

Menachem Begin In Rumania On Peace Bid

Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin arrived in Rumania last week for five days of crucial talks with Rumanian leaders on the situation in the Middle East. Rumania, the only Communist country which maintains diplomatic relations with Israel, has reportedly offered its good offices to mediate contacts between the Arabs, including the Palestine Liberation Organization, and Israel.

The trip to Rumania, which is of momentous significance, has virtually gone unreported in the U.S. press.

Rumania will be seeking to solve the central impasse during the Begin visit: how to reconcile the PLO and Israel by obtaining "simultaneous" recognition of each other in the framework of a Geneva peace conference. In addition, there are unofficial reports that Begin will hold secret contacts with Soviet and-or Arab officials during his stay in Rumania. An Egyptian delegation is scheduled to be in Rumania during the Begin visit.

The Rumanian initiative was announced only one day after the disastrous tour of the Middle East by Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, and was immediately taken up by Prime Minister Begin. It comes at a time when the Soviet Union, key West European forces, and a small number of U.S. Whigs like Gen. George Keegan are coordinating a major diplomatic offensive to extricate the Middle East from the brink of the crisis into which it has been plunged by the Carter Administration.

The USSR and West Europe, especially Italy and France, are determined to find a formula to establish a peace settlement in the Middle East as the cornerstone of a broader effort for an overall Mediterranean political and economic accord. This would pave the way for the creation of a triangular new monetary system involving huge quantities of Arab capital, West European industry, and the resources of the Comecon sector.

On the eve of Begin's trip to Rumania, the three Arab states of Egypt, Syria, and Jordan reportedly offered to sign peace treaties with Israel in the event an overall accord is reached including effective guarantees of the rights of the Palestinians, according to the *New York Times*. The Arab offer was a crucial precondition for the possible success of the talks in Rumania, since Begin is committed to securing full Arab recognition of Israel and its right to exist in any negotiations that take place. Since 1948, the Arabs have never publicly stated their willingness to conclude a peace treaty with Israel.

But the central issue remains the Palestine question. The PLO has indicated numerous times that it is willing to conclude a detente with Israel, including Israel's right to exist, provided that it is allowed to establish a

Palestinian state on the occupied West Bank and Gaza. A key goal of the recent Vance trip to the area was to prevent the PLO from making a decision to recognize an "amended" version of Resolution 242, one that would include a reference to the "national rights of the Palestinians." On this question, Vance has committed the U.S. to support the Israeli position and refuse to accept any changes in the UN resolution, which now refers to the Palestinians as "refugees." As Begin left for Rumania, the PLO convened a meeting of its Central Council to discuss the overall Middle East situation.

PLO Leader: Use Oil Only As A Positive Weapon

The following are excerpts from a summarized interview given by Palestine Liberation Organization External Affairs Minister Farouk Kaddoumi to the Lebanese weekly Monday Morning. The account was distributed by the PLO news agency Wafa Aug. 19:

Farouk Kaddoumi, head of the Palestine Liberation Organization's political department, told *Monday Morning* last week that a new resolution will be proposed to the Security Council in its next session, scheduled to be held this fall.

The resolution, he said, will be tabled by "friendly" countries and will recognize the national rights of Palestinians, "including their right to return to the land they left in 1948."

If that resolution passes through the Security Council without colliding with the American veto, "we can describe American action as positive," Kaddoumi said.

Until then, however, the Palestinians will continue to regard American actions and statements as "deceptive tactics."

U.S. Secretary of State Cyrus Vance's 10-day Middle Eastern tour, which ended on Thursday, August 18, was aimed not at achieving a just peace, Kaddoumi said, but at:

1. Pushing the United Nations out of the Middle East peace initiative.
2. Pushing the Soviet Union out of the Middle East region.
3. Pushing the Palestinians out of the Middle East settlement.
4. Sowing the seeds of inter-Arab and Arab-

Palestinian discord, in an attempt to give Israel more time to strengthen itself and to allow the Americans to continue to exploit the Arabs' "tremendous resources."

