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AS MOSCOW REARMS SYRIA, ISRAEL FEELS THE HEAT

Israel fears that the Soviets are once again playing a leading role in the Mideast. Any hope that Syria would move away from its position as a Soviet client state has vanished as Moscow has rebuilt its influence in Damascus with new shipments of arms and, apparently, new political clout. Even more ominous, the Israelis—in contrast to U.S. Kremlinologists, who tend to regard decision-making as a product of the system rather than of personalities—see the Russian role in Syria reflecting an aggressive new personal policy of Soviet Communist Party boss Yuri V. Andropov. And despite Prime Minister Menachem Begin's own disavowal of the Reagan plan for settling the Palestine issue, Jerusalem sees Jordanian King Hussein's refusal to participate in the plan as resulting indirectly from Soviet ploys in the Arab world.

Palestine Liberation Organization radicals—whose second allegiance is to Moscow—pressured PLO chief Yasser Arafat to ask Hussein for concessions that could not be met. The Israelis believe this means the Russians have rebuilt their position after the indirect defeat they suffered when Israel destroyed the PLO's base in Lebanon. That base, however important to the Palestinian cause, was also used by Moscow's international subversion network. The constant menace of Syria, whose losses in the Lebanon war have now been made good by Moscow, was another factor for Hussein. Not only have the Russians shipped Syria new weapons—including the SAM-5 missiles until now exclusively placed in the Soviet bloc—but they have increased the number of their advisers to 5,000. Soviet military have been spotted with the Syrians near Lebanese President Amin Gemayel's home village. They have also been seen supervising construction of Syrian defenses north of Tripoli, still a PLO stronghold, and in the Bakaa Valley on the Syrian-Israeli battle line, where the SAM-5s are deployed. The Syrians now have MiG-23s (Soviet aircraft that can carry nuclear weapons) and new direct communications to Moscow. The Israelis claim that the Soviets have assumed responsibility for Syrian air defenses—something they have not done in a foreign country for a decade. And Jerusalem does not rule out

the possibility that Russian pilots would be used to prevent the kind of debacle that overtook the Soviet-built, Syrian-piloted air force at the outset of the Lebanese war.

The Soviets also have launched a political offensive. Moscow's notorious ambassador to Beirut, Alexander A. Soldatov, a top KGB agent and a former emissary to Cuba, has renewed contacts with the PLO's defeated Lebanese leftist allies. The Druze leader, Walid Jumalat, a leftist who played a major role in the Lebanese civil war, has been visiting in Moscow. In late March, the head of the Soviet navy visited Aden, a major base for Russian operations in the Indian Ocean (BW—Apr. 4). The Soviet Union and Libya have announced they will sign a new treaty of friendship. The head of the Soviet Foreign Ministry's Mideast section, Oleg A. Grinevsky, held discussions with King Hussein just before Amman revealed the King's decision. A Soviet delegation headed by Vice-President Temirbek Koshoyev hardly concluded a weeklong visit to Damascus in early April before Soviet Defense Minister Dmitri A. Ustinov was expected.

ANDROPOV'S IMPRINT. Israel thus believes that the Soviets are trying to block any "Pax Americana" in Lebanon. Jerusalem recalls that when Syria planned to end the civil war in 1976 by moving troops into Lebanon, at the invitation of Lebanon's then-Christian-dominated regime and with the concurrence of the Arab League, Moscow opposed the move. And Israel speculates that the Soviets may want the Syrian troops pulled out eventually, to limit the Russian risk with Damascus in the region. But Jerusalem argues that Moscow, using the Syrians' continuing occupation force in Lebanon, can hold out for indirect Russian participation in any Lebanese settlement—thus dictating the terms for withdrawal of the U.S. Marines. And that, Israel says, gives Moscow a more central role—with Andropov's personal imprint—than it has had for many years.

These are not Washington's views. And while the Israelis obviously have a highly partisan approach to events in the area, Jerusalem's intelligence on its Arab neighbors has often proved to be accurate. □

A LIBYAN PORT IN LATIN AMERICA

Suriname, the newest convert to the radical anti-American alliance being built in the Caribbean by Havana and Moscow, has turned to Libya for economic and perhaps military support. Suriname's military strongman, Lieutenant Colonel Daysi Bouterse, signed a friendship treaty with Libya's Colonel Muammar Qaddafi in Tripoli after starting in March in New Delhi at the meeting of the Third World states calling themselves nonaligned. The conclave denounced a cut-off of \$100 million in annual aid from the Netherlands but made no mention of the reign of terror in the former Dutch colony that had brought on the action. Formerly known as Dutch Guiana, Suriname is on the northern coast of South America between former British Guyana and French Guiana.

