

CONFIDENTIAL

FBIS TRENDS  
28 FEBRUARY 1973

- 15 -

## MIDDLE EAST

### LOW-KEY SOVIET COMMENT ON PLANE DOWNING CITES CAIRO PEACE MOVE

Continuing Soviet comment on the 21 February downing of a Libyan civil aircraft in Sinai, as well as on the Israeli raid the same day against Palestinian camps in northern Lebanon, has seemed calculated to urge restraint on the Arab states at a time when Cairo is mounting a "new initiative" for a Middle East settlement.\* In keeping with their general restraint, Soviet media waited until the 26th to report condolences sent by Podgorny to Egypt's as-Sadat and Libya's al-Qadhafi; and the low-keyed message was confined to an expression of sympathy over the tragic deaths of Egyptian and Libyan citizens who "became victims of another provocation by Israeli aggressors."

Concern over the Arab response seemed indicated in an observation in a PRAVDA dispatch on the 24th that the action against the Libyan aircraft was "intended to provoke military operations" at a time when Egypt "is launching a new initiative for a political settlement." Perhaps significantly, the co-author of this Cairo-dated dispatch was Igor Belyayev, former PRAVDA Middle East specialist, who was last known to have been in Cairo late last July following as-Sadat's expulsion of the Soviet military advisors. Then and now, his presence in Egypt was revealed by the publication of signed dispatches from Cairo. And PRAVDA on 15 February carried a Beirut-dated article which indicated that the paper's other former Middle East expert, Yevgeniy Primakov, also was again in the area. (Belyayev and Primakov are both now deputy directors of institutes of the USSR Academy of Sciences.) In the first of their reports from Cairo, on the 23d, PRAVDA "special correspondents" Belyayev and Glukhov had also linked Israel's "fresh provocations" with the start of "diplomatic contacts and a quest for a settlement of the Middle East crisis being undertaken by Cairo."

Soviet propaganda has branded the Israeli action criminal, barbaric, and hideous, charged that the airliner was shot down "deliberately and in cold blood," and derided Israel for

---

\* Moscow all but ignored the talks held in Washington on 23 February by President as-Sadat's national security adviser, Hafiz Isma'il, although it has approvingly referred to Egypt's "wide diplomatic campaign" concerning ways of solving the Middle East conflict.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

FBIS TRENDS  
28 FEBRUARY 1973

- 16 -

hypocritical and insincere condolences to the victims' relatives and for contradictory reports and "justifications" of the downing. But this incident, unlike some other Israeli "armed provocations" in the past, failed to evoke any authoritative Soviet statement.\* In the weekly commentators' roundtable program broadcast in Moscow's domestic service on the 25th, moderator Zorin brushed off the "unprecedented attack" on the aircraft in introductory remarks summing up the week's events. He attributed to the London DAILY TELEGRAPH the conclusion that Israel's actions "are somehow linked to the start of new attempts to achieve peace in the Middle East."

The USSR Trade Union of Aviation Workers did not express its "profound indignation" until the 26th, when TASS reported messages of "resolute protest" sent to the counterpart Arab organization in Cairo and to the International Federation of Airline Pilots' Associations in London. There have been no other reported protests from Soviet organizations, and expressions of Soviet citizens' "indignation" have been monitored only in broadcasts in Arabic on the 22d and 23d. TASS has reported wide central press attention, but press coverage has focused largely on reaction in the Arab world and in Western Europe.

Only in isolated instances have Moscow commentators drawn any connection between Tel Aviv's action and Washington's support and aid for Israel. The initial commentary on the plane incident, by TASS commentator Kornilov on the 22d, said it was no accident that Israel's "impudent and wicked acts of aggression" occurred while talks were concluding in Washington on new U.S. aid to Israel. Kornilov added the standard charge that Washington's military, economic, and political support serves as encouragement to Tel Aviv's "expansionist policy" and incites "new crimes." Similarly, a Rassadin commentary broadcast in Arabic on the 22d found it striking that the plane downing came shortly before Israeli Prime Minister Meir's trip to Washington, where she reportedly would press for further financial aid to purchase more military aircraft.

