foreign intervention. The expected Israeli invasion, which was timed to follow the Syrian move and could well have triggered a U.S.-Soviet showdown, was blocked by Rabin only as a result of strong outside pressure from pro-detente factions in the U.S., including most likely President Ford himself.

The Soviet Angle

In place of the Kissinger confrontation policy — which led directly to the war crisis last week — Atlanticist policy makers are gradually reaching a consensus that the Soviet passive, “Oblomov” faction can be strengthened against the hardline Leninists in the Kremlin by pursuing a softer, less provocative course in NATO-Soviet relations. The extremely volatile Middle East is thus consciously being cooled down in an effort to offer Moscow a deal: jointly enforced “stability” in exchange for a tacit Soviet pledge not to lend support to revolutionary movements and governments in the Middle East and elsewhere.

According to IPS intelligence evaluations, the elements of the new Ford policy, framed around the concept of “stability,” will probably involve some or all of the following ideas. First, a NATO-imposed settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict, ratified at a Geneva Conference during which the Atlanticists hope to induce the USSR to “bargain away” its influence in Syria and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Second, a policy of detente in the Persian Gulf, based on the Iran-Iraq agreement of last March; this will include a scale-down of arms supplies into the region and a subversive “soft” policy toward Iraq. Third, a sharp political attack against the Rockefeller-controlled Seven Sisters oil cartel

and its chief Middle East allies, the Saudi royal family.

This intended pacification of the Middle East, however, is based on a number of exceedingly dangerous fallacies, which, if left uncorrected, will ensure that within weeks or months the region will again become an arena for U.S.-Soviet nuclear confrontation.

The Ball Fallacy

"If the Soviets agreed to join with us in a serious effort to establish an enduring peace in the Middle East," writes Ball in his Atlantic Monthly piece, it would mean that detente extended beyond...strictly bilateral problems....The Cold War could recede into the mists of history."

What Ball neglects in his proposed strategy is the existence of extremely powerful pro-development sentiments throughout the Arab sector, represented most strongly within the Arab Baath Socialist Party, which currently rules in Iraq and which has an organized network extending into most Arab countries. In addition, the peculiar character of Arab nationalism, which, since the rule of former Egyptian President Nasser, has been closely identified with development and social progress, guarantees that a "stable" Middle East cannot exist in its present state of miserable economic stagnation. Unless Ball's, or any other program, includes a strategy for increasing real income and standard of living of the Arab worker, then the resulting social unrest from working class and pro-development military layers in Egypt, Syria, etc., will in short order topple one or more Arab governments. This would immediately unravel the patchwork "stability" Ball seeks.

Further, without the crucial ingredient of the programmatic integration of Israel's highly developed technology into a regional development program — as outlined in the July 1975 ICLC Resolution on Israel — any "peace program" that is based solely on border adjustments and formal peace treaties contains the seeds of future conflicts. To establish a real stable peace in the Middle East, the mutual paranoia and nationalist hostility on both sides of the Arab-Israeli dispute must be permanently overcome by breaking down the intense, quasi-religious fear of outsiders that dominates Israel and, to a lesser degree, the Arabs. Ball and his co-thinkers ignore this very real problem, as they ignore the need to seek a negotiated solution to the Palestinian issue. Only Arab socialists, such as those in the Baath party, along with some relatively sane pro-peace factions in Israel have the ability to even begin to overcome a generation of brainwashing and hysteria and take the initial necessary steps toward achieving a lasting peace in the Mideast.

Compounding the shortcomings of his policies, Ball thus proposes to leave intact the Rockefeller-created networks led by Assad, Dayan and the Saudis. To maintain this dangerous troika in power would require a deployment of counter-insurgent forces that will rapidly lead to an expanded civil war in Lebanon, a revolt in Syria, and a collapse of the shaky Israeli regime. The gains of the pro-Iraqi and Communist left in Lebanon, and to some extent in Syria, since the beginning of the Kissinger-provoked Lebanese civil war last year dictate a fundamental shift in the political alignment of those two states in the near future.

Lebanon: Syria's "Operation Takeover"

The Syrian invasion of Lebanon, while having failed to produce the intended Israel-Syria war planned by the Rockefeller forces, has crushed Lebanon under the weight of a brutal occupying army. This force, which includes both

Syrians and Syrian-controlled Palestinians, has virtually taken over the day-to-day affairs of the Lebanese state — a state which has all but ceased to exist. A tripartite junta, comprised of the commanders of the Syrian, Lebanese, and Palestinian Liberation armies, has now assumed near dictatorial powers in Beirut.

