

**The Hebrew  
University of  
Jerusalem**



**The Leonard Davis Institute  
for International Relations**

---

# **The Lebanon Civil War 1975-76: A Case of Crisis Mismanagement**

**Ilana Kass**

**JERUSALEM PAPERS  
ON PEACE PROBLEMS**

---

**1979**

**26-27**

---

## **Leonard Davis Institute for International Relations**

The Leonard Davis Institute for International Relations at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem is dedicated to the development and support of theoretical and applied research in all branches of international relations, with special emphasis on Israel's foreign policy and on the Middle East. Research findings are published in the form of occasional papers, monographs, and the Jerusalem Journal of International Relations.

### **Executive Committee**

Nissan Oren (Chairman)

Yehoshua Arieli

Yehoshafat Harkabi

Dan Horowitz

Ruth Lapidoth

Jacob Landau

---

## **Jerusalem Papers on Peace Problems**

Jerusalem Papers on Peace Problems are designed primarily to analyze various dimensions of the Arab-Israel conflict, including its causes, intensity, crisis and non-crisis phases, specific facets of the conflict, and obstacles to peaceful resolution. In that context the Jerusalem Papers, a referee publication, will serve as a forum for the presentation of contending approaches and policy options about problems of peace and war in the Middle East.

The Jerusalem Papers will also provide a vehicle for the publication of research on other important issues, policy problems, and conflict situations in the contemporary international system.

Editor, Nissan Oren

### **Editorial Board**

Yehoshua Arieli

Gabriel Ben-Dor

Abraham Ben-Zvi

Yehezkel Dror

Moshe Yegar

Production Editor, Ruth Gelman

Prospective contributors are asked to submit manuscripts in duplicate to the Editorial Board.

# **The Lebanon Civil War 1975-76:**

## **A Case of Crisis Mismanagement**

**Ilana Kass**

**Jerusalem 1979**

Ilana Kass is the author of a number of studies on Soviet involvement in the Middle East and a book on Soviet foreign policy formulation. She is Lecturer in Political Science at Tel Aviv University and Researcher at The Hebrew University's Soviet and East European Research Center and at the Truman Institute, Jerusalem. Her current project is a study on Soviet positions on the Middle East conflict and its settlement in the wake of the Yom Kippur War.

© 1979 The Hebrew University  
All rights reserved

The views expressed in this paper are  
the sole responsibility of the author.

Printed in Israel  
at Alpha Press, Jerusalem

## CONTENTS

Introduction: The Roots of the Conflict	5
Stage I — March – July 1975: At the Crossroads	8
Stage II — September 1975 – December 1975: Reassessment	14
Stage III — January 1976 – May 1976: Joint Strategy Activated	21
Stage IV — Complicity or Collusion?	37
Stage V — June 1976 – January 1977: The Thorny Path to a <i>Pax Syriana</i>	46

## INTRODUCTION: THE ROOTS OF THE CONFLICT

Civil strife in Lebanon, smoldering beneath a deceptively placid surface of economic prosperity and political freedom, erupted with full force in April 1975, and within a mere six months consumed the entire nation in a protracted military conflict. The endless series of armed clashes among Lebanon's internal factions, exacerbated by Palestinian involvement, Syrian intervention, the meddling of other Arab states, and maneuvering by the superpowers, transformed a civil war into an all-out regional conflagration with broad global repercussions.

This study is concerned with one aspect of a multidimensional conflict, namely, the policy of the Soviet Union towards a triangular pattern of interaction involving indigenous Lebanese political groups, the Palestinian organizations, and Syria. A detailed analysis of the topic of interest must, however, be preceded by and tied to an evaluation of the basic issues and forces underlying the conflict.

The panoply of destabilizing factors within Lebanese society hinges upon the sharp cleavage among various religious communities comprising the two primary denominations (Christians and Muslims) and the resulting disparities in social status and in the levels of political participation. Historical rivalry and enmity on religious grounds were thus compounded by the resentment of the Muslims towards a system that grew increasingly unresponsive to their needs and demands and that accorded the competing Christian element the lion's share of power. A high Muslim annual birth rate (2.5% versus 1.3% for the Christians) and the steady exodus of Christians from Lebanon rendered still more obsolete the system of proportionate communal representation as consecrated by the National Charter of 1943.\* Festering grievances within the Muslim sector were confronted by

\* The National Charter of 1943 legalized the French-orchestrated rapprochement among Lebanon's religious sects, providing, *inter alia*, for proportionate division of parliamentary seats among the various communities on the basis of their numerical strength as shown by the 1932 census. It was further agreed that the positions of leadership (such as the presidency, prime ministership, command of the army, etc.) would also be divided on a confessional basis. Thus Lebanon's political structure

a crude, nonadaptive political mechanism that neither took account of demographic and political realities nor provided a systemic outlet for a burgeoning sense of national awareness among the popular majority. Under such circumstances, the conversion of the disenfranchised and atomized masses into a politically conscious, organized vehicle for fundamental social change was rapidly gaining momentum.

The volatility inherent in Lebanon's political structure was further aggravated by a contest over the country's national identity and its position in the regional matrix. Muslim attempts to change the Lebanese political system so as to reflect their majority status and their identification with Islam and pan-Arabism were strongly resisted by the Christians, and the Maronites in particular, who saw in those attempts a threat to their own status in society and, no less crucially, to Lebanon's viability as an independent state with a Western orientation.

While the turmoil ravaging Lebanon can be best understood in terms of a power struggle, undercurrents of ideological commitment by both major protagonists have nevertheless come into play, primarily through the identification of Muslim groups with the quest for political change and of the Christians with preservation of the status quo. Acknowledgment of an ideological dimension, however, does not imply that the complexity and metamorphic quality of the conflict can be reduced to any simple formulae. For little is gained by defining the Christians as "Rightists" in a state where they constitute the leadership of the socialist and communist parties. Conversely, the image of the Muslims as a "Leftist" movement committed to social transformation, representing the downtrodden elements of society and identifying, to varying degrees, with radical ideologies, is rather incongruous with the feudal background and conservative outlook of many Muslim leaders, Kamil Junblat being but one example. With these considerations in mind, the terms "Left" and "Right" are used in this study mainly for lack of more precise designations and should not be viewed as an attempt either to minimize the distinctive features of each political group or to assay the relative weight of each component of the conflict.

The Lebanese domestic pressures sketched above were given added momentum by the impact of two external factors: the Palestinians and Syria. These two vectors provided the link between the Lebanese Muslims' aspirations and the pressures for change in Lebanon's regional position. Thus the Lebanese Muslims' endeavor to alter the political balance of power was

---

became the reflection of the then existing religious and social make-up. Its harmonious and efficient functioning was predicated upon maintenance of the delicate equilibrium among the communities. No proper census was conducted after 1932.

fueled by the strength of a militant, armed and largely Muslim Palestinian force and by Syria's interest in dragging Lebanon into the orbit of Arab-Israeli confrontation.

The intrusion of the Palestinian guerrillas, who used Lebanese political pluralism and tolerance to establish an organizational and military network in Lebanon, virtually created a state within a state, thus sharply accelerating the centrifugal pressures already at play. The inherent weakness of the Lebanese regular army allowed the Palestinians to launch their forays into Israel with virtual impunity, while Israel's retaliatory strikes against the staging areas served as a further element contributing to Lebanon's disintegration as a politically viable entity.

The Palestinian presence in Lebanon, which polarized Lebanese society by contributing to both the Muslims' numerical strength and their feeling of identification with the Arab cause, became an even more important factor after the October 1973 war and the concomitant rise in the PLO's status regionally and internationally.

The post-October 1973 emergence of Syria as the standard-bearer of Arab militancy gave a new boost to the above-delineated developments. Syria's desire to enlarge the circle of active confrontation states was fused with its own national security considerations. The inherent weakness of Lebanon's regular army had allowed the Lebanese-Israeli border to become a dangerously soft underbelly in the Arab defenses; moreover, in the event of war, a non-combatant Lebanon could well serve as a convenient avenue for an Israeli flanking operation against Damascus. Lebanon's continued neutrality also deprived the Arabs of a tactically expedient springboard for launching an attack against Israel.

Immediate military considerations were superimposed on Syria's traditional stake in Lebanon. Damascus had never reconciled itself to the 1920 establishment of "Greater Lebanon" incorporating Syrian territory. Until 1976, there were no formal diplomatic ties between Damascus and Beirut, nor were ambassadors ever exchanged. Syria's position as the powerful Arab neighbor able to exercise a certain degree of control over Lebanon's politics was greatly enhanced by the fact that Damascus could cause severe damage to Lebanon's economy by paralyzing the transit trade between Beirut and inland Arab states. Consequently, Lebanon's viability has long remained a hostage to Syria's good will.

With its political order eroded by domestic discord and external menace, Lebanon was rendered a veritable powder keg needing but a spark to set it ablaze.



## STAGE I

### MARCH – JULY 1975: AT THE CROSSROADS

The 1975 spate of fighting began in Sidon in February and March, when mainly Muslim fishermen demonstrated against the government's grant of exclusive fishing rights to a predominantly Christian company. This led to a week of fighting which left many dead, including several soldiers. The incident was regarded by the Christian groups as a dangerous precedent. In reprisal, a bus carrying a score of Palestinians was ambushed on April 13 on the outskirts of Beirut, and all the passengers were shot on the spot. The gunmen were members of the Phalange, a right-wing Christian party founded in the 1930s by Pierre Gemeyal and aimed at preserving the status quo of Lebanese politics against growing pressure from the Muslim community. The massacre triggered a week of street fighting in Beirut, involving heavy weapons and accompanied by general strikes in Sidon and Tripoli. The government, always a coalition of mutually hostile faction leaders, fell on May 15, and President Franjiyeh, a Maronite but not a Phalangist, called on a retired general to form a military cabinet. The military government, lacking political authority and support, was helpless to stay the outbreak of new fighting and fell after three days, on May 26. This led to a hardening of positions on both sides of the political barricade, with the Muslim leaders calling for the revision of the constitution, redistribution of authority, and resignation of the president. These pressures forced President Franjiyeh to call on his personal enemy, Rashid Karami, hereditary Sunni Muslim leader and the perennial prime minister, to form a government of national unity. Though Karami energetically pursued reconciliation, he was unable to stop the spiral of fighting: the Phalange refused to consider constitutional change until law and order were restored, while the Muslim Left insisted on changes before laying down arms. In the early stages the aim of the fighting was to inflict maximum damage on the adversary; but in July the pattern changed, and both sides began to invade and occupy previously uninvolved quarters and to hold territory and strategic points. The fighting spread beyond Beirut, foreigners began to leave, and Lebanese fled to the mountains and abroad.<sup>1</sup>

Throughout the first stage of the Lebanese war the USSR adopted a discreet wait-and-see position towards the bloody skirmishes. Such a stance was most probably dictated by the fluid, unclear situation prevailing in Lebanon. Attempting to minimize the risk of placing its stakes on the wrong party, Moscow initially preferred to watch the indigenous factions slug it out among themselves, on the assumption that there would be enough time to support the winner, when one emerged.

In contrast to the apparent neutrality of the Soviet position with respect to the Lebanese forces, Moscow exhibited from the very outset a clear concern for the fate of the Palestinians. Such anxiety may well have reflected Moscow's awareness of the precarious nature of Palestinian-Lebanese relations and its ensuing fears that internal strife, whatever its outcome, would leave the Palestinians in a weakened if not completely untenable position.

The USSR's apprehension lest the Palestinians become the primary victim of the conflict was clearly apparent from the "saturation treatment" given the issue by the Soviet media. Events in Lebanon were depicted by the press organs as "provocations," "intrigues" and "plots" planned and executed by a sinister alliance among internal reaction, imperialism and Zionism. While such designations are common practice in communist analyses of international events, in the case of Lebanon what may be called a "conspiracy theory" served not only as a broad frame of reference but also as the main axis of Soviet attitudes throughout the war. Thus Israel, together with the Phalangists, was blamed for carrying out a premeditated plan aimed at "subverting the Palestinian Resistance Movement [hereafter PRM], weakening the progressive forces which were backing it, and forcing the Lebanese nation to deny support to the just Palestinian cause."<sup>2</sup> More explicit statements claimed that Israel was waging an "undeclared war against Lebanon" in order to "incite animosity towards the Palestinians and push the PRM out of Lebanon."<sup>3</sup> Moreover, it was pointed out that "Zionist and imperialist circles collaborate with the Lebanese reaction in attempts to smash the PRM [because they are] worried about the growing strength of the Palestinian Movement and the swelling support rendered to it by democratic parties and organizations."<sup>4</sup> On July 9, 1975, *Izvestiia's* correspondent Koriavin broadened the issue still further, warning of "a plot elaborated jointly by Tel Aviv and Washington to deal a blow to the PRM, provoke Palestinian-Lebanese strife, bring about clashes between Lebanon's religious sects, create economic chaos, and discredit Lebanon as the leading financial and information center of the Middle East."

Blaming external factors for the eruption and continuation of the conflict, Moscow pursued the dual goal of limiting the scope of internal strife by

rallying together antagonistic Lebanese factions against a clearly definable common enemy (Israel), and concomitantly diminishing the likelihood that the Palestinians would become the scapegoat for the conditions that brought about the current cycle of in-fighting.

While explicitly, albeit infrequently, acknowledging that the Palestinians did not take part in the fighting,\* the Soviet press consistently presented the situation in terms of polarization, conflict and clashes between the PRM and the Phalangists. References to a "fratricidal war between the Lebanese and the Palestinians"<sup>5</sup> appeared as early as April-May 1975. Throughout this stage the internal Lebanese forces were measured by the Palestinian yardstick. For example, the Leftists' "fraternal ties" with and consistent support for the PRM were repeatedly juxtaposed with the Rightists' "notorious animosity" towards the Palestinians.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, Premier Karami's positive image was advanced on the basis of his attitude towards the PRM.<sup>7</sup>

Concurrently, Moscow attempted to elicit sympathy for the PRM by appealing to both sentiment and reason. Thus the Palestinians' "cruel fate," their being a nation deprived of homeland and rights and, therefore, in need of "temporary refuge" in the fraternal Arab states, were constantly brought to the fore.<sup>8</sup> Arab radio audiences were exposed to a continuous flow of such appeals, the following being but one example:

How could the Palestinians be deprived of their right to operate in the Arab states? The Israeli aggressors have deprived them of their homeland and made them refugees . . . Are the tragedies which the Palestinian people have been suffering so few that their sons must now fall victim to Arab bullets? This not only a flagrant injustice but also a betrayal of the Palestinian cause . . . Soviet citizens are following with profound sympathy the struggle of the Palestinian Arab people and the events in Lebanon have caused them great sorrow and grief.<sup>9</sup>

On a more rational level, Moscow maintained that the Palestinians respected Lebanon's sovereignty, did not intend to interfere in the internal affairs of the host state,<sup>10</sup> and were interested in furthering security and

\* *Izvestiia*, June 29, 1975. Until January 1976, the PLO abstained for the most part from the intense clashes taking place in Lebanon. However, some groupings belonging to the rejectionist front fought on the side of the Muslim Left from the very beginning. According to *An Nahar*, the PLO's efforts not to become involved, and the use of joint Palestinian-Lebanese patrols to police the various cease-fires, had caused tension between the PLO and the Leftists. See *An Nahar Arab Report*, No. 15 (October 6, 1975).

stability in Lebanon while "maintaining fraternal ties with the Lebanese nation."<sup>11</sup> Simultaneously, the PRM was presented as a factor of sanity in the Lebanese chaos through repeated references to the Palestinians' "maturity," "cool-headedness" and "restraint."<sup>\*</sup> Broadening the scope of argument, Moscow portrayed the PRM as a vitally important element in the Arab struggle against Israel whose weakening would harm the overall Arab cause.<sup>12</sup> Consequently, support for the Palestinians emerged as a policy dictated by and congruent with Arab national interest.<sup>13</sup>

The overwhelming concern with the Palestinians and the defensive, virtually apologetic nature of Soviet reference to the PRM in the context of the Lebanese conflict seemed to reflect the USSR's recognition of the precarious situation facing its Palestinian allies. Painfully aware of the fact that animosity towards the Palestinian guerrillas was deep-seated and widespread<sup>\*\*</sup> the Soviets feared that the PRM would become the target of an all-out onslaught, Jordan-style. One can only assume that the propaganda campaign, designed to project a positive image of the Palestinians' role in Lebanon,<sup>Δ</sup> was accompanied by unequivocal directives to the Palestinian leaders to exercise caution and restrain so as to prevent a reenactment of the Black September slaughter.

Moscow's concern with the Palestinians' fate most probably reflected the USSR's vested interest in preserving the PLO's position in Lebanon and throughout the Arab world. For the Palestinians' role as a factor ensuring the continuous festering of the Arab-Israeli conflict acquired a proportionately greater significance with the resumption of American mediation

\* *Pravda*, May 24, May 26 and July 25, 1975; *Izvestia*, May 28, 1975. A somewhat different appraisal was provided by Alexander Ignatev's *New Times* commentary, which claimed that "the Palestinian movement has, by virtue of its prestige and progressive approach, become a catalyst in the political processes occurring in Lebanon.... The big bourgeoisie are primarily oriented towards the West and naturally oppose the radicalization of 'Lebanese' Palestinians." Concurrently, however, Ignatev praised the Palestinians' maturity and abstention from interference in domestic Lebanese affairs. See *New Times*, No. 30 (July 1975), pp. 25-27; see also Radio Peace and Progress in Arabic - BBC/Soviet Union, August 5, 1975.

\*\* Negative attitudes towards the Palestinian presence in Lebanon were by no means the prerogative of the Phalangists. The guerrillas' state within a state angered many Lebanese, regardless of religious or political affiliation. Furthermore, Israel's retaliatory strikes against targets in Lebanon linked problems of security with Palestinian activity while breeding acute antagonisms between the PRM and the predominantly Shi'i Muslim population of southern Lebanon.

Δ Although the PLO's image as a factor of restraint and sobriety could have been used for wider propaganda goals, such as presenting the organization as an acceptable partner to a Middle East settlement, the Soviet media refrained from linking the two issues.

efforts and the distinct possibility that Syria would emulate Egypt's rapprochement with the United States. In its broadcasts to the Arab world, Moscow was quite explicit in portraying the PLO as "a militant opponent of Western efforts to impose their own terms for a Middle East settlement on the Arabs."<sup>14</sup> Moreover, "the Palestinians obstruct a rapprochement between certain Arab circles and the USA, [while] constantly giving reminders that Israel had usurped the Arab territories with the support of the Americans."<sup>15</sup>

In contrast to the clearly perceptible link between Soviet strategic objectives and the Palestinian position in Lebanon, the indigenous Lebanese conflict remained, at this stage, beyond the scope of Moscow's immediate policy concerns. Consequently, during the first four months of fighting the reporting on internal Lebanese events was, for the most part, factual, brief and at times sporadic. Throughout this period, the Soviet media failed to present any comprehensive analysis of the issues affecting the situation in Lebanon. Similarly, no attempt was made to categorize the Lebanon factors in accordance with their position along the ideological spectrum or to offer public support for the Left.\* Particularly noteworthy in Moscow's superficial and fleeting treatment of the Lebanese crisis was the fact that the Soviet media refrained from promoting the Leftists' demands for wide-scale reform and secularization of Lebanon's political structure. Indeed, news coverage at this time contained the oft-repeated and blatantly erroneous observation that Lebanon's population "is evenly divided between the Muslim and Christian communities."<sup>16</sup> Such a misinterpretation not only distorted widely accepted realities but, more crucially, undermined the legitimacy of the Leftists' struggle for a more equitable political system.

The USSR's initial reluctance to commit itself to the Leftists' cause appears consistent with its traditionally cautious approach to insurgent movements that have yet to demonstrate their cohesiveness, viability and, most important, their functional value to Moscow's own interests. Nonetheless, the dynamics of Middle East developments, and specifically the new momentum of American mediative efforts, soon vested the Lebanese Left with the necessary prerequisites for attracting Soviet support.

The first harbingers of change in the Soviet attitude towards the Lebanese Left became apparent in late July 1975, i.e., a few weeks after the Ford-Sadat meeting in Salzburg (see below). On July 21, a delegation of the

\* Throughout the first four months of the war, there was only one explicit statement of support for the "democratic national forces which rebuff aggression, support the PRM and the just struggle of the Palestinian nation for its legitimate rights" (*Pravda*, June 4, 1975).

