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MIDDLE EAST

BREZHNEV CALLS FOR PEACE SETTLEMENT; MOSCOW REASSURES ARABS

The joint communique on Brezhnev's U.S. visit dealt with the Middle East in much more cursory fashion than the communique issued at the conclusion of the President's visit to the USSR in May 1972, but the two sides did pledge to continue their efforts to facilitate a settlement. Brezhnev referred only briefly to the Middle East in his speech on U.S. television, but this was in keeping with his generally low-key treatment of major international questions. Broadcasts in Moscow's Arabic-language service during the Brezhnev visit played up the significance of his discussions there for international detente and asserted that Arab public opinion considered that the visit and "other Soviet foreign policy steps"--unspecified--would have a "direct influence" on the Middle East situation. Followup comment in Arabic described the Middle East passage of the communique as in harmony with the interests of the Arabs and claimed that it compelled "the forces of aggression" to take into account "objective facts" of the contemporary world.

U.S.-SOVIET COMMUNIQUE In the joint communique the sides expressed deep concern over the Middle East situation and exchanged opinions on ways of achieving a settlement, agreeing "to continue their efforts to facilitate an earliest possible settlement." As in the U.S.-Soviet communique on the May 1972 summit talks in Moscow, the current document noted that the sides "set out their positions" on the problem. But in a notable variation from the 1972 communique the current one failed to repeat the sides' expression of support for Security Council Resolution 242. The communique's failure to mention the resolution is the more puzzling in view of Moscow comment before and after Brezhnev's visit. Thus, a Petrov article in NEW TIMES (No. 23, 8 June) observed that the 1972 U.S.-Soviet communique "officially sealed the U.S. position" with regard to the need for a settlement of the Middle East conflict on the basis of Resolution 242. And TASS commentator Kornilov commenting on the summit meeting on 27 June cited the resolution, and Jarring's mission, in reiterating Soviet support for a peaceful political settlement.*

* Arab criticism of the communique for failing to mention Resolution 242 was obliquely acknowledged by TASS in a Beirut-dated dispatch on the 27th. According to TASS, a Lebanese paper editorially defended the communique for speaking of "more important matters" than those dealt with in the resolution--specifically, Palestinian rights, which were "discussed for the first time at summit level."

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In the course of registering both sides' hopes for a settlement in line with the interests of all states in the area, the communique referred to the Palestinians' "legitimate interests." Such expressions of concern for the Palestinian people have long been a staple of Soviet propaganda, but there was no such reference in the 1972 Moscow communique.

BREZHNEV TV ADDRESS Brezhnev's brief remarks on the Middle East in his television address were consistent with Moscow's low-keyed treatment of the problem in recent months, and Brezhnev himself in formal speeches has usually addressed the issue only in generalized terms. Remarking that he and the President had "touched" on the "acute" Middle East situation, Brezhnev went on to express the belief that justice must be insured in the area and a lasting peace settlement achieved which would restore "the legitimate rights of those who suffered in the war" and would insure "the security of all peoples of the area." While the formulation on security of "all" peoples has seemed calculated to point to Israel,* Brezhnev might also have had in mind Arab arguments that their security interests should also be considered. He added that this "is important for all the peoples of the Middle East without exception."

Brezhnev's reference to "the legitimate rights of those who suffered in the war" would seem to be a variation of the phrase in his 21 December report last year on the 50th anniversary of the USSR. On that occasion he called for "concrete political actions" to force Israel to agree to a peaceful settlement and to recognize "the legitimate rights of the Arab peoples." In that speech he had pledged Soviet readiness to contribute to this effort and had referred to resolution of the conflict on the basis of relevant Security Council resolutions.

ASSURANCE TO ARABS During Brezhnev's visit, Moscow radio repeatedly assured Arab listeners that the U.S.-Soviet summit would not be detrimental to their interests. Arabic-language broadcasts have said, among other things, that the Soviet struggle for general international detente is compatible

* The security formulation has apparently been used as an alternative to Moscow's previous expressions of support for Israel's right to exist. Brezhnev in a speech in August 1970 declared Soviet support for insuring "national rights, security, and independence for all states" in the area. And a Soviet Government statement in September 1972 called for "an opportunity for all peoples of the area to live in peace and security."

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with hopes for a just settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Denying Arab press allegations of U.S.-Soviet "collusion," Moscow insisted that efforts to achieve a solution in the Middle East do not at all mean that the USSR is anxious to settle the problem "at any cost."

Moscow's reassurance has been directed in particular to Egypt, and a CPSU delegation's visit to Cairo coincided with the beginning of Brezhnev's U.S. trip. Arabic-language broadcasts reported that the delegation stressed to its hosts--the Arab Socialist Union--the significance of the U.S.-Soviet summit talks and at the same time reaffirmed "consistent" Soviet assistance and support for the Arabs' struggle for the liberation of the occupied Arab territories. The delegation head, in an interview broadcast in Arabic on the 21st, insisted that officials of the Arab Socialist Union regarded the Brezhnev visit as an important international event, while "ordinary people" in Egypt expressed total satisfaction with the USSR's peaceful coexistence policy.

The CPSU delegation apparently also sought to restrain Egyptian press criticism of Moscow's Middle East policies: TASS reported on 17 June that at a meeting of the delegation with Deputy Prime Minister for Culture and Education Hatim, the sides agreed that Egyptian and Soviet mass media "should be used only in the interests of strengthening, developing, and propagandizing" the friendly Soviet-Egyptian relations, and should expose all attempts to question the sincerity and strength of this friendship. Moscow has seemingly tried to keep its rejoinder to recent Cairo press critiques in low key; thus a 2 June article by the editor of the weekly AKHBAR AL-YAWM speculating on the correct interpretation of the Middle East passage in the May 1972 Soviet-American communique drew no direct Soviet reply, but a week later the Cairo paper published what it described as a response by "official Soviet sources" in Moscow. The "Soviet officials" maintained, according to AKHBAR AL-YAWM, that Brezhnev during his meeting with Nixon would defend the Soviet Union's interests in the Middle East which they described as in line with Arab interests.

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