The Rockefellers and their opposition are in uneasy tactical unity on this policy of "stabilization" of Lebanon through Syrian occupation. Both factions have endorsed the massacre and repression of Lebanon's Communist and Baathist left, an operation being carried out under the direct control of the NATO-backed Assad regime in Damascus.

Zuhair Mohsin, the Syrian Military Intelligence agent who heads the PLO military department, has moved to break the back of the Palestinian left wing in Lebanon, which in recent months had become increasingly allied with Lebanon's left. Mohsin announced earlier this week that he had formed a court to "try, find, and execute" leftist Palestinians who attacked the mansion of the fascist Interior Minister, Camille Chamoun. Mohsin and his Syrian backers have set up armed patrols in Moslem working class districts of Lebanon, often murdering on sight anyone seen carrying "unauthorized" weapons.

"A communist Lebanon would be a catastrophe," wrote the chief editorialist in the Syrian party newspaper Al-Baath Jan. 25, justifying the Syrian-PLA move into Lebanon. The Washington Post reported Jan. 27 that the Syrian junta in Beirut would order "restrictions on political liberties, the press, and trade union freedom" under an "authoritarian regime." In Washington, the State Department openly endorsed the Syrian move into Lebanon, welcoming it as introducing "calm" into the war-torn country.

The Syrian takeover of Lebanon has the following strategic objective. Until now, the powerful Lebanese left has been the center of a large and growing opposition to both Assad and PLO chief Yasser Arafat. Since Lebanon was a relatively democratic country by comparison to the Syrian dictatorship, the flourishing left using numerous channels, had a strong input into Syria itself. The left's strength, as well as that of the free-wheeling Palestinian movement in Lebanon thus made it virtually impossible for Assad to follow Egypt's Anwar Sadat along the path of overt pro-Western activity. In a sense, Assad was thus a hostage of the Lebanese left and the Palestinians.

By seeking to establish Syrian police and military hegemony in Lebanon, Assad is thus attempting to clear the path for an eventual Israeli-Syrian military disengagement, modeled on the Sinai pact. This would allow NATO to capitalize on the fact that Assad, like Sadat, is a would-be open collaborator of the Atlanticists.

The sort of "stability" that NATO hopes to impose on Lebanon through simple police and military measures, however, is incapable of securing the region without a parallel Marshall Plan-type infusion of development aid. Despite the fact that the overwhelming military force of Syria has temporarily submerged the Lebanese left and their Palestinian allies, both Syria, and more importantly Egypt, the linchpin of the Arab East, are nearly bankrupt economically. However, to the extent that capitalists cling to the bankrupt dollar and its enormous debt overhang, the financing of such programs is out of the question.

The Case of Egypt

The case of Egypt is exemplary, since under Sadat the

Egyptian government has gone virtually as far as an Arab regime can go in endorsing pro-NATO policies — yet basic economic reality now threatens to rapidly undo the work of 18 months of Kissinger's step-by-step diplomacy.

The government of Egypt this week bucked International Monetary Fund policy to increase the level of government subsidies on food and other basic commodities to the country's starving population. In a sharp reversal of economic policy, Anwar Sadat issued 700 million Egyptian pounds of subsidies, over 58 million from 1975 and 200 million over the projected level for 1976.

The government decision reflects an intense struggle behind the scenes between President Sadat and elements of the Egyptian government bureaucracy and military who have retained adherence to the policies of the late President Nasser, which called for close cooperation with the Soviet Union around development. Pressure from these layers now outweighs pressure for austerity from the IMF. "Within months," a U.S. based think-tank spokesman informed IPS, Sadat will totally reverse his famed Open Door policy towards Western capital.

Since he ascended to the presidency, Sadat, in cooperation with Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, has opened up Egypt to capitalist investment. IMF promises of substantial investment were accompanied by the proviso that Sadat institute "reforms": paring the Egyptian bureaucracy, permitting private investment, devaluation of the Egyptian pound, and chopping food subsidies.

As a result, Egypt, placed on the World Bank's 1974 list of Fourth World nations slated for triage, now faces an enormous national debt of \$12 billion and declining revenues. In addition, those Mideast oil-producing nations which have always bailed out Sadat in the past are now withholding funds as pressure to conform to IMF demands. This week Egyptian vice-president Mamdouh Salem cancelled for the second time his fundraising trip to Saudi Arabia, Iran, Kuwait, and other oil sheikhdoms to raise \$4 billion needed for refinancing the debt.