Progressive Socialist Party (PSP), headed by Junblat's deputy Abbas Khalaf, came to Moscow at the invitation of the Central Committee of the CPSU. Although the statement issued at the end of the "friendly talks" was quite general and failed to indicate unanimity on any given issue,<sup>17</sup> the very fact that the delegation was received by such Soviet officials as Ponomarev and Rumiantsev (head of the Central Committee's International Department) attested to the significance of the visit. Furthermore, the meeting with Ponomarev, the official in charge of relations with non-ruling communist parties, placed the PSP in an ideologically significant category. The visit was accompanied by the publication of several commentaries that gave tacit ideological endorsement to the Lebanese Left. Thus, Geivandov's July 25, 1975, *Pravda* commentary portrayed the Lebanese conflict for the first time in social terms, insisting that the Leftists were "fighting for a better life for the Lebanese people [and] for political and socio-economic transformation." *New Times* commentator Alexander Ignatev was even more explicit, defining the conflict as a "class struggle."<sup>18</sup>

Evidently, a reassessment was under way.

## STAGE II

### SEPTEMBER 1975 – DECEMBER 1975: REASSESSMENT

The September 4, 1975, disengagement agreement between Israel and Egypt changed the Middle East picture for the Soviets. With the United States successfully enhancing its position as the only party capable of delivering what the USSR had been promising for eight years – namely, forcing Israel to relinquish at least a part of the occupied territories – the Soviet position was significantly weakened, both in terms of the global zero-sum game and in regional terms. Cairo's acceptance of a Washington-sponsored accord was bad enough; worse still, it could have started a chain reaction, with other Arab states, most notably Syria and Jordan, following suit. The specter of a *Pax Americana*, apparent already in late 1973, grew increasingly tangible.

Fearing its practical exclusion from the Middle East system, Moscow had little choice but to align itself with the political pursuits of the more radical Arab groupings. Within this framework, Syria, the proverbial *enfant terrible*, was designated to serve as the linchpin of Soviet Middle East strategy. Specifically, Damascus' goal of establishing a Syrian-led northeastern Arab alliance was espoused by Moscow with the hope that it would effectively counterbalance the emerging Cairo-Riyadh axis and, in time, help the American peace initiative spend itself and die a natural death.\*

\* Syria's intentions to create a northeastern Arab front were first publicly announced on September 9, 1975, a few days after the conclusion of the Sinai accord. While on a visit to Kuwait to explain the attitude of his government towards the Israeli-Egyptian pact, Syria's foreign minister, Abd al-Halim Khaddam, said: "Syria is making efforts to establish a front that will extend from Ras Naqoura on the Lebanese coast to the port of Aqaba on the Red Sea." Khaddam's statement followed a year of planning. According to Western diplomatic sources cited by *An Nahar*, the idea was conceived shortly after the 1974 Rabat summit, when it was already clear that American diplomacy was aiming for the establishment of a new peace agreement on the Egyptian front in isolation of the eastern confrontation states. The first step toward the implementation of the Syrian project came on March 8, 1975, when President Asad publicly proposed the founding of a united Syrian-Palestinian political and military command. On the same day, PLO chairman Yasir Arafat an-

In view of these developments, the civil war in Lebanon acquired a new, more immediate significance for the USSR. A clear-cut Leftist victory in Lebanon and the establishment of a "progressive" regime in this traditionally pro-Western country could have effectively undermined the recent American successes, while allowing for the creation of a territorially continuous belt of Soviet influence extending from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean. Plausibly, the Kremlin expected Damascus to exercise a degree of control over the new Lebanese regime, thus making it more amenable to Soviet political goals. As an extra bonus, the USSR could have hoped for a more intimate relationship with Syria in reciprocation for facilitating the attainment of the latter's traditional national goal.

A meaningful change in Soviet attitudes towards the Lebanese conflict was communicated shortly after the signing of the September Sinai disengagement agreement. Quantitatively, the number of references to the situation in Lebanon almost doubled in both the daily press and in radio broadcasts. Recurrent statements to the effect that "the events in Lebanon cause alarm to all friends of this state" and constitute "a source of anxiety to the peace-loving community"<sup>1</sup> similarly signalled a vested Soviet interest.

On the qualitative level, new parameters of analysis were set. In contrast to previous attempts to minimize the proportions and significance of the internal strife, the Soviet media began to refer to "civil war."<sup>2</sup> The conflict was set in a clearly defined ideological framework, as one "reflecting the growing social polarization and political contradictions"<sup>3</sup> and, hence, as a "class struggle."<sup>4</sup> Concurrently, the cautious neutrality heretofore prevalent vis-à-vis the Lebanese combatants gave way to increasingly explicit expressions of sympathy and support for the Left. (As noted, first signs of this change were evident in late July of 1975.) Thus the Muslim-Leftist alliance was

---

nounced his acceptance of the scheme, and the PLO Central Council followed suit. Meetings then began on different levels to put the plan into effect. The second step toward realization of the newly planned front was taken on June 10, 1975. President Asad's visit to Jordan ended with an agreement with King Hussein for steps toward closer unity of action between the two states. Syria and Jordan agreed to form a joint committee to be co-chaired by the Syrian and Jordanian prime ministers and empowered to prepare plans "necessary for the development of programs in all fields of activity, including the political, military, economic, educational, informational and cultural spheres" (*An Nahar Arab Report* 7, No. 5 [February 2, 1976]). The Syrian-Jordanian accord was signed a few days after the meeting between Ford and Sadat in the Sinai. Since then, Syria had been working vigorously for improvement of its relations with both Jordan and the PLO, and, concurrently, for a rapprochement between Amman and the Palestinians under Syria's aegis.



portrayed as the proponent of change and progress, as a force "opposing the existing confessionalist system on the grounds that it is contrary to the principles of democracy and progress... and a serious impediment of socio-economic transformation."<sup>5</sup>

On October 13, 1975, *Pravda* commentator Orekhov for the first time defined the campaign waged by the "progressive forces" as a "success." On October 28 the CPSU organ explicitly identified itself with the Leftists' platform, stating also that "the Muslims claim that they constitute a majority now and, therefore, the existing system... contradicts the principles of democracy and progress."\* Concurrently, Radio Moscow's broadcasts to the Middle East began to underscore the fact that Lebanon was an Arab country.<sup>6</sup>

While broadening the internal proportions of the Lebanese conflict, the Soviets attributed to it a wider global and regional dimension. Thus on September 21, 1975, *Pravda* cited the Lebanese Communist Party organ as directly linking the "current aggravation of the situation in Lebanon" with the problems of the Arab-Israeli conflict and its settlement. Five days later, *Izvestiia* cited the Syrian foreign minister to the effect that "there is an imperialist-Zionist plot to turn the Arab-Israeli conflict into an internecine struggle involving the Arab countries, aimed at diverting attention from the main developments in the Middle East, while utilizing the so-called Lebanese problem as a smokescreen for the elaboration of a settlement suiting Israel and the US."<sup>7</sup> These statements were complemented by a *Pravda* commentary which stated, *inter alia*:

on the surface the crisis appears as a strife between religious communities adhering not only to different religious convictions but also to different political views. Basically, however, the Lebanese crisis is a

\* See also *Pravda*, November 11, 1975; Radio Peace and Progress in Arabic, October 28, 1975 - BBC/Soviet Union, October 30, 1975. Interestingly, the Soviet press was quite cautious, even ambivalent, in promoting the Muslims' claims to majority and, hence, to power. This attitude may have reflected internal Soviet considerations, specifically, the fact that the Russian domination in the Soviet Union is by no means based on a majority in the overall population. Moreover, given the significantly higher birth rate among the Soviet Muslims, they may, in the course of several years, outnumber the Russians. By the same token, Moscow's insistent opposition to any proposals to divide Lebanon on religious and ethnic grounds may also have mirrored fears of internal irredentism. Incidentally, the radio broadcasts both in Arabic and in Russian were particularly consistent in claiming that "what is taking place in Lebanon has nothing to do with religious differences." See, for example, Moscow Home Service in Russian, October 10, 1975 - BBC/Soviet Union, October 13, 1975.

political side-effect of the protracted Middle East conflict . . . . The events in Lebanon are a new testimony to the urgent need for a radical settlement in the Middle East.<sup>8</sup>

Subsequently, there were repeated references to "plans [elaborated by] international imperialism to replace the Arab-Israeli conflict with a struggle among the Arab states,"<sup>9</sup> as well as specific references to the Sinai disengagement agreement as "the real cause of the Lebanese crisis."<sup>10</sup> Moscow thereby utilized the Lebanese conflict as yet another avenue to censure Washington's (and Cairo's) Middle East policy, concomitantly advancing its own idea of an overall settlement. Blaming the West, Israel and Arab reaction for unleashing the Lebanese war in order to divert attention from the Sinai accord, the Soviets were, in fact, revealing their own cards. For, at least in the short run, it was the USSR that was interested in diverting attention from, and if possible undermining, the settlement process started by Dr. Kissinger. The continuation of the war in Lebanon, though undoubtedly an outcome of internal schisms rather than of international intrigues, benefitted Moscow insofar as it effectively focused Syria's attention on an immediate security issue, precluding, at least for the time being, a U.S.-orchestrated accord on the Golan. At the same time, as indicated above, a Leftist victory in Lebanon would have provided Moscow with a much-needed trump card in its relations with Washington.

Soviet and Syrian interests clearly dovetailed on the Lebanese issue. For one, it is hardly plausible that President Asad sought to place himself in a state of isolation similar to that faced by Sadat as a result of the Sinai accord. It seemed much more expedient to exploit the situation to the maximum, enhancing Syria's role as the militant leader of the Arab camp with an eye to achieving a better bargaining position vis-à-vis both the USSR and the U.S. Moreover, the opportunity to realize Syria's traditional goal of controlling Lebanon was just too tempting, particularly at a moment when the course of internal developments in Lebanon\* could have legitimized a Syrian takeover as a rescue operation on behalf of the besieged Palestinians. Moscow, for its part genuinely concerned with the fate of the PRM (see above), and committed more than ever to Damascus, could not but serve as a willing accomplice to Asad's strategy.

\* By October 1975, the pattern of the fighting changed from clashes between rival areas of Beirut into attempts by the warring factions to gain territory. Efforts by the PLO leadership to keep the guerrillas out of the civil strife suffered a setback when twenty-four Palestinians died on October 28 as a result of a direct hit on the Sabra refugee camp, on the outskirts of Beirut.

On October 9, 1975, a high-ranking Syrian delegation headed by President Asad arrived in Moscow "to discuss recent developments of the Middle East situation."\* The statement issued at the end of Asad's two-day talks with the Soviet leaders was an exercise in vagueness and ambiguity.<sup>11</sup> The actual agenda of the "friendly, cordial" talks was never disclosed. Nonetheless, the fact that Asad met with Prime Minister Karami and with Arafat immediately before and after his Moscow visit may suggest that the Lebanese events were high on the agenda.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, on his return from the October 11 talks with the Syrian leaders (i.e., talks held after Asad's trip to Moscow), Karami stated that "during the talks in Syria agreement had been reached on the adoption of the necessary measures to restore security and stability in Lebanon," adding that he was sure that the results of his visit would produce "positive results in the most immediate future."<sup>13</sup> Thus, it is plausible that a joint Soviet-Syrian strategy vis-à-vis Lebanon was already elaborated in October 1975.

In the immediate wake of Asad's Moscow visit, the Soviet media embarked upon a multifaceted campaign of promoting Syria's goals in Lebanon. It was repeatedly emphasized that the events in Lebanon had a direct impact on Syria since "the security of [both states] is inseparable."\*\* An October 21, 1975, commentary in *Izvestiia* warned of Israeli plans to occupy southern Lebanon so as "to create a corridor through Lebanese territory for the transfer of forces to the Syrian border." Subsequent pronouncements were even more explicit, claiming that "Israel intends to . . . use Lebanon as a springboard for aggression against Syria."<sup>14</sup> While implicitly justifying Syria's aims in Lebanon, the Soviet media went to great pains to refute Israeli "propaganda allegations" that Syria was "interfering with Lebanon's internal affairs."<sup>15</sup> Going even further, a November 3, 1975, *Pravda* commentary cited a Lebanese government statement categorically rejecting the Israeli "sensational announcement alleging that thousands of armed Syrians entered Lebanon and are engaging the Lebanese army."

\* Besides Asad, the delegation included two deputy-secretaries of the Ba'th Party, Foreign Minister Khaddam, and Defense Minister Mustafa Tlas. The Soviet side numbered among its participants Brezhnev, Podgornyi, Gromyko, and Grechko (*Pravda*, October 11, 1975).

\*\* *Pravda*, October 12, 1975. This line was foreshadowed by a September 25, 1975, Radio Peace and Progress broadcast that stated, *inter alia*, that "Syria is bound to Lebanon by strong geographical and historical ties . . . . In helping Lebanon to solve the crisis, Syria is strictly observing the principles of respect for sovereignty and independence in its relations with the sister Arab country. This attitude stems from Syria's deep realization of her responsibility toward the destiny of the anti-imperialist unity, which is a trusty weapon against the intrigues of imperialism and Zionism."

Concurrently, the plight of the PRM was emphasized, including references to plans "to physically annihilate the PRM fighters, liquidate the PRM as a political factor and as one of the most important components of the Middle East problem."<sup>16</sup>

On the surface, this line is reminiscent of the Soviet effort in April-May 1967 to commit Nasser to the defense of Damascus, an effort which actually triggered the Six-Day War. It is virtually impossible to determine whether and to what extent the current campaign was intended to push Syria into a more active involvement in Lebanon, or if it was merely a propaganda build-up meant to prepare the grounds for the implementation of a joint decision. In any event, given the vested Syrian interests, one may safely assume that little, if any, coaxing was needed to secure Syria's active participation in the Lebanese war.

Having forged a joint strategy with Damascus, Moscow moved to consolidate its relations with two additional elements involved in the Lebanese imbroglio. On November 11, 1975, a meeting between the Soviet ambassador in Beirut, Soldatov, and Prime Minister Karami was reported. Talks involving Soviet ambassadors are only infrequently mentioned in the Soviet press. This particular meeting, however, merited quite a lengthy report, disclosing, *inter alia*, that Soldatov "informed Karami as to the Soviet leaders' attitude toward Lebanon and [towards] the problems of its sovereignty, territorial integrity, and national unity." It was further pointed out that "the Soviet leaders, revealing deep understanding of the events, support the Lebanese government in its serious efforts aimed at achieving stability in the interests of all the Lebanese."

Next on the agenda were relations with the PLO. On November 24, 1975, Yasir Arafat came to Moscow at the head of a ten-man delegation that included, *inter alia*, Faruq Qaddumi, As-Saiqa's chief Zuhayr Muhsen, Abd al-Muhsin Abu-Maizar, and PDFLP representative Yasir Abd Rabo. The delegation was reported to have met with CPSU Central Committee officials Ponomarev and Rumiantsev, as well as with Foreign Minister Gromyko.<sup>17</sup>

The joint statement published at the conclusion of the four-day talks failed to make any reference whatsoever to the Lebanese crisis. While it is doubtful that the Lebanese-Palestinian issue was, indeed, excluded from the "wide exchange of opinions pertaining to the Middle East situation,"<sup>18</sup> the omission of the issue from a public statement may be construed as an attempt to improve the PLO's international image. Specifically, in view of the new Soviet initiative to reconvene the Geneva peace conference with PLO participation "from the very beginning and on equal footing," the November 11, 1975, U.N. General Assembly resolution condemning Zionism

as a form of racism and as a threat to international peace and security, and the forthcoming Security Council debate at which the PLO was scheduled to take part, Moscow sought to minimize the Palestinian's role as a catalyst of internecine strife in Lebanon and, implicitly, as a factor of regional instability.

This premise is further validated by the fact that throughout late November and early December the Soviet media attempted to portray the Lebanese crisis as an "internal-political conflict," while deemphasizing, if not completely ignoring, the Palestinian factor.<sup>19</sup> The Soviet line was clearly evidenced by the indignant response given to Couve de Meurville's "insinuations that the Palestinians play a basic role in the crisis." The former French foreign minister was accused, *inter alia*, of "turning everything upside down," of blaming innocent parties and of "outright interference" in Lebanon's internal affairs since, "as has been stated so many times . . . the Lebanese conflict is of an internal nature."<sup>20</sup>

A similar posture was adopted in the communiqué issued after the December 10, 1975, meeting between CPSU officials and a Lebanese Communist Party delegation. The concise, one-sentence reference to the Lebanese conflict appealed for "a peaceful political settlement of the *internal crisis*, on the basis of a *wide democratic* platform which would secure an end to the bloodshed, the achievement of national unity, the strengthening of Lebanon's independence and integrity vis-à-vis aggressive attempts of Israel, the imperialist and reactionary circles."<sup>21</sup> There was no explicit endorsement of the Leftists' demands, nor any mention of the Palestinians as a factor in the Lebanese events.\*

Moscow's preference to publicly keep a low profile in regard to Lebanon, while advancing other regional pursuits, sheds more light on the overall Soviet attitude towards the crisis. Evidently, Lebanon was perceived as a subordinate issue, to be used in accordance with expediencies dictated by broader considerations. Specifically, the dual goal of enhancing Soviet relations with the Arab confrontation states while striving to become an equal partner in the settlement process was the paramount regional determinant of Soviet policy towards the Lebanese war.

\* The Lebanese issue was completely ignored in other joint communiqués published during this period.

### STAGE III

#### JANUARY 1976 – MAY 1976: JOINT STRATEGY ACTIVATED

December saw the worst fighting in Lebanon's history. On December 6, Christian militia killed innocent Muslims in a rampage after the discovery of the mutilated bodies of five al-Kataib militia members. Mobs began a wanton destruction of churches and mosques. In the second half of the month the fighting spread to the mountain regions. The government seemed to have lost control of the situation. Lebanese army and security units began to abandon their positions, as Muslim and Christian militiamen seized military barracks and police stations. Government buildings were burnt down. At the beginning of January 1976 the war took a new turn, Right wing forces blockading the Palestinian refugee camps of Tal az-Za'tar and Jisr al-Pasha on the outskirts of Beirut. Lebanon was on the verge of collapse as a unified political entity.

Damascus left little doubt as to its position, announcing on January 7, 1976, that Syria would take over Lebanon if any further attempts were made to partition the country: "Lebanon used to be part of Syria and we will restore it if we see any attempt being made to partition it. Lebanon can either stay united or it will have to return to Syria."<sup>1</sup> Within a few days of this statement, Syrian-sponsored Palestine Liberation Army (PLA) units were already engaged in combat (their presence in Lebanon was officially confirmed by the Lebanese government on January 11, 1976). After intense fighting, the intervention of the Palestine Liberation Army units succeeded in lifting the blockade of the Palestinian camps and assuring some significant victories for the Left. Additionally, it halted, albeit temporarily, the growing trend toward partition into Muslim and Christian enclaves and, most crucially, paved the way for the acceptance of a Syrian-engineered cease-fire.

The Soviet attitude towards these events was quite ambivalent. The daily press emphasized the "serious aggravation of the situation," blaming the Rightists for the intensification of fighting and condemning Lebanese army participation in the "bitter clashes."<sup>2</sup> The reporting was almost entirely factual, dwelling primarily on issues such as blockades of several Palestinian

camps, the involvement of previously uncommitted PLO units to break the blockade, and the January 16 bombing of some Palestinian and Muslim strongholds by the Lebanese air force. Clear concern that the civil strife would escalate into a conflict between the main PLO forces and the generally pro-Christian army, both heretofore involved only partially and intermittently, was readily apparent. Concurrently, Moscow stepped up its criticism of Israel and the United States, blaming the former for attempts to "dis-member" Lebanon and destroy the PRM<sup>3</sup> and the latter for funneling arms to the Rightist forces.\*

This line of argument, presumably intended to provide propaganda backing and justification for the PLA involvement, was accompanied by recurrent indications of an imminent Syrian engagement, generally in the form of indignant rejections of Israeli "allegations as to some sort of incursion of Syrian forces into Lebanese territory and [their] participation in battles."\*\* Several very positive references to Syria's mediative role were also published.<sup>Δ</sup>

Meanwhile, however, the USSR continued to be rather cautious, stressing that "the Lebanese crisis is of an internal-political character and the only way out of the present situation is an agreement between all parties involved."<sup>4</sup> An *Izvestiia* editorial published on January 14, 1976 – i.e., three days after the PLA incursion had been officially confirmed – took this argument one step further, proposing that "the Lebanese nation solve alone its problems through peaceful measures in the framework of its own state." However, this same pronouncement exonerated, albeit indirectly, Syria's declared aims in Lebanon when it stated: "Partition and creation of a separate Christian state would provide the imperialist and Zionist forces with yet another instrument of struggle against the Arab national move-

\* Previous comment had generally avoided charges of direct United States involvement, although sometimes insinuating an American role through expressions such as "Israel and those who support it" or "the imperialists." The current line seemed to be largely reactive, using Western press reports on CIA arms deliveries to Lebanon. See, for example, *Trud*, January 6, 1976, citing a *Washington Post* report on the Interarmco arms supply corporation; see also *Izvestiia*, January 20, 1976, citing Arafat.

