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SOVIET POLICY AND THE 1967 ARAB-ISRAELI WAR

MEMORANDUM TO RECIPIENTS

The course of events before, during, and after the Arab-Israeli War of 1967 provides a case study of the dilemmas and dangers which arise when the Soviet Union seeks to implement its basic Middle East strategy of support for the Arab nationalist movements. Moscow's policy record in the Middle East is mixed, and events unforeseen by the Soviet leaders have forced significant and awkward shifts in Soviet policy emphasis.

In the period before the six-day war in 1967, Soviet policy shifted from support of moderate Arab policy to espousal of the radical Arab line, thereby encouraging a sequence of events that Moscow could not control. After the defeat of the Arabs, Soviet policy shifted back again to support of moderate Arab policies. But current trends in Soviet policy are again toward support of Arab radicalism, despite the seeming likelihood of a new war in the Middle East and the possibility of another Arab defeat. These policy shifts reveal how resistant Moscow is to any fundamental departure from its instinctive tendency to support militant Arab nationalism in hopes of Soviet political gains and/or Western political losses in the Middle East.

This research study has been reviewed in the appropriate Soviet and Middle Eastern branches of the Office of Current Intelligence, and the Office of National Estimates. Although not in agreement with every statement or judgment, they are in general accord with the major thrust and conclusions of the study.

The research analyst in charge was Mrs. Carolyn Ekedahl, with assistance from Mr. Carl Linden.

John Kerry King
Chief, DD/I Special Research Staff

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Abstract of Summary and Conclusions

The Arab-Israeli war of June 1967 was both a humiliating defeat for the Arabs and a major setback for Soviet prestige. The Soviets had committed substantial quantities of aid and political support to the Arabs, and the activist policy which they adopted in mid-1966 contributed significantly to pre-war tensions. In the hope of ensuring the support and survival of a new Syrian regime, the Soviets at that time began to voice a more militant, anti-Israel line and, more importantly, to encourage unity between their ally Nasir and the Syrians. While both Nasir and the Soviets might have hoped thereby to gain increased control over the fanatical Syrians, the net result of the policy was to push Nasir toward greater militancy against Israel. The Soviets failed to foresee the results of this policy. When they lost control of the situation, they were reluctant to spend their influence trying to restrain Nasir.

The embarrassing results of their pre-war policy led the Soviets to make some changes in their Middle East approach. Before the war they gave vocal support to the more extreme anti-Israel positions of the more militant Arab regimes. Afterward, they retreated to a more moderate, though still anti-Israel, line. Their willingness to take considerable risks in a situation they could not control, in order to achieve short-term goals, gave way in the war's aftermath to a somewhat more cautious, gradual approach. The dangers inherent in becoming overly committed to a radical leftist regime had become obvious. Before the war they undertook only perfunctory efforts to prevent Syrian provocations; now they began to urge restraint in earnest. In place of the demagogic ambivalence which had marked their pre-war statements, with pledges of support left purposely vague and undefined, the Soviets now clarified the limits of their support for the Arabs. And, as a result of the Arab military debacle, the USSR now asked that in exchange for aid, Soviet military instructors and advisers be given authority to train and organize at all levels of the Syrian and Egyptian armed forces.

While the Soviets had shifted their tactics, they remained wedded to the strategy which had helped produce the Arab fiasco in the six-day war. They continue to believe that the maintenance of Arab-Israeli tension at a high pitch augments Soviet influence in the area. However, they evidently hope to succeed where they failed in June 1967, i.e., to make their control over the Arabs efficacious and thus avoid a repetition of the June disaster. The result has been to give Soviet Middle East policy a schizophrenic appearance.

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For example, the Soviets have made clear to the Arabs that they do not intend to become involved militarily in a future conflict. On the other hand, Moscow has increased substantially the size of its Mediterranean fleet and has striven to restore Arab confidence in the firmness of its support through the prolonged visits of Soviet naval vessels to Syrian and Egyptian ports. The presence of large numbers of Soviet advisers and military personnel in the area, although possibly designed to ensure that the situation does not again get out of hand, has increased the dangers of the Soviet involvement in the event of war. Sufficient materiel to rebuild the Arab armed forces (and possibly confidence) continues to move into the area. Despite the increasing threat to peace in the Middle East that the growth of the Arab terrorist and guerrilla organizations poses, the Soviet Union has avoided any moves which might endanger its standing with these groups. It has funneled military aid to several guerrilla organizations through the UAR and Iraq, using its East European allies as arms agents. While the Soviets may hope thereby to gain some control over the guerrilla leadership, they seem to have forgotten the failure of a similar policy toward the Syrian militants prior to the June war.

Whatever may be the case, there has been a shift in emphasis in the last year away from the notable sobriety and caution shown by the Soviets after the June war, and toward renewed and overt support of Arab militancy. Recently the latter trend was highlighted by Kosygin's remarks asserting a line of active aid to the Arab anti-Israeli struggle (10 December) and by increasing reportage in Soviet propaganda of the activities and exploits of the guerrilla movement.

The post-war Soviet receptivity to a negotiated political settlement in the Middle East at the same time has not completely evaporated. However, Moscow's first consideration appears—just as it was before the June war—once more to be consolidation of its position as champion of the Arab “national liberation” and “anti-imperialist” movement. It thus has patronized the growing guerrilla movement. The Soviets see, it seems, in such a policy prospects for long-range gains for Soviet influence in the region which outweigh the chronic danger of events getting out of control again as they did in June 1967. Hence the Soviets have acceded to the Arab preconditions for a Middle East settlement, though they would not be unreceptive to U.S. proposals which they thought the Arabs could be persuaded to accept. While the Soviets seek to avoid a confrontation in the area, they may judge that the renewed support of Nasir and guerrilla militancy involves little chance of such a confrontation. Moreover, the Soviets once again seem confident that

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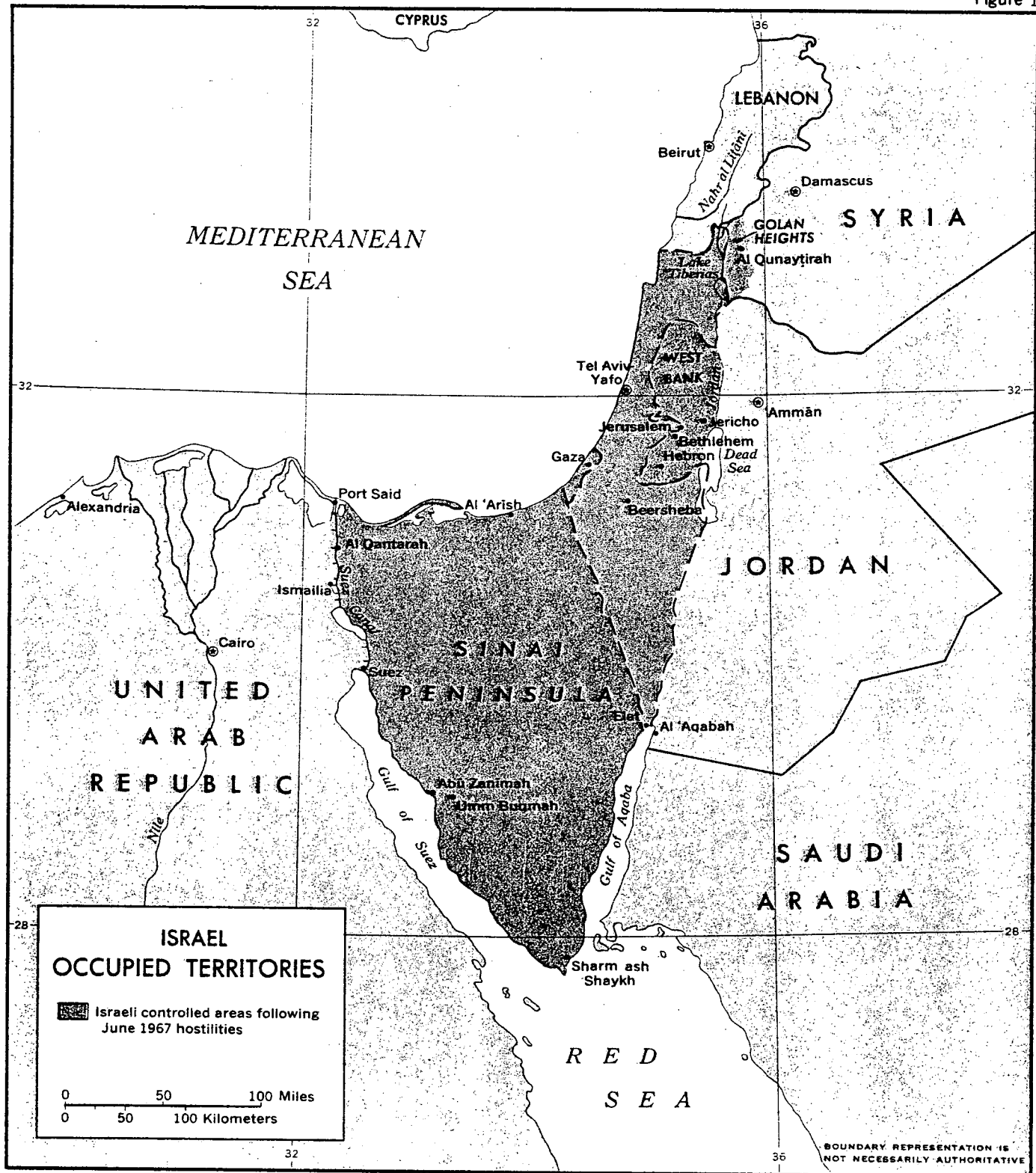
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they can control Nasir and avoid another full-scale Arab-Israeli war. The dangers of the policy may be greater than the Soviet leadership assumes, given Nasir's tendency, amply illustrated in May 1967, to act in an unpredictable, erratic, often bellicose, and sometimes politically suicidal manner.

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SOVIET POLICY AND THE 1967 ARAB-ISRAELI WAR

BEFORE THE WAR

SOVIET MIDDLE EAST POLICY UP TO THE CRISIS

Soviet Commitment to Political Support of Syria: Spring 1966

In the mid-1950s the Soviets began to cultivate the newly emerging nationalist Arab regimes, taking advantage of growing anti-Western sentiment common among them. Nasir, the most impressive of the new breed of Arab leader and head of the strongest Arab state, was the Soviets' primary target. The USSR invested heavily in the UAR, and by 1965 Cairo was almost completely dependent on Moscow for military aid. Arab fears that Soviet aid to the Middle East might be curtailed as a result of Khrushchev's ouster were not borne out.

After the 1954 overthrow of Colonel Shishakli in Syria, the Soviets had an on-again, off-again relationship with that nation. The February 1966 coup by the extremist wing of the ultra-nationalist Baath Party resulted in a rapid rapprochement in Soviet-Syrian relations, and the inclusion of a Communist in the new Syrian cabinet was particularly gratifying to the Soviets. Thereafter, the USSR increased greatly its military and economic aid to Syria, and concern for the survival of the radical Baathists became a major consideration in Soviet Middle East policy.

In an effort to capitalize on the situation in Syria, the Soviets began publicly to endorse an increasingly militant anti-Israel line, and to issue warnings against any interference in the internal affairs of her new client. Apparently concerned that Syria's neighbor Jordan might take some action against the new Syrian regime, the Soviets privately warned the Jordanians not to do so. On 28 May the Soviet Ambassador to Jordan, Slyusarenke, reportedly delivered such a message to King Husayn, stating that Soviet intelligence reports indicated such an intervention was in the wind. Publicly, on 7 May 1966, an *Izvestiya* article attacked Israel for "armed provocations" against Syria aimed at overthrowing the new regime and warned Israel not to intervene.

A 27 May TASS item implied increased Soviet political support for the Syrian regime. According to this statement, the Soviet Union would not

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“remain indifferent to attempts at violating peace in the region in immediate proximity to the frontiers of the USSR.” This statement specifically attacked “extremist” forces in Israel and charged that “reactionary” quarters in Jordan and Saudi Arabia, backed by the United States and United Kingdom, were plotting against Syria. The effect of the Soviet statement—despite the diplomatic impression of the language—was to encourage a still more activist Syrian policy against Israel. During this period the Syrians were backing guerrilla raids into Israel from Jordanian territory. While the number of these raids was not comparable to the postwar level of guerrilla attacks, it marked a significant increase over what had gone before.

The Soviets Urge Syrian-Egyptian Unity: Late 1966—Early 1967

In addition to issuing warnings against intervention, the Soviets sought to secure the new Syrian regime by urging reconciliation between the Syrians and the Egyptians; the two nations had been estranged since the 1961 secession of Syria from its union with Egypt. Kosygin, in a speech to the UAR's National Assembly in mid-May 1966, appealed for unity among the “progressive” Arab states. The Soviets may have hoped that in exchange for protection through an alliance with the UAR, the Syrians would adopt a less provocative stance. Yet, the eventual result seems to have been to encourage Nasir to adopt a more militant line.

During the fall of 1966 and continuing into 1967, Arab terrorist raids into Israel from Syria and Jordan intensified. Israel reciprocated with reprisal raids. Syrian Prime Minister Zuayyin, in October, announced that Syria would never take measures to curb the fedayeen. The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) met several times between 14 October and 4 November at the request of Israel, but the USSR veto prevented passage of a resolution condemning the terrorist raids.

Soviet behavior in the fall of 1966 set the pattern for the subsequent performance in the spring of 1967. On 12 October Israel received a note from the Soviet Union charging that a concentration of Israeli troops had formed along the Syrian border and that the Israelis were preparing for an air attack which would be followed by the penetration of Israeli troops deep into Syria. Soviet Ambassador Fedorenko repeated the charge two days later at the UN. A UN investigation failed to support the Soviet charges. Meanwhile, on 14 and 15 October, Moscow sought to disabuse the Arabs of any thought of responding in an adventurist manner. Thus, Moscow simultaneously urged the Syrian and Egyptian governments to stay calm and avoid giving Israel a pretext for aggression.

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On 8 November 1966, some three weeks after the Soviets pressed their allegation of an imminent Israeli invasion of Syria, the UAR signed a mutual defense pact with Syria. The timing suggests that the Soviet-sponsored report of a threatened Israeli attack may have encouraged the two Arab regimes to sign the pact. Certainly the Soviet report must have given the Syrian government added incentive to seek the protection of an alliance with Nasir, and Nasir may have hoped to acquire some control over the Syrians in exchange. The Soviet objective of Egyptian-Syrian rapprochement had been well served by the false report of Israeli mobilization. A similar false report, disseminated in May 1967, backfired and helped to precipitate the chain of events that led to war.

