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ARAB-ISRAELI WAR

USSR SCORES ISRAELI BOMBING, SILENT ON CEASE-FIRE PROSPECTS

Moscow's treatment of the Arab-Israeli war has made much of Israeli attacks on civilian populations, but even though Soviet casualties were involved the only official protest issued was a TASS statement on 12 October. The media give little indication of any diplomatic moves to bring an end to the fighting, and the most substantial public remarks on the war by a Soviet leader were Kosygin's at a dinner on the 15th for the Danish Prime Minister. Kosygin complained that "opponents of detente" had gone so far as to present Soviet solidarity with the Arabs "as the source of tension," and in standard fashion he said that the conflict was due to the "aggressive" Israeli policy which enjoyed "outside support and patronage."

The issue of U.S. arms resupply to Israel has been handled with circumspection: Moscow's increasing reportage has reflected the proliferation of reports in U.S. media, but the Soviet items have been carefully attributed to foreign sources with no comment added. Moscow media have displayed the usual reticence concerning Soviet arms shipments. Not until the 17th did TASS by indirection confirm ongoing supplies when it referred to military aid which "is" rendered to Egypt and Syria.

Typifying Moscow's propagandistic handling of the conflict, a PRAVDA Observer article on the 12th provided nothing more than a routine review of Middle East developments since 1967 couched in stereotyped terms, and PRAVDA's Mayevskiy in a 14 October review drew on the CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR for an assessment of U.S. policy. Statements by U.S. officials, including the President, have been reported briefly and without comment, if at all.

USSR LEADERS' REMARKS, CONTACTS Aside from Kosygin's remarks on the 15th, the only Soviet leaders broaching the Middle East conflict publicly were Grechko, in a speech in Warsaw on the 12th, and Shelepin, addressing a trade union congress in Bulgaria on the 16th. Going beyond Kosygin's reference to "opponents of detente," Grechko, as reported by TASS, asserted that forces of reaction and aggression and "influential" quarters in imperialist

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countries, which wanted to turn the world back to the cold war, were "precisely the forces that by their short-sighted policy" brought matters to a new conflagration in the Middle East. Shelepin, as reported by the Bulgarian news agency on the 16th, merely repeated the accusation that Israel bears full responsibility.

Moscow has given little publicity to consultations with Arab leaders, belatedly reporting on the 12th the Iraqi foreign minister's visit to Moscow on 9 October. Algerian President Boumediene's unheralded "friendly visit" on 14-15 October was acknowledged by TASS on the 15th in an announcement that Boumediene met with Brezhnev, Podgorny, Kosygin, Gromyko, and Grechko in "a friendly and frank atmosphere" for a detailed exchange of views on the Middle East situation. The sides, TASS said, affirmed their determination to assist "in every way" in the liberation of the occupied Arab territories.

Moscow has remained silent on other diplomatic contacts. Thus while TASS on the 13th reported Gromyko's meeting with the FRG ambassador, it did not acknowledge that the ambassador had conveyed Brandt's reply to a Brezhnev message on the Middle East. According to the West German DPA, Brezhnev sent messages to Nixon, Pompidou and Brandt; and Brandt in an FRG TV interview on the 14th said the exchange of views concerned whether and how something could be done to guarantee the right of Israel and the other states in the region to existence and security.

ISRAELI BOMBINGS, Denouncing Israel's "savage bombings and
OTHER ACTIONS shellings of civilian targets," the TASS
statement on the 12th pointed out that

Soviet merchant ship was sunk that day in Tartus port and that bombing in Damascus on the 9th had destroyed the Soviet cultural center. Noting that Soviet and Syrian citizens were victims in the Damascus bombing, the statement added at another point that as a result of the "criminal" Israeli actions there were victims among Soviet citizens in Egypt as well as Syria. Moscow has provided no clarification regarding the deaths of any Soviet citizens in Egypt; a Soviet friendship societies statement, carried by TASS some hours before the release of the TASS statement, had noted that a Soviet citizen-- a Russian-language teacher--and some Syrian staff members of the cultural center had been killed in the Damascus bombing.