\*\* *Izvestiia*, December 27, 1975; see also *Pravda*, December 26, 1975. As early as November 3, *Pravda* reported a statement by the Lebanese government that categorically rejected Israel's "sensational announcement alleging that thousands of armed Syrians entered Lebanon and are engaging the Lebanese army."

<sup>Δ</sup> *Pravda* and *Krasnaia zvezda*, December 16, 1975; *Pravda*, December 12, 1975; *Pravda*, January 12 and January 13, 1976; *Izvestiia*, December 27, 1975; Radio Moscow in Arabic, January 2, 1976 – BBC/Soviet Union, January 5, 1976. Soviet appeals to "safeguard Lebanon's unity, territorial integrity and independence" (*Pravda*, January 5, 1976; *Izvestiia*, December 27, 1975) may also be construed as expressions of support for Syria's Lebanese policy, since Damascus' goals were publicly couched in virtually identical terms. (See, for example, *Pravda*, December 26, 1975.)

ment toward freedom, independence and social progress . . . . [Therefore] the deep anxiety on the part of all Lebanon's friends is understandable."\*

There can be little doubt that Moscow could not but endorse Syria's pacification drive, particularly in view of the extremely dangerous situation faced by the Palestinian-Leftist alliance. Indeed, as suggested above, a contingency plan for such an eventuality might have been agreed upon already during Asad's October 1975 Moscow visit. On the other hand, however, the timing of both the escalation in Lebanon and the ensuing Syrian incursion was rather inconvenient, as far as the USSR was concerned. Global developments (in particular President Ford's Peking visit, the death of Chou En-Lai and the rapidly escalating war in Angola), as well as internal Soviet affairs (primarily preparations for the twenty-fifth CPSU congress), required the Kremlin's attention. On the regional level, Moscow might have feared that the Lebanese issue would figure prominently on the agenda of the forthcoming Security Council's Middle East debate (scheduled for January 12, 1976), thus overshadowing recent Soviet achievements scored at the November 1975 General Assembly session. Furthermore, the PLO's involvement in actual combat in Lebanon must have been embarrassing to Moscow, particularly in view of its efforts to secure the organization's recognition as a viable partner to a Middle East settlement.<sup>5</sup>

Whatever misgivings Moscow might have had as to the timing of Syria's pacification drive, they were quickly dispelled by its apparent success. On January 22, 1976, the Lebanese combatants accepted a Syrian-engineered cease-fire that provided, *inter alia*, for the implementation of political reforms: equal representation in the parliament and election of the prime minister by this body, with Syria guaranteeing that the Cairo accords and other pacts between the Lebanese government and the Palestinians would be implemented.<sup>6</sup> The Lebanese-Syrian accord further provided for the establishment of a "Higher Military Council" comprising Lebanese, Syrian and Palestinian representatives to supervise the maintenance of the truce and work out a settlement.<sup>7</sup> President Asad's achievement was impressive indeed. Any further developments in Lebanon hinged to a large extent on Damascus, a fact clearly evident from the very composition of the Higher Military Council. The two Palestinian representatives – as-Saiqa Chief

\* A Radio Peace and Progress broadcast clarified the issue even further, stating that "the Soviet people believe that the problems of Lebanon should be settled by the Lebanese people themselves, by peaceful means and within the framework of their state. However, it is necessary in the first instance to smash the imperialist-Zionist intervention" (Radio Peace and Progress, January 14, 1976 – BBC/Soviet Union, January 16, 1976).



Zuhayr Muhsen and Colonel Sa'id Sayil – were known for their allegiance to Damascus. In addition, Syria had two of its own members in the body. Moreover, Asad made a point of involving Jordan in his effort to solve the Lebanese crisis, thus ensuring the support of at least some of the Christian parties.\* Syria appeared to be well on its way to controlling Lebanon.

The initial Soviet response to the January 22 cease-fire was one of satisfaction and pronounced, if somewhat guarded, optimism.\*\* The Soviet media complimented Syria on its "constructive role" in stopping the bloodshed and undermining Israel's "plans to create another focus of tension in the Middle East aimed at diverting attention from the real causes of the crisis."<sup>Δ</sup> The reports emphasized that "in distinction from previous cease-fire accords the [current agreement] has more chances of success since it is based on a firm foundation [and] Syria acts as its guarantor . . ."<sup>8</sup> Thus Moscow granted Damascus de facto recognition as the determinant of Lebanon's future.

Concurrently, Lebanese leaders were cited at length as hailing the Syrian "peace initiative" as a policy aimed at "stopping the bloodshed and safeguarding a political settlement."<sup>9</sup> On January 26 *Pravda* featured the assessment of *The New York Times* that "The truce is a major political success of President Asad. Syria proved to be the only Arab state capable of influencing the course of events in Lebanon . . . . Consequently Asad emerges as the most suitable spokesman for the Arab world." It should be noted that in Soviet propaganda practice, quoting without criticism is tantamount to endorsement. Nonetheless, such a statement lacks the forcefulness and authority of an official Soviet pronouncement.

The apparent caution in directly acclaiming Asad's policy vis-à-vis Lebanon most probably reflected both the vehement condemnation with which the Arab world, most notably Egypt and Iraq, reacted to the Syrian in-

\* Assad might have hoped that Jordan's involvement in Syria's pacification efforts would lead to a Palestinian-Jordanian rapprochement towards which Damascus had already been working for some time (see above).

\*\* Verbal endorsement was coupled with more tangible gestures. On January 27, 1976, a Soviet-Syrian trade agreement covering the period 1976-80 was signed.

<sup>Δ</sup> *Pravda* and *Izvestiia*, January 24, 1976; see also *Izvestiia*, January 27, 1976; *Pravda*, January 31, 1976 ("International Week"); Moscow International Service in Russian, February 2, 1976 – FBIS/Soviet Union, February 4, 1976. *Krasnaia zvezda* of January 24 claimed that "the Right was forced to accept the Syrian [peace] proposals by the crushing defeats they have recently suffered," adding that as of January 23, 1976, "the National Patriotic Forces control two-thirds of Lebanon's territory." (For a similar comment see *New Times*, No. 12, [March 1976], pp. 8-9.)

vovement, and Moscow's fears that it too might be implicated.\* At the same time, the Soviets may have been apprehensive about Israel's reaction to Syria's alleged "armed interference in the Lebanese crisis."\*\* Doubts as to whether the Right-wingers would comply with the Syrian dictate and respect this, the twenty-first cease-fire, could have also contributed to Moscow's initial caution. The Soviet attitude towards the prospects for peace became perceptibly more enthusiastic as the cease-fire seemed to withstand the test of time.<sup>10</sup>

However, by mid-February the situation had once again begun to deteriorate. The conservatives were not satisfied with the truce (which most probably had saved them from total collapse). They stepped up their demands and held out the threat of partition. Presumably fearing that the cease-fire to which he was personally committed would fall, President Asad felt obliged to cede to the Rightists' pressures. Without consulting the Lebanese Left, he summoned President Franjiyeh to Damascus to work out a seventeen-point constitutional declaration that was sprung on the public on February 14, 1976. The declaration consecrated in writing what had been a verbal, hence revocable, arrangement, namely, the distribution of key state responsibilities on the basis of religious persuasion. An unpublished convention had been tacked on to it by which Syria pledged to carry out a series of measures to regulate and curb Palestinian activities in accordance with the 1969 Cairo agreement.<sup>11</sup> The document also stressed that "Lebanon is an independent, free Arab country." Such emphasis on Lebanon's Arab identity had never before been made on an official level.<sup>12</sup>

\* One indication of Soviet anxieties in this particular respect was a lengthy *Pravda* commentary which angrily rebuffed Egypt's "provocative allegations" that the Soviet Union was interested in the partition of Lebanon: "The USSR firmly and consistently... supports the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon [and demands that] all reactionary, imperialist intrigues against this friendly Arab state be curbed" (Gluckhov in *Pravda*, January 23, 1976). While *Pravda* failed to specify the pronouncement to which it was reacting, it is plausible that it was *Akhbar al Yawm's* January 10, 1976, article, which blamed Syria for instigating the fighting in Lebanon and for striving to annex Lebanese territory. The article also claimed that Syria unrealistically believed "that the Soviet Union will protect the annexation operation militarily," while in fact "the communists in Syria and Lebanon are using the Ba'th as a cat's-paw to catch Lebanon for themselves." Moscow's sensitivity was further reflected in a January 20, 1976, *TASS* dispatch which indignantly disparaged "absurdities" published by the Paris *L'Aurore* blaming the Lebanese crisis on Moscow's "perfidy and intrigues."

\*\* *Pravda*, January 23 and January 25, 1976; *Izvestiia*, January 31, 1976. *Krasnaia zvezda* was the only Soviet central organ to admit explicitly that PLA units entered Lebanon "at the request of the Lebanese government to help it maintain order" (*Krasnaia zvezda*, January 27, 1976).

The declaration was immediately criticized by the Left and by the rejection front (as well as by Libya and Iraq), and subsequently by all the Lebanese parties except for the avowedly pro-Syrian elements. The Left-wingers censured the declaration's adherence to confessionalism and its provisions for only superficial reforms rather than for real change in the political and social systems. The Palestinians, particularly the rejection front organizations, criticized the program on the grounds that it would, in fact, give Syria even greater control over Palestinian activities in Lebanon.\*

Although the Damascus agreement was labelled a sell-out by the Leftists, who felt they had been betrayed just when they were about to secure a total victory, the Soviet reaction continued to be basically positive. Koriavin's February 17, 1976, *Izvestiia* article defined the accord as a "constructive solution" and heaped praise on Syria's role in achieving an agreement "which puts an end to Lebanon's tragedy." *Pravda's* reaction was somewhat less exuberant. It spoke in terms of "elaboration of political and social reforms" which provide for "maintenance of the existing tradition" of distributing the positions of leadership according to religious persuasion. The CPSU organ refrained from providing any explanations as to how "reforms" can maintain an "existing tradition." Moreover, *Pravda* did not report that "Syria will now become the guarantor of the fulfillment of accords which define conditions of [Palestinian] presence in Lebanon"<sup>13</sup> although it did cite Franjiyeh's appeal to all parties "to strictly adhere to the 1969 Cairo accords."<sup>14</sup> *Pravda's* reservations on this score were further expressed on February 17, when it cited PLO leader Salah Khalaf as declaring that "the PRM strictly adheres to the Cairo accords and does not interfere with Lebanon's internal efforts." One possible implication of this statement, reported exclusively by *Pravda*, was that the PLO needs no policing, either from Damascus or anywhere else.

The CPSU organ's attitude appears somewhat curious, particularly in view of the fact that the February 14 accord was mainly a legitimization of what Moscow had publicly endorsed three weeks earlier, namely, the es-

\* By the end of February 1976, there were several moves toward rapprochement between the PLO and the rejection front, possibly because of the threat of Syria's developing alliance with Jordan (Syrian Prime Minister Ayoubi visited Amman on February 17 to discuss the implementation of the union between the two countries), as well as Syria's new role as policeman of the Palestinians in Lebanon. Concurrently, a split between the Syrian-sponsored Saiqa and other PLO groups was reported. Nonetheless, a PLO council meeting of February 21 supported the Syrian initiative "in stemming the flow of blood in Lebanon" (*Arab Report and Record* [hereafter ARR], No. 4 [February 15-29, 1976]).

establishment of Syrian control over PLO activities in Lebanon. Thus it is hardly plausible that *Pravda's* current reservations reflected concern with the PLO's independence. Rather, they might have been intended as a slap on the wrist for Syria's behavior on other levels. Specifically, *Pravda* might have been recoiling against Prime Minister Ayoubi's statement that Syria would not go to Geneva "after it was proven that the Conference will not lead to peace"<sup>15</sup> and/or against Asad's treatment of the Syrian communists.\*

The generally positive approach to Syria's pacification drive (some muted reservations notwithstanding) goes far in validating the above hypothesis as to the basic compatibility of Soviet and Syrian goals vis-à-vis both Lebanon and the PLO. Within less than a year, Syria had been able to forge a front stretching from Ras Naqoura on the Lebanese coast to the Jordanian port of Aqaba. Comprising four parties—Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and the PLO—this front was as yet incomplete and plagued by a lack of overall coordination and balance. The fact remains, however, that within a short period the idea for such a front had been transformed from theoretical discussions to practical implementation in many aspects. Specifically, the Higher Military Committee established in January and consecrated in February linked the security of Lebanon and the PRM to that of Syria, creating a kind of de facto united Syrian-Lebanese command, whether on the level of confrontation with Israel or within the framework of the settlement process. Moreover, both pacts constituted the culmination of Syria's efforts to restore the regional balance of power that had been upset since the freezing of Egypt's political and military role by the Sinai agreement. As such, they created stronger ties between Syria and the PLO with the result that now, more than ever, Syria was the state that had the most influence on the Palestinians. One may add that Moscow's interest in forging a Syrian-led northeastern front grew in proportion to the dimensions of the rift between Moscow and Cairo. Concurrently, some "taming" of the PLO, particularly of the rejectionists, was closely tied with the achievement

\* The Egyptian press reported as early as December 26, 1975, that some 300 Syrian communists had been arrested. While both the Syrian Communist Party and Moscow denied these "allegations," reports persisted that there was an internal crisis between the Ba'th and the Syrian Communist Party caused by the communists' attempts to gain more power within the National Front (*An Nahar Arab Report* 7, No. 1 [January 5, 1976]). According to Western intelligence reports, the Syrian authorities had decided to limit the travel privileges that the Syrian communists had enjoyed. Khalid Bakdash, who had led the communist party for forty years, was prevented from going to Cuba and forbidden to attend the twenty-fifth CPSU congress in Moscow. (Arrangements were made for a less prominent Syrian communist to take Bakdash's place at the congress.)

of the USSR's short-range Middle East goal, namely, the reconvening of the Geneva peace conference.

The Kremlin's perception of the Lebanese conflict was clearly echoed by Nicolas Shawi, head of the Lebanese communist delegation to the twenty-fifth CPSU congress:

The civil war in Lebanon should be seen in the overall context of confrontation between the Arab National Liberation Movement and local reaction, Israel and the imperialists. Inflaming the conflict, the reactionary Lebanese forces attempted to shatter the Palestinian Resistance, *encircle Syria*, deal a blow to the Arab Liberation Movement. Thus, they strove to impose an *American formula* of settlement.... *The failure of this bloody plot... would seriously and deeply influence the.... struggle concerning the principles of settlement.*<sup>16</sup>

Plausibly, the Soviets utilized the presence in Moscow of representatives of all the "progressive" forces involved in the Lebanese imbroglio to forge their cooperation and to alleviate the emerging tensions between Junblat's PSP and the Syrians.

While the festivities and backstage maneuvers continued in Moscow, the situation in Lebanon took a new turn. Convinced that by orchestrating the February accord Asad had helped the Right to turn a military defeat into a political victory, the Palestinian-Leftist alliance naturally took the opposite line, that of trying to cancel out their political setbacks by scoring military successes. Their first objective was to split the Lebanese army, the sole remaining force in the country supporting the Right, by inciting desertions and mutinies.\* After the barracks-room maneuvering came the war of the hills. The large-scale onslaught launched by the Left in the latter half of March 1976 resulted in their gaining control of large tracts of predominantly Christian areas. Enticed by their military victories and prodded by the hardliners, the Palestinian-Leftist alliance chose to go for an all-out victory.

The Syrian leadership, however, was beginning to realize that its support of the PRM had gone too far. The Syrians were experiencing what

\* According to *An Nahar Arab Report*, the Syrians were taken by surprise by Brigadier Aziz Ahdab's military coup. According to "informed sources" cited by *An Nahar*, Ahdab was "pushed to act by Saudi Arabia and Egypt," which hoped thus to deprive Syria of the political gains it would otherwise have secured in Lebanon. The Lebanese Left and the Palestinian resistance (Fatah in particular) are explicitly accused in a confidential Saiqa circular of "having participated in the plot." (See *An Nahar Arab Report* 7, No. 12 [March 22, 1976].)

others before them, including Jordan and Lebanon, and already experienced: the side they had been promoting had suddenly become too powerful and uncontrollable. The combined Leftist-Palestinian force was becoming a threat to the regional interests of Syria and its Ba'th. A complete Leftist-Palestinian takeover was bound to invite Israeli intervention (so far prevented through skillful maneuvering with the United States and the USSR). An Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon would have left the Syrian rear vulnerable and would have thwarted Syria's efforts to reach some kind of agreement over the Golan without war (for which Syria was not ready, especially with relations with Egypt at their lowest ebb).

What followed was a frantic Syrian attempt to put an end to the fighting by speeding the election of a new president and the installation of a new government that could start implementation of the Leftist reforms. But as Damascus soon realized, the road was not strewn with roses. First, Franjiyeh proved none too anxious to relinquish power even when faced with insistent demands and threats of a military take-over. Having failed to secure an agreement on a peaceful and legal transfer of authority, the Syrians authorized the PLA and Saiqa units to intervene militarily by blocking access to the Lebanese capital, encircling the Palestinian camps of Sabra and Shatila, and taking positions to defend the presidential palace, with the objective of preventing any military action that would force Franjiyeh to resign, on the official pretext that such action would inevitably lead to the partition of Lebanon. In reality, the Syrians seem to have decided to prevent a forced presidential resignation for fear that this would deprive them of the political gains already realized in Lebanon and, no less crucially, prevent them from participating in the choice of a successor amenable to Damascus. As tension escalated, heavy fighting broke out on all fronts, with the Leftist-Palestinian alliance, supported by mutinous units of the Lebanese army, scoring important strategic gains. Asad saw no choice but to send additional crack units, mass troops along the border and suspend supplies to the Palestinians in order to pressure the Leftists to agree to a cease-fire. However, the growing rift between Junblat and the Syrians quickly made all efforts to conduct a constructive dialogue a futile exercise.\* Furthermore, Syria had too many Arab opponents who were more than ready to add fuel to the fire if that would lead to the embarrassment of the Damascus

\* As early as March 1966, Junblat came out on record censuring "certain organizations backed by an Arab army who had intervened in Lebanon to prevent the Lebanese forces from carrying out the will of the people." He insisted on an immediate Syrian withdrawal, "as Syria's role was finished and the issue is now of concern only to the Lebanese" (ARR, No. 6 [March 1976], p. 185).

regime. Countries like Iraq, Libya and, of course, Egypt had vested interests in instigating the Leftists and the Palestinians to continue the battle irrespective of the cost in human suffering. Syria's position was becoming increasingly untenable.

Faced with a confused and volatile situation, the Soviets reverted to their initial position of "sitting on the fence." The Soviet media reported the various settlement efforts undertaken by Damascus, presenting the Syrian goals in such positive terms as "safeguarding Lebanon's unity, independence and territorial integrity and defending the Palestinian revolution."<sup>17</sup> The outbreak of the clashes and the successive failures of Syria's mediation were consistently attributed to "the Right-wing forces supported by imperialist circles and Arab reactionary regimes," who "attempt to provoke the progressive forces into a new round of clashes... and blame the Left for the deterioration of the situation so as to drive a wedge between the Lebanese progressive forces and the Syrian mediators."<sup>18</sup> On March 31 - i.e., with the arrival of U.S. presidential envoy Ambassador L. Dean Brown - Soviet media began to couple criticism of the Right with increasingly strident censure of the United States, linking Brown's mission with the American Sixth Fleet's activities and with the threat of "internationalization of the Lebanese crisis."<sup>19</sup>

Attempting to avoid the dilemma of choosing between any of the currently squabbling factions that Moscow had supported in the past, the Soviet media was silent on the escalating clashes between the Syrian-sponsored units and the Left. Similarly, while giving voice to the Leftists' demands, particularly to their *sine qua non* of Franjiyeh's resignation and the execution of "deep socio-political reforms," Moscow consistently refrained from directly endorsing their political platform.<sup>20</sup>

Nonetheless, the USSR's uneasiness with the emerging situation was growing, as statements such as the following from *Pravda* made clear:

It is important and imperative to maintain the strategic ties uniting the Lebanese National Movement, fraternal Syria and the Palestinian revolution in their common struggle against all plots, particularly those acquiring dangerous international scope and threatening not only Lebanon and the Palestinian revolution but the entire Arab region.<sup>21</sup>

Moreover, on April 7 *Pravda* and *Krasnaia zvezda* cited George Habash's pledge to fight against those supporting contacts with the United States since such contacts "constitute a prelude to negotiations with Israel." Giving voice to the position of the rejection front was most probably intended as a jab at both Asad and Junblat (the latter had conferred with Brown

several times). By the same token, the positive reference to Habash, the first since the onset of the Lebanese war, might have been intended as a warning signal to the effect that Moscow was keeping its options open and that unauthorized rapprochement with the United States might lead to Soviet alignment with the rejectionists.

