

## Soviets prepare to make new troubles in the Mideast

by Thierry Lalevée

The Soviet leadership has given the green light to its local satrapies Syria, Iran, and Libya to prepare new regional wars. Between early September and mid-October, the Soviet Union has scheduled an escalation of the six-year-old Gulf war between Iran and Iraq, as well as a war between Syria and Israel. After weeks of political uncertainty, following President Reagan's secret letter to Mikhail Gorbachov, the Soviets have decided to launch an offensive to test the United States. The Soviets aim to destroy the chances for a Middle East peace settlement heralded by the July 22 Ifrane summit between Israel's Prime Minister Shimon Peres and King Hassan of Morocco, as well as the September summit between Peres and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak.

Moscow has been heating up various hotspots for weeks.

- Since the middle of July, the Libyans have sent more than 1,000 troops into the Western Darfur province of Sudan, on the border with Chad, in preparation for what the *Sudan Times* described on Aug. 20 as an "upcoming major offensive against the legal regime" of Chad.

- During the same period, Colonel Garang's Southern Sudan Popular Army shot down a civilian airliner above the city of Makhatal with one of its Soviet-provided SAM-7 ground-to-air missiles, killing 62, and bringing all air traffic in the region to a standstill.

- On Aug. 15, Turkish military forces were forced to intervene into northern Iraq, according to their mutual treaty with Baghdad, to stop increased Kurdish guerrilla activities sponsored by Iran and Syria against Turkey and Iraq.

- The terror actions of the local Shi'ite militias in southern Lebanon, against the Israelis and the French troops who are part of the United Nations peacekeeping force in Tyre.

Meanwhile, since early August, there has been a reactivation of the global Soviet terror network run out of Syria,

Iran, and Libya. On Aug. 21, Iranian intelligence agents killed an anti-Khomeini Iranian in London. The same day, four Lebanese coming from East Berlin, were arrested by West Berlin police. Investigations showed they had been deployed by the Libyan mission in East Berlin, to bomb American civilians and military installations.

The spectacular side of such war preparations was celebrated from Aug. 24 to Aug. 26 in Tripoli, during the much publicized visit of Syrian President Hafez al Assad and Vice President Abdel Halim Khaddam. The first such major visit to Libya since the April 15 American bombing raid, Assad's visit was officially dedicated to bringing Syrian support to Libya as joint American-Egyptian military maneuvers began in the Mediterranean the same day.

But local intelligence sources indicated the real content of the talks: Assad requested Libyan financial support to wage his upcoming war against Israel. However depleted, Libyan financial resources, can be still be mobilized to such a purpose. Additionally, the perennial discussions about upgrading the cooperation of Syrian and Libyan intelligence services were held.

Privy to all such discussions was Gen. Mikhail Basov, the local KGB resident who has played an increasing political role within the Libyan leadership since last February. According to *La Repubblica* of Aug. 23, General Basov is the brains behind the military junta which has handled day-to-day affairs in Libya since last April.

### Soviet policy shift

Paralleling the Tripoli gathering, the foreign ministers of Syria, Iran, and Libya have been in regular meetings for the last few weeks. Coherently, the gatherings have followed an increased consultations between them and Moscow.

## U.S. fears new terror strikes by Qaddafi

U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Vernon Walters will go to Europe soon to renew U.S. pressure for sanctions against Muammar Qaddafi, amid reports that the Libyan leader may be plotting new terror attacks, according to a senior U.S. administration official. Walters "will be talking about diplomatic and economic initiatives against Libya, renewing our position that sanctions should be imposed," the official said.

Larry Speakes, the White House press spokesman, told reporters in Los Angeles on Aug. 27 that no timetable or itinerary would be released for the Walters mission, but noted that the allied consultations are at the highest level since January, and follow a declaration by European Community foreign ministers in April, the Tokyo Summit in May, and the withdrawal of U.S. companies from Libya. The talks "will cover the full range of political, economic, and diplomatic measures we or the allies have been taking, jointly and individually."

Speakes announced, "Our policy toward Libyan terrorism is unequivocal and unchanged: We will employ all

appropriate measures to cause Libya to cease its terrorist policies."

"Qaddafi and Libya," he said, "do retain the capability to commit terrorist acts, and we want them to be fully aware that our policy is unchanged, and we will do what we can to prevent them, and be prepared to take the necessary steps, either before or after these are committed in order to ensure they don't happen again."

A senior administration official, responding to questions about a *Wall Street Journal* article which alleged that Qaddafi was planning some major terrorist action, declined to make any specific predictions. "There are intelligence reports, many of which were referred to in the *Wall Street Journal* article," he said. "They were printed in the *Wall Street Journal* article without any reference to the level of credibility. Intelligence reports come in that have varying levels of credibility. . . . But obviously, we do have intelligence reports that Qaddafi has not been deterred in his efforts to commit terrorist activities, but once again, how imminent, or all that, I just don't have the weight to give to one report or the other. . . ."

"There is hard evidence that the Libyan government has been involved in planning and attempting to execute terrorist acts; that they have not—since the U.S. bombing; and that they have not been deterred in their goal of committing terrorist acts on a worldwide basis."

Indicating that Moscow is about to make a major political shift in the Gulf war, has been the reception the Soviet Union extended to Iranian emissaries in recent weeks. In the first week of August, Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Mehdi Larijani spent over a week in Moscow. The talks, which were held at all levels of the Soviet leadership, omitting only Gorbachov himself, were concluded by a spectacular reconciliation on the issue of Afghanistan, which had been for years an issue of conflict.

Larijani agreed that "our views do not converge. However, the Afghan problem is purely internal, to be solved by the Afghans themselves." On Aug. 16, Iranian oil minister Aqazadeh followed suit in Moscow. By Aug. 20, it was made known that the Iranian envoy had renewed the late 1970s' Soviet-Iranian oil and gas agreement, which will be reactivated by December 1986. Additionally, Aqazadeh stressed that a "defense cooperation" agreement had been "agreed upon." Iranian official sources indicated it would involve increased delivery of Soviet military spare parts and materials.

Strengthened by Moscow, Iran has been massing millions of its soldiers at Iraq's borders for an early September offensive. There have been indications that Teheran may be willing to go further than usual in such attacks. On Aug. 10, hundreds of Iranian pilgrims staged demonstrations in Mecca

before being arrested. On Aug. 26, Speaker of the Parliament Rafsanjani warned that unless the pilgrims were released, Iran would launch "counter actions against Saudi Arabia."

According to intelligence sources, the backbone of such policies has been a recent reorganization of the Soviet Southern Front Military Command in Tashkent and Kabul, which has direct responsibilities for the Middle East and Gulf theater. General Mikhail Zaitsev, formerly Commander in Chief of the Soviet forces in Germany, has been moved to Tashkent. Meanwhile Army General Ivan Tretyak, formerly of the Far East Command, is now in Kabul. Both are experienced combat officers, and have worked closely together since the late 1960s in Byelorussia.

Such top military appointments are of crucial importance, as Moscow is building its own military machine in Syria. As of Aug. 22, it was reported that Syria had begun receiving deliveries of its first units of the advanced MiG-29 jet aircraft. Western intelligence observers also spotted launching pads for the SS-23 ground-to-ground missile which had a 600 kilometer range.

None of these weapons had ever before been delivered outside of the Soviet bloc. Deliveries of such weapons underline Moscow's commitment to help Syria to launch an offensive against Israel during the next two months. An increased direct Soviet military presence in Syria is to be expected.