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Grechko's Role in Middle East Crisis

For the past several months there have been a number of reports that Defense Minister Grechko is one of the major domestic critics of party boss Brezhnev's detente policies. This has been one of the favorite themes of Western correspondents; Victor Zorza's column in this morning's *Washington Post* (The Middle East War: A Boost for Soviet Hawks) is a case in point. Zorza seizes on an isolated sentence in a Grechko article in *Pravda* on 8 October to build a case that Kremlin hard liners have been strengthened by the outbreak of hostilities in the Middle East. 3

The argument that renewed fighting in the Middle East, or anywhere else for that matter, strengthens the hands of Soviet militants stands on its own merits, of course. But whether Grechko is in the forefront of those arguing for a more aggressive policy by the USSR is far from certain. The theme expressed in Grechko's *Pravda* article--that Moscow's enemies have not yet renounced "military means" as a way of achieving their objectives--has been a staple element in the Defense Minister's pronouncements for some time. It does not contravene Brezhnev's detente initiatives but merely states the other half of the equation: that Moscow must not relax its guard during this time of transition. 3

In an important address in Warsaw on 11 October, Grechko spoke with considerable restraint, combining political support for the Arabs' cause with an arms-length attitude toward involvement of the USSR or other Warsaw Pact members in the fighting (*Soviet Developments*, 12 October). Coming as it did after Moscow's decision to initiate the massive aerial resupply effort on 10 October, the Warsaw speech afforded Grechko an opportune moment--which he passed up--to stake out a more independent position on the Middle East, if in fact he was 3

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one of the Politburo leaders instrumental in pushing for greater direct support for the Arabs

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[Redacted]

On the one occasion thus far when Grechko has become involved in matters directly affecting US-USSR relations, he has clearly attempted to work within established channels.

[Redacted]

In sum, the picture that emerges is of Grechko, the technician, working carefully within boundaries of his functional specialty and in coordination with agreed policy guidelines.

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