On April 9, Asad took yet another deep step into the Lebanese quagmire, introducing additional Syrian troops and armor into Lebanon and thereby raising the number of Syrian and pro-Syrian Palestinian forces in Lebanon to some 17,000.<sup>22</sup> The incursion, welcomed by the Phalangists (and by the United States), was labelled "an invasion" and severely criticized by the Leftists. Coming only a day after *Pravda's* "Observer" column had authoritatively expressed Soviet support for "the legitimate aspirations of the Lebanese nation to be master of its own fate" and had ruled out any "internationalization of the Lebanese problem," the Syrian operation appeared as an outright affront to Moscow. The Kremlin must have been particularly dismayed by the fact that Syria mounted its anti-Left campaign amid increasingly explicit overtures to the West.\*

Evidently, however, at this point neither side was interested in an open rift. The USSR's irritation was expressed only indirectly in terms of "opposition to foreign interference in Lebanon's internal affairs" and to "attempts to impose reactionary settlement plans."<sup>23</sup> At the same time, Moscow maintained complete silence on the presence of Syrian troops in Lebanon.

Moscow's restrained reaction to the Syrian invasion – a far cry indeed from the scathing criticism voiced by the Lebanese Left – was immediately reciprocated by President Asad's going on record to pay tribute to "the unshakable Soviet-Syrian friendship."<sup>24</sup> On April 15, the CPSU organ featured a lengthy quotation from the Syrian Ba'th daily, *At-Thawra*, depicting Syria as the steadfast champion of the PRM and Lebanon's progressive forces, striving in unison with them to "end the fratricidal slaughter and achieve a peaceful solution." *Thawra's* criticism of the United States – and specifically of the Brown mission, which it condemned as intending to "disturb Syria's mediation effort" – must have been particularly soothing to Moscow. So too Arafat's April 16 declaration of support for the Syrian peace initiative and the joint Syrian-PLO agreement to reject "American solutions and plans for Lebanon, end the fighting, resist partition and

\* Most notable among those gestures were: the cordial welcome given in Damascus to the American secretary of the treasury early in March; Asad's growing contacts with Saudi Arabia; and, most crucially for Moscow, the persistent indications that Syria was coordinating its Lebanese policy with Washington. (See, for example, *An Nahar*, March 29, 1976.)



Arabization or internationalization of the Lebanese conflict.”\* Within a day, Moscow explicitly and directly endorsed Syria’s activity in Lebanon:

[Giving] a resolute rebuff to the imperialist-Zionist plot, the Syrian Arab Republic is undertaking serious, constructive efforts aimed at solving the Lebanese crisis. Syria’s steadfast and principled position [as regards] the establishment of a just and stable peace in the Middle East receives the full support of the world’s progressive forces, and first and foremost, of the Soviet Union.<sup>25</sup>

For the next two weeks, Moscow had nothing but praise for Syria’s “helpful” role in Lebanon.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, the Soviet press, which had hitherto completely ignored the presence of the PLA units in Lebanon, implicitly endorsed their efforts in policing the Syrian-orchestrated cease-fire.<sup>27</sup>

With President Franjiyeh finally agreeing to sign the constitutional amendment that enabled him to resign before the end of his term in office, and with the Syrians appearing to be firmly in control, Moscow assumed that the worst was over.<sup>28</sup> A Soviet government declaration, published on April 29, made only casual reference to Lebanon, stating, *inter alia*:

Overt attempts are being made to deal a blow to the PRM, drag it into a fratricidal war. This is the real sense of the events in Lebanon [particularly in view of] such provocative actions as the concentration of Israeli forces on the South Lebanese border, and the movement of American warships toward Lebanon’s shores, although there is nothing for them to do there.

The Syrian intervention, so scathingly denounced by the Lebanese Left, was not even mentioned, let alone censured.\*\*

\* ARR, No. 7 (April 1976), pp. 221–222. According to *An Nahar*, the Damascus agreement between Asad and Arafat had not met with full approval from the Lebanese Left and had created “a crisis of confidence between Syria and the Phalangists, the National Liberal Party and their allies. As a result, there have arisen new political complications in the Lebanese crisis” (*An Nahar Arab Report* 7, No. 17 [April 26, 1976]). According to the Soviet report, however, Arafat negotiated with the Syrians on Junblat’s behalf (*Pravda*, April 17, 1976).

\*\* Syrian Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Khaddam, speaking at a press conference in Kuwait, analyzed the situation in Lebanon in almost identical terms (Kuwait Ar-Ra’y al-’Am in Arabic, April 29, 1976 – FBIS/Middle East, May 5, 1976). Subsequent comments on the declaration published in the Soviet press labelled it “an expression of solidarity with and support of the Palestinian and Lebanese nations,” thus again implicitly endorsing Syria’s declared goals of defending both the

The situation, however, was rapidly deteriorating. On May 8, a Syrian-sponsored president was elected amid continuous cannonade and violent clashes, embroiling mainly the rejectionists and the Damascus-controlled Saiqa. The results of the Saiqa-policed elections were immediately rejected by the Leftists as a Syrian dictate.<sup>29</sup> They were particularly dismayed by the election's close coincidence with the May 7 Rightist offensive, the sophisticated coordination of which led to reports of considerable advanced planning with Syrian foreknowledge.<sup>30</sup> On May 12, 1977, a tripartite alliance between the Palestinians, the Leftists and the Lebanese Arab Army was formed to counter the Rightist attack. A communiqué issued by the new alliance minced no words in indicating that it "will use every method" to achieve the retreat of the Syrian forces from Lebanon.<sup>31</sup> On May 14 the PRC issued a statement condemning Syrian actions in Lebanon, specifically "the shelling of Tripoli, the Burj al-Barajinah camp, and the western area of Beirut with artillery and rockets by the Syrian and As-Saiqua forces."\* All Palestinian factions, including Hawatmah's PDFLP, which had hitherto failed to explicitly criticize the Syrians, endorsed this statement.<sup>32</sup>

The increasingly overt rift in the progressive camp placed Moscow in an awkward position. The specter of its proteges locked in actual combat was quickly becoming a reality to be reckoned with. The USSR's initial reaction, perhaps the most natural in the given situation, was, again, to keep all its option open, judiciously choosing to lend public support to all its squabbling allies rather than favor one at the risk of alienating the others. Thus, Podgornyi hastened to congratulate Elias Sarkis on the occasion of his election, evidently ignoring the Leftists' opposition to both his

---

Palestinians and Lebanon (see, for example, Khaddam's statement and Damascus Domestic Service, May 4, 1976—FBIS/Middle East, May 5, 1976). On May 7, i.e., at a time when Saiqa was involved in a bloody massacre of rejectionists and nationalists in Tripoli, *Pravda* cited Saiqa leader Muhsen to the effect that "the Declaration attests to a deep Soviet understanding of the crisis." As a further illustration of Soviet support, one may mention the May 3 arrival of a high-ranking Soviet delegation headed by Skachkov to discuss the further development of Soviet-Syrian cooperation. The PLO's disaffection with Moscow's position was clearly evidenced by Qaddumi's April 28–May 3 visit to the Palestinian Revolution Command. The visit, officially intended to "strengthen the close strategic alliance with the PRC" (Voice of Palestine [Clandestine], May 1, 1976—FBIS/Middle East, May 3, 1976), was obviously made with an eye on Moscow, not so much as a rebuff but as a reminder that the PLO was not totally dependent on the Kremlin.

\* Voice of Palestine (Clandestine), May 15, 1976—FBIS/Middle East, May 17, 1976. Israeli Prime Minister Rabin said on May 12 that "forces under Syrian control in Lebanon had recently killed more guerrillas than Israeli forces in the past two years" (ARR, No. 9 [May 1976], p. 283).

candidacy and the way in which the election was conducted. Moreover, in a clear distortion of reality, *Pravda's* Beirut correspondent claimed that "the progressive forces are ready to cooperate with the new administration."<sup>32</sup> On May 22, the Soviets complimented Sarkis on his role in bringing about a deescalation of tensions, concomitantly censuring Franjiyeh's refusal to step down and enable the president-elect to work for a normalization of the situation.<sup>33</sup> It should be emphasized that the Arab news media hailed Sarkis' election "a triumph for the efforts made by Syria within the framework of the Syrian initiative to establish peace in Lebanon."<sup>34</sup> Hence, in supporting Sarkis the USSR was in effect supporting Damascus.

On the other hand, however, *Pravda's* senior correspondent Demchenko was rather explicit in voicing "disappointment" with the fact that the election of a new president failed to "stabilize the situation as was expected by many." Attributing Sarkis' failure *inter alia* to the still unsolved problem of "carrying out social and political reforms, particularly the liquidation of confessionalism," Demchenko implicitly supported the Leftists' demand for the secularization of Lebanon. Similarly, the appeal by the World Peace Council to hold "a solidarity day with Lebanon's democratic patriotic forces" may be construed as endorsement of Lebanon's Leftists.<sup>35</sup> A May 15 Radio Moscow broadcast was no less outspoken, referring to the Lebanese "progressive forces" as a "formidable anti-imperialist movement" and a "proponent of revolutionary change," admitting, perhaps for the first time, that the Lebanese Communist Party "cooperated" with the Left.<sup>35</sup>

Clearly attempting to keep all its options open, Moscow was almost equally forthcoming in promoting the PRM<sup>36</sup> and in referring positively, though perceptibly less frequently than before, to Syria's efforts at restoring law and order in Lebanon.<sup>37</sup> Nonetheless, beneath the seemingly smooth surface of even-handed support for all the "progressive forces," signs of displeasure were becoming increasingly apparent. Thus, the Soviet media were extremely vehement in opposing any "Arabization" or "internationalization" of the Lebanese conflict, censuring "foreign interference" in Lebanon's affairs. While the brunt of the criticism was reserved for the West (specifically,

\* Geivandov in *Pravda*, May 13, 1976. A few days earlier *Pravda* and *Komsomolskaia pravda* reported that "the national patriotic forces supporting, as it is known, the candidacy of Raymond Edde... were absent from the [parliament] at the moment of Sarkis' election" (*Pravda* and *Komsomolskaia pravda*, May 9, 1976). No explanation was provided for this obvious inconsistency.

\*\* *Pravda*, *Izvestiia* and *Krasnaia zvezda*, May 26, 1976. This appears to be the first time a Soviet front-organization was cited voicing its opinion as to the Lebanese events. Concurrently, the Polish press was used to voice support for the Left (see *Trybuna Ludu*, May 9 and May 10, 1976).

Brown's mission and France's offer to send a task force to Beirut), some of it may well have been intended for the USSR's progressive allies, namely, Libya, Iraq,\* the Lebanese PSP\*\* and, most notably, Syria.<sup>38</sup>

The new attitude towards Syria's role in Lebanon was clearly apparent in *Izvestiia's* May 23, 1976, commentary, which appealed, *inter alia*, for "a peaceful settlement of the crisis on a democratic basis without any kind of interference from without." While the context of the commentary was clearly the Brown mission (including Syrian censure thereof), its frame of reference may also be construed as a carefully veiled criticism of Damascus. Specifically, the statement that, given the conditions in Lebanon and the "validity" of Leftist demands for democratic reforms, "a full defeat of the Rightist forces becomes inevitable," may suggested disagreement with and opposition to Syria's policy of reaching a settlement in which there are no victors or vanquished; more crucially, it may imply dismay with the Syrian effort to prevent the Rightists' collapse. Nonetheless, these pronouncements constituted only a feeble echo to the vitriolic denunciation of Damascus' Lebanese policy voiced by the Leftist-Palestinian alliance (see above).

Concurrently, the Soviet media referred with increasing frequency to "imperialist and reactionary attempts to incite animosity not only between the Palestinian Resistance and the Lebanese nation, but also between the Palestinian Movement and Syria."<sup>Δ</sup> The scope was subsequently broadened to include "contradictions among various Palestinian factions and groupings and between the progressive, Left-wing forces and the Palestinians."<sup>39</sup> These reports, accompanied as they were by consistent references to the situation in Lebanon as "complex" and "complicated," reflected only to a very limited degree the actual acuity of the rift within the "progressive"

\* Libyan Prime Minister Jallud arrived in Damascus on May 17, declaredly "to find common national denominators between Syria on the one hand, and the Nationalist Movement and the Palestinians on the other hand" (*An Nahar Arab Report* 7, No. 21 [May 24, 1976]). The Soviet media made no comment on Jallud's mission, presumably expressing misgivings as to the wisdom of adding a new element to an already complicated situation. Iraq's anti-Syrian campaign, its unrelenting alignment with the Palestinian rejectionists and, most crucially, Baghdad's censure of Soviet hedging vis-à-vis the Lebanese combatants could have also angered Moscow (cf. *An Nahar Arab Report* 7, No. 22 [May 31, 1976]).

\*\* Junblat requested that the Arab League intervene in Lebanon to end the crisis. (*An Nahar Arab Report* 7, No. 21 [May 24, 1976]). See also *Pravda*, May 20, 1976).

Δ Radio Moscow in Arabic, May 15, 1976 – BBC/Soviet Union, May 18, 1976. As early as May 6, 1976, *Krasnaia zvezda* cited the PLO official Abu-Maizar to the effect that the United States "wants to sow discord between the Lebanese National Patriotic Front and the Palestinian Resistance Movement [on the one hand] and Syria [on the other] in order to create conditions for foreign intervention and for the separation of the Arabs from their allies, the socialist states."

camp.\* Nonetheless, they constituted tangible evidence of Soviet disaffection with the situation. Moscow's preferences were clearly stated in a pronouncement attributed to the "Third All-Union Conference of Soviet-Arab Friendship Societies," which called for "consolidation of Lebanon's national-patriotic forces with the Palestinian Resistance Movement and [with] *fraternal Syria*".\*\* The publication of this appeal on the very day of Kosygin's departure for Baghdad and Damascus, and two days before the massive Syrian incursion into Lebanon, seems more than mere coincidence.

\* For example, the bloody events in Tripoli (see above) were barely hinted at in the Soviet press, which made do with reporting that "PRM leadership ordered the PLA command to swiftly withdraw its units from the north Lebanese town of Tripoli, where armed clashes took place in the last few days" (*Pravda* and *Krasnaia zvezda*, May 16, 1976). A Radio Moscow Arabic broadcast went even further in belittling the scope and significance of the split in the progressive camp, defining it as a "marginal matter" and censuring the United States for "exaggerating rumored contradictions between the Lebanese and the Palestinians, between various Palestinian factions or between Left-wing forces and the Palestinians." (Radio Moscow in Arabic, May 20, 1976 - BBC/Soviet Union, May 22, 1976. See also "Lebanon: The Rugged Path to Normalization," *New Times*, No. 19 [May 1976], pp. 14-15.)

\*\* *Pravda*, May 29, 1976. *Trybuna Ludu* of May 19, 1976, carried a similar appeal, stating, *inter alia*, that "a Syrian-Leftist reconciliation would mean a total defeat for the conservative Right."

## STAGE IV

### COMPLICITY OR COLLUSION?

The last days of May 1976 saw a rapid escalation of fighting on all fronts, accompanied by an unprecedented exacerbation of political violence.\* Asad felt compelled to take action in a final drive to secure the peace initiative to which he was personally committed. On May 31, 1976, a Syrian armored regiment comprising some 2,000 troops and 60 tanks crossed the border into Lebanon. Early on the morning of June 1, 1976, additional Syrian troops advanced in a three-pronged formation into eastern Lebanon, routing the surprised Leftists.

The direct, massive military intervention constituted a make-or-break decision for the Syrian leadership. For relinquishment of the year-long mediation effort and withdrawal from the Lebanese arena were bound to be interpreted as a major political defeat for Damascus, and for Asad personally. Military intervention, on the other hand, was sure to have wide repercussions at the Arab level; but its chances of success, particularly in halting the bloodshed in Lebanon, might in the end outweigh all the other factors: victory could subsequently lend legitimacy to the invasion.

Asad's decision to commit his troops to Lebanon less than twenty-four hours before Kosygin's scheduled arrival in Damascus appears, at first sight, as a clear affront to Moscow, intended to present it with a *fait accompli*. However, a closer analysis of the situation gives credence to a different interpretation. For one, the timing of the Syrian incursion appears to be connected with actual developments within Lebanon (see above) rather than with the Soviet premier's scheduled arrival. Moreover, Asad had little reason to doubt Soviet support for his action in Lebanon. Aware of Syria's crucial position as the linchpin of Moscow's current Middle East strategy, Asad must have understood that the USSR simply could not afford a rift

\* For example, Junblat's sister, Linda al-Atrash, was murdered and her two daughters seriously wounded (Beirut Domestic Service in Arabic, May 27, 1976 - FBIS/Middle East, May 28, 1976). On May 25 Raymond Edde, leader of the National Bloc Party, was wounded in an attempt made on his life (Beirut Domestic Service in Arabic, May 25, 1976 - FBIS/Middle East, May 26, 1976).

with Syria, particularly when intensive Saudi and Kuwaiti efforts were under way to bring Syria and Egypt to the negotiating table in Riyadh, thus adding Damascus to the pro-Western axis.

While it is virtually impossible to determine whether and to what extent Moscow was a party to Asad's decision to invade Lebanon, one may safely assume that the decision itself did not take the Kremlin by surprise. The Soviet ambassadors in Beirut and Damascus had been actively involved in the crisis at least since Soldatov's November 1975 meetings with Premier Karami. For example, in May 1976 the Soviet ambassador to Syria was reported to have met with President Asad and to have handed him a letter from Brezhnev, the contents of which were not disclosed.<sup>1</sup> On May 22, 1976, Soldatov was reported by the same source to have met with Arafat. In addition to the roving diplomats, the extensive network of Soviet presence in Syria and to a lesser extent in Lebanon must have been a useful source of information.

Furthermore, the May 31 incursion was merely another step in a relatively long process of military involvement\* and thus hardly a surprise to those who kept a close watch on the vicissitudes of Syria's activity (as Moscow obviously did). Still more crucial, the USSR and Syria had been pursuing a coordinated strategy vis-à-vis Lebanon at least since Asad's October 1975 Moscow visit. The strategy was, as indicated above, predicated upon their convergent goals, namely, the establishment of a Syrian-sponsored north-eastern Arab front, isolating Egypt and counterbalancing the pro-American Riyadh-Cairo axis, and taming the PLO and making it a more amenable party to a Middle East settlement. Since Asad's activity in Lebanon was, in effect, advancing Moscow's pursuits, the USSR could not but endorse, at least tacitly, the creeping Syrian involvement, up to and including the massive intervention needed to impose the *Pax Syriana*. In other words, sanctifying the goal, Moscow could not but sanctify the means.\*\*

\* As the reader may recall, Syrian-controlled Palestinian units entered Lebanon in January 1976. Since March 1976 Damascus had used the PLA and disguised Syrian troops against the Left and the Palestinians.

\*\* In this respect a Radio Moscow Arabic broadcast of May 20, 1976, is particularly revealing. Stating that "anyone with common sense now realizes that what matters most is to stop the bloodshed and save the country from destruction," Moscow in effect endorsed the use of any and all means to achieve this goal. Moreover, the broadcast censured Western and Arab criticism of Syria's pacification effort as "malicious attempts" to focus attention on "marginal matters" rather than on the central issue of achieving a settlement, after having clearly implied that the Lebanese themselves were incapable of accomplishing this task because of "the existence of controversies virtually impossible to settle between the various religious sects and social strata." Thus, Moscow in fact gave Syria a *carte blanche* to act in Lebanon.