---

\* The last such statement, a Soviet Government statement on 17 September last year, condemned Israeli intrusions into Lebanon and Syria. Earlier, TASS statements had been issued following Israeli bombing of an Egyptian metalworks in February 1970 and "provocations" against Lebanon in May of that year.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

FBIS TRENDS  
28 FEBRUARY 1973

- 17 -

**EAST EUROPE REACTIONS** Along the lines of Soviet propaganda, East European comment has pointed out that the Libyan plane downing took place at a time when renewed efforts for a political settlement of the Middle East conflict were anticipated. Like Moscow, the East European commentators accused Israel of trying to thwart efforts for such a settlement. But several of the East European countries reacted more promptly and at more authoritative levels than the USSR did, and several--in contrast to the great bulk of Moscow comment--sought to implicate the United States by virtue of its aid to Israel.

The GDR denounced Israel's action in a 22 February foreign ministry spokesman's statement which claimed that Israeli "extremists" were encouraged by the United States to continue their "antipeace policy" and cited as evidence the grant of a further 500 million dollars in financial aid to Israel. In a similar vein, a Budapest domestic service commentary on the 22d said that while official U.S. statements sought to isolate Washington from the Middle East events, the credibility of these statements was "badly undermined" by the United States' contribution of the lion's share to the maintenance of "aggressive" Israeli policy. Poland's DZIENNIK LUDOWY asserted that not even the Black September, "a small organization composed of expelled and desperate people," had dared execute such a "criminal act."

Romania, which alone of the communist countries maintained relations with Israel after the 1967 war, summoned the Israeli charge d'affaires on the 23d to express government disapproval of an act "contrary to international rules and all humanitarian principles" and conducive to new tensions, with attendant effects on efforts for a political settlement. Also on the 23d, Ceausescu expressed sympathy and "disapproval" of the Israeli action in telegrams to al-Qadhafi and as-Sadat. Jerusalem radio reported on the 25th that the Romanian deputy health minister, scheduled to arrive in Israel that morning, had postponed his visit at the last minute, although an Israeli health ministry spokesman said "no political significance" should be attached to the postponement since the visit had already been deferred several times "because of problems of coordination and planning."

Tito sent a telegram of sympathy to al-Qadhafi on the 22d condemning the "unprovoked act of piracy on the part of Israel," and the Yugoslav foreign affairs secretariat spokesman the same day expressed Belgrade's condemnation of this "flagrant violation

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

FBI'S TRENDS  
28 FEBRUARY 1973

- 18 -

of all standards of international law." TANJUG reported from Washington that official U.S. expressions of regret and condolences failed to include a single mention or blame of the perpetrators.

Typically, the Albanian ZERI I POPULLIT, in a 24 February article, charged that Israel's "aggressive policy" was encouraged by both "U.S. imperialism" and "the double-faced stand of the Soviet revisionists"--the former giving Israel political, economic, and military aid while the latter supplied it with "live forces" by allowing the emigration of thousands of Jews to Israel.

PRC COMMENT Peking's reaction to the plane downing was highlighted by a 25 February PEOPLE'S DAILY Commentator article denouncing the "barbarous attack on an unarmed passenger plane" which resulted in the loss of more than a hundred lives. Commentator cited other recent provocations by the "Zionists supported by imperialism" as demonstrating that the "Israeli aggressors" were trying to seize permanently their "aggressive gains through all kinds of provocations, blackmail, and threats." PEOPLE'S DAILY expressed the Chinese people's "resolute condemnation" of the "brutal act" and their "staunch support" for the Palestinian and other Arab peoples in their just struggle against aggression.

#### EGYPTIAN WAR MINISTER'S MOSCOW VISIT HAS "SPECIAL SIGNIFICANCE"

Egyptian War Minister Ahmad Isma'il 'Ali arrived in Moscow on 26 February on what TASS described as an "official visit"--the first visit by an Egyptian war minister to the USSR since Sadiq, then occupying the post, paid an "official friendly visit" last June.\* Brezhnev received Isma'il 'Ali on the 27th, as he had received Sadiq last summer, for a "warm and friendly talk" on matters of mutual interest. The last Soviet-Egyptian military talks in Moscow--the first since the July expulsion of Soviet military advisers from Egypt--had been held by Air Force Commander Mubarak and his delegation last November. The Isma'il 'Ali talks follow the visit to Cairo of a Soviet military delegation which arrived there on 1 February.

