

Izvestia:

'The Middle East—Behind The Scenes Of The Crisis'

The following article appeared in the Soviet government daily Izvestia, Sunday, July 3, 1977. The author is V. Kudryavtsev, political observer for the newspaper.

If one were to assess the situation in the Middle East on the basis of the wire service and press agency reports arriving from the area, one would have to conclude that nothing out of the ordinary was happening there. The impression is given that a pause has set in in the diplomatic activity of the U.S. and the other Western powers with an interest in that region.

But in a careful analysis of the Middle East situation, this is only a surface impression. In fact, behind the scenes in the Middle East political theater, a plot is in intense preparation against those Arab countries, which directly suffered from Israeli aggression and which demand a just settlement of the Middle East crisis.

Answering journalists' questions at a June 28 press conference, a U.S. State Department spokesman asserted that the basic goal of the U.S. is supposedly to aid the sides in reaching a settlement of the Middle East problem which would correspond to the interests of all sides concerned. But this sort of assertion does not accord with reality, since already in March of this year the President of the U.S. announced that the foremost task of American policy in the Middle East is to defend the interests of Israel. Such statements have been made repeatedly and have more or less served as an answer to rumors — fanned by the American press itself — that there are some sort of sharp disagreements between the U.S. and Israel. The constancy of this U.S. position is also indicated by the continuing supplying of Israel with modern American weaponry of an offensive character. Not long ago, the U.S. decided to deliver Israel yet another \$115 million worth of arms.

The one-sidedness of American policy in the Middle East is also indicated by the fact that the U.S. and Israel interpret Security Council Resolution No. 242 of November 22, 1967 to their own advantage and simultaneously ignore subsequent resolutions of the U.S. and the Security Council. Why is this happening? Why is there an emphasis only on one resolution — and one which, it might be added, Israel rejected until recently? Because, it is said in Washington, this resolution, which demands the withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from the occupied territories, does not specify that this applies to all the territories. Thus a loop-hole has been discovered for revising Arab-Israeli borders to the aggressor's advantage. But in the U.S. and in Israel alike, it is not recalled that Resolution 242 stresses "the impermissibility of acquiring territory by means of war." The Resolution also talks about the necessity of a just settlement of the problem of refugees. The U.S. and Israel try to use this

formulation in order to avoid one of the most important problems of the Middle East — satisfying the legal rights of the Arab people of Palestine, up to and including the right to create its own sovereign state. And, in advancing recently as a "magnanimous" concession to the Arabs, a proposal to grant the Palestinian refugees some sort of "national place" or "homeland" (by no means on Palestinian land), the President of the U.S. ignores such UN resolutions as, for example, No. 3376 (XXX session) from November 10, 1975. This resolution says in black and white: "A just and firm peace in the Middle East cannot be established without reaching, in particular, a just settlement of the problem of Palestine on the basis of realizing the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to return and the right to national independence and sovereignty in Palestine, in accord with the U.N. Charter." Clear enough, it would seem! Why then indeed does the U.S. government not refer to that resolution (and it's not the only one), but prefer to orient itself by ten-year-old decisions, which were not implemented promptly exclusively at the fault of Israel and the U.S.

Not accidentally, the Damascus paper *As-Saura* concludes that "for the U.S., the problem is that they are constantly concerned for their privileges in the Arab world, but not about insuring the rights of various nations." And if some leaders of Arab countries at some point believed what the State Department spokesman said, today irrefutable facts influence them towards different conclusions. Now, writes the Beirut paper *As-Shaab*, "the Arab leaders have realized that they erred in evaluating the role of the U.S. and its ability to exert pressure on Israel in order to reach peace in the Middle East." If some people in the Arab countries are still deceived in this regard, this is due to a cleverer implementation of neocolonialist policy by the U.S. ruling circles.

The U.S., supporting Israel and depending on it as its bridgehead in the Middle East, at the same time does not want to quarrel irreparably with the Arab countries. They need the Arab East as a source of oil and as a strategic bridgehead. But in the present circumstances it is practically impossible both to feed the wolves and keep the sheep whole. Internal Arab reaction can still try to lead the Arab countries on the road to capitulation, hoping thereby to extract material gains from a deal with the U.S. monopolists, but it is incapable of turning back the history of the Arab countries and liquidating everything that the Arab peoples gained as a result of the successes of the national-liberation movement. At the same time, the U.S. cannot guarantee itself its Israeli bridgehead in the future, without satisfying, to some degree, the aggressive appetites of the militant Zionists at the expense of these very same Arab countries. At the present time, the Carter Administration is therefore pre-

paring a plot with Israel, which could give the U.S. neocolonialist hegemony in the Middle East.