Moreover, according to the United States Defense Department spokesman, the Soviet Union had doubled the number of its surface combat vessels in the Mediterranean between May 28 and June 4. In the first three days of June, five more warships had been moved into the Mediterranean, bringing the total Soviet vessels there to 70 (as compared with 44 American ships).<sup>2</sup> Belgrade Radio reported on June 1, 1976, that "today four more Soviet naval vessels sailed through the Bosphorus on their way from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean. The number of Soviet naval vessels joining the Mediterranean squadron in the past two weeks has thus risen to ten." It is hence conceivable that Moscow beefed up its Mediterranean flotilla to provide the Syrian expeditionary force with at least psychological backing.

Thus it would appear that Kosygin came to Damascus, not to be confronted by an independent Syrian decision, but rather with the aim of further coordinating a joint strategy vis-à-vis Lebanon and related Middle East issues.\*

The communiqué published at the close of Kosygin's visit spoke in terms of a joint "resolve to continue to work together toward ending the bloodshed, restoring security and peace in Lebanon and ensuring its integrity, independence and sovereignty."\*\* A Radio Moscow comment on the results of Kosygin's Baghdad and Damascus talks was virtually explicit in indicating that a joint strategy "to protect Lebanon against all imperialist interference in its affairs . . . to discontinue the bloodshed and to settle the present crisis by peaceful means" had been elaborated during the visit.<sup>3</sup>

\* Conceivably, one goal of Kosygin's visit was to reconcile the rival Syrian and Iraqi regimes and thus broaden and strengthen the pro-Soviet northeastern front. The "vital importance" of unity among the "confrontation states" was the *leitmotif* of the official pronouncements in both Damascus and Baghdad. Moreover, in view of Moscow's apprehensions as to Syria's ability to withstand Saudi economic and political pressures, Kosygin might have engaged in an effort to mediate the Syrian-Iraqi oil dispute. Iraq had cut off Syria's oil supplies in the winter of 1975-76. At that time, Saudi Arabia reportedly agreed to compensate Damascus for the oil Iraq withheld from it. According to *An Nahar*, in the wake of talks with the Soviet prime minister, Iraq resumed pumping its oil into Syria (*An Nahar Arab Report* 7, No. 23 [June 7, 1976]). One may add that a Syrian-Iraqi reconciliation might have seemed particularly crucial at that time, given the rapprochement between Moscow and Amman.

\*\* *Pravda*, June 4, 1976. Similar terminology was employed in the joint Soviet-Iraqi communiqué published on June 1, 1976. Moreover, though clearly bowing to Iraq when stating that "a positive solution of the crisis can be achieved by the Lebanese nation itself," the Baghdad document failed to specify that a settlement should be achieved exclusively by the Lebanese, thus leaving the door open to Syrian mediation.



Similarly, Soviet reports of the Syrian incursion left little doubt as to Moscow's initial support for the operation. The incursion was first reported on June 5, 1976, i.e., on the very day Syria "started an all-out assault and a land, sea, and air offensive to control approaches to Beirut and the mountain range."<sup>4</sup> The *TASS* item cited "Syrian press reports":

Syrian troops are stationed on the territory of Lebanon.... The Syrian Arab Republic sent its troops to Lebanon, being guided by *national duty towards a sister nation* and by *compassion* for the victims of the bloodshed between Arab brothers. Syrian newspapers say the situation in some areas of Lebanon is back to normal. The situation in Beirut is relatively quiet. Armed clashes between the rival parties have almost stopped. Power and water supply systems and other services are being repaired....<sup>5</sup>

*Pravda's* June 6, 1976, commentary was equally positive when it explained that units of the Syrian army were introduced into Lebanon only after "all attempts by the national forces to seek ways leading to... a political settlement of the crisis have failed," stressing that "their presence *has helped ease the situation*...." The same commentary also spoke in terms of the USSR's "absolute support" for Syria's position, emphasizing that, given "the ties of cordiality and friendship which are based on trust and mutual respect, common objectives and solidarity in the struggle for peace and progress," Syria "can always rely on the support of the Soviet Union."\* On June 7, 1976, *Pravda* and *Izvestiia* presented the introduction of "small contingents of Syrian troops" as an attempt to "normalize the situation" since "the legally elected President Sarkis is denied the possibility of exercising his duties, because certain forces standing behind those who support the former Lebanese president... are trying to torpedo a peaceful settlement."\*\* On June 8, the Soviet media claimed that the Syrian units were introduced into Lebanon at the request of the Lebanese "official authorities" with the aim of "restoring order and facilitating the achieve-

\* In a similar vein, a Radio Moscow Arabic broadcast cited Syria's official mouthpiece, *al-Ba'ith*, to the effect that "Syria highly appreciates... Soviet support in every situation for the just Arab cause, and the enormous aid for Syria in its economic and social development" (Radio Moscow in Arabic, June 6, 1976 - FBIS/Soviet Union, June 7, 1976).

\*\* As might be recalled, the Leftists rejected Sarkis' election as an illegitimate Syrian dictate. Thus, by defining him as the "legally elected" president, the Soviets were, in fact, implicitly dissociating themselves from the Left's position (see also *Pravda*, *Izvestiia* and *Krasnaia zvezda*, June 8, 1976).

ment of a cease-fire." Thus, the Syrian involvement in Lebanon was granted the same stamp of "legitimacy" as the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956 and of Czechoslovakia in 1968.

However, the first signs of Soviet displeasure with the course of events in Lebanon soon became discernible. *Pravda*, *Izvestiia* and *Krasnaia zvezda* of June 8, 1976, defined the situation in Lebanon as "complicated," explaining that "armed clashes involving the Christian Maronite community and Palestinian organizations of different trends... stand in the way of normalization...." At the same time, clashes between the Syrian troops and unidentified "opposition forces" were reported. On June 9, the Palestinian News Agency was cited to the effect that the PLO's armed detachments had succeeded in halting the advance of Syrian units toward Beirut.\* It was added that the cease-fire announced on June 7, 1976, "has not entered into force, and the intensity of the fighting has not slackened." While these statements constituted at most veiled expressions of displeasure with Syria's activity in Lebanon, an official TASS statement published on June 10 struck a different note:

The Syrian Arab Republic, on its side, time and again made statements to the effect that the mission of the troops it introduced into Lebanon was to help stop the bloodshed. Nevertheless, notice should be called to the fact that bloodshed continues in Lebanon today and blood flows in even greater streams.... The Soviet Union urges all states to abstain from any action that goes against the principles of respect for independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity so that the generally recognized international principles should be fully implemented in relation to Lebanon also. The first thing to be done in Lebanon, in order to achieve this, is to stop the bloodshed. It is necessary that all sides involved in the Lebanese events, in one way or another, should immediately hold their fire.

While the TASS statement reserved most of its wrath for France and the U.S. which "threaten direct military interference in the affairs of Lebanon," the explicit censure of Damascus cannot be ignored.

Syria had embarked on a calculated risk in driving its troops and armor into its neighbor's civil war, the logical continuation of a policy determined

\* Moscow's confusion was clearly apparent from the following TASS report: "Military actions involving the use of tanks [and] artillery... are still going on, with units of the national patriotic forces in Lebanon, the PRM, Syrian troops and armed units of the Right-wing Christian forces taking part" (Moscow TASS in English, June 9, 1976 - FBIS/Soviet Union, June 10, 1976).

to end the fighting and to prevent either side from achieving total victory. Having failed to achieve this through political influence, Asad saw no alternative but to intervene militarily. Yet Asad, and presumably Moscow as well, had clearly underestimated the will, tenacity and fighting skill of the Palestinian-Leftist alliance. The Syrian troops encountered much stiffer resistance than they appear to have anticipated. Syria's thrust into Lebanon was relatively slow and limited, probably due to Asad's initial reluctance to engage in a bloody all-out confrontation with the radical Left and the Palestinians. Moreover, according to Western intelligence reports, to gain the decisive upper hand the Syrians would have needed about 50,000 troops, i.e., approximately double the force they had actually committed. Their indecisiveness resulted in the near destruction of the pro-Syrian Saiqa and heavy casualties to the commando battalions posted in Beirut, Tripoli, Sidon and Tyre. Plausibly, it was this Syrian vacillation rather than the engagement itself that angered Moscow and changed all-out endorsement to overt criticism. The Soviet Union was recoiling less from Syria's intervention in Lebanon than from its failure to be quick and bold enough to tip the scales and thereby spare Moscow an embarrassing situation.

This hypothesis appears validated by a close analysis of both the above-cited *TASS* statement and commentaries published in its wake. Thus, the June 10 pronouncement was indeed quite explicit in censuring Syria for failing to accomplish its declared goal, i.e., stopping the bloodshed, while the intervention as such was not denounced. Moreover, the appeals to respect Lebanon's sovereignty were clearly directed at "all states" involved in the Lebanese events in "one way or another" rather than specifically at Syria. Similarly, the threat included in the statement—that the Soviet Union might intervene directly in the Lebanese events should any other "power" intervene—could hardly have been intended for Damascus. On the contrary, in signalling the West to stay away and in backing its verbal message with a formidable naval task force under the personal command of the Soviet chief of staff, General Kulikov,\* Moscow was in fact ensuring Syria's freedom of action.

\* According to Western intelligence reports, General Viktor Kulikov came into the Mediterranean through the Bosphorus aboard the new missile cruiser *Ochakov* on June 6, 1976, to take command of the seventy warships of the Soviet task force in the waters of Lebanon. According to these reports, the force included two large intelligence-gathering craft able to monitor all military movements in Lebanon, Syria and Israel; landing craft able to disembark 700 fighting men; helicopters; and surface warships against potential shore targets. This may have been the first time that a Soviet chief of staff was sent to lead an operational naval force in waters where a powerful American fleet was stationed.

Subsequent pronouncements offered equally clear indications that Moscow was trying to dissociate itself from Damascus' failure to establish effective control over Lebanon rather than from the attempt as such. Thus, for example, an authoritative Radio Moscow commentary explicitly differentiated between the commendable goals of Syrian intervention and the subsequent "unfortunate" development of the situation.\* Similarly, the Soviet media were consistent in referring to the Syrian involvement in terms of "being drawn into" or "drifting into" (*vovlechenie*) the clashes, thus implying some sort of involuntary action on Damascus' part.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, Moscow generally refrained from directly reproaching Syria; rather, it attributed the deterioration in Lebanon to "the Rightists' attempts to prevent normalization" (as well as to their "vested interests," shared by Israel and the United States, in the "perpetuation of the fratricidal war") and censured the "Lebanese reaction" for "whipping up anti-Syrian sentiments."<sup>Δ</sup> By the same token, Moscow's positive attitude to the June 21 cease-fire agreement achieved through the joint mediation of the Libyan prime minister

\* Moscow International Service in Russian, June 13, 1976 – FBIS/Soviet Union, June 14, 1976 ("Weekly International Observers' Roundtable"). See also Potomov, "The Lebanese Crisis: Who Stands to Gain?" *New Times*, No. 26 (June 1976), pp. 8-9. The broadcast also included some warm remarks about Soviet-Syrian friendship and cooperation.

\*\* *Pravda*, *Izvestiia* and *Krasnaia zvezda*, June 13, 1976; and *Pravda*, June 14 and June 20, 1976; *Pravda* and *Krasnaia zvezda*, June 15 and June 16, 1976. However, *Trud* of June 23, 1976, implicitly accused the Syrians of failing to observe the cease-fire achieved on June 12 through Libyan mediation, thus forcing the Palestinian-Leftist alliance to fight simultaneously against the "Christian offensive" and the "Syrian troops." (See also *Pravda*, June 19, 1976.)

<sup>Δ</sup> *Pravda* and *Krasnaia zvezda*, June 15, 1976. See also Radio Moscow in English, June 14, 1976 – FBIS/Soviet Union, June 15, 1976; Radio Peace and Progress in Arabic, June 8, 1976 – FBIS/Soviet Union, June 9, 1976. This pronouncement may be construed as an indirect reprimand of the Leftist-Palestinian alliance which, rather than the Rightists, condemned Syrian intervention. For example, the June 12 statement issued by the Central Command of the Palestinian Revolution and the Lebanese National Movement contained some scathing criticism of the Syrian "military invasion" (see BBC/Middle East, June 14, 1976). Similarly, PSP leader Jumblat went on record as condemning Syria's "selfish interference," which "prevented a political solution," in order to pave the way for Syrian "domination" (Beirut Home Service, June 14, 1976 – BBC/Middle East, June 16, 1976). A similar statement was issued by Habash's PFLP (see BBC/Middle East, June 22, 1976). According to a Beirut Radio broadcast on June 14, 1976, the Central Command of the Palestinian Revolution and the Lebanese National Movement had addressed an important letter to Brezhnev, asking him "to make every possible effort to help in halting the Syrian military invasion, achieve the withdrawal of the Syrian army and end the blockade imposed on Lebanon" (Beirut Home Service, June 14, 1976 – BBC/Middle East, June 16, 1976). None of these statements was reported by the Soviet media.

and the Arab League secretary – a quixotic arrangement whereby the Syrian troops would be withdrawn from Beirut airport and some other areas, to be replaced by other Syrian units (along with Libyan military forces) in the capacity of the first battalions of the “Arab Security Force” – would seem to suggest that the USSR did not renege in its basic support for Syria’s goals in Lebanon.\* As before, the Soviets were ready to endorse an arrangement legitimizing the Syrian presence in Lebanon over the vocal opposition of both the PLO and the Lebanese Left.<sup>7</sup>

Nevertheless, Moscow’s irritation with the behavior of *all* the parties involved in the Lebanese events was coming through, albeit indirectly. Several remarks pointed out the problems Moscow foresaw over broader issues in the context of a Middle East settlement as a result of Syrian-Palestinian antagonism, Lebanese Christian and Muslim incompatibility, general Arab disunity, and erosion in the attitude of some Arab states towards a political settlement. Thus, for example, *TASS* Deputy Director-General Sergei Losev complained, in an English-language commentary for North American listeners, that the worsening Lebanese situation made a Middle East settlement more difficult to obtain. He went on to observe that “some Arab countries have already taken a tougher stand” on the issue of political settlement.\*\* A Radio Moscow Arabic commentary suggested that any Soviet hope of Syrian influence over the Palestinians – perhaps with an eye to obtaining Palestinian agreement to attend the Geneva peace conference – was simply going down the drain. The commentary also lamented that never in twenty years had Arab unity been subjected to “such a serious crisis,” pointing out that the Arabs had suffered a new blow with the armed clashes in Lebanon, which “the Palestinian resistance and Syria have joined in addition to the Lebanese.” “It is worth mentioning,” the commentary went on, “that solidarity between [these forces] constitutes the most important part in Arab resistance against the policy of imperialism and aggression in the Middle East.”<sup>8</sup> At the same time, Moscow expressed particular frustration with the “disunity and heterogeneity of the Lebanese political

\* Had it been respected, the June 21 cease-fire could have achieved the dual goal of putting an end to a situation that was becoming increasingly untenable and embarrassing for Moscow, at the same time providing a stamp of legitimacy for the Syrian presence in Lebanon. Moreover, successful mediation by “progressive” Libya could have effectively excluded any need for involvement by the more conservative Arab quarters.

\*\* Radio Moscow in English, June 11, 1976 – FBIS/Soviet Union, June 14, 1976. The reference would appear to be to Syria, which, judging from the communiqué on Kosygin’s visit to Damascus, would only agree to a lukewarm endorsement of a renewed Geneva peace conference (see above).

forces," as well as with "differences within the Palestinian movement."<sup>9</sup>

Another problem stemming from the Lebanese civil war was indicated in *Krasnaia zvezda's* June 16 commentary, which pointed to the awkward position in which the Lebanese strife had placed those states advocating the creation of an "independent Palestinian state." For, the military organ maintained, the fighting gave validity to American and Israeli arguments concerning "the 'impossibility' of peaceful coexistence of Muslims and Christians" within the framework of a single state and, by implication, the "impossibility of a Palestinian state existing next to Israel."<sup>10</sup>\*

While most of these statements presumably expressed genuine exasperation with what appeared to be the total collapse of Moscow's Middle East strategy, some of the critical remarks might have constituted a reaction to Arab censure of the USSR's role in Lebanon. This assumption is based on several relatively explicit Radio Moscow statements which recoiled against Egyptian, Chinese and Western allegations that "the Soviet Union is 'guilty' of the Lebanese tragedy" and has a "certain 'interest,' alongside the US, in Syria's actions against the Palestinians."<sup>10</sup> Hence, it seems conceivable that Moscow had to denounce Syria's failure in Lebanon in order to exonerate its own policy. Taking this speculation one step further, one may suggest that at least some of the criticism leveled at Syria was simply a propaganda measure intended both at placating the Palestinians\*\* and shielding the USSR from Arab (most notably Egyptian and Iraqi) attacks.<sup>Δ</sup>

\* While the issue of Soviet support for a Palestinian state is beyond the scope of this essay, it is nonetheless noteworthy that the above-cited statement appears to constitute a clear negation of the PLO's idea of a "democratic secular state."

\*\* Moscow's effort to compensate the Palestinians for denial of tangible support in the Lebanese context is further evident from the inordinately explicit verbal support given the PLO in other contexts, most notably as regards its "equal" participation in the Geneva peace conference and its position as the "legitimate representative of the Palestinian nation" (see, for example, *Pravda*, June 17, 1976 [editorial]; Podgornyi's speech honoring Hussein, *ibid.*, June 19, 1976; *ibid.*, June 11 and June 20, 1976). Moreover, on June 1976, after almost two years of delays, the PLO office was opened in Moscow. While the event merited only minor attention in the Soviet media, it may nonetheless be seen as an integral part of Moscow's effort to compensate and reassure the PLO.

<sup>Δ</sup> It is also symptomatic that even while reacting to Arab censure of its Lebanese stance, Moscow refused to step up its criticism of Syria beyond the standard accusation of contributing to an escalation in the fighting. Furthermore, Syria was explicitly excluded from the above-cited June 12 Radio Moscow statement that "what the USSR is really against is any interference in the Lebanese crisis by any force from outside, be it under French, American or Nato flags."

## STAGE V

### JUNE 1976 – JANUARY 1977: THE THORNY PATH TO A *PAX SYRIANA*

Moscow's extensive and increasingly costly\* efforts to back Syria were reciprocated by a series of provocative and offensive gestures on Damascus' part. Following the June 24, 1976, meeting in Riyadh of the prime ministers of Egypt, Syria, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, Damascus and Cairo agreed to restore full diplomatic relations (the respective diplomatic missions in the two capitals were closed by Egypt on June 5, 1976), to terminate the propaganda warfare between the two states, and to set up a "joint political-military committee to draw up guidelines for political action aimed at achieving a just and permanent solution to the Middle East problem."<sup>1</sup>

The Riyadh meeting and the ostensible Syrian-Egyptian reconciliation under Saudi aegis must have cast serious doubts on Syria's policies and intentions. The Soviet media were rather explicit in conveying concern and uneasiness that Damascus, succumbing to the need for Saudi subsidies, might be softening its opposition to the second Sinai disengagement agreement and, more ominously, swinging to join the pro-American Cairo-Riyadh axis.<sup>2</sup> The slow but steady growth of Syria's political, economic and even quasi-military\*\* contacts with the West did precious little to dispel Moscow's misgivings.

The rapprochement with Egypt and Saudi Arabia was followed by the Syrian government's decision to award the outgoing Chilean ambassador the Medal of Merit in appreciation of his service. This gesture, although

\* The reference is to both the political and economic spheres (see above for Arab criticism of Soviet-Syrian collusion). In economic terms, Moscow was expected to underwrite the expenditures of the Syrian task force in Lebanon, estimated at this stage to have been some two and one-half million dollars per day (*Al-Ahram*, June 12, 1976).

\*\* For example, on June 28 the U.S. Senate approved the sale of L-100 transport planes to Syria (*The New York Times*, June 29, 1976). Also, in mid-June Asad left for France on his first trip to the West since assuming power in 1970.

mainly symbolic, was construed as an intentional affront to the USSR. A Radio Peace and Progress Arabic broadcast found it appropriate to respond by expressing "astonishment" on the part of "the world's progressive circles," and presented Damascus' action as an outright endorsement of the Chilean "ruling clique which deserved only the noose or the scaffold."<sup>3</sup> All these were developments that Moscow could not ignore.