The USSR apparently hoped that the UAR-Syrian alliance would provide greater security for the radical regime in Syria and dampen the Syrian regime's tendency to undertake adventures on its own. However, Nasir did not succeed in moderating the provocative Syrian policy toward Israel. On the contrary, Nasir, tied to the far more militant Syrians, became more vulnerable in the face of demagogic Syrian appeals to anti-Israel passions among the Arab nations.*

In early 1967 the tension along the Israeli-Syrian border was high as artillery exchanges increased. Syria (clearly not strong enough to handle Israel alone) put considerable pressure on Nasir to demonstrate his leadership of the Arab world and to prove the worth of the November defense pact. During this period the Soviets warned the Syrians on at least two occasions that they did not want the situation to get out of hand. But the Soviet desire to capitalize on the prevailing tension in order to increase their influence at the expense of the United States prevented them from taking any strong position with the Syrians and led to somewhat contradictory actions. For example, on 3 February, a few weeks after the Soviets privately cautioned the Syrians against precipitating a war, *Izvestiya* published an article charging Israel with concentrating large forces on the Syrian border, calling up reservists, and putting the military forces on alert.

On 7 April 1967, following a border exchange of fire, Israel launched the deepest air strikes into Syria up to that time. This may have marked a

**Nasir was vulnerable to charges of inaction from both left and right. An Israeli raid on the Jordanian border town of As-Samu on 13 November 1966 caused Jordan's Husayn to start taunting Nasir.*

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major change in Israel's retaliatory policy, as its pilots were authorized to penetrate deep into Syria. The Syrians were humiliated and the Soviets, who had supplied Syria with aircraft, were embarrassed by Israel's success. Five days later there was another fierce gun battle across the Israeli-Syrian border. The Arab states criticized the UAR for remaining relatively silent and passive during the period. Moscow Radio, on the other hand, was shrill in charges of U.S. fleet moves and "conspiracies" and warnings of Israeli plans to invade Syria. The 7 April battle revealed to the Soviets and the Syrians the vulnerability of Syria to Israeli attacks, and the Soviets may have concluded that in order to deter Israel, Egypt must make a firmer commitment to Syria.

In mid-April the Soviets sent Israel a warning note, stating that Israel must bear full responsibility for her actions and "hoping" that Israel would not permit herself to be used by those who would make her the puppet of foreign enemy forces. Soviet propaganda continued to link Israel and the United States as plotters against Syria. On 24 April, Brezhnev called for the withdrawal of the U.S. Sixth Fleet from the Mediterranean.

PRELUDE TO WAR—May 1967

Rumor Feeds Tension

In a speech on 2 May, Nasir, perhaps responding to Arab criticism and Soviet nudges, attacked "imperialism" and the United States in unusually violent terms. On 12 May Israeli Prime Minister Eshkol, in a sharply worded statement, warned Syria that it faced severe conteraction if it did not halt terrorist incursions into Israel. Shortly thereafter, word spread through the area that Israel was concentrating forces on the Syrian border and was poised to launch an attack on Syria. The report was untrue. In fact Israel did not reinforce its frontiers and mobilize its reserves until *after* the UAR began its military build-up.

The origin of the report is not clear; it apparently did not originate with either the Syrians or Egyptians, both of whom were given the information by the Soviets. It is possible that the Israelis themselves floated the rumor hoping to induce the Soviets to persuade the Syrians to stop their provocative actions. In any event, the Soviets did not appear particularly concerned about establishing the validity of the report. They had made similar unfounded claims in October 1966 and February 1967 and were the main disseminators of this report. In a speech on 22 May Nasir said that

on 13 May we received accurate information that Israel was concentrating on the

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Syrian border huge armed forces.... The decision made by Israel at this time was to carry out an aggression against Syria as of May 17.

In speeches on 9 June and 23 July, Nasir cited the Soviets as the source of this "accurate information" and claimed that the information had been passed to an Egyptian parliamentary delegation which visited Moscow in May.

On 13 May a message was sent through Egyptian channels to Cairo from Moscow. It stated that Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Semenov had told the Egyptians that Israel was preparing a ground and air attack on Syria—to be carried out between 17 and 21 May. It stated that the Soviets had advised the UAR to be prepared, to stay calm, and not to be drawn into fighting with Israel, and that they had advised the Syrians to remain calm and not give Israel the opportunity for military operations. The message also said that the USSR favored informing the Security Council before Israel took military action against Syria. According to the message, Anwar al-Sadat, head of the Egyptian delegation then in Moscow, had been given this information. This intercept confirms Nasir's statement that the Soviets had passed the information to the UAR and adds the fact that the Soviets at the same time urged caution. The Arabs were to take the information but not the advice.

According to [redacted] from 15 through 19 May Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko informed each Arab ambassador accredited to Moscow of an impending Israeli attack on Syria and offered every assistance, including military. Another [redacted] confirmed that such assurances had been given in Moscow by a very high Soviet political officer. It is highly unlikely, however, that such a blanket assurance was ever given. The report of alleged Israeli plans for an attack was subsequently repeated at the UNSC meeting on 29 May by UAR Ambassador al-Quni and was echoed by Soviet Ambassador Fedorenko, who said that the Arabs had precise information of Israeli troop concentrations and an Israeli intention to attack on 17 May.

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Soviet motivation for spreading a flimsy and unsubstantiated report as explosive as this one is not clear. Even if they knew the facts of the story to be untrue, the Soviets might in fact have feared that, as a result of Eshkol's speech, an Israeli reprisal attack of some sort against Syria was likely to occur shortly. If so, they may have hoped to push the UAR toward a firm and open commitment to come to Syria's aid, reasoning that such a commitment might deter Israel from further raids. It is also possible that the Soviets hoped to frighten the Syrians into modifying their policies by convincing

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them that they faced an Israeli attack otherwise.* In either case, they were proved wrong. If they did believe the report, they had made an intelligence blunder; if, as seems more likely, they did not believe the story or had fabricated it and were using it to prod either Nasir or the Syrians, they misjudged the effect it would have. The story did not restrain the Syrians, and it provoked a far more aggressive reaction from Nasir than Moscow expected or desired.

Build-up of UAR Forces

Nasir apparently believed the reports given him by the Soviet Union,** and the mobilization of UAR forces deployed against Israel followed. Nasir may have had reasons of his own for proceeding as he did, but the report spread by the Russians gave him justification. According to the Egyptian press, an emergency had been declared in the UAR in order "to put teeth into the mutual defense pact with Syria." In public statements Nasir repeatedly stressed that UAR military preparations were in response to the threat of an Israeli attack on Syria. This apparently was designed to direct Israeli attention to the Egyptian border, and at the same time help bolster Nasir's image as the leader of the Arab world.

On 17 May Nasir requested the withdrawal of UNEF from Sinai and the Gaza Strip; he subsequently demanded that these forces be withdrawn from the UAR entirely. On 18 May UAR forces began to occupy UN observation posts in Sinai. UN forces were not equipped to respond and the following day Secretary General U Thant agreed to complete withdrawal.*** By 22 May, Egyptian soldiers had completely replaced the UN forces.

**This supports the view that Israel itself might have started the rumor.*

***Nasir's willingness to believe the reports at this time may have been influenced by the Israeli air attacks on Syria in April as well as by Eshkol's sharp warning in May.*

****The UN forces had been stationed in the UAR after the 1956 war; units stationed in Sharm ash-Shaykh, a point southwest of the Strait of Tiran at the mouth of the Gulf of Aqaba, had been a token of assurance of safe passage for Israeli ships through the strait. The control of the Strait of Tiran had been a source of friction between the Arabs and Israelis since 1949; in that year, following the armistice, Egypt installed guns near Sharm ash-Shaykh, overlooking the strait. In the 1956 campaign, Israel captured the post commanding the strait. In the face of U.S. and Soviet pressure it subsequently withdrew its forces.*

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Nasir's demand that the UN forces be withdrawn and U Thant's compliance served several purposes. With the UNEF buffer removed, Egyptian forces could respond more quickly in case of an Israeli attack on Syria. Nasir's demand also undercut Jordanian charges that the UAR had been hiding behind a UN shield. And, getting UN forces out of the UAR, particularly out of the symbolic and strategic post at Sharm ash-Shaykh, bolstered Nasir's prestige and Arab pride.

Soviets Appear Sanguine

While Soviet press support for the UAR build-up conveyed an impression of Soviet approval of developments, there were some indications of Soviet apprehension. [redacted] Soviet UN Ambassador Fedorenko expressed some concern at the speed of UNEF withdrawal, and on the same day Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin told Ambassador Thompson that he thought the Soviets could "match" the United States in urging restraint on its allies. The Soviets did make some gestures toward restraint, [redacted] indicating Soviet unwillingness to become directly involved in a Syrian-Israeli war. However, [redacted] a multitude of ambiguous Soviet public [redacted] statements either implied or left open the possibility of Soviet support.

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On 18 May a Moscow Domestic Service broadcast charged that Israeli troops were being concentrated on the Syrian frontier and that some observers were comparing the situation with that on the eve of the Suez operation. According to the broadcast, the Syrians had had no choice but to put their army on alert in view of the threats from Israel. The broadcast also stated that the provisions of the Syrian-Egyptian mutual aid treaty had been applied, that UAR forces were on stand-by alert, and that Cairo had stated that it would intervene in the event of Israeli aggression against Syria.

On 19 May the Novosti Press Agency went further. The dispatch, distributed in Arab countries but not carried in the Soviet press, stated that the USSR would not stand idly by if Israel attacked Syria. [redacted]

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[redacted] The net effect of such statements must have been to reassure some Arabs of Soviet support.

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Nasir Closes the Gulf of Aqaba

By 22 May 1967, the day the small UNEF force was withdrawn from Sharm ash-Shaykh, Nasir announced that the UAR had closed the Gulf of Aqaba to Israeli shipping and to ships of all other countries bringing strategic cargoes to Israel. The next day, Eshkol repeated the Israel position that Egyptian interference with Israeli shipping in the Gulf would be considered an act of aggression. On 26 May Israel warned that it would not wait indefinitely for an end to the Egyptian blockade and the withdrawal of Arab troop concentrations on its borders. By then, the Israeli armed forces were near peak mobilization.

Nasir's actions during the month of May probably were influenced by bad information concerning Arab military strength and the extent of Soviet backing. But the false report of Israel's plans to attack Syria, by triggering Nasir's decision to mobilize, played a major role in Nasir's actions. If he believed that Israel planned an attack on Syria and that the UAR would have to respond, his mobilization and his demand for a withdrawal of UNEF forces might have been intended as deterrents.

However, Nasir's decision to blockade the Gulf of Aqaba raised the pitch of the crisis to new and dangerous levels. His speeches indicated that he believed Israel would respond to the blockade and that the UAR was equipped to handle an Israeli attack. On 26 May he stated

....Recently we have felt strong enough that if we were to enter a battle with Israel, with God's help, we could triumph. On this basis we decided to take actual steps.... Taking over Sharm ash-Shaykh...meant that we were ready to enter a general war with Israel.

Though he indicated that the UAR would not initiate an attack, he declared that if Israel attacked either Syria or the UAR.

....The battle will be a general one and our basic objective will be to destroy Israel.

While Nasir was publicly stating that Israel would have to respond and that the UAR could then handle Israel militarily, it seems likely that Nasir in fact believed that Israel would not attack and that he would make major political gains for only a modest risk.

The USSR and Closure of the Gulf

The Soviets, the evidence suggests, were taken by surprise when Nasir closed the Gulf. Not only was their disapproval indicated by the absence of

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explicit expressions of support, but the reaction of the Soviet press was muted and delayed. This was a sign of either a lack of advance notice, or absence of a prepared official position, or both. On 23 May TASS reported Nasir's statement on the closing of the Suez canal and several hours later issued a Soviet government statement repeating much of the previous Soviet propaganda line, but failed to mention the closure of the gulf.*

The first semi-official comment on the closure of the gulf came three days later in a *Pravda* article. The article recalled that Israel had not used the gulf before 1956, thereby intimating she had no right to use it. However, the Soviets were at this point evidently reluctant to support Nasir's act.

The Soviet attitude toward the Middle East situation seemed to be summed up in a rhetorical question posed on 1 June by a Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister [redacted] he asked if there was any reason why the USSR should work with the United States in the Middle East. That the Soviets had not yet seen any reason to do so was demonstrated by their position at the United Nations, where efforts to resolve the situation were lukewarm, ineffective, and slow. The USSR had rejected requests for four-power talks. On 24 May Soviet UN Ambassador Fedorenko temporarily barred the way to Security Council discussion of the developing crisis by refusing to participate. On 29 May, when a Security Council meeting was at last held on the crisis, Fedorenko added nothing constructive.

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ON THE BRINK

Nature of Soviet Support for the Arabs

Reports on specific Soviet commitments to the Arabs are confusing; it appears that Soviet assurances were always kept vague and thus were open to misinterpretation by the Arabs. The only fairly clear commitment the Soviets made was to support the Arabs if the United States intervened on behalf of Israel—and even here the extent and type of assistance were not

**The Soviet government of 23 May accused Israel of preparing to attack Syria and stated that Western "imperialist circles" were responsible for inciting Israel. The statement concluded by warning that the aggressors would meet not only united Arab strength but also "strong opposition" from the Soviet Union and all peace-loving states.*

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clear. According to one report, in mid-May Nasir asked what the Soviet Union would do if the United States came to Israel's aid in the event of war. Kosygin reportedly replied that the Soviets in turn would aid the Arabs.*

Confusion in the Arab world about the extent of Soviet support for the Arab cause is demonstrated by the varying official reports made to the Syrian and Egyptian governments in mid-May. On 15 May the Syrian Ambassador in Moscow reported generalized Soviet assurances of support and said that he felt this was meant to include even military intervention. On the following day the Egyptian Ambassador in Damascus also reported to Cairo that Moscow would support Syria "to the extent of military intervention." Subsequent clarification from the Syrian Ambassador in Moscow contained the information that "Soviet assistance will not, repeat not, reach the point of military intervention." It is not clear from the reporting whether or not this clarification was conveyed to the Egyptians; the Syrians might have preferred to keep it to themselves so that the Egyptians would not back off. In short, as far as we know, the Soviets tried to avoid making a clear-cut statement concerning the nature and extent of their assistance in the event of war.

From 25 to 28 May the Egyptian Minister of War, Shams Badran, was in Moscow where he met with Kosygin, Gromyko, and Grechko.** In his 29 May speech Nasir said that Kosygin had sent a message back with Badran stating that the Soviet Union

stands with us in this battle and will not allow any country to intervene, so that the state of affairs prevailing before 1956 may be restored.

This statement, together with Nasir's claims regarding Egyptian strength vis-a-vis Israel, suggests that Nasir's expectations of Soviet support in the

**According to a Soviet official, in late May the Soviets had told Nasir that they were committed only to "neutralizing" the US—that they would respond to any escalation Washington might undertake but would not go beyond that.*

***UAR Ambassador to Moscow Ghaleb stated after the war that the Soviets had never promised military aid to the Arabs, but that a young and inexperienced Minister of Defense (Badran) who visited Moscow shortly before the war had misunderstood and reported that he was sure Moscow would help the Arabs in the event of war. Badran was one of the first to be dismissed after the war; it is probable that he had overstated the Soviet commitment.*

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event of war included only materiel and the necessary Soviet actions to deter U.S. intervention in Israel's behalf. Nasir surely did not anticipate what in fact occurred—a disastrous five-day war. He more likely foresaw a prolonged conflict in which Soviet aid—in the form of military equipment, not actual physical support—might well play an important part.

