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ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT

USSR ASSESSES EFFECTS OF "NEW ELEMENTS" IN MIDEAST SITUATION

While Soviet reportage on developments continues to focus on alleged Israeli cease-fire violations and obstruction of the 11 November Egyptian-Israeli agreement, a PRAVDA article on the 16th attempts to put the October war in some sort of perspective. PRAVDA's Demchenko and panelists in the weekly radio roundtable on the 18th enumerated the changes in the Middle East situation brought about by the war, with Demchenko pointing to a new "psychological atmosphere" engendered by military, economic and political circumstances. Demchenko and the roundtable observers summarized Moscow's view of the new elements: an end to the myths of Israeli invincibility and of Arab military incompetence; increased Arab unity which, the roundtable panelists noted, "ought to be strengthened even further"; Arab use of oil as a political weapon; increased international isolation of Israel as evidenced by African and West European attitudes; and the "important positive changes" in Soviet-American relations.

PRAVDA went on to support Security Council Resolution 338's call for implementation of Resolution 242 and for talks between the sides, and like other comment pressed for Israel's withdrawal to the 22 October positions. Like Kirilenko in his October Revolution anniversary speech on the 6th, Demchenko acknowledged the complexity of the situation but concluded that favorable conditions exist for resolving the crisis.

Kosygin, speaking at the luncheon for a visiting Guinean delegation on the 15th, did not depart from stereotyped themes in declaring that there could be no dependable peace in the Middle East without settlement of the "main issue"--Israeli withdrawal from all occupied Arab territories. He gave priority to "immediate implementation" of Security Council Resolution 338 of 22 October and reiterated that the USSR was prepared to continue giving the utmost assistance to this.

EFFECT OF DE'TENTE Moscow has given publicity to a spate of statements and supporting comment underlining the importance of detente with respect to stopping the Middle East fighting and working toward a stable settlement. Thus Brezhnev was cited by TASS and Moscow radio on the 17th as saying, "in an NBC television interview," that improvement of relations

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between the Soviet Union and the United States promoted the achievement of the agreement on a cease-fire. TASS on the 15th reported that President Nixon, in his speech to the National Association of Realtors that day, pointed to the need for cooperation of the great powers in achieving a peaceful Middle East settlement and declared that summit-level talks with the Soviet Union therefore "will be continued."

Both Moscow radio on the 14th and PRAVDA the next day noted that Deputy Secretary of State Rush had observed that the detente in Soviet-U.S. relations "withstood the test of the military conflict" in the Middle East and that Soviet-American cooperation was "an essential condition for further progress" in a peaceful settlement. (But Rush was cited in another context by IZVESTIYA on the 17th when it said that he had declared U.S. determination to make up Israel's loss of military equipment and used the "hackneyed argument" of a need to maintain the military balance.)

Similarly, Arbatov, director of the USA Institute of the USSR Academy of Sciences, remarked at a 15 November meeting on the 40th anniversary of Soviet-U.S. relations that events in the Middle East confirmed the significance of the favorable changes in Soviet-U.S. relations. There is no doubt, TASS quoted him as saying, it would have been much more difficult to stop the war in that area without these changes and without tireless work to improve relations. Both Demchenko in PRAVDA and the roundtable panelists offered the same opinion.

CEASE-FIRE AGREEMENT Soviet coverage of developments continues to focus on alleged Israeli-cess-fire violations--with TASS providing almost daily accounts of UN reports of Israeli-initiated incidents--and again stresses Israel's refusal to withdraw to the 22 October cease-fire positions. Moscow has followed the efforts to implement the six-point cease-fire stabilization arrangement, which Soviet media refer to as the "11 November protocol on observing a cease-fire, halting military operations, and returning forces to the 22 October positions."

As the sides attempted to work out the last four points of the 11 November agreement--on supplies to Suez, nonmilitary supplies to the Egyptian Third Army, replacement of Israeli checkpoints on the

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Cairo-Suez road by UN forces, and exchange of prisoners of war-- Moscow ignored the crucial POW issue pressed by the Israelis and concentrated on the other three points, critical for Egypt. It accused Israel of failing to implement the "entirely clear clauses" of the 11 November agreement on establishment of UN checkpoints, passage of nonmilitary supplies and provision of food, water and medicines to Suez.