The first signs of a debate within the Soviet leadership regarding the position to be adopted towards the forces involved in the Lebanese imbroglio became detectable in the last days of June. These signs multiplied during the first week of July to form a clearly polarized pattern of opinion. Specifically, the government organ *Izvestiia* abstained from emphasizing Christian-Syrian cooperation, ignoring Damascus' role in facilitating Rightist attacks on Leftist and Palestinian strongholds.<sup>4</sup> The disagreement between the organ reflecting the positions of the bureaucratic lobby, presumably headed by Prime Minister Kosygin, and that representing the Brezhnev group<sup>5</sup> was further accentuated by the respective treatment given by *Pravda* and *Izvestiia* to Foreign Minister Khaddam's July 5-8 visit to Moscow. While *Izvestiia* accorded great attention to the Soviet-Syrian talks, accompanying its reports with numerous photographs and eye-catching headlines, the organ of the CPSU's Central Committee made due with minimal coverage. Moreover, in what amounted to an early indication of doubt as to the chances of attaining a Soviet-Syrian accord, *Pravda* on July 7, 1976, carried Faruq Qaddumi's statement expressing gratitude for Soviet support of the Palestinian-Leftist alliance. *Izvestiia* refrained from publishing this pronouncement, thereby suggesting its opposition to overt endorsement of the Left at Syria's expense.

The failure to bridge the gap between Moscow and Damascus became increasingly apparent in the days following Khaddam's departure. No joint communiqué was issued to summarize the high-level talks, an uncommon procedure in the framework of Soviet-Syrian intercourse and a clear indication of irreconcilable discord. Moreover, on July 10, a day after Khaddam's departure was reported, the Soviet press featured a declaration by the Soviet Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee which blamed Syria for "complicating the situation in Lebanon," appealing, in the name of the Soviet people, for worldwide support of the PRM and the NPF (National Patriotic Forces).

While the July 10 declaration suggests that the Kremlin had decided to tip its hand in favor of the Left, the continuous debate in the Soviet press indicated that no final decision was reached. Thus, *Pravda* and *Krasnaia zvezda* continued to voice increasingly strident criticism of Syria's involvement on the Rightists' side.<sup>6</sup> *Izvestiia*, on the other hand, refused to lend its voice to the anti-Syrian campaign, failing to censure Syria's Lebanese policy in



any of its independent commentaries. Furthermore, it systematically omitted reference to Syrian involvement on the Rightists' side from reports otherwise identical to those published by *Pravda*. Similarly, *Izvestiia* omitted from its coverage items highlighting the Soviet position in terms of support for the Palestinian-Leftist alliance.

Moreover, during the second week of July only five issues of *Izvestiia* appeared in print instead of the usual six. (Generally, *Izvestiia* appears every day but Monday; during the week in question the paper was not issued on both Monday, July 12, and Thursday, July 15, 1976.) Curiously, the July 15 issue of *Pravda* contained perhaps the most scathing attack on Damascus' Lebanese policy since the beginning of the Syrian involvement, as well as a lengthy interview with the head of the PLO's Moscow office, Muhammed al-Sha'ir, denouncing Syria and hailing the USSR's "resolute support for the PRM and the NPF." While it is impossible to ascertain whether this unusual incident stemmed from or reflected the existence of divergent approaches towards the forces involved in Lebanon, this speculation should be given some credence, particularly in view of *Izvestiia's* previously deviant stance.\*

The next issue of *Izvestiia*, dated July 16, continued with the dissenting pro-Syrian line, concomitantly emphasizing the chances of a rapprochement between Asad and Arafat and its importance for settling the Lebanese crisis. *Pravda*, on the other hand, on the same day carried a long article signed by its senior commentator, Pavel Demchenko, which mentioned a "rift" between Damascus and the PLO leadership and condemned Syria for stabbing the PLO in the back.

Most probably, the disagreement between *Pravda* and *Krasnaia zvezda*, on the one hand, and *Izvestiia*, on the other, only to a limited degree reflected the actual extent of the internal debate. The choice between Syria and the PLO was anything but an easy one. An open rift with Damascus was bound to send Asad closer to the Americans, endangering thereby the entire Soviet Middle East strategy and leaving Moscow with unstable Iraq as the only pro-Soviet Arab confrontation state. On the other hand, the USSR could not afford to abandon the PLO without imperilling its image as the patron of

\* At the same time, one cannot discount the possibility that the evident differences between *Izvestiia* and *Pravda* reflected a centrally directed division of labor within which each paper was assigned the task of supporting one of the squabbling forces, thus minimizing the risk involved in betting on the wrong horse and maximizing Moscow's room for maneuver. Of course, *Izvestiia's* failure to appear on Thursday, July 15, could have stemmed from a totally unrelated (and inexplicable) set of circumstances.

national liberation movements and, consequently, its standing with the Third World nations.

Caught between Scylla and Charybdis, Moscow attempted to use its leverage upon both parties in what appeared as a desperate effort to extricate itself from an untenable position. According to the Paris *Le Monde*, on July 11 Brezhnev sent a personal note to Asad urging him to withdraw his forces and "take all possible measures to end the military operations against the Resistance and the Lebanese National Movement."<sup>7</sup> While the note did not include any specific threats, the Iraqi News Agency quoted "reliable diplomatic sources" as having said that the Soviet Union had suspended the delivery of all arms, armor and spare parts to Syria "until the Syrian forces are withdrawn from Lebanon and until an end is put to Syria's clashes with the PRM and National Movement."<sup>8</sup> Reports that the "Soviet Union is preparing an emergency action to come to the aid of progressive and Palestinian forces"<sup>9</sup> may be seen as a further propaganda measure intended to pressure Damascus into an accord with the PRM.\*

While the above-cited reports remain largely unconfirmed—the Iraqi statement appears particularly exaggerated—they may nonetheless be construed as the public corollary of the pressures actually brought to bear on Syria. Simultaneously, Moscow exhorted the PLO to begin negotiations with Asad and to relinquish its consistently stated demand for a Syrian withdrawal from Sidon and Sofar as the *sine qua non* for any dialogue with Damascus.<sup>10</sup> Later statements by Palestinian leaders clearly confirmed the existence of substantial Soviet pressure to get the PLO "to negotiate with Damascus instead of confronting it."<sup>11</sup>

On July 22, in an apparent reversal of its position, the PLO dispatched Faruq Qaddumi to Damascus for talks with the Syrian leaders even though the Syrian troops remained in place throughout Lebanon.\*\* Moscow's response was swift: the talks were described as a "positive" and "encouraging" factor,

\* According to *Tanjug*, the Fatah representative in Cairo denied reports that Arafat sent a message to the foreign ministers of the Arab League member-states to warn them that the USSR would intervene on the Palestinians' side if the Arab countries failed to do so (Belgrade *Tanjug* in English, July 15, 1976—FBIS/Middle East, July 20, 1976). This report coincided with the statement of the Soviet ambassador to Beirut, Aleksandr Soldatov, to *L'Orient Le Jour*, denying allegations of "the role of Soviet experts in the execution of military projects in Lebanon, as well as the dispatch of arms allegedly destined to certain Lebanese parties or to the PRM" (Paris AFP in English, July 16, 1976—FBIS/Soviet Union, July 19, 1976).

\*\* The visit of the PLO delegation followed by one day a major speech by President Asad in which he strongly attacked the Palestinian-Leftist alliance, blaming them for the continuation of the bloodshed in Lebanon (for details see *An Nahar Arab Report* 7, No. 30 [July 26, 1976]).

evoking "satisfaction and hope" on the part of "all those interested in the restoration of peace to Lebanon."<sup>12</sup>

The public endorsement of the Damascus talks was both preceded by and coupled with direct approaches by the Soviet ambassadors in Beirut and Damascus to the respective leaders. Moreover, Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Kozyrev was secretly dispatched to Damascus, presumably to prepare the ground for Syrian-Palestinian negotiations and, if needed, to act as a mediator.\*<sup>13</sup>

On July 29, 1976, after prolonged squabbling over its provisions, a new Syrian-Palestinian agreement was signed.<sup>14</sup> The new accord constituted a major concession by the Palestinians, reaffirming as it did Syria's predominant role in Lebanese affairs. Furthermore, it endorsed Syria's basic position on two crucial issues: (a) the Palestinians should not interfere in Lebanon's internal affairs and should strictly abide by agreements concluded by the Lebanese authorities, such as the 1969 Cairo agreements and its supplements; and (b) the political dialogue to follow full implementation of a cease-fire should be based on the February 14, 1976, constitutional declaration, i.e., on a Syrian-sponsored document that was categorically rejected by the Left (see above). The fact that the PLO accepted these points over the vocal opposition of the rejectionists and the Leftists\*\* indicated the inherent weakness of its position and the ensuing desire to settle the dispute with Damascus. Conversely, as admitted by Palestinian sources, the Damascus agreement reflected "the balance of power resulting from the Syrian invasion and from the Syrian-isolationist alliance."<sup>Δ</sup>

\* Kozyrev's visit was reported by Lebanese and Palestinian sources only. The Soviet media maintained complete silence as to his mission.

\*\* In a statement issued in Beirut on July 30, the official spokesman for the "Front of the Palestinian Forces Rejecting Capitulationist Solutions" described the Damascus accord as "complete submission to the will of the Syrian regime... absolving [it] from all the crimes it has committed against the Palestinian and Lebanese peoples during its continuous invasion of Lebanon" (Baghdad INA in Arabic, July 30, 1976 - FBIS/Middle East, August 3, 1976). In a separate statement the PFLP declared that the agreement "represents a great risk, an offense to all our struggles and martyrs, and a threat to the Palestinian armed struggle and to the relations of cohesion between the Palestinian resistance and the Lebanese nationalist movement" (Baghdad INA, July 31, 1976 - FBIS/Middle East, August 3, 1976).

Δ Voice of Palestine (PLO Station), July 31, 1976 - FBIS/Middle East, August 3, 1976. Particularly noteworthy in this respect was Syria's ability to enlist the PLO in its propaganda warfare against Cairo through the inclusion of a clause condemning the Sinai disengagement agreement as the triggering factor of the Lebanese crisis. Syria's attempt to undermine the budding Palestinian-Egyptian rapprochement and, perhaps, to subvert Arafat's authority, forced the latter to state that neither "he personally, the PLO or the Fatah organization have [any] relationship with the joint

Consequently, continuing internal Palestinian squabbling notwithstanding, Qaddumi returned to Damascus on August 4 to discuss with the Syrians the practical ways of implementing the Damascus accord. On the same day a cease-fire was reached among the Lebanese combatants under the supervision of the Arab Security Force Command.<sup>15</sup> A high-level Syrian delegation was scheduled to arrive in Lebanon on August 5, to participate in the "Quadripartite Higher Security Committee" formed in accordance with the July 29 agreement. Concurrently, the evacuation of wounded from the besieged Tal az-Za'tar Palestinian refugee camp got under way.<sup>16</sup>

Moscow's response to these events followed the pattern of Soviet reaction to earlier Syrian attempts at settling the conflict. The gist of Soviet commentaries was that while the agreement "did not solve all the problems," it was "an important step toward solving the serious crisis" and the best one could hope for given the existing circumstances.<sup>17</sup> At the same time, the Soviet media maintained that the accord corresponded with the interests of the Lebanese "progressive community," the PRM and the Arab national liberation movement, allowing them to "concentrate on their main mission, namely, the liberation of the territories occupied by Israel and securing the national rights of the Palestinian people."<sup>18</sup> It was further noted that "anyone sincerely and consistently supporting the rights of the Arab peoples . . . and working for the normalization of the situation in tormented Lebanon would undoubtedly show deep satisfaction with the Syrian-Palestinian agreement."<sup>19</sup> Moscow's vested interest in a Syrian-Palestinian rapprochement as a means of avoiding the dilemma of having to choose between Damascus and the PLO was voiced explicitly in *Pravda's* August 3, 1976, statement attributed to the Syrian Communist Party, that the accord will strengthen "the alliance of blood" between Syria, the PRM and the USSR.

Closely paralleling its attitude towards the February 1976 Damascus accord, the USSR completely ignored the protests voiced by the Left. Moreover, condemning the "Christian reaction" for attempts to torpedo the Syrian-Palestinian "reconciliation," Moscow was, in effect, indirectly reprimanding those in the Leftist camp who refused to comply with the Syrian dictates.<sup>20</sup> The positive emphasis given by the Soviet media to Syria's position regarding the causal effect of the Sinai disengagement agreement on the Lebanese crisis may be cited as yet another illustration of Moscow's support for Damascus.<sup>21</sup> (Conversely, it is plausible that Syria insisted that the Asad-

---

statement issued yesterday in Damascus following the signing of the Syrian-Palestinian agreement" (Cairo Domestic Service in Arabic, July 30, 1976 - FBIS/Middle East, August 2, 1976).

Qaddumi joint statement include a clause denouncing the Israeli-Egyptian accord with the aim of placating the Soviets.)

Nonetheless, the optimism inspired by the second Damascus accord proved to be short-lived. Despite the PLO's readiness to accommodate Damascus and the Leftists' agreement to join the peace talks,<sup>22</sup> the meetings of the Quadripartite Higher Security Committee, intended to consolidate the cease-fire, were first postponed and then cancelled at Syria's request. Within a few days the fighting resumed with full force throughout Lebanon. The new attacks mounted by the Right against the last Muslim enclaves in Christian-held territory vindicated Palestinian claims that Syria had stalled the efforts to carry out the cease-fire in order to enable the Right to enhance its position.\*

The collapse of the cease-fire brought Moscow's policy dilemma into sharper relief, also underlining the USSR's basic preference for a *Pax Syriana*. While the outbreak of the fighting and the Christian offensive were reported immediately,<sup>23</sup> no mention was made of either Syria's collaboration with the Right\*\* or of Damascus' torpedoing the quadripartite talks. Even the August 13 surrender of the Tal az-Za'tar camp – the last Palestinian enclave in eastern Beirut which had withstood a fifty-two day siege – did nothing to change Moscow's position.<sup>Δ</sup> For example, a major *Pravda* com-

\* Voice of Palestine attributed the following objectives to Damascus' procrastinations: "1. Giving the spy isolationist forces a chance to liquidate the positions of the nationalist movement – both Palestinian and Lebanese – in the eastern area of Beirut so that the isolationist forces would attend the meeting from a position of strength, assuming that there was an intention to convene the meeting in the first place. 2. Splitting the PRM and the NPF to prevent them from attending the meeting and replacing them with certain quarters which are known for their allegiance to the Damascus regime, or to weaken the nationalist ranks prior to the meeting, or on the eve of the meeting, in order to force them to bow down to imposed conditions." (Voice of Palestine [Clandestine], August 8, 1976 – FBIS/Middle East, August 9, 1976. See also Cairo Domestic Service in Arabic, August 11, 1976 – FBIS/Middle East, August 11, 1976.)

\*\* The Soviet media spoke exclusively in terms of American and Israeli support for the Right, blaming this "unholy alliance" for the collapse of both the cease-fire and the peace negotiations. (*Pravda*, August 9, 1976; *Izvestiia* and *Trud*, August 13, 1976; *Pravda*, August 14, 1976.) Concurrently, "the passive position of certain Arab states and of the Arab League, which did absolutely nothing to defend the Palestinians," was censured (*Pravda* and *Izvestiia*, August 14, 1976).

Δ Cf. *Izvestiia* and *Pravda*, August 15, 1976; *Pravda*, *Trud* and *Krasnaia zvezda*, August 17, 1976; Glukhov in *Pravda*, August 17, 1976. In sharp contrast to the worldwide outpouring of sympathy for the beleaguered Palestinians, the Soviet media, including those intended for Arab consumption, by and large refrained from glorifying the heroism and sacrifice of the camp's defenders. The sullen indifference demonstrated by Moscow may be construed as an integral part of the attempt to diffuse the Syrian-Palestinian confrontation.

mentary by Demchenko published two days after the fall of Tal az-Za'tar called for settling the Lebanese crisis on the basis of "a healthy compromise," thus clearly indicating Moscow's support for a Syrian-orchestrated accord as well as its disaffection with the Palestinian-Leftist militancy.\* In a later statement, authoritatively signed "Observer" (generally major policy statements published with the approval of the CPSU's highest echelons and expressing their views), the CPSU explicitly censured "certain Leftist elements within the Palestinian movement and the NPF" for their "intransigence and outright rejection of all peace proposals."<sup>24</sup>

This stance would suggest that Moscow was gradually arriving at the conclusion that, with the Palestinian forces on the verge of collapse, the imposition of a *Pax Syriana* – even if this involved major concessions on the PLO's part – was the only way to save them from total annihilation. Concomitantly, as was clearly evident from Soviet commentary, a Syrian-Palestinian reconciliation was perceived as a means of securing the USSR's regional interests, namely, driving a wedge between Damascus and Washington and refocusing attention on the Geneva peace conference.

Aware that the PLO could not have been expected to negotiate with Damascus as long as the Syrian onslaught continued, the USSR engaged in desperate efforts to curb the fighting.

Initial hesitation in demanding the withdrawal of the Syrian troops\*\* was followed by direct Soviet demands that Syria cooperate with its "natural allies – the PRM and the NPF – in the establishment and strengthening of an Arab front of struggle against Israeli aggression"<sup>25</sup> and that it contribute to the cause of settlement by withdrawing its forces from Lebanon.<sup>Δ</sup> The

\* Demchenko's statement was published in the immediate wake of a flurry of declarations by the Leftists and the Palestinians pledging to wage an all-out war against the Damascus regime (Voice of Palestine [Clandestine], August 10, 1976 – FBIS/Middle East, August 11, 1976. See also Beirut Domestic Service in Arabic, August 10, 1976 – FBIS/Middle East, August 11, 1976).

\*\* For example, the August 18, 1976, communiqué closing a meeting between CPSU officials and the Lebanese communist delegation cited the Lebanese party's opinion that "the withdrawal of Syrian forces from Lebanon would be of great significance for a political settlement." However, the joint part of the communiqué failed to suggest Soviet support for this stance, making no reference whatsoever to the Syrian involvement. Subsequently, Soviet media gave publicity to foreign statements, including those issued by European front-organizations and West European communist parties, appealing for a Syrian withdrawal as the means of solving the Lebanese crisis (see, for example, *Pravda*, August 19, 1976; *Pravda* and *Izvestiia*, August 20, 1976).

<sup>Δ</sup> The appeal for the establishing and strengthening of the Arab confrontation front, repeated also in subsequent commentaries, may be viewed as yet another expression of support for the Syrian-led northeastern alliance (see above). Interestingly, within two days of the publication of the Soviet appeal, the organ of the Syrian Ba'th

public censure of Syria's military activity in Lebanon,\* albeit muted and relatively mild, was apparently coupled with some direct pressure on Damascus. According to Leftist Lebanese sources, "the Soviet Government has affirmed to the Lebanese national movement that it was applying pressure on Damascus to make it withdraw its forces from Lebanon." The source cited as "expressions of Soviet displeasure" with Syria's policy the instance of a Soviet ship bound for Tartus and carrying an arms consignment as having returned without unloading its cargo.<sup>26</sup>

While it is extremely difficult to authenticate the above-cited report, it might nonetheless serve as a clear illustration of Moscow's inherent inability to bring its allies to heel. Short of applying its economic and military leverage to the full, thereby imperilling its entire strategic position in the Middle East, the Kremlin's only alternative was such mild and half-hearted arm twisting, mainly intended to reinforce the diplomatic approaches towards a reconciliation between its feuding allies.

By mid-September a new Soviet initiative to mediate between Syria and the PLO was evidently under way.<sup>27</sup> Soviet arbitration efforts call to mind Chou En-lai's remark at the 1954 Geneva Conference that, in reaching an agreement, each side must take a few steps toward the other, although "this does not mean that each must take the same number of steps."<sup>28</sup>

As evidenced by the September 18 statement summarizing a meeting between Gromyko and Faruq Qaddumi,\*\* the PLO was the main focal point

---

outlined a federation plan linking Syria with Jordan, Lebanon and the future Palestinian state (ARR, No. 16 [August 1976], p. 520). This statement – the first by an official Syrian organ – was echoed in the September 8 "Observer" article.

\* Similar to the position adopted in the aftermath of the June invasion, Soviet media took pains to differentiate between the positive motives for Syria's involvement and the actual outcome of the military activity (see, in particular, *Pravda's* "Observer" on September 8, 1976).

