

Top Secret 217

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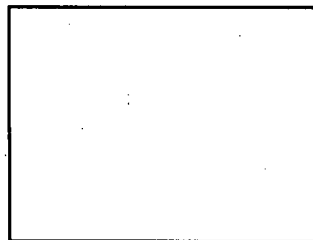
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Saturday April 23, 1977

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State Dept. review completed



NATIONAL SECURITY INFORMATION

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Top Secret

(Security Classification)

USSR: Lenin Day Speech

[] *The Soviet leadership's annual Lenin Day speech, delivered Friday by M. V. Zimyanin, the party secretary for culture and propaganda, featured a tough, uncompromising exposition of Moscow's views on relations with China and the US but contained few surprises.*

[] In remarks that provoked a Chinese walkout, Zimyanin accused Peking of making common cause with reactionary forces. His criticism of China, the strongest by a member of the leadership since Mao died, evidently reflects Soviet frustration that there have been no changes in post-Mao policy toward the USSR.

[] Turning to the US, Zimyanin assailed unnamed opponents of detente for impeding "urgent" arms control measures while fanning the arms race. He assured his listeners that the USSR remains steadfast in its search for mutually acceptable solutions to arms control problems, but reiterated the Soviet line that they must be based on existing agreements and understandings, a reference to the Vladivostok accords. He characterized recent US proposals as unsound and one-sided.

[] Zimyanin heaped scorn on the Western campaign for human rights but did not mention the US by name in this context.

[] Zimyanin's shrill tone was in marked contrast to the reasoned, moderate character of the Lenin Day address last year by Politburo member Andropov. Zimyanin's speech was, however, couched in the strong ideological terms customary to the occasion.

[] All members of the leadership turned out for the ceremony except party secretary Kirilenko and First Deputy Premier Mazurov, Politburo members who presumably remain ill.

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USSR-SYRIA: Asad's visit

[] *The communique issued last night at the conclusion of Syrian President Asad's five-day visit to the USSR indicates that the two sides resolved at least some of their differences.*

[] The text states that the two sides outlined "steps for further raising the level" of Syrian defenses, and calls for "further deepening" bilateral economic and technical cooperation, suggesting that the Soviets have agreed to supply the Syrians with additional arms and economic assistance. In addition to the top leaders, Soviet participants in the talks included Marshal Ogarkov, chief of the General Staff, and foreign aid specialist Skachkov.

[] Asad clearly wanted to ensure that his severely strained relations with Moscow were patched up so that he would be in the strongest possible position for his talks with President Carter in Geneva on May 9. Asad probably is satisfied with the outcome. Syrian media have given the trip heavy coverage, stressing the "strategic" nature of Syrian-Soviet relations and, by extension, Soviet recognition of the "key" role Syria plays in Middle East peace negotiations.

[] The Syrians replayed portions of General Secretary Brezhnev's banquet remarks, including his statement that Israel, as well as the Palestinian people, has a right to an "independent state and secure existence."

[] The USSR and Syria stated that the Palestine Liberation Organization must be at any reconvened peace conference in Geneva "from the very beginning and on an equal footing." This language contrasts with what had appeared to be a recent Soviet shift away from insistence on Palestinian representation at the outset.

[] The communique refers to "a constructive exchange of opinion" on "highly important" problems, one of which presumably was the disagreement over Syrian intervention in Lebanon.

[] The two sides condemned Israel's "unceasing provocations" in southern Lebanon and "noted with satisfaction" a process of "normalization" in the Lebanese situation. This formulation reflects obvious Soviet approval of Syria's support for the Palestinian side in its clashes with Christian forces in southern Lebanon in recent weeks and does not suggest a shift to over-all Soviet backing for Syria's intervention.

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