Whatever his interpretation of the actual Soviet commitment, Nasir apparently felt that it was sufficient. He seems to have believed that Soviet support would only be needed to prevent a recurrence of 1956—when Western forces assisted Israel. He apparently felt that the United States could restrain Israel and also seemed confident that the Arabs could cope with Israel militarily if necessary. Nasir's confidence in Egypt's military capability seems to have been at least partially shared by the Soviets. [redacted]

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[redacted] the Soviets overestimated the Arab ability to employ its military strength, and [redacted] the Soviets had made a bad estimate of Arab capabilities. [redacted]

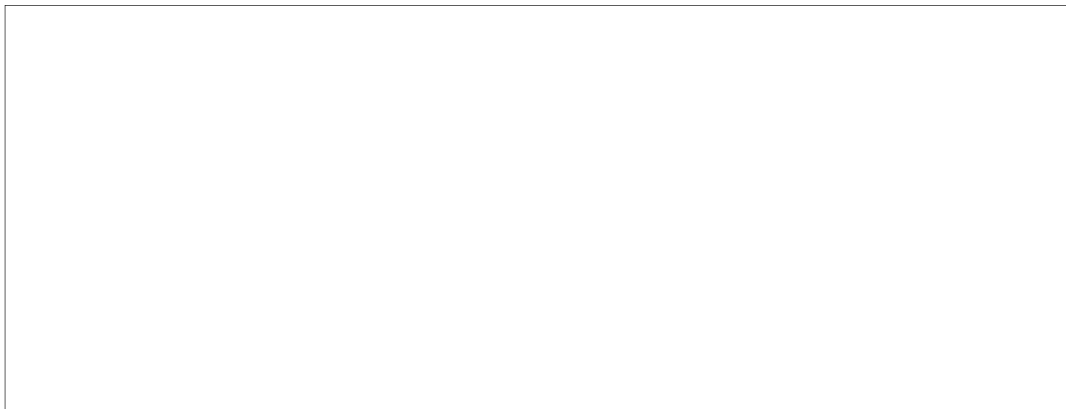
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[redacted] However, the most important Soviet error at this point would appear to have been their failure to foresee an Israeli attack.

Soviets Urge Restraint—Too Little Too Late

During the period between the announcement of the blockade of the Gulf of Aqaba and the outbreak of war, Soviet policy apparently was based on the assumption that Israel would not attack if the situation remained static. On the one hand, the Soviets gave encouragement to the Arabs and left open the possibility that they would support the Arabs in the event of war; on the other hand, they sought gently to restrain the Arabs from further provocative actions. There is no indication that they ever attempted to persuade Nasir to lift the blockade. Anxious to avoid war and at the same

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time retain the atmosphere of tension from which they felt they could benefit, the Soviets urged upon the Arabs only that degree of restraint they felt necessary to keep the situation from boiling over into war.

The Soviets, in their post-war accounts, have claimed that before the war they urged the Arabs to refrain from actions which could be used by Israeli ruling circles as a pretext to launch hostilities. Nasir has supported this claim, stating that on 26 May the U.S. Government had given the Soviet Ambassador in Washington a message asking that the Soviets urge the UAR to use restraint and not be the first to open fire. [redacted]

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Soviet attempts to restrain the Arabs were limited, however, and suggest that they were concerned not so much about a possible Israeli retaliation for closure of the Gulf of Aqaba, as they were about further Arab actions which in turn might lead to war. Their late May attempts to convince the Arabs that Israel was not going to attack**apparently referred back to the original untrue report of a planned Israeli attack on Syria, rather than to the possibility of a retaliatory attack for closure of the gulf.

Positions Harden

In the last days of May, Nasir began to settle his differences with the more conservative Arab nations, a situation most feared by Israel and, by the beginning of June, the Egyptian and Israeli positions were completely intransigent. On 1 June Israeli Labor Minister Yigal Alon insisted that some protection of Israel's borders from terrorist attacks, the withdrawal of Egyptian troop concentrations along the border, and the lifting of the

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blockade were necessary conditions to avoid an "inevitable" military clash. On 2 June UAR Foreign Minister Riyad announced that the Suez Canal would be closed to anyone who tried to break the blockade.

Most available information indicates that the Israeli attack at dawn on 5 June came as a complete surprise to the Soviets. [redacted]

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[redacted] The timing of the attack certainly surprised the Arabs. After the war Nasir blamed his unpreparedness on the fact that the United States had indicated it would try to restrain Israel. And Nasir, as well as the Soviets, apparently was convinced Israel would not attack without U.S. approval.

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THE SIX-DAY WAR AND ITS IMMEDIATE AFTERMATH

THE OUTBREAK OF WAR

Israel Attacks; the USSR Reacts

Israel's attack on the UAR came in the morning on 5 June 1967. Surprise enabled the Israeli air force to virtually eliminate the Egyptian air force on the ground, and Israeli forces advanced with little trouble into Sinai and the Gaza Strip. By 6 June Israeli forces were well on their way to the Suez; on 7 June they captured Sharm ash-Shaykh; and on 8 June Israel claimed complete control of Sinai. The war with Jordan began later in the day of 5 June. After Jordanian forces seized UN headquarters in Jerusalem, Israel launched air and ground attacks along the armistice line and Israeli forces swept toward the Jordan River. Israel had virtually destroyed the Syrian air force on 5 June, but did not begin her ground attack against Syria until 9 June; by the time of cease-fire with the Syrians, Israeli forces had penetrated about 10 miles into Syria and occupied the Golan Heights.

Soviet press organs, also taken by surprise, continued their pre-war propaganda themes. On 5 June *Izvestiya* and TASS both charged that Johnson and Wilson, at their recent Washington conference,* had worked out an anti-UAR strategy and that they had spurred Israel on. That afternoon a Moscow broadcast in Arabic said that Israel would not have attacked without U.S. instigation, that the Arabs were ready to reply to the imperialists, and that the Arabs were not alone in their just struggle. Some hours later, in a French-language version of the same commentary beamed to the Maghreb states, the following line was added:

As the Soviet government stressed recently, the organizers will have to face not only the united strength of the Arab countries, but also the firm response to this aggression by the USSR and all other peace-loving states.

The commentary did not elaborate, leaving the threat of Soviet intervention vague.

**The Johnson-Wilson meeting had ended on 3 June.*

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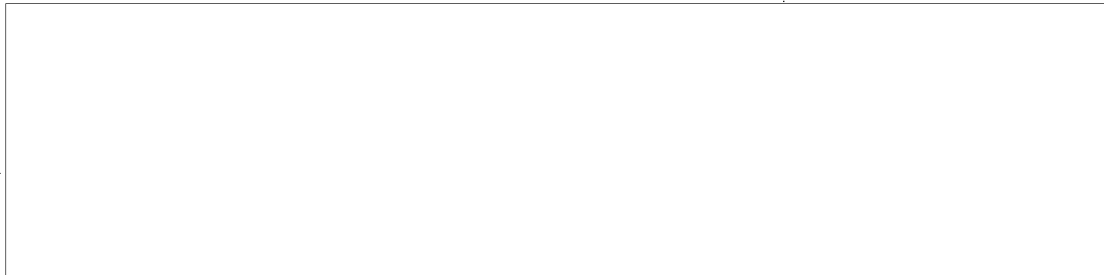
A Soviet government statement, issued late on 5 June was even more imprecise. It demanded that Israel halt military actions immediately and withdraw behind the truce line, stating that the Soviet government reserved the right to take all necessary steps. It called on the UN to condemn Israel's actions and to try to restore peace in the Middle East.

These statements revealed the Soviet fear of becoming militarily involved. There were several reports that they considered a military response,* but their actions suggest that this was not a serious alternative at this point. Within hours of the outbreak of war, according to a State Department report, Moscow made use of the "hot-line" teletype to Washington, probably for two reasons—to make sure no accidental confrontation with the United States occurred and to try to stop the war, which they quickly realized the Arabs could not win.

Charges of US-UK Involvement

Soviet restraint was also demonstrated in Moscow's reaction to the Arab charge that the United States and Great Britain had actually participated in the air strikes against the UAR. The original source of the report is not clear. According to an Egyptian source, Cairo's charge was based on the belief that more aircraft took part in the attack than Israel possessed; it seems likely that the Arabs misread the origins of the aircraft, which the Israelis had sent in at low altitudes from the Mediterranean to escape radar

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detection. Nasir, for one, seems to have believed the report.* On 7 June he sent a message to Jordan, Syria, and Algeria, in which he claimed that the UAR high command had "confirmed beyond any doubt the collusion of the US and England with Israel."

The implications of this charge for the Soviets could have been serious, if they in fact had made a commitment to assist in the event of an actual US intervention. The Soviets never officially accepted the accusation of US participation as valid, although the Soviet press did, in several instances, repeat the charges.** [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] during Boumediene's visit to Moscow from 12 to 14 June, the Soviets reportedly emphasized that US aircraft had not participated in the Arab-Israeli war and asked him to pass this information to Nasir. Furthermore, no authoritative Soviet source gave public credence to the Arab charge. The Soviets were clearly unwilling to fall for what they may have felt was an Arab effort to drag them into the war.

Soviets Urge Acceptance of Cease Fire

Agitated conversations were reportedly held between the Soviets and Egyptians after the outbreak of war—in Cairo between Nasir and Pozhidayev, and in Moscow between Ghaleb and top Soviet leaders. The Egyptians demanded that the Soviets immediately replace their demolished air force but were told that there was no place to land planes as the airfields too had been destroyed. In response to the Egyptian accusation that the Soviets were

**This charge was consistent with Soviet prewar press charges that US and British naval forces were being built up in the Mediterranean and with prewar Soviet charges that the US and Britain planned to support Israel militarily.*

***A 6 June domestic broadcast repeated the Arab Command statement that it had proof of Western participation. As late as 11 June a Soviet domestic commentator said that while the US was trying to repudiate reports of participation, the fact remained that on the eve of the war, US and British carriers passed through the Suez and stationed themselves in the Red Sea, from where their planes "covered Israel's air space."*

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deserting them in their hour of need, the Soviets said that they were committed only to supporting the Arabs against the United States—not against Israel.

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the Soviets decided shortly after the Israeli offensive that an immediate cease-fire should be accepted, as the Arab position was not yet catastrophic. They felt that the Egyptians could not respond successfully as they had no planes; however, Nasir did not accept this line of reasoning and launched a counter-offensive which failed.

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The Soviets for a brief time refused to accept the simple cease-fire resolution put forth at the UN and instead urged adoption of a resolution combining a cease-fire with the call for withdrawal of troops to prewar positions. Israel refused to accept this condition and the UAR refused to accept a cease-fire without it. On 6 June Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Semenov ordered Soviet UN representative Fedorenko to accept the simple cease-fire in spite of the Arab position. However, the UAR was not yet prepared to accept and without Egyptian approval the Security Council unanimously passed a simple cease-fire resolution.

For the next two days the Soviets apparently attempted to persuade the UAR to accept a simple cease-fire, although they were also pushing a cease-fire with conditions

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On 7 June a UAR Embassy spokesman in Paris said that Egypt rejected the UN resolution calling for a simple cease-fire. The Soviets requested an immediate meeting of the Security Council that afternoon and tabled a second cease-fire resolution, simply calling on the governments concerned to cease firing at 2000 GMT that night. It was unanimously adopted. Jordan and Israel agreed, but the UAR still rejected it.*

**On this date Radio Moscow broadcast the text of a Soviet government statement to Israel charging that the failure of Israel to comply with the UN call for a cease-fire was further proof of Israel's aggressive policy and threatening to break diplomatic relations with Israel.*

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[Redacted] The reasons for this sudden shift in Egyptian policy are not clear. Soviet pressure to accept a cease-fire had been consistent and perhaps effective, but it is more likely that Nasir saw the hopelessness of Egypt's military position and finally decided to accept.

On 8 June, at the same Security Council meeting at which U Thant announced that the UAR would abide by a cease-fire if Israel would do the same, the Soviets tabled a draft resolution calling for a condemnation of Israel and the withdrawal of troops behind the truce line. This resolution was never passed but was to become the basis of Soviet demands in the months ahead. On 9 June a resolution was unanimously passed, demanding fulfillment of the previous resolutions (of 6 and 7 June) calling for a cease-fire. Two hours after passage of the resolution, Syria and Israel had accepted it.

Threat of Soviet Intervention and the Moscow Conference

In spite of the formal agreement to cease fire, Israeli troops continued to advance into Syria on 9 and 10 June. At this point, the Soviets began to threaten some (undefined) action if Israel did not stop. Reports indicate that on 9 June several Soviet diplomats warned that if Israel did not observe the cease-fire in Syria, the Soviets might intervene. A CPSU document prepared in October 1967 stated that on the morning of 10 June the Soviets sent an urgent message to President Johnson, warning that if Israel did not stop the USSR would be compelled to take unspecified "necessary" action. This is probably a reference to the use of the "hot-line" between Moscow and

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Washington on the morning of 10 June. The Soviets reportedly initiated this call and threatened military action if the United States could not restrain Israel.

There were indications that the Soviets were in fact making preparations for limited intervention. On 11 June there were several reports of Soviet military preparations—one involving the possible landing of 400 Soviet sailors near Latakia, Syria, and the other involving the possible landing of paratroops in Syria to halt the Israeli advance toward Damascus. These reports reveal the extent of Soviet concern for Syria and its regime, but the amount of support being considered was token only. It is not impossible that these reports were circulated by the Soviets in an attempt to scare the Israelis into stopping their advance in Syria.

After the war the Soviets were to claim that the Israeli halt was a direct result of the USSR's determined stand. While it is possible that the Soviet threats played a role in Israel's decision to stop, the fact that Israel had agreed to a cease-fire *before* the USSR began to make threats suggests that the Soviet threats were not so important; furthermore, there is little to indicate that Israel had planned to take Damascus in any event.