---

\* The Sadiq visit is discussed in the TRENDS of 21 June 1972, pages 25-26.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

FBI'S TRENDS  
28 FEBRUARY 1973

- 19 -

Explaining the visit as falling within the framework of regular Soviet-Egyptian consultations, a Moscow broadcast in Arabic on the 27th put these talks in the context of the "growing armed provocations" by Israel, citing the 21 February raid into Lebanon and the downing of the Libyan airliner. The visit thus "acquired special importance and significance," the broadcast said. Moscow again urged the Arabs to strengthen their own unity and emphasized the importance of Arab-Soviet friendship and cooperation. The commentary recalled that, as pointed out in the communique on the recent Moscow visit of Egyptian national security adviser Hafiz Isma'il, the USSR stressed that the Arab countries "had full right to use every means of struggle" to liberate their territories.

The 27 February broadcast seemed to place somewhat more emphasis on Soviet military assistance than did a followup commentary on the Sadiq visit last June. At that time, Moscow routinely pledged assistance, including military aid, to peoples struggling for their legitimate rights. The current broadcast called the Isma'il 'Ali visit a further contribution to the cementing of Soviet-Egyptian cooperation, "which includes Soviet aid in strengthening the Egyptian military capability on the grounds that this aid is the most constituent part of this cooperation."

#### MOSCOW SEES MEIR AS SEEKING MORE ARMS, PARTIAL SETTLEMENT

Limited Soviet comment on Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir's Washington visit, which began on the 26th, has focused on further U.S. aid to Israel and, like other recent Moscow propaganda, has underscored talks being held on an American loan of some 500 million dollars for further military acquisitions. Soviet commentators have also noted that Mrs. Meir herself said the incident of the downing of the Libyan plane would not affect the results of her Washington talks. A Moscow domestic service commentary on the 27th quoted the London TIMES' Washington correspondent as remarking that U.S. reaction to this event was surprisingly mild and as concluding that Washington's unwillingness to criticize Israel evidently stems from its role as chief supplier of armaments and its diplomatic support for Israel.

Some propagandists also suggested that plans for a partial settlement in the Middle East would be discussed during the visit. In line with the customary Soviet approach to this idea, the commentators disparaged the concept without flatly rejecting it and displayed Moscow's reluctance to see a made-in-the-U.S. settlement.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

FBIS TRENDS

28 FEBRUARY 1973

- 20 -

A Soltan foreign-language commentary on the 27th, for example, claimed that the United States was attempting to take on the role of "exclusive broker" in the Middle East but that the "so-called U.S. initiative" amounted at best to an effort to achieve a "so-called partial settlement."

Former PRAVDA Middle East specialist Primakov, in a Beirut-dated article in the 15 February issue, found it unsurprising that Israeli Defense Minister Dayan considered Washington "the most acceptable mediator" of a Mideast peace settlement in light of Tel Aviv's desire for a "so-called intermediate settlement" based on a conditional opening of the Suez Canal: Egypt would not be allowed to transfer troops to the eastern bank, and Israel would make no commitment to withdraw its forces from the other occupied Arab lands.

Moscow has recalled that early in 1971 Egyptian President as-Sadat himself had suggested the idea of an interim settlement based on Israeli withdrawal into Sinai and the opening of the canal as a first stage of an overall settlement. In a 22 February PRAVDA article Demchenko, like Primakov, noted Egyptian opposition to a partial settlement and objected that the fate of the remaining occupied territories would remain "frozen" indefinitely. In a PRAVDA article a month earlier, on 20 January, Demchenko had recalled as-Sadat's proposal but said it was now a "different matter," since Israeli media indicated that the question of the other lands would be frozen. And an article by Petrov in NOVOYE VREMYA (No. 6, 9 February) also brought up as-Sadat's "idea of an interim settlement"--but failed to point out Egypt's present opposition to a partial settlement and its insistence on an overall settlement.

Demchenko counseled, in his 22 February article, that only determination to defend one's interests and rights, "based on a consideration of the real political and economic factors and the alignment of forces in the international arena," would make Israel heed Arab demands. Calling Resolution 242 the basis of a settlement, Demchenko conceded that its implementation would not be a "simple task" and that by virtue of "established historical conditions it cannot be solved right away." But the Vietnam example, he concluded, demonstrates the possibility of finding peaceful solutions for other conflict situations.

CONFIDENTIAL