This week Egypt participated in the Group of 77 of Nonaligned Nations "experts" meeting in Manila, Philippines, where according to the French daily *Le Figaro*, all nations formally agreed to a debt moratorium.

When asked about the recent signs that Egypt has stopped bowing to the IMF, a State Department simply replied, "The IMF doesn't understand politics." The combination of the miserable level of working-class and peasant living standards and the existence of pro-Soviet layers in the bureaucracy make it almost impossible for Sadat to proceed full-steam ahead with more austerity. According to one Commerce Dept. official, recently returned from Egypt, solid "East European-type" planning groups exist in the Planning Ministry and other departments of the bureaucracy. As reflected periodically in the Egyptian press, these layers are engaged in serious discussion around a debt moratorium and an International Development Bank. This layer is also in direct contact with the Soviet Union. Last week, representatives from the Soviet Union ran a conference on national planning in Cairo.

Persian Empire Folds Up

Paralleling the clumsy efforts of the pro-NATO, non-Rockefeller financiers and their allies in the Ford Administration to cool down the Arab-Israeli conflict, an effort is now underway to stabilize the Persian Gulf. They key

element of this operation is a NATO-dictated reversal of the Rockefeller policy in Iran, formerly a bastion of the Rockefeller oil cartel and a leading proponent of the Rockefeller faction's pro-war and anti-Soviet policies in the region.

The change in policy was announced this week by the Shah of Iran himself. In an interview with the *Washington Post*, the Shah declared that Iran intended to "revamp our foreign policy and maybe limit ourselves to defending the interests of our country alone, which is probably going to create an entirely new situation." Confirming that Iran's role as regional policeman was being entirely junked in favor of a much more inward-looking strategy "because we have to spend every last dime for our own internal development," the Shah said that Iran would abandon its previously proclaimed role of defending the naval and shipping lanes in the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean. The Shah added that perhaps a sharp cut in military spending would follow these moves.

Coinciding with the Shah's new outlook, the Iranian government took steps to dismantle the Rockefeller apparatus inside the country. The commander of the U.S. military mission in Iran, General Vandenburg, was fired for "abrasive" diplomacy, according to the *New York Times*. Vandenburg is the son of a former chief of the U.S. Air Force who was closely linked to the Rockefeller-connected RAND Corporation. In addition, the Shah announced, tough new measures aimed at halting the practice by which U.S. arms manufacturers paid huge "commissions" to Iranian officials, thus eliminating a primary mechanism by which the Rockefeller "arms mafia" made inroads into controlling key elements of the Iranian bureaucracy.

The de-emphasis on Iran's military and arms role coincides with the Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-Mass) policy toward the Persian Gulf area. Almost one year ago, Kennedy suggested that the U.S. encourage a ban on further military sales to Iran and the Arab Gulf because of the danger of a conflict with Iraq in the region and the resulting threat of a U.S.-Soviet showdown. Kennedy is also pushing to investigate the role of the oil companies in controlling the oil producers' cartel, OPEC, and is sponsoring legislation to break up the Rockefeller-owned oil cartel, the U.S. Seven Sisters. On this, too, the Shah demonstrated that he had changed with the changing times: in an interview with the *Christian Science Monitor*, he attacked the Rockefeller oil companies for strangling Iran's production and thus crippling Iranian internal development programs.

The Shah received backup on the U.S. side from the House Intelligence Committee, which is essentially controlled by the new Atlanticist cabal. First, the U.S. ambassador to Iran, Richard Helms, a former Director of the CIA, was put under heavy fire by the committee for his role in CIA domestic covert activities in the 1960s. This, combined with the firing of "abrasive" Mr. Vandenburg, has greatly undercut the Rockefeller military and intelligence capability within Iran. Secondly, the House revealed that Kissinger was directly and personally responsible for the dangerous covert aid to Kurdish rebels in Iraq during 1972-1974, thus providing an official condemnation of the Rockefeller-Kissinger policy of fomenting war between Iran and Iraq.

From all indications, Iran is being readied as a potential force to intervene in the Middle East on the side of the Ball-Kennedy forces against the Rockefeller faction. The Shah announced that all foreign aid was being suspended as a result of the economic crisis — except for \$2.5 billion aid promised to Syria and Egypt.