

ARAB SUMMIT: The leaders of 15 Arab states today begin two days of meetings designed to forge a common policy for dealing with Israel and the US. Although these consultations may lead to superficial "unity," they will probably be unsatisfying for all concerned. Some Arab leaders are already resentful of President Sadat's efforts to assure that the conclave will be a pro forma gathering to ratify his decision to negotiate with Israel. Furthermore, the absence of key leaders, including Presidents Qadhafi and Bakr and King Husayn, will deprive Sadat of the show of Arab solidarity he had hoped for.

The summit conferees apparently will do little more than rubber-stamp decisions made during the weekend meeting of Arab foreign ministers, whose agenda was reportedly prepared and controlled by the Egyptian delegation. The foreign ministers discussed the extension of the oil embargo to other nations considered supporters of Israel, the possible use of monetary resources as a political weapon, and the Palestinian question.

Egypt is on record as favoring an extension of the oil boycott to South Africa, Rhodesia, and Portugal. It is doubtful, however, that the summit will reach any decision on monetary questions. Moreover, there are indications that the Egyptians want discussion of the Palestinian issue to remain as cursory and uncontroversial as possible. In addition to discussing these issues, the heads of state will probably endorse Arab participation in the forthcoming peace conference.

President Sadat's efforts to assure that the moderate Arab states control the summit have preempted the radicals. Iraq and Libya, expecting that the gathering will approve Sadat's decision to negotiate with Israel, are boycotting the conclave. Algeria, despite its irritation at Sadat's maneuvers, will reportedly not raise controversial, potentially divisive issues.

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Sadat will not get from the summit all he wants, however. He will be unable to draw out the support of his Arab colleagues with reports of tangible progress in the disengagement negotiations with Israel, and he will fail to unify the Arabs, in part because of continuing disagreements between Jordan and the fedayeen.

King Husayn has refused to attend, primarily because of the Jordan-fedayeen issue. He apparently fears that the Egyptians and other Arab states will bless fedayeen participation in a peace conference and will support the fedayeen's demand for creation of a separate Palestinian state on Jordan's West Bank. He has instead sent a lower level delegation to the summit so that he can avoid a personal showdown with fedayeen leader Yasir Arafat and his supporters on this issue.

Arafat is attending the summit to secure his own position and assure that no other Palestinians, particularly non-fedayeen Palestinians under Jordanian control, are designated to represent Palestinian interests in any future peace negotiations. The summit may well name Arafat's Palestine Liberation Organization to participate in negotiations, but the fedayeen's own inability to reach agreement on their territorial demands and on the desirability of establishing a government-in-exile will probably result in a summit decision to allow the fedayeen to work out for themselves how to establish an independent Palestinian entity.

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ARAB STATES - ISRAEL: Egypt called off yesterday's scheduled meeting with Israeli representatives on the question of disengagement of forces, apparently in protest against what the Egyptians view as Israeli stalling. Another meeting is set for today, however. Tensions remain high on both military fronts, and the Israelis reported a brief exchange of artillery fire on the Egyptian front yesterday.

At meetings on 22, 23, and 24 November, Israeli and Egyptian negotiators discussed a variety of withdrawal proposals without reaching agreement on either the extent of an Israeli pullback or the degree of control Egypt would be permitted to retain on the Suez Canal's east and west banks. The Israeli newspaper Maariv has reported that Israel will evacuate its west bank salient and withdraw to a point six miles east of the canal. This would be done on condition, however, that Egypt remove its military units from the east bank, deploy only "policing" forces, and agree not to introduce heavy weapons into the evacuated area of the west bank. The Israeli requirement that Egypt not occupy either bank of the canal in force has apparently become the major sticking point in the negotiations. The Egyptians have become increasingly frustrated as they have become convinced that this is an Israeli effort to stall.

The Egyptians apparently feel that it is incumbent on Israel to withdraw to the original truce lines without discussion and that, failing this, continued haggling over further withdrawal is merely an effort to delay the necessity for any Israeli movement. Sadat is probably also somewhat disgruntled that he has been able to achieve nothing in the way of tangible progress that he could present to the Arab summit as justification for his decision to negotiate. There has been no indication, however, that the Egyptians intend to terminate the talks.

