



Kissinger Prepares Israeli Pre-emptive Strike

May 22 (IPS) — Israel is preparing a pre-emptive military strike against Syria and Lebanon, Arab diplomatic sources reported this week.

Defense Minister Shimon Peres, an ally of U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and the leader of Israeli hawks, has launched a cold coup against the government of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. Peres' coup, backed by the National Security Council, is aimed at blocking a growing movement in leading Israeli political circles in support of an Israeli peace initiative.

The threat of an Israeli attack against Syria and Lebanon is a direct response to the imminent collapse of shaky rightist governments in both countries. Under pressure from Iraq, Libya, Algeria and the Palestine Liberation Organization, the Syrian regime of President Hafez Assad is on the verge of being overthrown by a coalition of pro-Iraqi and Communist forces, nationalist army officers, and Palestinians. In addition, the powerful Lebanese left, now backed openly by the entire Arab progressive movement, is close to establishing itself as the government of a united Lebanon.

The planned Israeli attack is meant to crush both the Syrian army and the left in Lebanon in a devastating aerial strike. Henry Kissinger, the mastermind of the policy of deliberate U.S.-Soviet confrontation in the Middle East, is supporting the Israeli hawks to achieve what the Rockefeller forces consider necessary to regain NATO hegemony over the collapsing dollar empire: a "credible show of force" against the USSR as a demonstration of ruthlessness. Rockefeller and Co. intend to use a Middle East war, which could rapidly escalate to nuclear weapons, to convince the Soviet Union that the discredited Schlesinger doctrine of "limited" or regional nuclear war is a viable U.S. military stance.

According to military observers, an Israeli strike against Syria — even if ostensibly a response to provoked Syrian threats — would almost definitely invite a military countermove from Iraq and the Soviet Union. This, under conditions of an Israeli "breakaway" ally, would set up a potential use of the Israeli nuclear arsenal against Baghdad, the Iraqi Kirkuk oil fields, and Soviet forces. The result would be the annihilation of most of the world in a thermonuclear holocaust.

The "breakaway ally" mode is a Rand Corporation scenario under which Israel, supposedly abandoned by the U.S., could launch a military attack seemingly unconnected to its real sponsors, Kissinger and the National Security Council.

A possible deadline for the outbreak of war is May 30, the date on which the mandate for United Nations peace-keeping forces on the Golan Heights between Israel and Syria expires. The besieged Assad regime in Syria, under pressure from pro-socialist domestic opposition, may opt for a belligerent anti-Israeli position before May 30 in a suicidal attempt to quiet internal unrest by a mobilization against Israel. Such a course would invite an Israeli military strike, especially if the UN forces are ousted by Syria.

A desperate diversionary maneuver was announced today by French President Giscard d'Estaing, presently visiting the U.S. Giscard declared that France was prepared to send "a couple of regiments" of the French army to Lebanon "on 48-hours notice" to join Syrian troops in fighting the left. Though phrased softly, the Giscard initiative was denounced by the Lebanese left, Iraq, and Algeria, and the shredded Lebanese government declared that it had no wish for French troops on Lebanese soil."

Revolution in Lebanon, Syria

Led by Iraq, Algeria, and Libya, the entire Arab left moved this week to show its support for the Lebanese National Front of Kamal Jumblatt. The Lebanese leftists, which include pro-Iraqi Baathists and the Lebanese Communist party, have been fighting a bloody civil war in alliance with the PLO against the Lebanese right, which has been heavily supported by the Syrian army. The wave of support for the left in Lebanon came in the aftermath of a massacre of Baathists in Tripoli, Lebanon's second city, by Syrian army forces last week.

Yesterday, a meeting in Beirut, Lebanon's capital, brought together representatives of the Lebanese left, the PLO, Iraq, Libya, and Algeria. At the meeting, the Iraqi delegate proposed the formation of an Arab front to support the left. "The Lebanese revolution cannot be stopped halfway," he declared. Algerian President Houari Boumedienne sent a special emissary to Lebanon to express Algeria's solidarity with the left. Earlier in the week, Libyan Prime Minister Jalloud visited Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq to communicate the full support of Libya for the revolution in Lebanon.

The spreading support of the Arab working class for the Lebanese battle against the Syrians and the Lebanese Falangists has pulled the rug out from under the already shaky Syrian regime. According to Die Welt, a West German daily, rumors flooded Beirut that a coup d'etat was imminent in Damascus that would bring about a "drastic change in the Syrian position toward the left in Lebanon."

In fact, a coup may already be underway. Israeli radio reported today that the Lebanese Communist party newspaper stated that three Syrian Air Force bases had been placed on a state of alert because of opposition within Syria to Assad's support of the Lebanese right. Earlier this week, several waves of arrests of Syrian leftists and Palestinians by Syrian security forces were reported, and as many as 5000 military officers and civilian party members have been arrested in Syria since April.