Two or three days after the start of the war, the Soviets summoned their East European allies to Moscow to discuss the situation. The leaders met on 9 June and the following day released a statement warning that if the UNSC did not take proper measures and if Israel did not withdraw to the armistice lines, the signers would do "everything necessary to help the peoples of the Arab countries administer a resolute rebuff to the aggressor." This belated and again vague verbal threat indicated that the Soviets and their allies had no intention of becoming militarily involved. On 10 June the Soviet Union did, however, break diplomatic relations with Israel, and in the days that followed the other Moscow signatories followed suit.*

Various other agreements not included in the public statement were made at the Moscow Conference [redacted] it was agreed

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that the Soviets would be the spokesmen for all and that they would present a united front on the Middle East problem.* [redacted] said the meeting recognized the need to repair the war damage in the Arab countries and to supply the Egyptian armed forces with replacements for lost tanks, aircraft, and other materiel.** But limits to this aid were also discussed. In light of the weaknesses in the UAR military structure revealed by the war [redacted] reported, the Soviets decided they must exercise control of Egyptian use of Soviet-supplied military equipment. It was agreed that all of Nasir's requests for military aid would be met, but that the Soviets would demand that they participate in any future UAR decision concerning major military actions to be launched with Soviet-supplied arms. While the Soviets may have requested that they be involved in such decision making, it is not likely that Nasir would have agreed to weaken his own prerogatives. The Soviets did, however, acquire a greater role in Egyptian military training and organization.

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SOVIETS REACT TO DEFEAT

Attempts to Reassure Arabs

The Soviets, shocked by the magnitude of the Arab defeat, reacted instinctively. First, they tried to salvage what they could from a bad situation. They were particularly vulnerable to charges that they had failed the Arabs; they also were sensitive to rumors that the Chinese were going to move into the area with offers of aid and even more sensitive to the prospects of a Chinese propaganda heyday at their expense. Their immediate aims were to restore their damaged prestige in the eyes of the world and to re-establish their credibility as friends of the Arabs. The emergency airlift of

**The Soviets agreed to contact Cairo immediately in behalf of the Eastern European countries; this was the first time the Soviets had thus represented the Eastern European countries in negotiations with the UAR.*

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aid begun by the Soviets on 6 June* (the largest such operation Moscow has ever conducted) and the 10 June statement of the Moscow conference were the first steps in this direction. Subsequent high-level visits and assurances of continuing military aid were a vital element in their efforts to restore their influence with the Arabs.

The Arabs were stunned by defeat and were at once gripped by shock, humiliation, and anger. They looked for scapegoats and found a number; the United States and Great Britain whom they said had aided Israel, some of their own leaders—particularly military—whom they felt had failed them,** and the Soviet Union which they felt had let them down. Their frustration and anger with the Soviets was openly expressed in the press as well as privately. Among the most vehement was Algerian President Boumediene, who at one point apparently considered ordering all Algerian students in the USSR to return home. On 12 June Boumediene flew to Moscow where he reportedly attacked the Soviets for their failure to assist. He was reminded of the dangers of nuclear war and was somewhat mollified by promises of continued aid. Syrian President Al-Atasi visited Moscow shortly after the war and charged that on the second day of the war the Soviet Ambassador to Damascus had promised “technical military assistance” which was then not provided. The Soviets reportedly responded that the military situation had developed so swiftly that the Soviet aid program had been thrown off balance.

Probably because they realized their need for Soviet aid and support, the Arabs' anti-Soviet line of the first few days faded fairly quickly. Press articles lost their anti-Soviet tones and, [redacted]

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**Although the Soviets had begun to airlift replacement equipment to the Arabs while the war was still in progress, aid alone was far from enough to reverse the tide of the war. In the war the UAR lost about two-thirds of its fighters, four-fifths of its bombers, and one-half of its tanks; the Syrians lost most of their fighters and one-fourth of their tanks. The Iraqis and Algerians lost only small amounts of materiel.*

***On 9 June Nasir issued his official resignation. At the same time Commander-in-Chief Amir and War Minister Badran also submitted their resignations as did 11 other high-ranking military commanders. Nasir later retracted his resignation, but the others held.*

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On the same day Pozhidayev had handed Nasir an "important message" from the Soviet government. Possibly this contained promises of further Soviet support.*

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A major move in the Soviet effort to assuage the Arabs was the tour of Soviet President Podgorny to Arab capitals in late June. Podgorny himself described the trip as a "calming mission." He undoubtedly gave reassurances of continued support, both military and economic, but the exact amount promised and the *quid pro quo* (if any) were not so clear. It seems likely that at this time the Soviets committed themselves at least to the replacement of all Egyptian equipment lost in the war. The Podgorny-Nasir talks apparently were not completely smooth and final agreement on all issues was postponed [redacted]

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Podgorny did return to Moscow before visiting Syria, and his visit to Syria may have been particularly unsatisfactory. The communiqué issued after this visit was somewhat chillier than those following his trips to Cairo and Baghdad,** and [redacted] the Syrians were very upset by the extent of Soviet caution and stinginess [redacted]

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[redacted] Podgorny urged a calm approach and advised the Syrians not to consider an immediate resumption of hostilities. His promise of aid to support an eventual resumption of war was said to be offset by a

**In fact, Arab resentment was to continue for a long period; open criticism stopped, however, because of the need for Soviet aid.*

***The former said simply that "official talks" were held and that Podgorny expressed "heartfelt gratitude" for the hospitality shown him. The others stressed the spirit of friendship and understanding which prevailed at the meetings.*

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request for a naval base in Syria and for Soviet direction of Syrian "technical commands." [redacted] that the Soviets were demanding bases in the Middle East. If they did demand bases they did so unsuccessfully, for although they have been given increased access to Arab ports, they have not acquired control of any port facilities. Soviet technicians and advisors were subsequently stationed in Syria, but, again, it is highly unlikely that these advisors have been given command authority.

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Efforts to Regain International Prestige:
Propaganda in the UN

Restoration of their international status was the second immediate goal of the Soviets in the wake of their June setback. On 13 June in a letter to the Secretary General of the UN, Gromyko requested an emergency session of the General Assembly to consider the Middle East situation and the question of "liquidating the consequences of Israeli aggression against the Arab states and the immediate withdrawal of Israeli forces behind the armistice lines." This was a reversal of the USSR's traditional emphasis on the Security Council and was probably based on the expectation that the assembly would prove a more sympathetic vehicle for propaganda purposes.*

A number of UAR UN officials, [redacted] [redacted] were dismayed by the Soviet move and saw it as a gesture to regain prestige rather than an attempt to help the Arabs. This interpretation was apparently quite valid. [redacted]

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[redacted] the USSR considered mid-June as "essentially a propaganda phase" in the UN. As the peak of the immediate Soviet post-war drive to regain Arab trust had been reached with Podgorny's trips to the Middle East, so the drive to regain prestige in the world reached a high point with the arrival at the UN of Soviet Premier Kosygin on 17 June. On the 19th Kosygin addressed the UN General Assembly. He repeated Soviet charges of Israel's mid-May plot to attack Syria and of imperialist support for Israel, charging that military maneuvers by the U.S. and British fleets on the eve of the war could have been interpreted by Israel as encouragement for aggression. He also attacked the United States for blocking the Security Council resolution calling for immediate withdrawal of Israeli troops. But he steered clear of any implication of direct U.S. and British involvement in the

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**On 14 June the Security Council failed to adopt a Soviet draft resolution condemning Israel and demanding that she withdraw her troops behind the armistice line.*

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war. He stressed the dangers of a world war which he said would be nuclear and, in a statement not included in a later Moscow Domestic Service version, said that every state should refrain from further complicating the situation.

Kosygin then presented the Soviet Union's draft resolution which contained four provisions:

- (1) Condemnation of the aggressive actions of Israel and the continuing occupation by Israel of part of the territory of the UAR, Syria, and Jordan;
- (2) Immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all Israeli forces from the occupied territory to positions behind the armistice lines;
- (3) Restitution in full by Israel of the damages inflicted by its aggression;
- (4) Immediate effective measures by the UN Security Council to eliminate all consequences of Israel's aggression.

Kosygin met with President Johnson at Glassboro on 23 and again on 25 June, then held a press conference to discuss the meetings. He hinted at Soviet flexibility in his statement that after Israeli withdrawal the Security Council could consider all other questions arising in the Middle East. The TASS version of the press conference omitted this statement but said simply that all other solutions (other than withdrawal) to the crisis were unrealistic.* Kosygin's formula was to be the basis of the July 1967 Soviet proposal which never came to a vote.**

SHIFT IN SOVIET TACTICS—TOWARD MODERATION

Soviets Urge Restraint on Arabs

While the desire to restore their reputation with the Arabs and to ensure against Chinese inroads in the area was stimulating the Soviets to continue active support of the radical Arabs, they also had seen the

**See pps. 31-37 for discussion of leadership differences on the Middle East.*

***See page 30.*

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disastrous results that policy had helped cause in June. The Soviets, however, tried to straddle both sides of the problem. They continued to supply large quantities of aid—both military and economic—but they also tried to establish greater control over its use. In addition, they would moderate their support of the radical Arab line.

Soviet political restraint reflected an urgent desire to avoid a repetition of the June War. The Soviets at the time made it very clear to the Arabs that they would *not* come to their assistance in the event of renewed hostilities. This shift from a somewhat vague to a clear-cut position emerged in early July. From 10-12 July East European leaders with the exception of Romania's leaders met in Budapest; their communiqué promised continued aid as well as "steps aimed at strengthening the Arabs' defense potential." It contained no implied threat of action by the socialist states in the event of renewed hostilities.*

During this same period the Arab leaders were meeting in Cairo in a futile effort to plot a common course.** The Soviets reportedly sent word to this "little summit" that the Arabs should expect no Soviet armed intervention if hostilities were resumed, although aid and diplomatic support would continue. Only if "clear-cut" intervention by the United States occurred (and this would be determined by the Soviets) would the USSR become directly involved [redacted]

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**In addition, according to a CPSU document prepared in October 1967 for distribution to delegates to the November anniversary celebrations in Moscow (see page 51), the conference also decided that a more realistic stand was needed on the part of the Arabs and that an immediate step should be to combine demands for immediate Israeli withdrawal with a formula for terminating the state of war.*

***On 11 July Boumediene, Nasir, and Husayn met in Cairo but were reportedly unable to reach agreement on a common approach. The next day Boumediene met in Damascus with Syrian leaders, and they issued a statement promising resistance to compromise. At this time Husayn was trying to promote an Arab summit—which would be moderate in approach. The Syrians and Algerians were opposed, and the UAR was fluctuating. On 23 July Nasir indicated that the UAR would attend an Arab summit.*

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Soviets also proposed a compromise plan—if the Arabs would accept implicitly the existence of Israel as a state and end the state of belligerence, the USSR would intervene with the United States to pressure Israel to give up “most” of the territory occupied during the war.

In addition to top-level consultations and communications, numerous military delegations were traveling back and forth in an effort to work out priorities and conditions for aid.* Syrian dissatisfaction with Soviet aid offers had been indicated after Podgorny's visit to that country early in July. Toward the end of that month Egyptian disappointment began to show. When Egyptian Chief of Staff Riyad visited Moscow in late July, the Soviets reportedly presented a counterproposal to his, offering less than the Egyptians had expected. Riyad reportedly indicated that the Soviets were not prepared to do more than replace what had been lost. He said that the Soviets supported the expulsion of Israel from Sinai but would not support a war to destroy Israel. Another source reported that the Soviets promised only enough to enable the UAR to defend itself.

Reports of conditions demanded by the Soviets in return for aid have varied. Some sources have stated that the Soviets agreed to replace lost material with “no strings.” But it is clear that they were pressing for some things in exchange for aid.

The most obvious condition demanded and agreed upon was the stationing of Soviet advisors in the Arab armed forces. Soviet advisors began arriving almost immediately in the UAR. They arrived somewhat later in Syria and Algeria, possibly reflecting earlier unhappy Syrian reaction to Podgorny's visit. [REDACTED] has stated that by late

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**Soviet First Deputy Defense Minister Zakharov was in Cairo from 20 June to 1 July. Late in June the Algerian Defense Minister met with Brezhnev and Grechko, and in early July Soviet Deputy Defense Minister Pavlovskiy spent several weeks in Algeria. Soviet military delegations also arrived in Syria shortly after the war. On 14 July Grechko met with a UAR military delegation led by Chief of Staff Riyad and late in July Soviet Politburo member Mazurov met with Iraqi and Sudanese military delegations.*

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June about 100 Soviet officers had already been attached to the UAR army at brigade level and had already caused dissension in the UAR military.* In late June Nasir told [redacted] that:

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For the first time Soviet advisors have been integrated into the organic structure of the UAR Army at the lowest level. I am sorry about this but I had to do it.

The second Soviet condition most frequently reported was the acquisition of naval facilities in the Mediterranean. Such facilities are essential to the maintenance by the Soviets of a sizable fleet in the Mediterranean, and the Soviets demonstrated in 1967 their firm intention of becoming and remaining a Mediterranean power.** At the same time Soviet condemnation of Western bases in the area made their own acquisition of bases an embarrassing proposition. Hence, their demands may have centered on the use of facilities rather than their acquisition. Nasir, in talks with Husayn in early July, said that he was prepared to sign a defense pact with the Soviets giving them whatever bases in the UAR they needed. This statement is somewhat suspect, however, as it smacks of a Nasir effort to push the West (which he may well have assumed would receive this information) into

**On 29 June about 20 majors and colonels were reportedly pensioned off after they voiced disapproval of the arrival of Soviet officers. This action was reportedly reversed by Nasir in early July and about 50 pensioned officers were reinstated.*

***The Soviets began building up their Mediterranean fleet shortly after the war. In late June they sent their first landing ships through the Bosphorus into the Mediterranean, and in mid-July Moscow took over direct communications with its warships there. During the year the size of the Soviet fleet continued to grow.*

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making concessions in an effort to stave off such a Soviet presence.*

[REDACTED] reports that Nasir had rejected requests by Podgorny and Zakharov for Soviet acquisition of naval facilities but had approved the idea of the Soviets expanding available facilities. On 10 and 11 July Soviet ships put into Alexandria and Port Said for a week's visit—probably to demonstrate Soviet support for the Arabs and possibly to make use of their new access to port facilities there. On 12 July the Egyptian paper *Al Jumhuriyah* stated that the UAR would extend an open invitation to the Soviet fleet to stay in Port Said and Alexandria as long as it wished. Since that time vessels of the Soviet fleet have continually visited these ports, as well as Latakia in Syria.

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More Flexible UN Posture

In addition to modifying their policy of supporting the Arabs by urging restraint and imposing conditions on aid, the Soviets, in July, began moving toward a more flexible stance at the UN. Their position, as reflected by the 10-12 July Budapest Conference, was that a more realistic Arab position was needed and that demands for immediate Israeli withdrawal should be supplemented with a formula for terminating the state of war.

Having made their propaganda points with the Arabs, the Soviets dropped the hard-line resolution proposed by Kosygin on 19 June and gave their support to a nonaligned nations resolution sponsored by Yugoslavia; this draft was somewhat more moderate than that of the Soviets. While it called for the immediate withdrawal of all troops behind the armistice line with UN supervision, it did *not* demand condemnation of Israel, did *not* call for reparations, and *did* suggest that after withdrawal had occurred the Security Council might consider "all aspects of the situation in the area." In addition, it requested that the Secretary General designate a personal

**Nasir's deviousness is reflected in various other reports. He used Chinese offers of assistance, for example, to try to obtain further commitments from the Soviets. The fact that China had made offers was, according to one source, supposed to leak to the Soviets, as was the fact that Nasir had rejected the offer—at least for the time being. [REDACTED] has reported that fears of Chinese movement into the area had added impetus to the Soviet postwar aid program.*

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representative to work for compliance. On 3 July Gromyko praised the resolution and condemned any other approach. However, the draft failed to pass in a vote on 4 July 1967.*

In mid-July the Soviets indicated their willingness to compromise still more on a UN resolution.