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The TASS statement contrasted the Israeli "atrocities" with the "enormous fortitude and self-control" displayed by the Arab states waging combat operations against the enemy's armed forces only. Echoing the statement, an Afonin commentary on the 15th told North American listeners of the Arabs' "humanity," lacked by the other side, in that "not a single Arab plane bombed cities or villages in Israel."

TASS said the "Soviet people" condemned the bombing, and the Soviet Union could not "regard indifferently" the Israeli actions, continuation of which would lead to "grave consequences" for Israel itself. The statement also observed that Israeli ruling circles were "profoundly deluded" if they thought their actions would go unpunished. The current TASS statement is similar in these respects to one issued on 16 February 1970 in a comparable situation--the Israeli bombing of the Egyptian metal works at Abu Zabal with civilian casualties. The 1970 statement was followed by a mounting campaign of protest meetings throughout the USSR, and in the present case, reports of such protests have also begun to appear.

TASS continues to report developments on the Sinai and Syrian fronts, conceding on the 12th that Israeli troops had broken through Syrian positions and moved beyond the 1967 cease-fire line. Jordan's dispatch of troops to the Syrian front was reported in a one-line TASS dispatch on the 13th, and TASS on the 14th briefly noted that Saudi Arabian troops in Jordan had reportedly crossed into Syria.

ARMS TO ISRAEL In the last few days, Moscow has picked up numerous foreign press reports regarding American supply of materiel to Israel, but has thus far refrained from comment. TASS' straightforward account of Secretary Kissinger's 12 October press conference sidestepped his remarks about Soviet behavior in the crisis, although it did quote him with respect to U.S. contacts with the parties and the permanent members of the Security Council. Kissinger outlined U.S. objectives, according to TASS, as ending the hostilities as quickly as possible and in such a way as to contribute to the promotion of a more permanent solution in the Middle East. TASS noted that in response to a question on U.S. military aid to Israel, Kissinger said the United States "has an ongoing military relationship with Israel." Moscow's domestic service gave the Kissinger press conference only two sentences, reporting that he refused to give a frank reply

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when asked the nature of U.S. military assistance to Israel, but said only that the United States maintained military ties with Israel.

State Department spokesman McCloskey's 15 October announcement on U.S. resupply of military equipment was only briefly reported by the domestic service on the 16th. TASS the same day said McCloskey "admitted" that U.S. weapons deliveries to Israel "reach considerable proportions." Noting that McCloskey refused to disclose the kind of military equipment being supplied, TASS went on to cite UPI, AP, and the Washington POST for reports of various deliveries including tanks, combat planes such as Phantoms, missiles, and electronic and other equipment. On the 15th TASS had reported NEWSWEEK assaying that Israel had asked the United States urgently to provide at least 75 up-to-date military aircraft including Phantoms, as well as tanks, artillery, and missiles, and that missiles and ammunition ordered earlier were dispatched last week.

Soviet media have picked up some Arab complaints of U.S. actions, including charges that planes piloted by U.S. citizens took part in the Israeli bombing of Damascus. And TASS on the 14th reported the Egyptian protest to the United States claiming that U.S. reconnaissance aircraft overflew Egyptian territory on the 13th. The Cairo paper AL-AHRAM was cited by TASS on the 15th for a report that Egypt had informed Greece, Turkey, and Spain of its concern over the use of NATO bases in these countries by U.S. reconnaissance planes, and that same day the Soviet agency reported that the Egyptian government spokesman, commenting on reports of deliveries of U.S. weapons to Israel, had emphasized that the entire responsibility for political, military and economic support "to the aggressor" rests with the United States.