\*\* It is difficult to determine if Gromyko's meeting with Qaddumi, rather than with Arafat, signified a Soviet preference for and intentional elevation of Qaddumi's status at Arafat's expense. While the dearth of publicity given to the Moscow talks would tend to suggest that Qaddumi's visit was merely a PLO representation agreed upon by both sides, the frequent (albeit inconclusive) signs of Soviet preference for a change in the PLO leadership – whether motivated by Moscow's own pragmatic reasons or in realization of what might have been seen as a likely development – are nonetheless noteworthy. (For further elaboration, see *Bulletin: The Soviet Union and the Arab-Israeli Conflict* [is edited by the author, at the Soviet and East European Research Centre, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem], No. 15, September 1–15, 1976.) One should add that Arab sources were quite explicit about a power struggle within the PLO. For example, an Iraqi source claimed that "Asad had called for relieving PLO Executive Committee Chairman Yasir Arafat of all his civil and military posts as a condition for stopping the Syrian attack on the Palestinian resistance in Lebanon." (Baghdad

of Soviet pressure. This announcement, the only one issued on the visit, failed to include any pledge of support for the PLO, except for the rather noncommittal phrase that "peace negotiations should not be allowed to become a cover for continuing strikes against the PRM."\* Nor did the statement criticize or even mention Syria's military involvement, making due with the standard and vague appeal for settlement "without external interference."

The Qaddumi-Gromyko talks were immediately followed by three consecutive meetings between the Soviet chargé d'affaires in Beirut and Yasir Arafat. While neither the agenda of these meetings nor the contents of "an important message from the Soviet leaders" reportedly handed to Arafat during the last session have been disclosed,<sup>29</sup> it is likely that this spate of contacts was necessitated by the PLO's reluctance to yield to Soviet pressure and come to terms with the actual balance of power in Lebanon. It is also conceivable that the Kremlin attempted to secure Arafat's *a priori* support for its peace bid in order to prevent the recurrence of internal PLO squabbling such as that which surfaced in the aftermath of the second Damascus accord.

Concurrently, the Soviet press halted all, even indirect, censure of Syria's involvement in Lebanon. Moreover, excerpts from Asad's September 25 speech, in which the Syrian leader unequivocally justified the presence of his troops in Lebanon and assailed "certain Palestinian leaders" for "falling into the trap" set for them by the "imperialist plotters," were prominently featured by *Pravda* in an explicit endorsement of Damascus' position.\*\* Yet another quotation from Asad's speech depicted Syria and its president as staunch supporters of the Palestinian revolution.<sup>30</sup>

---

Domestic Service in Arabic, September 8, 1976 – FBIS/Middle East, September 9, 1976. See also Baghdad INA, September 23, 1976 – FBIS/Middle East, September 24, 1976, citing Abu Iyad's criticism of Syrian attempts to split Fatah and shake the confidence of the masses in the Palestinian leadership.) Furthermore, the PLO radio claimed that "the Chinese government, party and people today asserted their firm position in support of the Palestinian revolution under the leadership of Brother Abu Ammar" (Voice of Palestine [PLO Station], September 29, 1976 – FBIS/Middle East, September 30, 1976). These reports, and particularly the explicit Chinese support of Arafat, could verify the assumption that Moscow was ready to cooperate with Damascus also as regards changes in the PLO leadership.

\* This phrase may be indicative of a Soviet effort to reassure the Palestinians while prodding them into accepting a *Pax Syriana*.

\*\* While Moscow's support for Syria's policy in Lebanon stemmed from a basic compatibility of interests on this specific issue, the unreservedly pro-Syrian stance adopted in September 1976 might have been dictated by broader exigencies: the Soviets needed Asad's support for their new plan for a Middle East settlement and the reconvening of the Geneva peace conference. (The proposal was made public on October 1 following a series of meetings between the Soviet co-chairman of the



The concerted Soviet pressure was apparently successful. On September 24, Arafat proclaimed a unilateral cessation of all Palestinian military activity, pledging support for President Sarkis and readiness to abide by all agreements regulating Palestinian-Lebanese relations.\* The Syrians, however, presumably encouraged by Palestinian and Soviet acquiescence, launched a full-scale attack against Palestinian strongholds in the Jabel Lubnan area, demanding unconditional surrender and withdrawal of the Leftist units.

Syria's September 28 offensive could not have but evoked ire and bewilderment on Moscow's part. For one, in light of the Palestinian unilateral declaration of a cease-fire, the onslaught could be viewed only as an unprovoked act of indiscriminate violence unleashed against an already crippled opponent. In this context, Syria's display of brute force was bound to have the net effect of fueling the PLO's intransigence, thereby shattering or at least significantly diminishing the chances for the rapid Syrian-Palestinian reconciliation so urgently sought by the Kremlin.\*\* The resultant strengthening of the PLO's ties with Cairo (already under way since the June invasion) and Sadat's emergence as the champion of the Palestinian cause<sup>Δ</sup> were similarly

---

Geneva conference, Vladimir Vinogradov, and the Syrian foreign minister; cf. Damascus Domestic Service in Arabic, September 10, 1976 – FBIS/Middle East, September 20, 1976; and Cairo MENA, September 19, 1976 – FBIS/Middle East, September 20, 1976.) Additionally, the pronounced endorsement of Syria's Lebanese policy might have come as a reciprocal gesture for Damascus' avowedly pro-Soviet position on issues such as North Korea and Angola (SANA, August 22, 1976 – FBIS/Middle East, August 25, 1976).

\* The extent of the Palestinian concession becomes even clearer when viewed against the background of the September 18 declaration by the PLO's Central Information Department Chief that "the total withdrawal of the Syrian troops is the precondition for any agreement" (*L'Unita*, September 18, 1976 – FBIS/Middle East, September 24, 1976).

\*\* Palestinian and Leftist pronouncements spoke in terms of unshakable resolve to engage the Syrians in combat and refusal to accept any further ultimatums. (See, for example, Cairo MENA in Arabic, September 28, 1976 – FBIS/Middle East, September 29, 1976, citing the Fatah Cairo representative; Cairo Domestic Service in Arabic, September 29, 1976 – FBIS/Middle East, September 30, 1976, citing Junblat.) On October 1, Arafat issued an impassioned appeal to "all heroic Lebanese and Palestinian fighters," urging them in the name of "the homeland, the revolution, the people and history" to confront the Syrian plot with their "young and brave arms," as "the rifles are the ones that would resolve all things" (Beirut Domestic Service in Arabic, October 1, 1976 – FBIS/Middle East, October 4, 1976).

<sup>Δ</sup> Arafat was reported to have telephoned Sadat within a few hours of the Syrian onslaught, exhorting him to "exert every possible effort to stop the new massacre" (Baghdad INA in Arabic, September 28, 1976 – FBIS/Middle East, September 28, 1976). Similarly, Junblat spoke in terms of Egypt's "responsibility" to protect the Palestinian revolution and its leadership (Cairo MENA in Arabic, September 29, 1976 – FBIS/Middle East, September 30, 1976).

ominous for the USSR's Middle East strategy. No less significantly, the collapse of the Soviet-mediated rapprochement was sure to pave the way for intensified activity by the Arab League and, subsequently, for a settlement under Saudi aegis.\*

On a broader level, the coincidence between the Syrian offensive and the presentation of the October 1 Soviet proposal for a Middle East settlement (see above), on the one hand, and the opening of the U.N. General Assembly session scheduled to discuss the Middle East problem, on the other, was particularly disruptive for the USSR. For, at the least, the escalation in Lebanon was bound to divert attention from the Soviet working paper, rendering its October–November 1976 time frame for the reconvening of the Geneva peace conference totally irrelevant. Worse still, the swift collapse of a Soviet-engineered accord in Lebanon did precious little to promote the Kremlin's image as a full-fledged, acceptable partner in and coordinator of an Arab-Israeli settlement.

Quite apart from these regional and global ramifications, the Syrian action placed Moscow in an awkward position vis-à-vis the PLO. Bilateral Soviet-Palestinian relations, presumably already badly frayed by the Kremlin's insistence on Palestinian concessions, must have been seriously undermined by what seemed to be a clear instance of Soviet-Syrian collusion and, in retrospect, the culmination of Soviet support for Syria's anti-Palestinian policy. To wit, Fatah Central Council member Abu Iyad (Salah Khalaf, considered Arafat's second in command) went on record to accuse the Soviet Union of "giving the order to Syria to intervene militarily against the Palestinian resistance in Lebanon with the aim of shattering the Palestinian resistance."\*\*

In this light, the intense tone of frustration and anger that came to characterize Moscow's response to Syria's action is virtually self-evident.

\* In the immediate wake of the Syrian offensive, Egypt's National Security Council appealed for convening an "Arab mini-summit within forty-eight hours, to be attended by President Sarkis, Yasir Arafat, Syria, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, to tackle the situation in Lebanon" (Cairo, Voice of the Arabs, September 29, 1976 – FBIS/Middle East, September 30, 1976).

\*\* While Palestinian denunciations of Moscow's position were totally ignored by the Soviet media, Radio Moscow in Arabic found it appropriate to assail Egyptian claims that the Soviet Union "is encouraging armed Syrian intervention in Lebanon." The statement went on to assert that the USSR "opposes any form of intervention in Lebanon's internal affairs... and is resolutely and firmly on the side of the just struggle of the Palestinians" (Radio Moscow in Arabic, October 5, 1976 – BBC/Soviet Union, October 7, 1976). See also Cairo MENA in English, September 27, 1976 – FBIS/Middle East, September 27, 1976; Beirut Domestic Service in Arabic, September 28, 1976 – FBIS/Middle East, September 28, 1976, citing PDFLP Marxist leader Hawatmeh.

Damascus was blamed for opening "a new act of the Lebanese tragedy" after first steps toward a political settlement had been taken following the PLO's unilateral cease-fire declaration.<sup>31</sup> An October 18, 1976, *Pravda* "Observer" did not mince words in accusing Syria of double-dealing and outright betrayal.<sup>32</sup>

The anti-Syrian campaign reached its peak on October 19 with the publication of yet another statement by the Soviet Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee. Expressing Moscow's "deep anxiety" and "bewilderment" with the fact that Syria "is coming out against its real allies,"\* the document went on to lament that:

in Lebanon blows are being dealt to the Palestinian Resistance Movement, one of the avant-garde detachments of the national liberation struggle, a movement whose anti-imperialist positions have long ago made it a target of imperialism and Zionism. And this is being done with the direct participation of the Syrian forces. Thus, an old scheme of the forces hostile to the Arabs is being carried out with the hands of the Arabs themselves. What it comes to is actually a subversion of the struggle of the Arab peoples for eliminating the consequences of the Israeli aggression, a serious blow to the Arab national liberation movement as a whole.

The above attack is without precedent in the recent history of Soviet-Syrian relations in general and within the Lebanese context in particular. Coming as it did on the very eve of the Riyadh summit, this outburst of indignation appears somewhat ill-conceived insofar as it might have pushed Asad further toward the Saudi-Egyptian orbit. It can only be understood in terms of the acute sense of betrayal felt towards a needed ally whom Moscow had hitherto supported against all odds.

Nonetheless, Moscow's wrath, for all its intensity, was remarkably short-lived. With the Riyadh and Cairo summits lending legitimacy to Asad's takeover of Lebanon, the USSR had little choice but to join the band wagon in endorsing an irrefutable *fait accompli*.\*\*

\* This reference is applicable to both the Palestinians and the USSR.

\*\* Moscow's initial reaction to the Riyadh and Cairo conferences was mixed and guarded. On the one hand, the Soviets were clearly relieved by the fact that the cease-fire agreed upon at the Riyadh conference spared the PLO total annihilation. Concurrently, the Soviet press went to great lengths to emphasize Israel's anxiety over the cease-fire, since the latter was "the chief beneficiary of the continuation of the fratricidal war" (*Pravda*, October 23, 1976; *Izvestiia*, October 24, 1976). On the other hand, whatever approval Moscow extended to the cease-fire achieved in Riyadh

The smooth deployment of Syrian troops into Lebanon's major cities served further to alleviate Moscow's misgivings.\* By the end of 1976, the Syrian-Palestinian war was for all intents and purposes over, as was the painful task of imposing a *Pax Syriana*.\*\*

Soviet disengagement from the conflict quickly followed the halt in Syrian-Palestinian clashes. The fragile entente between Damascus and the PRM, while offering no solutions to the numerous problems that produced Lebanon's civil strife, effectively removed the one dimension of the conflict that aroused Moscow's interest and concern. The USSR was now able to withdraw to the position it held during the first stage of the war, a position it abandoned in late July 1975 when, in light of regional developments, the war was perceived as a means of promoting its broader Middle East objectives. The sharp diminution of Soviet interest in the Lebanese conflict – a direct consequence of the Leftists' declining viability – is most pronounced in the return to laconic, sparse and dispassionate press coverage of later events in

---

and confirmed in Cairo was not sufficient to blunt the apprehension evoked by the possible consequences of a Saudi-orchestrated accord. One can understand Moscow's hedging on the prospects of making this, the fifty-seventh cease-fire, a viable mechanism for achieving a political settlement in Lebanon. It was certainly reasonable for the USSR to prefer to reserve judgment until it was confident that "normalization would be on a healthy basis, without harm to the Lebanese patriotic forces and the Palestinian Resistance Movement" (Brezhnev's speech at the CC CPSU Plenum, *Pravda*, October 26, 1976). However, the Soviets carried their apprehension one step further by playing up Iraqi misgivings that the policy elaborated in Riyadh could be dangerous as it would allow Saudi Arabia and Kuwait to work out a compromise at the expense of both the Lebanese NPF and the Palestinian nation. As a further illustration of Moscow's mounting concern, one may cite Brezhnev's October 26 speech in which he made a point of listing Saudi Arabia (along with the U.S., NATO and Israel) as an element organizing the assault against the NPF and the PRM. Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that Soviet reservations were limited in terms of both their duration and their target. As of November 11, the Soviet line gradually shifted to a more positive and optimistic evaluation of the situation in Lebanon. This trend was clearly connected to and reflective of the generally successful deployment of the inter-Arab security forces, in which "the main role is being played by Syrian troops" (*Pravda*, November 10, 1976). Moreover, the Soviet media targeted their criticism exclusively on the sponsors of the accords rather than on their substance. To wit, all censure of Syria was abruptly halted on October 20, not to be renewed even in the retrospective analyses of Lebanese events.

\* *Izvestiia* of November 14, 1976, carried a photo of the jubilant welcome given the Syrian tank units upon entering Beirut. Moreover, the renewal of Aeroflot flights to Lebanon was made public immediately upon the reopening of Beirut's international airport in apparent recognition of the restoration of peace (*Izvestiia*, November 26, 1976).

\*\* On November 16, the Soviet media began referring to the Syrian troops in Lebanon as "peace-keeping forces," thus granting them approval and endorsement.

Lebanon, the Nabatiyet crisis and the continuing bloodshed in southern Lebanon being striking illustrations of Moscow's reemerging indifference. Lebanese civil strife evidently has had little if any intrinsic value to the USSR.

The Soviet Union was faced now with the problem of picking up the pieces of its Middle East strategy and arranging them in a pattern congruent with the new constellation. As the Lebanese war wrought havoc in the traditional collage of regional alliances and exposed in the process the rivalries at play in the Arab camp, Moscow's most immediate consideration was to reestablish some semblance of unity, at least among its allies. Restoration of Syrian-PLO cooperation was particularly crucial, as it would allow Moscow to use the Palestinians to further its Middle East objectives without incurring the attendant risk of aggravating relations with Damascus. Consequently, the USSR embarked on an all-out effort to bring about a rapprochement between Syria and the PLO. While striving to deemphasize the scope of the discord\* and paying tribute to the newly established Syrian hegemony over the PLO,<sup>33</sup> Moscow at the same time attempted to forestall any further weakening of the Palestinian organization. Demands that a peaceful settlement in Lebanon give "due consideration to the legitimate rights and interests of the Palestinian Resistance Movement [as] represented by the PLO"<sup>34</sup> clearly demonstrated that the latter was still an essential component of Soviet Middle East strategy.

The importance of the PLO notwithstanding, the Soviet Union was unable to rely upon a disunited and badly battered liberation organization\*\* to pursue its paramount regional objective, namely, regaining its former position as the dominant, or at least equal, power in the Middle East. By the same token, the USSR's budding relationship with more radical Arab states such as Iraq and Libya could not, for all its importance, serve as a basis for its position. A strategy based solely on collaboration with the Middle East pariahs was far too narrow to be effective. The Soviet Union needed a link to the main orbit of regional activity, namely, to the states involved in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Furthermore, since the Geneva peace conference was perceived as the most likely avenue for a Soviet comeback, alliance with the Arab leaders committed to the peace forum was of vital necessity.

\* *Pravda* of November 19, 1976, defined the Syrian-Palestinian clashes as "certain frictions." A later commentary claimed that Syria's ties with the PRM cannot be undermined by "temporary, transient factors such as the Lebanese events" (*Pravda*, December 27, 1976).

\*\* Reflecting the weakened position of the PLO as a result of the Lebanese war, the Soviet press began to publish explicit references to factionalism and rivalries within the Palestinian movement, and specifically between the PLO and the rejection front.

Accordingly, the months following the end of the Lebanese war were marked by an intensive Soviet effort to mend the fences with Cairo and Damascus. With two consecutive bids to achieve rapprochement with Egypt ending in fiasco,\* Moscow had little choice but to write Egypt off as an irretrievable loss. The total rift with Sadat served further to enhance Syria's position, already strengthened both by the outcome of the Lebanese conflict and by the close working relationship it succeeded in establishing with Washington. As a result, Moscow had to seek a new *modus operandi* with an increasingly assertive and independent ally.\*\*

The Lebanese war, and most notably Syria's behavior, clearly demonstrated the limits of Moscow's influence over the policies of its clients. Forced by the dynamics of regional developments to chart its course along the same radiants pursued by Damascus, the Soviet Union could expect to realize its objectives only to the extent that they did not diverge markedly from those of Syria. Similarly, the tactics adopted by Syria in furtherance of its own policies towards Lebanon paid scant if any heed to Soviet preferences, which were often undermined as a result. Given the linkage of patron-client policy objectives, the chances for the major power to superimpose its pursuits upon those of the client, or to exert effective pressure to establish the supremacy of its objectives, are minimal indeed. Under these conditions, disparities in size, resource capabilities and international status are rendered secondary factors in shaping the bilateral relationship, with any attempt at coercing the

\* The reference is to the Gromyko-Fahmi November 3-4, 1976, meeting in Sofia and to Fahmi's June 8-11, 1977, Moscow visit. During both those meetings agreement was achieved only on the lowest common denominator: the need to reconvene the Geneva peace conference no later than the fall of 1977. Positions regarding other issues, both bilateral and pertaining to a Middle East settlement, were left for "further meetings and consultations aimed at overcoming the existing differences." (*Pravda*, June 12, 1977. For further details see *Bulletin: The Soviet Union and the Arab-Israeli Conflict* I, No. 9, November 1-15, 1976; and *ibid.*, II, No. 11, June 1-15, 1977, respectively.)

\*\* The new nature of Soviet-Syrian relations was vividly illustrated in the course of Asad's April 18-22, 1977, visit to the Soviet Union. Soviet leaders spared no effort in extending Asad a lavish welcome, with Brezhnev himself coming to the airport to greet his guests. (Such a gesture was not accorded to either the Iraqi prime minister or Colonel Qaddafi, both of whom visited Moscow just before Asad.) Syria's significance as the pillar of Soviet Middle East strategy was further accentuated by the extensive coverage given the visit in the Soviet press. Nonetheless, official pronouncements published during the visit made it entirely clear that no identity of view on all issues prevailed. Differences in their positions were acknowledged as an integral part of their friendship and of little consequence in building their bilateral relations. (See *Bulletin: The Soviet Union and the Arab-Israeli Conflict* II, No. 8, April 16-30, 1977.)

client into acquiescence fraught with the danger of causing a disruption to the relationship far out of proportion to the potential gain.

On a broader level, the war in Lebanon brought into sharp relief the inherent weakness of the USSR's position in the Middle East. The basic tenets of Soviet regional policy, predicated upon maintaining conflicts at levels that Moscow could successfully manage and control, were placed in doubt by the failure to prevent the degeneration of Lebanon's civil strife into a full-scale armed conflict between the USSR's allies. Lebanon's power struggle posed the Kremlin with the dilemma of having to function on both sides of the quarrel and to perform the thankless task of mediator with little if any ability to pressure its squabbling allies into reconciliation.