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Other reports indicate that, while for the first time the Soviets did include a promise of some reciprocal action for Israeli withdrawal, they did not put withdrawal and ending the state of belligerency on the same level. Rather they called for Israeli withdrawal under UN supervision and for referral of the Arab-Israeli question to the Security Council, which would be enjoined to decide on issues concerning termination of the state of belligerency, free passage through international waterways, and the refugee problem.

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that the Egyptians and Iraqis had agreed to the Soviet draft proposal. However, Boumediene and the Syrians issued a statement on 12 July promising to resist any compromise. The Soviets were unable to change Boumediene's mind when he visited Moscow in mid-July, and the radical Arabs prevailed. The USSR never presented its draft and on 21 July the General Assembly's emergency session was adjourned.

Thus the Soviets had cornered themselves by restricting their freedom to maneuver in the UN. Their initial call for a General Assembly session reflected their desire for a public propaganda forum. In July, when they had

**The emergency UNSC session considered seven draft resolutions and adopted two—all others failing to gain the required two-thirds majority. The US draft, which along with the Soviet draft failed to pass, called for negotiated arrangements with third party assistance based on five principles: mutual recognition of the political independence and territorial integrity of all countries in the area; recognized boundaries to accompany disengagement and withdrawal; freedom of innocent maritime passage; a just solution of the refugee problem; recognition of the right of all sovereign nations to exist in peace and security. The two resolutions which were passed called for adoption of humanitarian principles and for Israel to take no action to alter the status of Jerusalem.*

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become more serious in their efforts to work out a compromise UN resolution, they were trapped by the fact that in the General Assembly, where each Arab nation had a vote, in order to push their resolution through they would have had to actively and publicly oppose the radical Arabs.

They were still unwilling to do this. Their exasperation was voiced by several high-level Soviet figures in late July. [redacted]

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[redacted] Also in late July, in his meeting with Italian Communists, Ponomarev criticized the Arabs ferociously, calling them fanatical and irrational.

CROSS CURRENTS IN THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP DURING THE CRISIS

While the war had produced severe, if momentary, strains in the Soviet-Arab alliance, it also produced pressures in Soviet internal politics. At one point even the performance of the top leaders in crisis came under an apparent attack. That attack appears to have echoed the views of an element which was critical of the cautiousness of official policy moves in the crisis. Both during and after the crisis, such a view remained outside the consensus in the leadership—in fact was firmly rejected by it. However, within the consensus which opposed direct involvement in the crisis but favored continued support of the Arabs, differences over the extent of such aid in the future as well as more or less flexible positions concerning a diplomatic settlement of the conflict were discernible. Not only the difficult Arabs but the lack of complete unanimity within the top Soviet echelons was a complicating factor in Soviet policy-making.

The Yegorychev Affair

The activist viewpoint, which [redacted] was in fact considered by some leaders but was discarded, called for taking a limited military risk and cautiously challenging the United States in the crisis. Whether or not such a view was advanced in the Politburo during the heat of the crisis when that body met in frequent session, it may have been raised by Moscow party chief Yegorychev when he spoke to the Central Committee plenum convoked after the June War to endorse the Politburo's actions in the crisis. According to some reports, he criticized the leadership for a lack of forcefulness in the crisis, and though he subsequently suffered for his temerity by

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losing his post, it seems unlikely that he would have raised his voice if there had been no support for his views at the highest levels. In any case, a policy of calculated risk was shunned by the consensus that emerged in the Politburo during the crisis.

While a more aggressive view may have had some supporters within the Politburo itself, the evidence contains little direct indication as to who they might have been. Shelepin, of course, is one suspect since Yegorychev, who voiced the criticism of leadership's crisis actions at the June plenum, can be counted a member of the coterie around this leader. However, there were signs that the militant view had supporters among elements on the periphery of the inner-leadership, especially among the military. For example, *Red Star* was one of the few Soviet organs which openly defended the UAR's closure of the Straits of Tiran (28 June) and was particularly insistent in its calls for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Israeli forces from occupied territories. Further, it was close to a month after the war before any Soviet military leader explicitly endorsed Soviet handling of the crisis. Only on 5 July did Defense Minister Grechko do so—the day Brezhnev also presented a vigorous public defense of Politburo policy in the crisis.

Brezhnev's speech on 5 July bore all the earmarks of a general apologia for Soviet Middle East policy, past, present, and future. This was his first post-war speech and probably was designed to counter both foreign—particularly Arab—and internal criticism. He first tried to counter arguments that a more assertive policy should have been followed in the crisis. He insisted on the “correctness” of Moscow's “energetic” moves to stop Israel and protect Arab interests. He then moved on to defend the continuing strong Soviet support for the Arabs; while careful to say—in line with Politburo policy—that the struggle in the present phase was “political,” he emphasized the demand for Israeli withdrawal from occupied lands and pointed to the material aid the USSR was rendering the Arabs. While alluding to efforts at resolving the crisis in the UN, he dwelt on the purpose of Podgorny's missions to the UAR, Syria and Iraq; namely, strengthening ties and coordinating common action in the defense of Arab interests. The speech contained little hint of any interest in promoting a compromise settlement in the area. In general the speech seemed to be a defense of Moscow's pro-Arab policy. From the perspective of Soviet internal politics it appeared to reflect Brezhnev's awareness of the danger of an alliance of military* and party elements joining together in opposition to official policy in the mid-East.

**The speech was delivered to a graduating military class.*

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The danger was already implicit in the Yegorychev affair. Yegorychev, the Moscow party chief and thus a pre-eminent figure among the party's middle-level executives, launched his criticism of official policy when two of its prime promoters and agents, Podgornyy and Kosygin, were away from home implementing that policy, the first in Cairo and the second in New York at the UN. This left Brezhnev, the third of the triumvirate in charge of executing the adopted policy in Moscow, to bear the brunt of this evidently unexpected attack.

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The precise content of the Yegorychev criticism remains unclear.

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**A similar criticism—but from figures linked with reform rather than hard-line positions—was discernible in a 17 June Pravda article by Rumyantsev, Burlatskiy and Bestruzhev. This article while devoted to the need for more intensive study of broad social and political trends contained a pointed call for better political predictions “especially” with regard to “prospects of developing international relations.” The glaring case in point—the lead up to and outbreak of the Arab-Israeli war—could scarcely fail to come to mind in an informed reader.*

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equipment and that "further improvement" of military preparedness depended "to a great extent" on the practical activity of the military itself. Further, the introduction of a Soviet naval force into the Mediterranean in the wake of the crisis served, among other things however belatedly, to cover the leaders' flank against charges of passivity in crisis situations.

In any case, Brezhnev administered a severe rebuff to Yegorychev by relegating him to a lesser post—presumably as an object lesson to any who assumed his policy or leadership was easily challengeable—and obtained an express stamp of approval from the Central Committee and the Moscow party organization among others for the Politburo's actions during the crisis. Indeed, the display of his organizational power was essential to Brezhnev's immediate prestige and authority. Brezhnev's elaborate defense of policy in the crisis in the 5 July speech also mirrored his awareness of the danger of an erosion of his authority resulting from publicity within the regime of the view that the leadership was not sufficiently forceful in foreign affairs. Further, it is possible that the main motive behind the Yegorychev foray was to undermine confidence in the leadership; Brezhnev's rapid response succeeded in rebuffing this attempt.

The Politburo Consensus and Differences Within It

The quick disposal of Yegorychev underlined the agreement among the top figures in the Politburo on the need for caution and strict avoidance of any direct Soviet involvement in the military side of the conflict. The evidence contains strong indications that the latter view was unanimously held by the four ranking members of the Politburo: Brezhnev, Podgornyy, Suslov, and Kosygin.

For example, both Brezhnev and Suslov during the war's early stage were critical of Nasir in remarks to visiting delegations. Brezhnev stressed that the USSR's first aim was to avoid world war and if it had only the smallest alternative to war it would choose it. Further, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] he was quite undisturbed and uncritical regarding the American role during the Middle East crisis and took Nasir to task for complaining that the Soviets were not supplying him enough weapons. Suslov said that Nasir had pursued shortsighted and provocative policies prior to the crisis, that the USSR bore no responsibility for the military defeat of the Arabs, and that the only course open to the Arabs was to secure an immediate peace. He stated that the USSR could only assist them to the latter goal and that the USSR would not interfere or intervene directly in the region in opposition to the United Nations.

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Both Kosygin and Podgorny indicated their commitment to a peaceful resolution of the crisis. Further, the tenor of Kosygin's statements and activities at the UN and Glassboro and Brezhnev's treatment of Podgorny as a confidant regarding the Yegorychev affair deepens the impression that these figures were working in close concert to minimize the effects of the Arab setback.

Yet within this area of agreement at least two diverging positions were visible as well as differing nuances in the views expressed by individual figures. The differences suggest that policy in the crisis was formulated by a coalition rather than by a coterie of like-minded men. For, on the one hand, Kosygin seemed to represent a more flexible position than his colleagues with regard to seeking a major political settlement in the Middle East, while Brezhnev, and even more distinctly Podgorny, assumed less flexible postures on a postwar settlement. The latter seemed more intent on refurbishing the Soviet image as the Arabs' champion and restoring them to their prewar positions than on altering the basic conditions that had helped produce the war. It should be noted, however, that these views reflected the different forums to which these men were speaking—Kosygin to an international audience, Podgorny to the Arabs, and Brezhnev to party and military groups. However, their views were compatible with the differing outlooks each had displayed earlier.

[REDACTED] reported that Kosygin even threatened to resign at one point as a result of his disagreement with other Politburo members. That he may have represented a position of greater flexibility than the other leaders was suggested by the conciliatory shadings of his statements during his UN trip in contrast to the uniformly harsh-toned, anti-Israeli, anti-Western propaganda in Soviet media. Indeed, passages in Kosygin's statements which could be interpreted as conciliatory were excised from Soviet press accounts. Editorial trimming of such passages was evident, for example, in Kosygin's 25 June statement that after an Israeli withdrawal all other questions arising in the Middle East could be considered by the Security Council.

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Any hints of a softening of Soviet demands regarding a Middle East settlement or of the possibility of compromise were absent from Brezhnev's major speech on 5 July. He also did not reiterate Kosygin's support at the UN of Israel's right to exist as an element of Soviet policy, nor the Premier's reference to the responsibility of the great powers to contribute to peace in

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the Middle East.* Similarly, the Central Committee resolution which, in effect, approved Brezhnev's unpublished report to the plenum also omitted these points. In other respects, however, the resolution paralleled the main lines of Kosygin's UN speech—though, as might be expected, defining Soviet policy positions in a more thoroughgoing ideological form. Similarly, Podgornyy in a conversation

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assumed an intransigent tone.

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He indicated that he was not sure a compromise was possible, though he said a peaceful solution was necessary. He emphasized that aggression could not be rewarded and that Israel's withdrawal from occupied Arab territories was the precondition of any negotiations. That this position may have been a diplomatic stance rather than ironclad policy was at least suggested when

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not to take what the Arabs and the Soviets said publicly too literally and that compromises were necessary. Yet, in a conversation in late July, Kosygin again took a softer line, saying that a second round militarily in the Middle East was out of the question from the Soviet viewpoint and that a peaceful solution, preferably in the UN, must be found. Thus, the relatively consistent difference in emphasis between Kosygin and his two colleagues emerges in the available evidence and suggests that he was an advocate of a more flexible policy designed to increase chances for a political settlement in the Middle East.

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While detailed evidence on the views of other Politburo-level figures on Middle East policy during the crisis period is scanty, one notable moderate-sounding voice emerged in the Central Committee Secretariat. The audience to which it was addressed probably in part accounts for its tenor. In late July, in his meeting with Italian Communists, party secretary Ponomarev expressed sharp criticisms of the Arabs for refusing Moscow's counsels of restraint before the war and for taking such unilateral actions as closing the gulf. He charged that the Arab governments were fanatic and irrational, and that Moscow was forced to give aid to Nasir as he was the most reasonable of the Arab leaders; he was particularly critical of Boumediene, a view apparently not previously held by Brezhnev, who in early June had stated that

**Kosygin's assertion of Israel's right to exist was implicit in the statement that every people had the right "to establish an independent state of its own." Like Brezhnev, other leaders did not mention this right with reference to the Middle East, though presumably recognition of Israel's right to statehood has remained a promise of Soviet policy.*

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Boumediene was the most reasonable of the Arab leaders. Ponomarev complained that the Arabs were bleeding the socialist states and criticized the Egyptians for keeping the Suez closed. He was quite pessimistic, stating that the cease-fire had left the crisis unresolved and the Soviets did not know how it could be resolved; he expressed alarm that the situation might lead to a direct confrontation among the great powers.

In sum, it would appear that during the crisis a perhaps uneasy consensus existed, based on the desire to keep losses to a minimum and avoid any direct involvement in the conflict. While some leaders may have urged stronger action than was in fact taken, support for such a course seems to have been slight. However, once the actual crisis had passed the differences on Middle East policy surfaced—most explosively in the Yegorychev attack. A consensus approach again prevailed, aimed at preserving with minimal loss the Soviet role as champion of Arab interests. However, on one side of the consensus may have been a hard-line, activist position, and on the other a more moderate one. Differences over the extent of commitment to be made to the Arabs most probably have persisted. These countertrends within the leadership probably have been partly responsible for the schizophrenic course of Soviet conduct since the war; they also suggest a potential for change in Soviet Middle East policy.