ARMS TO ARABS Moscow was silent on its own arms resupply operations until the 17th, when TASS commentator Latyshev, attacking Peking for belittling Soviet aid to the Arabs, declared that the Arab public directly links the Syrian and Egyptian armies' fighting efficiency with the military aid which has been and "is rendered" by the Soviet Union.*

* Moscow had earlier referred to Soviet supply of arms to the Arabs in a commentary in Mandarin on the 9th also replying to PRC charges. Without specifying any ongoing deliveries, the broadcast set forth the stereotyped argument that if a country provides arms to the victims of aggression it cannot be accused of conniving with the aggressors.

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Moscow had indirectly affirmed such deliveries on the 16th in a TASS dispatch from Baghdad which cited ATH-THAWRAH as hailing the USSR's valuable assistance and its role in "the reinforcement" of the Arab armies' "defense potential."

Algerian President Boumediene's talks in Moscow dealt with Soviet "support" for Syria and Egypt, according to the Beirut AN-NAHAR as reported by the MIDDLE EAST NEWS AGENCY on the 17th. The paper said there were signs that the USSR intends "to expand the scope of aid to certain Arab states" to enable them to face any long war. Without mentioning any Soviet assistance, a Zakharov commentary broadcast in German on the 16th, analyzing Israel's "blitzkrieg strategy," asserted that Israel was now forced to wage a long war on several fronts which would exhaust its strength.

Prior to the Latyshev commentary, Moscow's references to the Arabs' Soviet weaponry were largely confined to a 13 October RED STAR article and to broadcast pickups of remarks by Mrs. Meir that Israeli losses were due to the increased strength of Arab forces trained by Soviet specialists and armed with Soviet weapons. In the RED STAR article, Pustov pointed out that the Egyptian and Syrian armies were well trained and "equipped with modern weapons." He cited Western correspondents as impressed by the Arab forces' military technique and effectiveness, and noted an "admission" by an Israeli air force general that the biggest problem for Israel's air force was the Syrian army's air defense batteries-- "the best and most modern missile installations."

AS-SADAT SPEECH Soviet media promptly reported the basic points of President as-Sadat's 16 October speech to the Egyptian People's Assembly, with Moscow radio's Arabic-language service filling in some details omitted by TASS. None of the reports mentioned as-Sadat's reservations on the policy of detente: Egypt wants this policy to succeed, he said, and is prepared to contribute, but this cannot happen "while aggression is being committed" against the Arab nation.

TASS noted as-Sadat's remark that the United States was siding with "the aggressor" but that Egypt would not be intimidated by new deliveries of weaponry to Israel. And TASS reported his statement that Egypt was ready to accept the proposal of a cease-fire with the provision of Israeli withdrawal, and that after Israeli troops were withdrawn Egypt would participate in

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a peace conference under UN auspices and exert efforts to insure participation of other Arab leaders and Palestinian representatives. TASS also noted his statement that Egypt was ready to reopen the Suez Canal immediately and had started preparations for this.* The account quoted his reference to the Arabs' "loyal and sincere friends," whom the Arab world will not forget--his only allusion to the Soviet Union.

An Arabic-language commentary on the 16th went beyond TASS in pointing out that as-Sadat addressed his words to President Nixon when he said Egypt was prepared to halt the war on condition of immediate Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Arab territories and recognition of Palestinian rights. And a brief Arabic-language news item on the speech noted as-Sadat's remarks on Egypt's Zafir missiles, citing him as stating that the Egyptian army possessed missiles capable of hitting targets deep inside Israel but that Egypt, aware of its responsibility for using such missiles, refrains from using them.

Israeli Prime Minister Meir's statement to the Knesset on the 16th was characterized by Soviet media as "aggressive" and "hostile." TASS cited news agency reports that Mrs. Meir said the war would end only when the Arabs were defeated, and the Arabic-language commentary noted that she made peace conditional on the return to the pre-6 October lines, reconfirming that Tel Aviv wants a "peace built on occupation and annexation of others' territories."

* Victor Louis, in an article in the 12 October London EVENING NEWS, claimed that the Arabs were looking to the USSR and East Europe for assistance in reopening the canal, and that volunteers to act as pilots and technicians "are already being recruited in Moscow."

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