When implementation of the last four points was worked out in an agreement reached on 14 November, TASS on the 15th, like the MIDDLE EAST NEWS AGENCY the day before, broke the news by way of reporting a UN spokesman's press conference in Cairo. TASS briefly noted that according to the agreement, Israel would remove checkpoints on the Suez-Cairo road and this would be followed by an exchange of prisoners of war. Since then, Moscow has duly noted the POW exchange while pressing for implementation of the second point of the 11 November agreement on "discussions to settle the question" of the return to the 22 October positions. Demchenko observed in his 16 November PRAVDA article that the Egyptian Government was "quite reasonably insisting" on this point, which was laid down in the 11 November protocol. Implementation of this demand would show, Demchenko said, whether Israel was really ready to abandon its confrontation with the Arab countries.

Mrs. Meir has been derided for declaring that the 22 October lines did not exist, IZVESTIYA on the 16th dismissing Israel's "absurd assertions" that these positions "are something 'far-fetched, unreal and illusory.'" Moscow apparently has not explicitly acknowledged Mrs. Meir's proposal that Egyptian forces withdraw from the east side of the canal and Israelis from the west with a UN peace-keeping force on each bank. According to American press reports, the Israeli prime minister had advanced such a suggestion during her early-November talks in Washington, and she made this proposal in her 13 November Knesset speech and a 16 November television interview. TASS on the 3d, in reporting Mrs. Meir's Washington visit, had said that she proposed "a so-called reciprocal evening out of the cease-fire line" and had declared that Israeli forces would not leave the west bank of the canal. A TASS dispatch from Cairo on the 20th rejected Tel Aviv's "cynical" proposal "to 'straighten out positions' on both sides of the Suez Canal, which as a matter of fact is tantamount to a proposal to exchange Egyptian territory for another Egyptian territory." TASS noted that Egypt categorically rejected this idea and again demanded an Israeli pullback to the 22 October lines.

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Soviet reportage has not pressed for speedy convening of a peace conference. Demchenko did recall that Resolution 338 of 22 October stipulated the holding of talks under appropriate auspices. TASS on the 19th cited an Egyptian Government spokesman as saying that Egypt wanted the immediate convocation of a peace conference, and it noted that Israel was trying to delay the conference "on a pretext" that parliamentary elections are to take place in Israel in December.

OTHER DEVELOPMENTS Moscow has noted the U.S. announcement of the ending of the air bridge of military supplies to Israel on the 14th and continuation of deliveries by sea, and has occasionally picked up reports of continuing U.S. military re-equipment of Israel. Soviet media have publicized Arab praise of Soviet weaponry used in the October fighting, along with continued replays of Arab expressions of gratitude for Soviet aid and support. An Arabic-language commentary on the 19th, for example, reported that the communist parties of Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Iraq, meeting in Beirut, had expressed appreciation for the "comprehensive assistance" the Soviet Union "is presently giving" the Arab countries.

The Demchenko PRAVDA article on the 16th is notable for the most forthright admission of Arab reverses in the fighting; while it approvingly remarked on the Arabs' skillful use of modern combat equipment and their determination in fighting, it conceded that the Syrian troops "had to retreat, digging in on the second line of defense." On the Egyptian front, Demchenko said that as a result of Israeli violation of the Security Council cease-fire resolutions, the Israelis succeeded in cutting the Cairo-Suez road and "cutting off communications" to the Egyptian Third Army holding positions on both banks of the southern sector of the Suez canal.

Moscow welcomed the special session of the ministerial council of the Organization of African Unity held at Algerian request in Addis Ababa 19-21 November to discuss the Middle East situation. There has been little reaction as yet to the planned Arab summit in Algiers on 26 November; PRAVDA reported from Beirut on the 15th on diplomatic activity in Arab capitals in preparation for the summit "to draw up a common strategy" on questions for further settlement of the crisis. TASS has reported without comment Libyan leader al-Qadhdhafi's arrival in Yugoslavia on the 18th for talks with Tito, but has not mentioned Libyan--and Iraqi--refusal to attend the summit meeting. A TASS commentary on 23 October had lambasted al-Qadhdhafi for sitting out the war in safety and had defended the cease-fire in rebuttal of al-Qadhdhafi's vehement criticism of it in a LE MONDE interview.

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