SOVIETS SHIFT SUPPORT FROM SYRIANS TO EGYPTIANS

Moscow Endorses Nasir's Postwar Moves

Soviet policy underwent a gradual, hesitant shift away from the radical Arab position toward the Egyptians in the months immediately following the June war. During this process Soviet policy makers experienced repeated frustration both because of the imperviousness of the Syrian radicals and their Arab abettors to any notion of compromise politics in the UN and because of their own self-imposed inhibition against pressuring the radicals to the point where they might turn in anger against Moscow's sponsorship. Despite the part Nasir had played in precipitating the June war, he was by way of contrast less fanatical than the Syrians and the more amenable to Soviet counsel and admonition. In fact, after the shock of the Arab defeat had lessened and Nasir had survived the crisis of his own leadership, Moscow did not hesitate to aim public criticism at the Egyptian failures and by indirection at Nasir himself in press articles in late June. The Soviets were even more explicit in their criticisms [redacted] with showing impatience with Arab hotheadedness and referring to Nasir's prewar actions

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as case in point. Evidence that Nasir had been chastened—at least temporarily—by his experience and saw the need for political flexibility was first reflected in his decision in mid-July to attend an Arab summit meeting. Since the meeting was endorsed by the conservative Arabs and boycotted by the radicals, the decision marked a shift away from his prewar alliance with the Syrians. Nasir's decision to side with the conservative Arabs was undoubtedly tied to an effort to find sources of relief for the UAR's critical economic situation. Loss of revenue from the closing of Suez as well as the general dislocation caused by the war had created a monetary crisis and Nasir needed money. At the conference, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Libya jointly agreed to provide the UAR and Jordan with quarterly aid payments, in exchange for which these three nations were to resume oil shipments to the United States. The conference rejected the "continue-to-fight" policy recommended by Syria (which refused to attend the conference), Algeria, and the Palestine Liberation Organization, and gave Nasir and Husayn a mandate to seek a political settlement; it termed a Yugoslav compromise proposal "reasonable."*

**In mid-August Tito had visited the UAR, Syria, and Iraq in an effort to win Arab support for his proposal. This five-point plan did not include a nonbelligerency clause as Nasir had said, indicating that Nasir was prepared to go further in compromise than the Tito plan. As published in Tanyug on 16 September its provisions were:*

- 1. The pullback of all troops from territories occupied since 4 June, with UN observers on hand.*
- 2. A UN Security Council or big-four power guarantee of the security and frontiers of all countries in the area until a final solution was found.*
- 3. Free passage through the Strait of Tiran pending a ruling by the International Court of Justice.*
- 4. Restoration of all forces in Suez on the eve of 5 June.*
- 5. As soon as the above was done, the UNSC would take steps to resolve other issues.*

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In the first week of September Moscow somewhat belatedly voiced its approval of the Khartoum conference. At the same time Soviet propaganda changed its tune on Middle East issues. As late as 31 August Soviet propaganda continued to echo the hard line taken in *Pravda* and *Izvestiya* early in the month. *Radio Peace and Progress* carried a report urging continued embargo of US oil, withdrawal of Arab currency from Western banks, and a general boycott of the West. Also Moscow had been critical of the idea of an Arab summit prior to Nasir's announcement of his decision to support the Khartoum summit on 23 July.

Now *Pravda* endorsed the Khartoum conference on 5 September as a step forward in Arab unity; it said that the view held by various Arabs that the resumption of war was the only way out had been replaced by a more sober approach. *Radio Peace and Progress*, on the same day, noted the absence of the Syrian leaders "who consider military operations the main method" but said that the Syrians had agreed to support "all positive measures" drafted in Khartoum. *Pravda* and *Izvestiya* now praised the resumption of oil shipments to the United States as a necessary source of Arab revenue. *Novoye Vremya* in September called the Syrian and Algerian advocacy of continuous struggle unrealistic, and praised the Egyptian public for reacting favorably to suggestions that the slogan of destruction of Israel be dropped. The article held out hope for settlement by saying that the Khartoum conference had rejected direct negotiations "at the present stage," thereby leaving open the possibility that this might change.

The Soviet decision to change the propaganda line evidently came after Nasir's own switch to support of Khartoum and somewhat tardily. Despite the delays, the Soviets had taken a major step in their policy of supporting the less militant Arab line. Each step in this direction cost the Soviets influence in the more radical Arab camp, and each step was made reluctantly. A public Soviet position on the summit conference was necessary, and, as the radical Arabs vigorously opposed the conference while Nasir supported it, a Soviet position was bound to alienate one or the other. The fear of a renewed war and another setback was consistently pushing the Soviets toward the moderate Arab line and away from their previous support for the radicals.

Soviets Urge Restraint on Syria

Pravda's endorsement of the Khartoum summit registered Moscow's readiness to support the relatively moderate position now assumed by Nasir and to criticize the more radical Arabs in public. The Soviet policy of urging

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Egyptian-Syrian unity before the war had helped to push Nasir toward greater militancy with disastrous results. Now the Soviets were prepared to make clear their support for a more rational Arab line and to risk alienating the Syrians as a result. Their efforts to pull the Syrians in that direction met with no success.



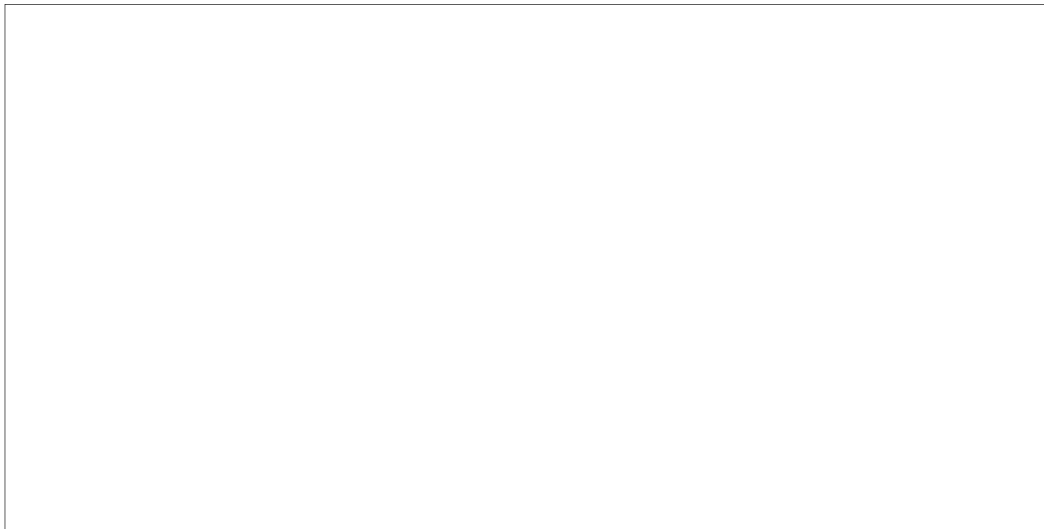
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The arguments used by the Soviets clearly indicated their apprehension about the possibility of a renewal of the war and their particular fear that Syrian provocations would cause an Israeli reaction which might prove disastrous. And they were now willing to let the Syrians know that they did not support any policy which might impel the Israelis to resume the fighting.

In early August a Syrian delegation led by Minister of Defense Hafiz Asad spent a week in Moscow; reports on the results of this visit suggest a less than satisfactory result from the Syrian point of view. Although one source said that Asad was pleased with the visit, most reporting indicates Syrian disappointment. According to the Damascus press, the Soviets agreed to give the Syrian Army free military equipment equal to that lost in the war, but insisted that the Syrians pay for equipment received in excess of the June 1967 levels. A [redacted] stated in mid-August that the Syrians were angry because the Soviets were supplying them with old and used equipment and were making them pay 50% rather than the previous 25% of the cost of aircraft.

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A Syrian military mission to the USSR in October is also said to have come back dissatisfied. Although by the end of the year most of the Syrian war losses had reportedly been replaced, as of November Soviet deliveries of military equipment largely represented fulfillment of prewar contracts. The October delegation reportedly returned with no new promises of aid.

In any event, the Syrians were dependent on the Soviets for their equipment and, while the message may never have been relayed directly, the

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implication might well have been conveyed that until the Syrians moderated their position, Soviet support would be less than complete. In addition, the Soviets might well have reasoned that the dangers inherent in supplying the radical and aggressive Syrians with a larger military capability were too great to be risked.

The Lever Of Military Aid

While Soviet arm-twisting never reached the point where the Syrians or Egyptians openly complained, Soviet military aid policy was unmistakably aimed at measurably increasing the USSR's presence, influence and—to whatever degree possible—control over Arab policy in the war-making sphere.

The Soviets had considerable room in which to maneuver and apply pressure in their military aid program. For, although they had immediately promised after the war to resupply equipment lost in the war, the Soviets could decide how much and what type of additional equipment would be forthcoming. The stationing of Soviet military advisors in the Arab forces was clearly one of Moscow's conditions for aid. The number of Soviet personnel in Arab countries jumped rapidly to about four times its prewar level and continued to be maintained there.

This influx has been accompanied by signs of considerable friction within the Arab armed forces between the Soviet and Arab military. [redacted] the Soviets demanded that Soviet personnel serve as instructors at all levels of the Syrian army command and that they control any firing along Syria's frontiers; this source stated that this degree of Soviet control was unacceptable to the Syrian government, had stirred controversy, and, in fact, had helped bring down the Syrian Government on 28 September 1967.

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The authority actually given these advisors is not clear. Although various reports have indicated a high degree of Soviet authority in training and operational exercises, there is no proof of direct Soviet command and control authority. While it seems unlikely that Soviet personnel have any final say in policy and command decisions, the extent of their involvement in both the Syrian and UAR armed forces is certainly greater than it was before the war. The Soviets must in this way expect to exercise some restraint on Arab forces and to make sure that Soviet-supplied equipment was not again squandered; at the same time they obviously hoped to raise the standards and capabilities of the Arab armed forces.

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The Soviets also succeeded in gaining increased access to naval facilities in the Mediterranean. The Soviets greatly increased the size of their Mediterranean fleet during 1967, and access to refueling and repair facilities had become very desirable. Secondly, a Soviet naval presence in Arab ports provided a greater deterrent factor against future Israeli attacks and, more importantly, US intervention in the area.

However, a distinction must be drawn between the establishment of Soviet *bases* in the Middle East and the use by the Soviets of existing port facilities. According to a political observer in Cairo, Foreign Minister Riyad said that Nasir refused the Soviets permission to open a naval base in the UAR, although Soviet ships at Alexandria and Port Said could "stay as long as they want." In other words, Soviet requests for *control* of port facilities had been rejected, but Soviet *use* of such facilities would be permitted.*

In fact, the Soviet fleet has made only minimal use of these ports and has relied primarily on its own auxiliary ships for supplies and repairs. However, Soviet fleet vessels have made prolonged visits to various ports, particularly Port Said and Alexandria in the UAR and Latakia in Syria. The increased Soviet naval presence provides an added counter for Soviet tactics in future crisis situations.

SOVIET MANEUVERS ON ARAB-ISRAELI SETTLEMENT

Position on Withdrawal Ambiguous

The Soviet shift in August and September 1967 to support of Nasir and a less militant propaganda line** and the growing Soviet criticism of the radical Arabs were accompanied by a corresponding inclination by the Soviets to follow Nasir's lead in the diplomatic realm without undertaking any initiatives of their own. As their shift on various themes (the summit, an oil boycott of the West, and so forth) had been accomplished in stages, so

**In fact the Soviets themselves probably would not wish to acquire bases formally as they have long been outspoken critics of US bases. Furthermore, their acquisition of bases could render them still more vulnerable to possible involvement in a future war.*

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their position on a political settlement during this period was ambiguous and even contradictory. For example, UN Ambassador Fedorenko told [redacted] on 3 August that Soviet policy in the future would link Israeli withdrawal to the end of the state of belligerency in the Middle East, but in September Moscow injected a new adjective—unconditional—into propaganda demanding Israeli withdrawal.

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The public statements of top Soviet spokesmen were also vague. Both Kosygin and Gromyko in mid-September publicly stressed the dangers of tensions in the area "in direct proximity" to the USSR's frontiers. Gromyko, in his 22 September speech to the General Assembly* warned of the dangers of a new armed conflict, called for Israeli compensation to the Arabs, and said that if Israel did not observe the UN resolutions, the Security Council must determine sanctions. [redacted]

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He did not elaborate, but the implication that compromises were possible was clear.

By the end of September, however, the Soviets seemed to have no specific goal in the diplomatic realm, and their statements seemed to lack direction. They still had not taken any public position on the Tito proposals of August** which the moderate Arabs, including Nasir, had indicated were acceptable. Taking no initiatives of their own, Soviet policy seemed to be in a state of suspense and seemed content to let Nasir take the lead, as he had on the Khartoum summit, and follow his initiative in again supporting a compromise UN resolution.

Soviets Support Arab Initiative

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**The special emergency session of the UNGA, convened on 17 June and adjourned temporarily on 21 July, concluded on 18 September with a resolution asking that the regular General Assembly session give the Middle East situation high priority. Gromyko was addressing the regular session.*

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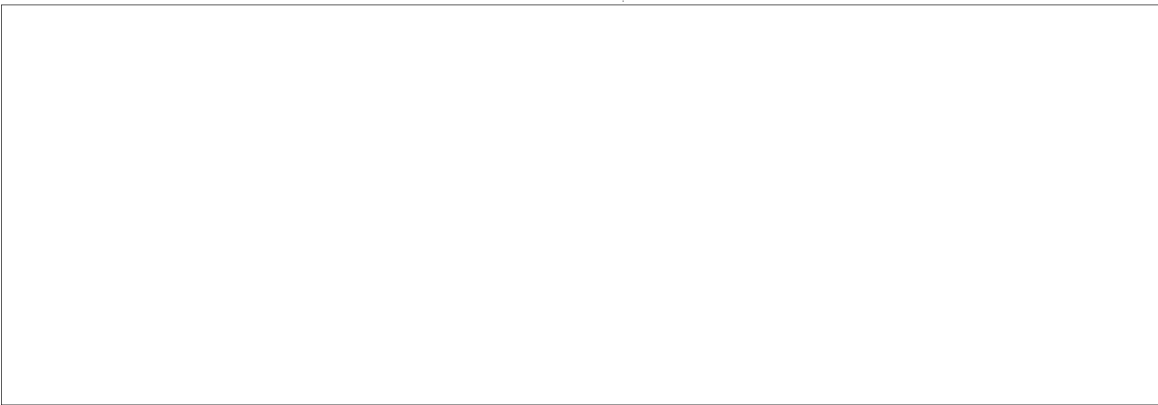
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During the next week US Ambassador Goldberg told Ambassador Dobrynin that the United States did not want a UN meeting on the issue without Moscow's prior agreement on future guarantees of Israeli security—presumably including passage through the Suez. According to one report Moscow would not commit itself on this matter without Arab agreement, a



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negative posture since Nasir was adamant that free passage be combined with the refugee question. However, Soviet Ambassador to Cairo Vinogradov reportedly told Western diplomats that Moscow believed an end to the state of belligerency would include Israeli passage through the Suez, but felt that Israel should not assert this right until the final stages of settlement. Thus, the Soviet view, as stated by Vinogradov, was more conciliatory in this respect than was Nasir's position.

Increased Tension and Nasir's Ambivalence

Numerous border incidents along the cease-fire lines in the Middle East have raised Arab-Israeli tension to a high pitch since the end of the war and the danger of a major outbreak of war has returned. Arab terrorist raids into Israel increased steadily and by October 1967 Israel was warning that it might have to strike at the "centers of terrorism"—a clear threat to Syria and possibly to Jordan. The threat particularly alarmed the Syrians, who [redacted] [redacted] were expecting an "imminent attack."