Adapting themselves to the present conditions in the Middle East, the U.S. ruling circles, albeit without consistency, are forced to recognize the inevitability of a withdrawal of Israel occupation troops "approximately" to the 1967 borders. In this regard, they want to catch the Arab side on the hook of demagogy. At the very same time, they consent to Israel's revising the previous borders to its advantage and creating double borders: state borders and "security borders," which will run across Arab territory and thus limit their sovereignty. What's more, the period of withdrawal is more than drawn out. In the Sinai, for instance, it is a full three years.

U.S. Vice-President Mondale, in his June 17 speech in San Francisco, stated generally that "Israel ought not to withdraw from occupied Arab lands, until it obtains genuine peace from the Arabs," i.e., more simply, until the Arab countries accept the Israeli-American conditions for a settlement. And after this, the State Department spokesman talks about taking into account the interests of all sides concerned!

Ardent defenders of the Zionists, such as Senators Jacob Javits and Charles Percy (both Republicans), have again become involved in the matter. After the "hawks" headed by Begin came to power in Israel, Javits advised Begin not to withdraw from the occupied territories at all, so as not to lose negotiating aces. Begin immediately grabbed this advice from the U.S., and declared that there can't be any talks about evacuating the Israeli troops, especially from the West Bank and Gaza, since these are supposedly "in fact Israeli lands." With this, he not only tries to fend off any sort of measures

towards a settlement, but also backs up the U. S. government thesis about giving the Palestinian refugees a "national place" preferably somewhere else, just not on the West Bank and Gaza. Israel and its protectors abroad thus want to completely avoid the question of creating an independent sovereign state of Palestinian Arabs on Palestinian land.

And so, in all the talk about trying to solve the Middle East crisis "in the interests of all sides concerned," Zionist and imperialist interests stick out like rabbit ears.

The only path to a just settlement of the Middle East crisis in the interests of all countries and peoples of the Middle East is the proposals of the Soviet Union, supported by all progressive forces of the world. A firm peace in the Middle East can be established only on the basis of the withdrawal of Israeli troops from all Arab territories occupied in 1967, respect for the independent and secure existence of all states and peoples of this region, restoration of the legal rights of the Arab people of Palestine, including its right to create a sovereign national state. To realize these tenets, it is necessary to convene the Geneva peace conference on the Middle East as soon as possible, with the indispensable participation, on equal footing, of representatives of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO).

There is no other path to peace in the Middle East. Otherwise, the Middle East can again find itself at the threshold of a new armed conflict, which will pull not only the Middle East states into its orbit. Liquidation of the Middle East spot of military tension is a foremost task of all who seek peace and security.

EXCLUSIVE

Israel's 'Europe Option'

Khaled Hassan, a leading member of the Palestine Liberation Organization, broke with precedent this week in offering Israel the hand of the Arab countries in a joint effort to develop and build up the industry and agriculture of the Middle East. In a Brussels press conference, Hassan said that if Israel recognizes the PLO's right to establish an independent state on the West Bank and Gaza, then Israel and Arabs can work together. Once Israel is ready to negotiate, said Hassan, "it will be forced to turn itself toward the countries of the region to survive."

The initiative by the PLO, while only an indication, might signal that a much broader and significant process is underway, in various European capitals, to reconcile the Arabs and Israel.

A curious exchange this week between Prime Minister Menachem Begin of Israel and Egypt's President Anwar Sadat is an example of a possible new spirit of cooperation, in which the supposedly hard-line Likud bloc in Israel, contrary to expectations, may now be considering dumping the Carter Administration's bungled Middle East diplomacy and moving directly toward a peace agreement with the Arabs.

Begin, speaking in Israel early this week, announced in an almost offhand manner that Israel proposes October 10 for the reconvening of the Geneva peace conference. In the West African country of Gabon, where Sadat was present to attend a meeting of the Organization of African Unity, the Egyptian president told a reporter that he welcomed the call from Begin, and refused to dismiss the statement from Begin as a rhetorical game. Then, in Israel, Begin responded to the Sadat statement with warm words.

"For the first time between the Arabs and Israel, an exchange and not a polemic has taken place," said the influential Italian newspaper *Il Giorno*, which noted that Arab-Israeli relations are "going well," and added that "between now and October the question of the PLO has time to be addressed." This point was underlined in Italy's Parliament by Foreign Minister Arnaldo Forlani, who, in commenting on the Begin-Sadat exchange, warned that it would be wrong to consider Begin "a simple hardliner, as his openness to Sadat shows."

"This can open the road to peace," said Forlani. "Begin, in contrast to the previous Labour government (in Israel), is flexible."