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Soviet Reaction to the Egyptian-Israeli
Cease-fire Agreement

The handling by the Soviet press of the Egyptian-Israeli cease-fire implementation agreement worked out by Secretary Kissinger has shown some confusion and a general coolness toward the accord, probably because of its failure to ensure Israeli withdrawal to the positions of 22 October.

Moscow's initial report of the agreement did not appear until 10 November, almost 24 hours after it was publicly announced. TASS then carried a report under three date lines. The first, attributed to the Egyptian press service, said the agreement provided for a return to the 22 October positions. The second, datelined Washington, was a relatively accurate account of the agreement. The third, datelined Paris, pointedly noted "some rather substantial discrepancies" between various accounts and specifically singled out the issue of the 22 October pullback.

Three hours later, TASS issued a service message that killed its earlier report and substituted a factual rundown on the agreement, reporting that Israel and Egypt are to discuss the question of the return to 22 October positions. Despite this correction, the Soviet media continued to stress the idea of conflicting accounts of the agreement. On the evening of 10 November, *Pravda* commentator Yuriy Zhukov, in a radio broadcast, told his listeners to treat reports of the accord cautiously "while waiting for the real state of events to clarify." Moscow's account of the signing of the agreement, issued on 11 November, ambiguously referred to it as a protocol "on the observance of the cease-fire, the ending of military operations, and the return of troops to positions they occupied on October 22."

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It is difficult to understand why Moscow's confusion on the terms of the agreement should have lasted so long, [redacted]

[redacted] It is possible that, after publicly stressing the urgent need for an Israeli pullback to the lines of 22 October, Moscow was distressed to see Cairo compromising on the issue.

In any event, it seems clear Moscow is not overjoyed with the sudden burst of US activity in the Middle East, a burst that has overshadowed the Soviet role in the area. The Soviets gave perfunctory press coverage to Secretary Kissinger's visit to the region and only briefly noted the resumption of US-Egyptian diplomatic relations. Before hostilities broke out, Moscow was suspicious of Sadat's attempts to improve relations with the West and with conservative Arab states, and it probably sees the new developments as a continuation of that unwelcome trend. The Soviets must be irritated that their aid to Egypt during the war has only reinforced the Egyptian desire to avoid dependence on Moscow.

Despite the apparent Soviet discomfiture, there has been no indication that Moscow wants to see a resumption of hostilities, and it probably has little choice but to accept the enhanced US role. [redacted]

[redacted] the USSR was interested in seeing US efforts to stabilize the cease-fire succeed. [redacted] it was the responsibility of the US to intervene effectively with Israel to bring about the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Egypt. [redacted]

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