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In October there were indications that Nasir was in a troubled state of mind. Nasir's confidant Haykal expressed anxiety about the leader's mental condition, saying that he was subject to sudden fits of temper and severe depression and was obsessed with the ambition of restoring Egypt's prestige through a successful strike at Israel. The sinking of the Israel destroyer *Eilat* on 21 October might have reflected this attitude on Nasir's part. If so, he must have been further infuriated by Israel's retaliation—the bombing of Egyptian oil refineries—and the announcement that the United States would supply fighter bombers to Israel.

There were various reports at this time that the Egyptian position was hardening and doubt was growing in Cairo about the possibility of a peaceful settlement. On 10 November Haykal, writing in *Al Ahram*, termed the continuation of the war "inevitable"; he hedged a bit, however, by adding that this did not necessarily mean that fighting would resume tomorrow.

Toward a UN Resolution

In spite of their reportedly hardening position, the Egyptians during this period, nonetheless, supported a draft resolution, submitted by the Indians,* which embodied with a few changes the earlier Jordan/UAR/Soviet

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understanding of early October. Israeli withdrawal from all territories occupied during the war was tied to the end of the state of belligerency, as it had been in the Arab plan, but instead of referring the questions of refugees and free passage through international waterways to future deliberation, this draft implied that settlement of these issues would occur in the same time frame as the other provisions. In addition, it called for the dispatch of a special representative to the Middle East to coordinate efforts to resolve the situation.

At this time, however, the UAR and Jordan appeared to be losing touch with each other. Cairo, which had called for a Security Council session* apparently without consulting Jordan, was supporting the Indian draft. Husayn, on the other hand, felt that the Arabs must accept a proposal which had US approval, as the United States was the only nation which could exert a practical influence. A US draft resolution had also been presented to the Security Council; it called for an end to the state of belligerency and recognition of the right of all states to exist within recognized boundaries; it called for Israeli withdrawal, but did not specify withdrawal from *all* occupied territories.

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**The Security Council met in urgent session on 9 November at the request of the UAR.*

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Soviets Play a Double Role

During the fall Soviet diplomats began to speak again of a mounting war danger in the Middle East.* Several indicated that, without a political settlement (which seemed far away), terrorism might increase and open hostilities recur. [redacted]

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[redacted] This threat may well have been intended for Western consumption with the goal of pushing the West toward a more flexible diplomatic position.

The degree of pressure, if any, the Soviets exerted on the UAR to accept the UK draft is not known, but they evidently did want some sort of political accommodation to reduce the danger of renewed hostilities. [redacted]

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[redacted] Fedorenko was annoyed over the sinking of the *Eilat* as this complicated reaching agreement at the UN. Probably the Soviets also feared that incidents of this sort might result in renewed war.

In October Muhyi ad-Din stated that the Soviets were not providing the UAR with arms in the quantity or quality requested; he said that they were holding back on certain weapons and counseling that the UAR make a final agreement on permanent guaranteed boundaries. In a CPSU document probably written in October, which was circulated to delegations visiting the USSR in November,** the Soviets stated that it was necessary for the Arabs to adopt a more realistic approach and that an immediate step should be to combine demands for immediate Israeli withdrawal with a formula on terminating the state of war. Thus both the desire and the willingness to push for a resolution seemed to be present on the Soviet side.

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***See page 51 for further discussion of this document.*

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At the same time Soviet actions betrayed ambivalence [redacted]

[redacted] The draft specified that Israel withdraw to pre-5 June borders and postponed consideration of the refugee problem and passage through international waterways for future consideration by the council. Thus, it returned to the July 1967 Soviet proposal; this emphasis on total withdrawal and postponement of the other issues made the Soviet proposal more palatable for the Arabs than was the British plan but also ensured its rejection by Israel and the United States. In addition, the Soviet draft omitted any provision for a special representative to be sent to the area.

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The Soviet action delayed Security Council proceedings for two days and mystified everyone. Their sudden action came as a surprise since they were expected to support the UK draft. The action may have been a last-minute effort to appease the radical Arabs by playing the part of partial obstructionists and by going through the motions of submitting a more pro-Arab resolution which they expected to withdraw.

On 22 November the Soviets withdrew their resolution and supported the British draft which then passed unanimously.

The Syrians predictably reacted violently to the Security Council resolution. On 23 and 25 November Atasi and other Syrian leaders issued inflammatory statements calling for armed struggle. And, on 23 November, [redacted] Zuayyin complained to the Soviet Ambassador in Damascus that the USSR wanted to impose Nasir's political line on the Syrians. The Soviets did not remain silent. A *Pravda* article on 27 November praised the self-control of the moderate Arabs and criticized Arab "hot-heads":

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We cannot help noting that in some Arab capitals there are hotheads and hasty statements in the press which, under present conditions, act like a boomerang, give pretexts for anti-Arab Western propaganda, and are taken advantage of by extremists in Tel Aviv.

Soviet efforts to urge the Syrians into moderation had failed. The Soviet decision to endorse the compromise UN resolution further antagonized the Syrians. In spite of their efforts to walk a middle line, the Soviets had again been forced to choose and, in so doing, had alienated the Syrian extremists.

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THE SOVIET POSITION—NOVEMBER 1967

In November 1967 the Soviet leadership issued a CPSU document on Soviet policy in the Middle East giving an authoritative defense and explanation of Soviet actions in the Middle East. Circulated among delegates to the 50th anniversary observances in Moscow, it reflected Soviet sensitivity to criticism of the USSR after the war, both by critics domestic (Yegorychev) and foreign (particularly of course the Arabs). The document pictures the Arab leaders as supporters of Soviet policies who did not seek Soviet involvement in the armed conflict. It only gives an intimation of Arab dissatisfaction with Soviet policy in raising accusations against the Chinese and "imperialists" who allegedly sought to drive a wedge between the USSR and the Arabs. The document zigzags between attacks on the "imperialist West" and "its tool" Israel, attributing Israel's aggression to the "imperialist" goal of destroying the progressive Arab states, and criticism of the Arabs for their military failure in the war.

Soviet contempt for the Arab military is visible in passages on military aid which explains how deliveries of basic arms had already made up for UAR and Syrian losses in the war.* Citing Podgorny's trip in late June, the sending of military delegations to the Middle East, and the visits of Soviet naval vessels to Port Said and Alexandria as measures of the Soviet effort to strengthen Arab defenses, it suggests that the successful use of the aid rests with the Arabs in stressing the importance of the efficient mastering of equipment and the need to improve the Arab armed forces.

The document tends to exaggerate Soviet efforts to prevent war in late May 1967 and Soviet support for the Arabs when war broke out. According to its account the USSR urged restraint on the Arabs during the late May visits of Badran and Atasi, but when the war started, sent military aid to the Arabs and Soviet warships into the Mediterranean as a counterpoise to the U.S. Sixth Fleet. And, finally, according to the document, the Soviets issued a series of warnings, culminating in the 10 June message to President Johnson containing a threat of unspecified Soviet counteractions if Israel did

**The Soviets are also somewhat defensive about the military aid given, perhaps reflecting Arab dissatisfaction.* [REDACTED]

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not cease military operations. [redacted]

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At the same time, the document reaffirmed the Soviet interest in a "political settlement" and Israel's continued existence as a state, while calling for an immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Israeli forces from Arab territory. In this connection, the document cited the admonition of the July Budapest conference that the Arabs must be more realistic and that the first step should combine a demand for immediate Israeli withdrawal with an arrangement for terminating the state of war between the Arabs and Israel.

The Soviet advocacy of this policy nonetheless left a number of questions of interpretation and implementation unanswered. The less extreme Arab leaders had already indicated that they wanted Israeli withdrawal from *all* territories occupied after 5 June, a condition unacceptable to Israel. Further, the Arabs and Israelis were at odds on the question of *when* Israeli withdrawal would occur—before, during, or after some reciprocal Arab action. In this period the Soviet position vacillated. It shifted from demanding withdrawal *before* any reciprocating Arab move to a more flexible stance and back again. The argument over the foregoing issues was further exacerbated by questions of passage through international waterways, settlement of the refugee problem, supervision of an agreement, direct talks, and so forth. Thus, passage of a UN resolution, seen as a major goal for so long, was simply a first step, and a hesitant one at that, toward a solution.

CONCLUSION

While the resolution was not a panacea, its passage punctuated the change in Soviet tactics which had evolved since the June war. Before the war Moscow lent support to the fanatic Syrian regime which it saw as a springboard for extending Soviet influence in the Middle East. To this end Moscow pursued conflicting tactics which soon proved counter-productive. On the one hand, Moscow made no effective effort to curb the mounting Syrian propaganda and guerrilla campaign against Israel and at one point helped abet that campaign by disseminating a false report of an imminent Israeli military move against Syria. On the other hand, Moscow sought to revive Egyptian-Syrian rapprochement evidently expecting that such a development would at once serve to curb Syrian initiative and deter Israel. However, the unintended result of the Soviet policy was not to improve control over the Syrians but to radicalize Nasir and to accelerate the movement of events toward war.

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During and after the war, the Soviets improvised policy staying away from direct involvement behind a smokescreen of pro-Arab propaganda and diplomatic gestures. Moscow issued some vague threats and initiated an airlift to the Arab nations while making clear to the Arabs that the USSR would not be drawn then or in the future to such a war.

As the war crisis receded Soviet policy shifted toward stronger support of Nasir who evidently was at least temporarily chastened by defeat. Moscow followed Nasir's lead and gave its support to the Khartoum summit conference. The conference was endorsed by the conservative (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Jordan) and moderate (UAR) Arabs and boycotted by the radical Syrians. The Soviets urged the Syrians both to attend the conference and modify their line. In the face of Syrian refusal, Moscow put pressure on the Syrians by giving them less military aid than was requested—but to no avail. The new Soviet line was underscored by the USSR's endorsement of the UN compromise resolution in November despite Syrian opposition. Earlier in July 1967 Syrian opposition had led the Soviets to back down from their proposed resolution. In November they refused to back down again and on the 22nd a compromise resolution was passed in the Security Council with Soviet backing. While it might have been supposed at the end of 1967 that Soviet policy on the Middle East had finally evolved into a more or less firm course, Soviet policy since then has once again displayed a schizoid tendency.

Despite a determination in the aftermath of the June disaster to prevent a repetition of that episode, the Soviet leadership has continued to ride on the back of an unpredictable and untamed Arab nationalist movement. Indeed, Soviet diplomats became more vocal in urging restraint on the Arabs in late 1967 and warned them not to expect direct Soviet participation in any second installment of the June war. Nonetheless, Moscow at the same time resumed and even augmented the policies that had produced Arab overconfidence in the first place: it re-equipped Arab armies, stepped up training of the Arab military through an expanded corps of Soviet advisors, and began to funnel aid to the Arab guerrillas—the most fanatical vanguard of the Arab movement against Israel.

The renewed Soviet preference for the presumably more malleable Egyptians over the Syrian zealots scarcely offset the chronic danger inherent in Soviet policy. Any pressure Moscow put on Nasir in favor of a political settlement with Israel was restricted by its own desire not to alienate the Arab leader. Acting under this inhibition the Soviet moderate line of late 1967 has eroded as Nasir's anti-Israeli militancy has mounted to a point

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where he rivals the Syrians in stridency. The moderate trend in Soviet policy has been increasingly submerged by a trend toward more open support of Arab militancy. Recently, the latter trend was underscored by Shelepin's speech (19 October 1969) at a WFTU meeting endorsing a strong line of active aid to Arab guerrillas, Kosygin's remarks in a similar vein (10 December 1969) in welcoming an Egyptian delegation, and increasing favorable reportage in Soviet media of the activities and reputed exploits of the Arab guerrilla movement. The shift suggests that Moscow once more seems intent on keeping pace with Arab radicalization. Moreover, with its increased military and naval presence in the area along with greater confidence in its strategic posture toward the United States, Moscow may now see itself in a better position than it was in 1967 to tolerate the risk inherent in its policy and be ready for a more active role in any future crisis in the Middle East. While such a judgment does not necessarily imply that the present Soviet leadership has developed a penchant for sudden or risky initiatives in crisis situations, it has unmistakably striven to put itself in a position to play a more active part in future crises and incidentally reduce its vulnerability to charges of unpreparedness from internal critics that arose in June 1967. In sum, the Soviets currently estimate that the long-range gains for Soviet influence in the Middle East outweigh the chronic danger of having events get out of control as they did in June 1967.

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SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The prelude to the Arab-Israeli war contains the recurring theme of Soviet attempts to manipulate and take advantage of a highly explosive situation over which, in the final analysis, the Soviets had no control. Prior to the radical Baathist coup in Syria in February 1966, Soviet policy-makers focused on wooing Nasir. After the coup, they saw Syria as another promising candidate for advancing Soviet influence in the Middle East and turned their attentions to that more fanatical, more anti-Israeli nation. In the spring of 1966 they began to support a radical anti-Israel line more in harmony with the inclinations of the fanatical Syrians than with the relatively moderate views of Nasir.

The decision to support the Syrians involved the commitment of prestige as well as additional quantities of economic and military equipment. Thus the Soviet Union assumed a major interest in insuring the survival of a shaky regime, beset by internal problems and vulnerable to outside pressures. Syria's hostility toward her conservative, pro-West Arab neighbor Jordan created fear of subversion from that quarter, and her aggressive policy towards Israel—including both verbal and terrorist attacks—created the constant possibility of reprisals from that nation.

In addition to supporting a generally harder (more pro-Arab, anti-Israel) propaganda line in the Middle East, the USSR began to issue vague warnings against any outside interference in Syria's affairs. In the beginning these warnings were directed primarily at Jordan, but soon the focus of apprehension shifted to Israel, which was portrayed as the tool of the United States. Although this anti-U.S. line was consistent with the Soviet policy of undermining U.S. influence in the area and, therefore, might have been used in any case, it is also possible that memories of the 1958 U.S. intervention in Lebanon contributed to a fear of U.S. interference in Syria.

Hoping to ward off any retaliatory attacks against Damascus, the Soviets sought to bring Syria and the UAR closer together; this was not an easy task as the two had been very hostile since the break-up of their union in 1961. In seeking a Syrian-UAR rapprochement, the Soviets may have hoped to gain several things; first, they might have felt Nasir could persuade the Syrians to take a less provocative attitude toward Israel, and, secondly, they apparently wanted Nasir to pledge his support to Syria and thereby deter any planned intervention against Syria. A Soviet disseminated report in October 1966 that Israeli troops were concentrating along the Syrian border

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in preparation for an attack may have helped prompt the signing of a UAR-Syrian mutual defense pact directed against Israel in November 1966. The terms of the pact made the UAR the senior partner with the option of determining when and how it would respond to any hostilities between Israel and Syria. The Soviets and Egyptians may have hoped this would increase their influence over Syria; the most important effect of the treaty, however, was to render Nasir more vulnerable to demagogic pressures brought by the extremist Syrians.