One of Vance's major aims, Kaddoumi said, was to return to former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's "step-by-step" approach to the Middle East crisis — an approach which the Palestinians will fight "with everything at their disposal."

In view of these "American-Israeli maneuvers," Kaddoumi added, the Geneva conference will not be held this year. Instead, the Arabs must prepare themselves for an Israeli preemptive strike aimed at the occupation of more Arab land — South Lebanon included....

Kaddoumi called for an Arab summit conference to develop a unified Arab stand, urging concerted use of all the Arabs' potentials in a drive to regain Arab rights and establish a Palestinian state.

He added, however, that the Arabs' oil weapon should be used only for "positive pressure."

He ruled out the possibility of a future Arab oil boycott for reasons which he said he cannot discuss "due to Arab security considerations."

"All I can say is that an Arab oil boycott would be comparable to the use of the atomic bomb by the other side," Kaddoumi said....

Q: If that resolution is passed, will the PLO recognize Israel?

"We will not recognize Israel. Recognition is a sovereign act. The United States, for instance, has not recognized China, whose population is larger than the United States'.

"What we say is this:

"We are willing to establish our independent state on any part of our land which is liberated through any means. We will do so if that state is free of all external interference and is ruled solely by the Palestinians under the leadership of the PLO.

"We always consult our Arab brothers in Egypt, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Iraq, Morocco, Tunis. We always coordinate our actions with them and try to maintain a unified Arab position. We want the Arabs to use all the weapons at their disposal. If the Arabs' oil resources can be used as a positive weapon, instead of a threatening one, to bring pressure to bear on the United States and Europe, we are all for its use in that manner. It is my view, in fact, that Arab oil should be used only as a tool of positive pressure. Positive pressure would be better than a boycott or other measures, because there are a number of issues linked with the question of oil. I cannot reveal these issues, due to Arab security considerations. All I can say is that an Arab oil boycott would be comparable to the use of the atomic bomb by the other side...."

General Keegan: U.S. Should Support A Palestinian State

West Germany's Die Welt published an interview with former Chief of U.S. Air Force Intelligence, General George Keegan on Aug. 22, which is excerpted below:

The USA must take care of a future Palestinian state with financial aid and guarantees for its security — otherwise it will develop into a new crisis point. U.S. General George Keegan, who was head of U.S. Air Force Intelligence for years, came to this conclusion after a trip to the Mideast. In an exclusive interview with Die Welt, Keegan warned about Arab plans to cut Israeli territory in two in the event of a conflict with a spearhead of 14 to 15 tank divisions.

Welt: General Keegan, we are in a turbulent phase of American peace efforts in the Mideast. Secretary of State Vance's trip can be understood as being a strong U.S. inclination toward the Arab position, and as putting corresponding pressure on Israel. Carter is in a hurry and says that the reason for this is that for the first time in the history of the Mideast conflict both sides, including the Arabs, are ready for a negotiated solution. What is your analysis?

Keegan: It is difficult to contradict this viewpoint, especially when one looks at what has been said. There is ample evidence that the Arab leaders, as they have always said, are holding firm to their old goal of the destruction of Israel and the Jews. But their strategy has changed. They have recognized after four wars, that a direct policy of war does not pay....

Welt: As a result of your trip, do you see other possibilities that would go beyond those that we have just discussed?

Keegan: I believe that the Israelis — their leadership really desperately wants peace — would close ranks behind an agreement if it would absolutely rule out having the West Bank ever return to being a glacis (a slope that runs downward from a fortification — ed.) for Soviet tanks in Arab hands. I believe that in this context there are a whole series of alternatives that we have not even considered yet.

For example: If our government were to maintain — which I consider to be a horrible irrationality — that the creation of a Palestinian state is indispensable because it believes that it could calm the Arabs by doing so, then it should make the effort with its money and its resources to ensure that the creation of such a state does not create a new crisis point. This would occur if we were to sub-