Jerusalem radio announced yesterday that the Israeli cabinet had decided to accept "in principle" the convening of a peace conference next month in

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Geneva to be attended, according to the radio report, by Israel, the three Arab confrontation states, the US, the USSR, and the UN Secretary General. Israel is withholding official acceptance, however, until it receives a formal invitation to the conference. The Israeli press has indicated that the opening will be only pro forma as far as Israel is concerned; substantive negotiations must await the conclusion of Knesset elections on 31 December. The Israeli report of the conference participants omits any mention either of Palestinians or of other UN Security Council members, on whose participation the Arabs may insist.

On the military front, Israeli spokesmen announced yesterday that an artillery exchange had taken place between Egyptian and Israeli forces at the northwestern edge of the Israeli salient on the west bank. The exchange, the Israelis contend, was initiated by the Egyptians and continued for 30 minutes. The Israeli press has portrayed this as an escalation in military incidents, which have "for some time" consisted only of small-arms fire. No further incidents were reported after mid-afternoon yesterday.

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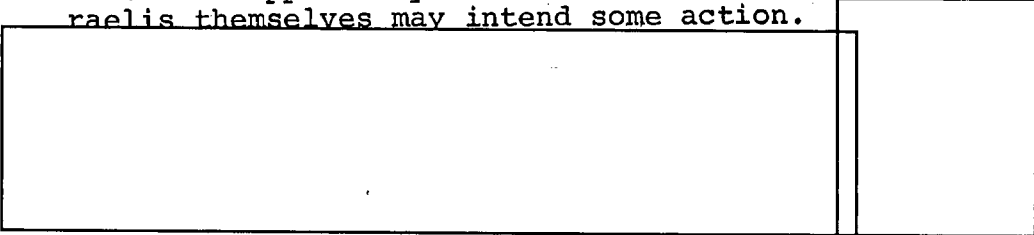
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While the Israelis talk publicly about increased Arab preparations for renewed fighting, the Arabs are apparently somewhat concerned that the Israelis themselves may intend some action.

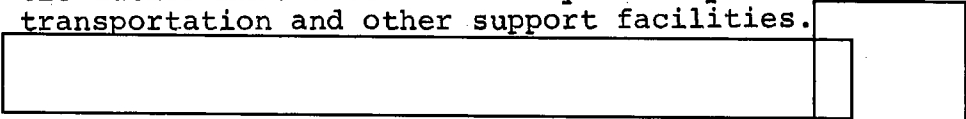


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Prospects for effective action by the UN Emergency Force (UNEF) have increased in the past few days. The General Assembly's Finance Committee has approved plans for a special assessment of UN members to fund UNEF, which has been hard pressed financially since its establishment. The approved assessment formula will place the major burden of UNEF costs on the developed states, particularly the US, the USSR, France, and the UK. China has announced that it will not contribute.

In other UN action, the Security Council has added Kenya and Senegal to the 11 states already providing troops to UNEF, a move that should bring the force close to its 7,000-man goal. Deployment of the troops will be facilitated by an agreement reached this weekend between Canada and Poland on the organization of their joint logistics unit. Protracted Canadian-Polish negotiations over logistic duties have until now delayed badly needed transportation and other support facilities.



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USSR-FEDAYEEN: Moscow's failure to acknowledge the visit by Yasir Arafat's delegation suggests it is maintaining a cautious attitude toward the fedayeen until Palestinian issues are resolved within the Arab camp.

Arafat reportedly was accompanied on the six-day visit, which ended Saturday, by all of the other principal fedayeen leaders except George Habbash of the radical Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. The delegation declined to discuss the substance of its talks or the level at which it was received, although Arafat claimed the dialogue "exceeded our expectations." Soviet media have ignored the visit, and a Middle East specialist in the Foreign Ministry told the US Embassy on 23 November that Arafat had not been in Moscow.

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The Soviets probably used Arafat's visit to take soundings on these issues and on the question of Palestinian participation in a Middle East peace conference. In talks with the US, the Soviets have stressed the complexity of the Palestinian problem and have said the USSR would not be in a position to support or propose solutions until after the Arab summit meeting in Algiers.

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