The Syrian Communist Party, which left the National Front in Damascus this week, charged in Berlin that NATO was plotting against Syria. "The imperialist plot against Syria has intensified," Syrian CP delegate Yakoub Garro told the East German Communist Party congress. "The aim is to isolate our country in the Arab sphere... wreck its alliance with the Palestine resistance movement, embolden domestic reaction, and reverse progressive accomplishments."

In Lebanon, meanwhile, the leftist forces have made major gains in fighting since the election of the Syrian-backed President Elias Sarkis in early May. The heartland of the Falangist-controlled area is under heavy attack, and key mountain villages have fallen to the left in areas around the fringe of the shrinking Christian-held territory. According to Israeli reports, the Falange arms supplies have been depleted. The Arab political pressure on Syria has hampered Syrian efforts to back up the Christian right, further weakening their position in Lebanon.

Kissinger Readies Israeli Hawks

The possibility that both Syria and Lebanon might fall to the revolutionary left — an event that would ensure the collapse of the entire NATO strategic position in the Middle East and the eastern Mediterranean — underscore the frantic preparations by Kissinger and his Israeli allies to unleash a Middle East war.

An open split has emerged in the Israeli government. Shimon Peres, along with ex-Defense Minister Moshe Dayan and the former "Rafi" faction of the Labour Party, has openly threatened to bolt the government and form an alliance with the rightist Likud opposition. The threat from Peres — who controls much of the Israeli military and intelligence establishment — to wreck the government forced impotent Prime Minister Rabin to capitulate to the hawks' demands, according to the Jerusalem Post. In effect, the Peres move serves as a quiet coup against Rabin and Israeli centrists.

Two open signs of factional division emerged this week. First, a provocative "peace plan" floated by the Israeli embassy in London and circulated by AP, which did not

mention either the Palestinians or an Israeli territorial withdrawal, was flatly denied by the Israeli foreign ministry! At the same time, the Chicago Daily News had a report on May 21 that Israel and the USSR had undertaken discrete diplomatic contacts on reconvening the Geneva Conference with the participation of the PLO. The News also reported a Soviet offer to reestablish relations with Israel, broken off in 1967.

Then, while Israeli hawks around Peres were demanding a stepped-up policy of repression in the occupied West Bank, where three Arabs were gunned down by Israeli soldiers and hundreds arrested this week, an official Defense Ministry spokesman stated that Israel did not consider the PLO responsible for the rebellion, removing a possible cause for war. The spokesman added that Israel would take steps to soften its repressive policy toward the occupied area.

Publicly, the Israeli Cabinet hushed up its sharp factional battles, with Peres and Rabin supposedly reaching an accord on policy, but the Israeli press was skeptical of the sudden rapprochement between the two political enemies. The consensus in the Israeli press is that the government must fall. "Pro-Peres sources" in the Jerusalem Post were quoted as saying that Peres is being "intolerably -and in Peres' view deliberately — undermined by Rabin, and that the situation cannot continue even on an interim basis." The Chicago Daily News speculated May 19 that two governments could emerge from the crisis; the first, a war government, headed by Peres, with Yigal Allon as Defense Minister, and the second, a peace government led by Rabin, with dove leader Abba Eban as foreign minister and Haim Zadok, an ally of Eban, as defense minister.

Text Of Remarks By Sen. Adlai Stevenson III (D.-Ill.) At Hearings Of The Neareast Sub-Committee

For many years American policy in the Middle East has consisted of little more than a series of efforts to buy time. The passage of time without movement toward peace — has moved the situation toward war.

The lines harden, the tensions mount, the most immoderate elements on all sides gain authority.

Now the survival of a moderate Sadat government in Egypt may depend on its immoderation, as well as sufficient weaponry from the West to keep the officer corps from turning restless — and sufficient capital for the distressed Egyptian economy to keep the people from turning restless.

Much of the authority lost by the Sadat government in the Arab world was recovered by the government of President Assad in Syria.

The Palestinians are the central problem. And the PLO, while suffering from serious internal disunity and some distrust in Arab capitals, now stands without significant rival as the representative of the Palestinians.

Now the Arab side has limitless financial resources. The Israeli economy is depressed by the burdens of war—and the Israeli people are divided.

The passage of time has advantaged no one really, except perhaps the Soviet Union. Arab states are dependent on the Soviet Union. Even Jordan is turning to the Soviet Union for weapons.

Whatever else may be said about American policy in the Middle East, the impasse has resumed. Step-by-step diplomacy has run its course. The U.S.-Israeli "end of war" formula never was realistic. American efforts appear to be confined to keeping the Israelis and Syrians from warring over Lebanon.

The deadly impasse has resumed. The movement is toward war. And the levels of violence for the next battle in the long war are raised, as happens in every such interlude. The nuclear threshold has now been reached in the Middle East.

Now for the good news.

As we all find on our trips to the Middle East, communication proceeds on two separate planes, one public and one private. Arab public utterances, in particular, are distorted by the exaggeration and hyperbole which mark Arab culture. It strengthens the hard liners in Israel who say "they want to destroy us."