Most of all, events in Lebanon revealed the dearth of options available to the Soviet Union within the new Middle East constellation. Until the October 1973 war, two basic issues underlay Soviet policy in the Middle East: the encouragement of "anti-imperialist" Arab unity and continued involvement in the festering Arab-Israeli conflict. With the polarization between Arab "progressive" and "reactionary" regimes becoming an increasingly irrelevant factor in Middle East politics, Moscow was deprived of a convenient and useful substratum for its policies. Consequently, it was forced to diffuse its efforts throughout the region rather than concentrate its presence in two key states. (Concerted attempts to outbid the U.S. in arms sales to Jordan and to develop relations with Kuwait illustrate this process.) Moreover, as Arab policy was more and more shaped by the influence of the newly acquired petro-wealth, Saudi Arabia, an avowedly anti-Soviet regime, became the prime force promoting Arab unity. Riyadh's ascendancy effectively denied Moscow one of the main tools for enhancing its regional position and, even more ominous for the USSR, played directly into America's hands. Similarly, support for the Palestinian cause, long a rallying cry for both Arab unity and a Soviet solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, lost its effectiveness as a conduit for Soviet policy.

The Arab choice to seek a political settlement with Israel vested Washington with the preeminent role in the region, thus allowing the United States to advance its own policy goals largely at Moscow's expense. With its position dwarfed and its influence diminished, the Soviet Union was left to face the unattractive alternatives of either awaiting Washington's invitation to re-enter the area's political processes – most probably as a *quid pro quo* for concessions on other issues – or torpedoing the settlement efforts, with the attendant risk of damaging East-West détente.

## REFERENCES

### Stage One

1. *Strategic Survey, 1975* (London: IISS, 1976), pp. 82-85.
2. *Pravda*, June 4, 1975; *Izvestiia*, May 29, 1975.
3. *Pravda*, June 1, June 12 and July 9, 1975; *Izvestiia*, June 29, 1975; *Krasnaia zvezda*, August 21 and August 28, 1975.
4. *Pravda*, July 25, 1975.
5. *Pravda*, April 26, 1975; *Izvestiia*, May 28 and May 31, 1975.
6. *Pravda*, April 15 and June 4, 1975; *Izvestiia*, May 28 and May 31, 1975.
7. See, for example, *Pravda*, May 29, June 8, July 29, and August 10, 1975; *Izvestiia*, July 17, 1975.
8. *Izvestiia*, May 31, 1975; *Pravda*, April 26, June 1 and June 4, 1975; *Krasnaia zvezda*, August 21, 1975.
9. Radio Moscow in Arabic, May 28, 1975 - BBC/Soviet Union, May 30, 1975.
10. *Izvestiia*, May 31, 1975; *Krasnaia zvezda*, August 21, 1975; *Pravda*, May 29, 1975.
11. *Pravda*, July 7, 1975 (citing Karami).
12. *Pravda*, April 26 and June 6, 1975.
13. See, for example, the communiqué on Ponomarev's meeting with the Lebanese Progressive Socialist Party delegation, *Pravda* and *Izvestiia*, July 25, 1975.
14. Radio Moscow in Arabic, May 26, 1975 - BBC/Soviet Union, May 28, 1975.
15. Radio Peace and Progress in Arabic, August 2, 1975 - BBC/Soviet Union, August 5, 1975.
16. See, for example, Nadezhdin and Chernukhin in *Pravda*, June 6, 1975.
17. *Pravda* and *Izvestiia*, July 25, 1975.
18. Alexander Ignatev, "Why the Shooting in Beirut?" *New Times*, No. 30 (July 1975), pp. 25-27. See also Radio Peace and Progress in Arabic, July 25, 1975 - BBC/Soviet Union, July 28, 1975.

### Stage Two

1. See, for example, *Izvestiia*, October 17, 1975; *Pravda*, September 31, 1975.
2. *Izvestiia*, September 11, 1975; *Pravda*, September 9, 1975.
3. Moscow Home Service in Russian, October 12, 1975 - BBC/Soviet Union, October 14, 1975.
4. Radio Moscow in Arabic, September 22, 1975 - BBC/Soviet Union, September 24, 1975.
5. *Pravda*, October 25, 1975. See also *Pravda*, November 16, 1975; *Izvestiia*, September 16, October 25, November 6, November 7, and November 20, 1975.
6. See, for example, Radio Moscow in Arabic, September 11, 1975 - BBC/Soviet Union, September 13, 1975.



## JERUSALEM PAPERS ON PEACE PROBLEMS

7. *Izvestiia*, September 26, 1975.
8. *Pravda*, October 5, 1975 ("International Week"). See also Koriavin in *Izvestiia*, October 25, 1975; and Novikov in *Izvestiia*, November 11, 1975.
9. *Pravda*, October 12 and October 15, 1975.
10. *Pravda* and *Krasnaia zvezda*, October 16, 1975.
11. *Pravda* and *Izvestiia*, October 11, 1975.
12. *Pravda*, October 10 and October 11, 1975.
13. *Pravda*, October 11, 1975.
14. Koriavin in *Izvestiia*, October 25, 1975.
15. *Pravda*, *Izvestiia* and *Krasnaia zvezda*, November 2, 1975.
16. Ibid. See also *Pravda*, November 3, 1975.
17. *Pravda*, November 25 and November 27, 1975.
18. *Pravda* and *Izvestiia*, November 29, 1975.
19. See, for example, *Pravda*, November 26, November 30 and December 3, 1975; *Izvestiia*, December 4 and December 16, 1975.
20. Geivandov in *Pravda*, November 30, 1975.
21. *Pravda*, December 11, 1975. Emphasis here, and throughout, has been added unless otherwise indicated.

### Stage Three

1. *Arab Report and Record* (hereafter ARR) (London), No. 1 (January 1-15, 1976), p. 12.
2. *Izvestiia*, January 9 and January 10, 1976; *Pravda* and *Krasnaia zvezda*, January 8, 1976; *Pravda*, January 11, 1976.
3. See, for example, *Izvestiia*, January 14, 1976 ("Editorial").
4. *Pravda*, December 30, 1975.
5. *Izvestiia*, December 7, 1975, and January 22, 1976; Radio Peace and Progress in Arabic, January 12, 1976 - BBC/Soviet Union, January 14, 1976.
6. *An Nahar Arab Report* 7, No. 4 (January 26, 1976).
7. *As Shaab* (Jerusalem), January 23, 1976.
8. *Pravda* and *Izvestiia*, January 24, 1976. See also *Izvestiia*, January 27, 1976; *Pravda*, January 31, 1976 ("International Week"); Moscow International Service in Russian, February 2, 1976 - FBIS/Soviet Union, February 4, 1976.
9. *Pravda*, *Izvestiia* and *Krasnaia zvezda*, January 24 and January 27, 1976.
10. *Pravda*, February 1, 1976; *Izvestiia*, February 3, 1976; Moscow Domestic Service in Russian, February 13, 1976 - FBIS/Soviet Union, February 18, 1976; Moscow Domestic Television Service, February 2, 1976 - FBIS/Soviet Union, February 18, 1976.
11. ARR, February 17, 1976.
12. *An Nahar Arab Report* 7, No. 8 (February 23, 1976).
13. *Izvestiia*, February 17, 1976.
14. *Pravda*, February 16, 1976.
15. Speech cited by *An Nahar*, February 16, 1976.
16. Speech cited by *Pravda*, March 4, 1976. See also speeches by the PLO and Syrian Ba'th representatives as cited by *Pravda*, March 4 and March 3, 1976, respectively.
17. *Pravda* and *Izvestiia*, April 2, 1976.
18. *Pravda*, March 21, 1976. See also *Pravda*, March 18, 1976; and *Pravda* and *Krasnaia zvezda*, April 1 and April 4, 1976.

## THE LEBANON CIVIL WAR

19. *Pravda* and *Krasnaia zvezda*, April 1, 1976; *Pravda* and *Izvestiia*, April 2, 1976; *Pravda*, April 4, 1976 ("International Week"); *Izvestiia*, April 11, 1976.
20. *Izvestiia*, March 18, March 19 and April 2, 1976; *Pravda* and *Krasnaia zvezda*, April 3, 1976.
21. *Pravda*, April 4, 1976, citing Arafat. See also *Pravda*, April 8, 1976 ("Observer").
22. ARR, No. 7 (April 1976), p. 219.
23. *Pravda* and *Krasnaia zvezda*, April 10, 1976, citing *An Nida*. See also *Pravda*, *Krasnaia zvezda* and *Trud*, April 13, 1976, citing the "Declaration of the Leadership of Lebanon's National Patriotic Forces."
24. *Pravda*, April 14, 1976.
25. *Izvestiia*, April 17, 1976.
26. See, for example, *Krasnaia zvezda*, April 18, 1976; *Pravda* and *Trud*, April 21, 1976; *Izvestiia*, April 23, 1976; *Pravda*, April 28, 1976; V. Nikolaev, "Trying Days for Lebanon," *New Times*, No. 16 (April 1976), pp. 10-11.
27. *Pravda* and *Krasnaia zvezda*, April 22, 1976; *Pravda*, April 23, 1976.
28. *Pravda* and *Krasnaia zvezda*, April 25, 1976.
29. ARR, No. 9 (May 1976), p. 286.
30. Ibid.
31. Beirut Domestic Service in Arabic, May 12, 1976 - FBIS/Middle East, May 13, 1976.
32. ARR, No. 9 (May 1976), p. 289.
33. *Pravda*, *Trud* and *Krasnaia zvezda*, May 29, 1976. See also *Pravda*, May 18, 1976.
34. *An Nahar Arab Report* 7, No. 20 (May 17, 1976).
35. Radio Moscow in Arabic, May 15, 1976 - FBIS/Soviet Union, May 18, 1976.
36. Radio Moscow in Arabic, April 28, 1976 - BBC/Soviet Union, April 30, 1976.
37. *Pravda*, May 17, 1976. See also *Izvestiia*, May 15, May 21 and May 23, 1976; Radio Moscow in Arabic, May 15, 1976 - BBC/Soviet Union, May 18, 1976.
38. For example, Declaration of the World Peace Council, *Pravda*, May 26, 1976. See also Demchenko in *Pravda*, May 16, 1976.
39. Radio Moscow in Arabic, May 20, 1976 - BBC/Soviet Union, May 22, 1976.

### Stage Four

1. *An Nahar Arab Report* 7, No. 21 (May 24, 1976).
2. *International Herald Tribune*, May 5, 1976. See also Belgrade Domestic Service in Serbo-Croatian, May 31, 1976 - FBIS/Soviet Union, June 2, 1976; Belgrade Domestic Service, June 1, 1976 - FBIS/Soviet Union, June 3, 1976.
3. Moscow International Service in Russian, June 6, 1976 - FBIS/Soviet Union, June 7, 1976.
4. ARR, No. 10 (June 1976), p. 329.
5. Moscow TASS in English, June 5, 1976 - FBIS/Soviet Union, June 7, 1976.
6. See, for example, *Krasnaia zvezda*, June 27, 1976; and *Pravda*, June 20 and June 23, 1976.
7. *Pravda* and *Izvestiia*, June 22 and June 23, 1976, respectively. Cf. Voice of Palestine, June 18, 1976 - FBIS/Middle East, June 22, 1976, citing Qaddumi; *ibid.*, citing the PFLP-GC statement; *ibid.*, citing the Central Command of the Palestine Revolution and the Lebanese Nationalist Movement.
8. Radio Moscow in Arabic, June 16, 1976 - FBIS/Soviet Union, June 18, 1976. See

## JERUSALEM PAPERS ON PEACE PROBLEMS

also Radio Peace and Progress in Arabic, June 8, 1976 – FBIS/Soviet Union, June 9, 1976; Podgornyi's speech honoring King Hussein, *Pravda*, June 19, 1976; Iakhontov in *Pravda*, June 20, 1976.

9. Demchenko in *Pravda*, June 23, 1976.

10. Moscow TASS in English, June 12, 1976 – FBIS/Soviet Union, June 14, 1976; Moscow TASS in English, June 23, 1976 – FBIS/Soviet Union, June 30, 1976.

### Stage Five

1. *The New York Times*, June 24, 1976. See also *An Nahar Arab Report* 7, No. 26 (June 28, 1976).

2. *Pravda* and *Izvestiia*, June 25, 1976; Moscow International Service in Russian, June 27, 1976 – FBIS/Soviet Union, June 28, 1976; Radio Moscow in Arabic, June 27, 1976 – FBIS/Soviet Union, June 28, 1976.

3. Radio Peace and Progress in Arabic, July 9, 1976 – FBIS/Soviet Union, July 12, 1976.

4. Cf. *Pravda* and *Izvestiia*, July 1, 1976; *Pravda*, *Izvestiia* and *Krasnaia zvezda*, July 3, 1976.

5. For a comprehensive analysis of the role played by Soviet political interest groups in the determination of Soviet Middle East policy, see Ilana Kass, *Soviet Involvement in the Middle East: Policy Formulation* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1977).

6. *Pravda*, July 11 and July 12, 1976; *Pravda* and *Krasnaia zvezda*, July 13, July 14 and July 15, 1976; *Krasnaia zvezda*, July 16, 1976.

7. *Le Monde*, July 20, 1976 – FBIS/Soviet Union, July 21, 1976.

8. Baghdad INA in Arabic, July 15, 1976 – FBIS/Middle East, July 16, 1976.

9. Belgrade *Tanjug* in English, July 15, 1976 – FBIS/Middle East, July 20, 1976.

10. *Pravda*, *Izvestiia* and *Krasnaia zvezda*, July 20, 1976.

11. *The New York Times*, August 17, 1976, citing Abu Iyad. See also Beirut Domestic Service in Arabic, August 8, 1976 – FBIS/Middle East, August 9, 1976, citing Qaddumi.

12. *Pravda*, July 25, 1976 ("International Week"); Radio Moscow in Russian, July 25, 1976 – FBIS/Soviet Union, July 26, 1976.

13. Voice of Palestine, July 24, 1976 – FBIS/Middle East, July 26, 1976, reporting a meeting between Qaddumi and the Soviet ambassador to Damascus, Mukhitdinov, with Kozyrev participating; Algiers Voice of Palestine in Arabic, July 28, 1976 – FBIS/Middle East, July 29, 1976, reporting a Soviet message to Syria being delivered by Kozyrev.

14. For the text see Damascus Domestic Service in Arabic, July 29, 1976 – FBIS/Middle East, July 30, 1976.

15. Voice of Palestine (Clandestine), August 4, 1976 – FBIS/Middle East, August 5, 1976.

16. Beirut Domestic Service in Arabic, August 4, 1976 – FBIS/Middle East, August 5, 1976.

17. Demchenko in *Pravda*, August 4, 1976. See also Radio Moscow in Arabic, July 30, 1976 – FBIS/Middle East, August 2, 1976.

18. *Pravda*, August 3, 1976, citing the Syrian Communist Party's statement. See also *Pravda*, August 1 and August 4, 1976; Radio Moscow in Arabic, July 30, 1976 – FBIS/Soviet Union, August 2, 1976.

19. Radio Moscow in Arabic, July 30, 1976.

20. See, for example, Demchenko in *Pravda*, August 4, 1976; *Pravda, Krasnaia zvezda* and *Trud*, August 5, 1976; *Izvestiia*, August 7, 1976.
21. *Pravda, Krasnaia zvezda* and *Trud*, August 1, 1976; *Pravda*, August 2, 1976; Radio Moscow in Russian, August 8, 1976 – FBIS/Soviet Union, August 9, 1976 (“International Observers’ Roundtable”).
22. Beirut Domestic Service in Arabic, August 6, 1976 – FBIS/Middle East, August 9, 1976.
23. *Pravda, Izvestiia, Trud* and *Krasnaia zvezda*, August 9 and August 11, 1976.
24. *Pravda*, September 8, 1976 (“Observer”).
25. Statement by the Soviet Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee, *Pravda* and *Izvestiia*, August 27, 1976. See also *Pravda*, August 29, 1976 (“International Week”); and *ibid.*, September 8, 1976 (“Observer”).
26. Beirut Domestic Service in Arabic, August 17, 1976 – FBIS/Middle East, August 18, 1976.
27. Cf. *Pravda*, September 17, 1976, citing the Syrian Communist Party’s daily.
28. Quoted by P. Devillers and J. Lacouture, *End of a War* (London: 1969), p. 281.
29. Beirut Domestic Service in Arabic, September 22, 1976 – FBIS/Middle East, September 23, 1976.
30. *Pravda*, September 27, 1976.
31. *Krasnaia zvezda*, October 3, 1976. See also statement by the Soviet Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee in *Pravda*, October 1, 1976; *Pravda*, October 3, October 7 and October 17, 1976.
32. See also Radio Peace and Progress in Arabic, October 18, 1976 – FBIS/Soviet Union, October 20, 1976.
33. *Pravda*, November 19, 1976.
34. Declaration by the Warsaw Pact members, *Pravda*, November 27, 1976.

---

## THE JERUSALEM JOURNAL OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

**Published by The Leonard Davis Institute for International Relations,  
The Hebrew University of Jerusalem**

A significant quarterly journal reflecting the global importance of the Middle East and dealing with many of the key issues in the study of international relations. Included are papers by internationally recognized scholars writing on major theoretical and practical issues of foreign policy and the effects of international developments on the Middle East.

Volumes 3 and 4 include:

Special Double Issue, "Studies in Crisis Behavior"

Guest Editor, Michael Brecher

"Social Change and International Relations"

Ralf Dahrendorf

"The Vulnerable Modern Industrial Society"

Bertil Häggman

"The Northern Tier as Crucible for Postwar America"

Bruce R. Kuniholm

"Nuclear Terrorism: Armchair Pastime or Genuine Treat?"

Robert H. Kupperman

"The Impact of Protracted Peripheral Wars on the  
American Domestic System"

Shmuel Sandler

"A Dialogue on the North-South Dialogue"

Charles Wolf, Jr.

Subscriptions can be ordered from:

The Jerusalem Journal of International Relations, The Leonard Davis  
Institute for International Relations, The Hebrew University, Jerusalem,  
Israel.

### **Annual rates:**

Institutions	\$25.00
Individuals	\$15.00

---

## JERUSALEM PAPERS ON PEACE PROBLEMS

1. *Peace Conferences: The Formal Aspects* by Raymond Cohen and Stuart Cohen
2. *The Juridical Status of Jerusalem* by Yehuda Zvi Blum
3. *The Role of Great Power Guarantees in International Peace Agreements* by Alan Dowty
4. *Soviet and Chinese Relations with the Palestinian Guerrilla Organizations* by Moshe Ma'oz
5. *Sharm al-Sheikh – Bab al-Mandeb: The Strategic Balance and Israel's Southern Approaches* by Mordechai Abir
6. *Israel's African Setback in Perspective* by Susan Aurelia Gitelson
7. *The Soviet Union and the Arab-Israel War of October 1973* by Galia Golan
8. *United States – Israel Relations, 1967–1973: A Study in the Convergence and Divergence of Interests* by Shlomo Slonim
9. *American Guarantees to Israel and the Law of American Foreign Relations* by Michla Pomerance
10. *The Limits of Alliance: America, Europe, and the Middle East* by Linda B. Miller
11. *The Demilitarization of Sinai* by Yair Evron
12. *Israel in the Middle East: An Introduction* by Yaacov Herzog
- 13–14. *Freedom of Navigation with Special Reference to International Waterways in the Middle East* by Ruth Lapidoth
15. *Syria Under Hafiz al-Asad: New Domestic and Foreign Policies* by Moshe Ma'oz
16. *Israel's Concept of Defensible Borders* by Dan Horowitz
- 17–18. *U.N. Peace-Keeping in the Israel-Arab Conflict, 1948–1975: An Israel Critique* by Michael Comay
19. *Perception, Deception and Surprise: The Case of the Yom Kippur War* by Michael I. Handel
20. *Persian Gulf Oil in Middle East and International Conflicts* by Mordechai Abir
21. *Military Geography and the Military Balance in the Arab-Israel Conflict* by Steven J. Rosen
22. *Gandhi, Satyagraha and the Jews: A Formative Factor in India's Policy Towards Israel* by Gideon Shimoni
23. *Preemption and Two-Front Conventional Warfare* by Robert E. Harkavy
24. *War Termination – A Critical Survey* by Michael I. Handel
25. *A Conceptual Framework for the Analysis of Behavior in a Territorial Conflict: The Generalization of the Israeli Case* by Baruch Kimmerling
- 26–27. *The Lebanon Civil War 1975–76: A Case of Crisis Mismanagement* by Ilana Kass

Papers may be ordered from the Institute at the cost of U.S. \$1.00 (or its equivalent in other currencies) per number.

Jerusalem Papers on Peace Problems

The Leonard Davis Institute for International Relations  
The Hebrew University  
Jerusalem, Israel