During the early months of 1967 the conflict on the Israeli-Syrian border mounted as guerrilla attacks from Syrian territory intensified. An Israeli reprisal attack and a major air battle on 7 April between Syrians and Israelis resulted in an overwhelming victory for the latter and pointed up Syria's military vulnerability. Nasir's passivity during and after this battle led to new efforts by the Soviets to persuade Nasir to make a credible commitment to Syria, probably in the hope that this would deter Israel.

Another Soviet-spread rumor in mid-May 1967 that Israel had mobilized its forces on the Syrian border in preparation for a major attack triggered the chain of events which led to war. The rumor was without basis in fact, and while some analysts feel that the Soviets did believe the report, it seems likely that they did not.* If they did believe it, they were remiss in their failure to investigate it. A similar Soviet-disseminated false accusation in October 1966 had been followed by the November defense pact between Syria and the UAR. It is thus quite possible the Soviets were again consciously using a false report in an effort to manipulate Nasir. They may have hoped to convince Nasir that an Israeli attack on Syria was imminent and that he should convincingly show his support for Syria and thereby deter the Israelis from undertaking any major hostile action.

The Soviets' willingness to pass along an uncorroborated report as dramatic as this one illustrated their readiness before the war to take risks for the sake of their immediate goals. Of course, the full extent of the danger was not yet understood. In their drive to gain Nasir's support for the Syrians they added fuel to an already explosive situation. Their concern about a

**The Soviets may well have feared, however, that the Israelis were contemplating an eventual attack. On 12 May Israeli Premier Eshkol had issued a sharp warning to Syria, stating that that nation faced severe counteraction if it did not halt terrorist raids into Israel.*

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possible Syrian-Israeli conflict and their desire to increase their own influence and power in the area at the expense of the United States caused the Soviets to underestimate the risks involved in their policy. The USSR was trying to play the role of manipulator, but it did not have direct control over the primary actors.

Nasir, the led, now took the lead into his own hands. The Soviets initially looked on approvingly as he mobilized Egyptian forces and moved them toward the Israeli borders. (Some analysts feel the Soviets were upset by the Egyptian mobilization, but if that was the case, they gave no indication of disapproval.) His demand that UN emergency forces be withdrawn from Sinai and the Gaza Strip was described by him and accepted by the Soviets as an attempt to deter Israel by convincing the latter of Egyptian readiness to come to Syria's defense. However, the Soviets were not quite so sanguine or approving of Nasir's 22 May announcement that he was blockading the Gulf of Aqaba. For this was not a move to *deter* Israel but was itself a provocation which the Israelis interpreted as an act of war.

At this important stage the Soviets made little effort to retrieve the situation for which they had so carefully laid the groundwork. Although they were *not* informed in advance of the blockade and did not approve of it, they were clearly unwilling to squander any of their influence by trying to convince Nasir that he must pull back. They seem to have minimized the possible dangers, being persuaded that the United States could and would restrain Israel, fairly sure that the UAR could deter Israel from any attack (Nasir himself seemed convinced the Arabs could handle Israel militarily), and secure in the belief that regardless of what happened the USSR could only gain politically at the expense of the United States.

Instead of trying to convince Nasir that he must retreat, the Soviets continued with their demagogic but ambivalent support of the Arabs. They issued strong statements of support for the Arab cause, implying Soviet assistance in the event of imperialist aggression. They left deliberately vague, however, the forms such assistance would take and under what circumstances it would be forthcoming. Nasir was convinced that the USSR would at least prevent any U.S. interference in Israel's behalf, his major anxiety at the time. There is no evidence that the Soviets ever made it clear to him, however, that they would not become directly involved* and they never

**On one occasion in mid-May, they did finally indicate this to the Syrians, but there is reason to doubt that this one clear statement in a welter of Soviet ambiguity ever reached the UAR.*

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tried to persuade Nasir to retreat from the suicidal steps he had already taken. The closest they came to the latter was to suggest that he not take *further* provocative actions.

Surprised by the Israeli attack on 5 June and shocked by the ease and magnitude of the Israeli victory, the Soviets first of all made sure that they would not be pulled into the conflict. They made immediate use of the "hot-line" to Washington both to try to put a stop to the Israeli attack and to insure against a U.S./USSR confrontation. They rejected the Arab charge of U.S./UK participation in Israeli air attacks—a charge they probably felt was calculated to draw them into the war. The Soviets then turned to the task of salvaging what they could from the debacle. They supported a simple cease-fire resolution in the United Nations in an attempt to cut Arab losses, and they initiated an emergency airlift of equipment to their Arab allies.

The only indications of possible direct Soviet involvement came after Israel began its march into Syria on 9 June. On that date the Soviets began to issue vague warnings of possible Soviet action if Israel did not stop its advance toward Damascus, and on 11 June there were several reports indicating that the Soviets in fact were making plans for token landings of sailors and/or paratroops in Syria. After the war the Soviets attributed the cessation of hostilities by Israel to the effect of its warnings. While it is possible that Israel stopped its advance rather than risk possible Soviet intervention, it is more likely that it stopped because it had achieved its objective of capturing the strategic Golan Heights; there is little to suggest that Israel planned to advance to any of the Arab capitals. In any event, the Soviet threats were kept vague and the reported actions being considered by the USSR were belated and only token in nature.

The initial reactions of the Soviets during the war seemed almost instinctive in character—first, self-preservation and then the attempt to salvage what they could. Immediately after the war they continued with essentially the same approach; they tried to redeem themselves in the eyes of their Arab allies by sending high-level delegations to reassure the Arabs of continued Soviet support, and they tried to regain some of their international prestige by championing the Arab cause with strong words in the United Nations.

However, interwoven from the beginning of the post-war period were the strands of a somewhat more cautious Soviet approach to the Middle East, based on the desire to prevent a recurrence of the June disaster. Soviet fear of another runaway situation was demonstrated by their demands for

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some control over future arms shipments, by an unwillingness to make unlimited commitments of military aid, particularly to the Syrians, and by the Soviet decision to make it clear to the Arabs that they would *not* come to their assistance in the event of renewed hostilities with Israel.* Furthermore, in July 1967 the Soviets seemed to be working toward a compromise UN resolution which would combine demands for Israeli withdrawal from occupied territories with termination of the state of belligerency in the Middle East.

However, in many important ways Soviet policy retained ambiguities. While fearful of a new military disaster and therefore anxious to restrain Arab militancy, the Soviets quickly demonstrated their support for their Arab clients by shipping large quantities of arms to them. While anxious to get some sort of UN resolution passed, in order to put pressure on Israel to withdraw, the Soviets withdrew their support of such a proposal in July in the face of radical Arab opposition. These apparent contradictions point up the USSR's consistent dilemma—the desire to continue to profit politically from Middle East tension without permitting the situation to explode again.

Soviet policy during the post-war period of June and July was in transition. The leadership was struggling to justify its actions in the Middle East which were under attack from both foreign and domestic sources. Its foreign critics included the Arabs, who had been disillusioned by Soviet inaction during the war. Within the Soviet Union, Moscow City boss Yegorychev attacked these policies at the late June CPSU plenum. Although Yegorychev was removed from his post, the fact that he dared express strong criticism suggests that he felt his views had support from influential elements in the hierarchy.

In spite of internal disagreements, Soviet policy began to take clearer shape in the summer of 1967 and by November of that year the second shift in Soviet policy was virtually complete. The first shift, that of mid-1966, had followed the radical Baathist coup in Syria; it had reflected the Soviet

**The Soviets did, however, manage to retain an element of ambiguity regarding their response in the event of U.S. intervention in a Middle East war. While stating explicitly that no Soviet armed intervention would occur in the event of Arab-Israeli hostilities, they indicated that the USSR might become directly involved in the event of "clear-cut" U.S. intervention—to be determined by the Soviets.*

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decision to support and defend this regime and to try to achieve a Syrian-Egyptian rapprochement. It had involved the adoption by the Soviets of a more activist line and had helped push Nasir to a more militant stance. The second shift followed Nasir's own post-war decision to reject the bellicose "continue-to-fight" line of the Syrians, and involved the Soviet decision to support Nasir at the cost of alienating the Syrians.

In late July and August the UAR began to adopt a more conciliatory attitude toward the West and a more friendly attitude toward the conservative Arab nations. The latter change in line was probably prompted in large part by the economic plight of the UAR, for soon afterward Arab conservatives came forth with promises of substantial quantities of aid to Nasir. Nasir shifted from opposition to support of a proposed Arab summit which was being endorsed by the conservatives (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Jordan) and boycotted by the radical Syrians. The conference, held in Khartoum at the end of August, gave Nasir and Husayn a mandate to seek a political settlement and termed "reasonable" a compromise Yugoslav proposal. The Soviets, forced to make a public choice between Nasir and the Syrians on this issue, chose Nasir. Critical of the conference until Nasir endorsed it, the Soviets switched to supporting it and at the last moment even tried (unsuccessfully) to persuade the Syrians to attend.

Soviet backing for Nasir's policies was further revealed by the USSR decision in October 1967 to support Nasir's and Husayn's efforts to get a resolution passed in the United Nations. The terms agreed to by the two Arab leaders in September were similar to those included in the Soviet-backed plan of July; the Soviets had withdrawn this plan when the radical Arabs rejected it. This time the Soviets indicated they would support a resolution regardless of Syria's opposition.

The compromise (UK) draft resolution which was finally passed by the UN Security Council contained less favorable terms than those desired by the UAR (for example, it did not specify that Israel withdraw from *all* territories occupied after 4 June, nor did it call for *immediate* Israeli withdrawal. Nonetheless, after considerable haggling Nasir had apparently agreed to accept it. Before its adoption, however, the Soviets made one final attempt to avoid alienating the radical Arabs. On the eve of the Security Council vote, they submitted their own substitute draft calling for *immediate* Israeli withdrawal from *all* territories occupied during the war. However, this was a gesture only, and the day after submitting it the Soviets withdrew the draft and voted for the UK resolution.

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The Soviet gesture served to give the radical Arabs some assurance of a Soviet commitment to their cause. The substitute draft restated the Soviets' pro-Arab position and placed the USSR in the role of temporary obstructionist. If the mollifying of the Syrians was its objective, it had little success, for they reacted violently to the passage of the resolution, and attacked the Soviets bitterly for voting for it.

A Soviet-Syrian estrangement had been in the offing throughout the summer and early fall of 1967. Having made their choice for Nasir and the more moderate line, the Soviets had turned to the task of trying to move the Syrians in that direction—to no avail. There was considerable evidence that the Syrians were furious at the lack of Soviet support during the war and dissatisfied at the Soviet subsequent failure to give them everything they wanted in terms of military aid. The rift between the two was further exacerbated by the increased Soviet influence that accompanied the continued aid. The USSR insisted upon, and the Egyptians and the Syrians acquiesced to, the stationing of Soviet instructors and advisors at all levels of both the UAR and Syrian armed forces. Although they probably recognized the need for Soviet personnel to instruct in the use of equipment, both the Syrians and Egyptians undoubtedly had to swallow considerable pride in order to accept the presence of large numbers of foreign military advisors.

The Soviets also, according to reports, exerted pressure for the acquisition or use of naval facilities in the Mediterranean. They have not acquired control of any Arab ports, and even their use of these facilities has been minimal, with Soviet vessels relying primarily on their own auxiliary ships for supplies and repairs. However, the Soviet fleet has been provided continual access to various Arab ports, and Soviet vessels have paid occasional visits to them with the apparent purpose of demonstrating Soviet support for the Arabs and deterring Israel from attacking these ports. Israel has in fact not attacked any of these ports, but it is a matter of conjecture whether or not this has had anything to do with the Soviet presence.

Soviet shipments of military equipment to the Arabs increased in intensity during and just after the war. The Soviets apparently promised almost immediately to replace all equipment lost in the war and this has been virtually accomplished. Since the summer of 1967 shipments have settled down to a fairly steady flow, and the resupply program has restored Arab capabilities to at least the pre-war level.

In a similar way the Soviet attitude toward the fedayeen has tended to increase rather than decrease tension. Despite the dangers of major Israeli

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retaliation, the Soviets have been increasingly unwilling to alienate the fedayeen, and, as a result, have been providing them indirectly with some assistance—mostly small arms equipment. In the last half of 1969 Soviet media began to voice support of the fedayeen and to publicize reports on the guerrilla-terrorists actions. And by the end of 1969 statements by figures at the Politburo level indicated that a line favoring more active aid to the Arab guerrillas was emerging in the Soviet leadership. Soviet recognition of the fedayeen as a force to be reckoned with reflects the political reality of the situation; since the June war the fedayeen have become a significant factor in the Middle East.

The actual Soviet military presence in the Middle East has increased substantially since the war. The Soviet Mediterranean fleet was bolstered significantly during 1967 and then leveled off. After the war the Soviets stationed large numbers of technicians and advisors in all branches and at all levels of the Egyptian and Syrian armed forces with the objective of raising the standards and capabilities of these organizations. The element of caution is also present in this policy, as these personnel have the additional purpose of exercising some control over the use to which Soviet-supplied arms are put. However, though Soviet advisors have apparently been given a high degree of authority, particularly in training operations, thus causing considerable friction with the Arabs, there is no evidence in either the UAR or Syria of direct Soviet command and control authority. It is doubtful that direct participation of Soviet personnel in combat would occur, or, if it did occur, that it would be acknowledged.*

Nonetheless, the added Soviet presence in the Middle East increases the possibility of Soviet involvement in a future conflict. Furthermore, in spite of the presence of Soviet advisors, the USSR has little more control over Arab actions than it had in May 1967. Nasir is as unpredictable as ever, and apparently determined to maintain military pressure against Israel along the Suez Canal. There is little to suggest that the Soviets have made any serious effort to restrain him. Thus, the Soviets are again in the position of being

**The presence of Soviet personnel in Syria may be partially responsible for Israel's restraint in launching reprisal attacks in Syria. However, this may be due more to the fact that the Syrians have been cautious about launching terrorist attacks from their own territory; the latter seems more likely as the Israelis have launched reprisal raids into the UAR in spite of the presence there of Soviet personnel.*

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heavily committed in terms of money, arms, men and prestige to its Arab clients without having a proportionate share in the decision-making.

Soviet policy in the Middle East thus bears a resemblance to an attempt at pressure cookery without a reliable safety valve. With one hand Moscow has sought to hold the lid on pressures tending toward another major eruption in the Middle East and with the other feeds the fire causing those pressures. In fact, the moderating tendency in Soviet policy which emerged after the June war has suffered erosion recently. The Soviets' choice of Nasir over the Syrians as the less fanatical and irrational of the two has been undercut by the increasing anti-Israeli militancy of the Egyptians under Nasir's lead since the June war. Unwilling to lose the position they have beside the vanguard of the Arab movement, the Soviets are once again moving with the current of Arab extremism. The danger of the policy is certain, but what remains very uncertain is whether or not the Soviets have instituted effective means to guide or deflect the current whenever Soviet interest requires.

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