Sources in the Netherlands say they believe that Libya is stepping in because Havana is unable or unwilling to meet the

gap in Suriname's balance of payments. Dutch officials halted aid in December after the murder of 40 Surinamese opposition leaders, including Cyril Daal, a trade-unionist who organized a general strike in November to protest the visit of Grenada's pro-Cuban dictator, Prime Minister Maurice Bishop (BW—Feb. 18, 1980). The leaders were tortured before being shot, according to a report on 14 of the deaths written by the Dutch branch of the International Commission of Jurists in Geneva.

CLOSE TO CUBA. Accusing the Central Intelligence Agency of instigating the demonstrations against Bishop, Suriname's Foreign Minister, Harvey Naarendorp, threatened to expel two U.S. diplomats. Naarendorp is close to Bishop and is a proponent of Surinamese ties to Cuba and Moscow. There are reports, so far not officially confirmed, that Bouterse and Naarendorp concluded a friendship treaty with Cuba when

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Soviet Presence in Syria Boosts Risk of Crisis

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Soviet Presence In Syria Boosts Risk of a Crisis

On Feb. 25, I quoted intelligence reports warning that the Soviets were trying to precipitate a military clash between Syria and Israel. Reason: the Kremlin high command desperately needs to know whether their updated SA5 anti-aircraft missiles are any better than the SA6s, SA8s and SA9s the Israelis destroyed with such ease during the Lebanon invasion last year.

What was anticipated two months ago is now becoming disturbingly imminent as the Soviet presence in Syria increases almost daily. Encouraged by their Soviet suppliers, the Syrians will try to remain in Lebanon after Israelis and international peace-keeping forces agree to pull out. Neither Israel nor the United States can tolerate this. It could lead to a U.S.-Soviet confrontation growing out of the Israeli-Syrian explosion the Kremlin is trying to ignite.

The basis for this fear is that the Soviets, embarrassed by the failure of their less-sophisticated surface-to-air missiles against the Israelis, can't afford to have the same thing happen to the SA5s and SA10s they

have sent to Syria—the first time these weapons have been deployed outside the Soviet Union.

Intelligence experts are uncertain about just how far the Soviets would go to prevent a humiliating rerun of last year's dismal performance by their missiles in Lebanon. But the SA5's potential for disaster is frightening: it can be armed with a nuclear warhead. The SA5, code-named "Gammon," has an impressive range of 150 miles. The Israelis, to protect their aircraft, would have to attack missile sites within Syria—and these missile batteries are now manned by Soviet crews.

A top-secret Pentagon report, seen by my associates Lucette Lagrado and Dale Van Atta, notes that nuclear warheads are available for most SA5 batteries within the Soviet Union. And in simulated launches against hypothetical B52 bombers the SA5 crews were able to destroy "several aircraft with a single missile, suggesting a nuclear warhead."

The Soviets have not installed nuclear warheads on their missiles in Syria. But that they could do so has not been overlooked by Israel and the United States.

The prospects of touching off a conflagration with the Soviets in the Middle East has had a chilling effect on the Israelis. Yet, once Israel withdraws from Lebanon, the only way it could counter a Syrian move to regain control of the country would be

a new invasion on the 1982 scale. And this would put Israel eyeball-to-eyeball with the Soviets inside Syria. U.S. and Israeli intelligence experts haven't yet agreed on exactly what the Soviet role in Syria will be. The Soviets may simply be trying to recoup their lost credibility among doubtful Arab allies. It has been suggested that presence in Syria shows Soviet determination to keep the Syrians from acting rashly.

At best, the Soviets seem to be indulging in a bit of brinkmanship, stirring up mischief to test U.S.-Israeli resolve. At worst, the Soviets are irresponsibly risking a showdown in hopes of regaining their prestige in the Middle East.

Headlines and Footnotes: Rep. Joseph G. Minish (D-N.J.), of Italian heritage, took a bit of Italy on a recent congressional visit to China: 10 pounds of Genoa salami and nine loaves of crusty Italian-style bread. "They held up pretty well," he reported. In Shanghai, Minish jokingly complained to his hosts that, while the Chinese invented spaghetti, "I was here a week and didn't see any."

• Presidential hopeful Sen. Ernest F. Hollings (D-S.C.) acknowledges a bit of a name-recognition problem. He contrasted his situation with that of a famous brokerage house in its TV ad: "When E.F. Hollings talks" the room falls silent, he said, adding: "I don't know if they're listening or just keeping quiet in disbelief."

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