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KIPPUR WAR

Author(s): Robert O. Freedman

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Soviet policy in the Middle East—complicated, expensive, and often frustrating—met perhaps its greatest setback on 18 July 1972 when Egyptian President Anwar Sadat announced the termination of the mission of the Soviet military advisers and experts in Egypt. Undaunted however, Kremlin planners continued to pursue their goal of an “anti-imperialist” Arab union dependent on Russian arms and amenable to Russian influence. The Yom Kippur war of 1973 apparently rewarded their efforts with success, but the long-sought prize of Arab sympathy was taken, if only temporarily, by their archrival, the United States, via the diplomatic efforts of Henry Kissinger.

SOVIET POLICY TOWARD THE MIDDLE EAST FROM THE EXODUS OF 1972 TO THE YOM KIPPUR WAR

An article prepared

by

Dr. Robert O. Freedman

Introduction. Since their 1955 arms deal with Egypt, Soviet policymakers have sought to establish the Soviet Union as the dominant power in the Middle East. The main thrust of this strategy has been simply to replace the Western Powers in their former positions of political, military, and economic influence within the region. The Soviet leaders have engaged in massive economic aid projects such as the Aswan and Euphrates Dams; they have contributed large amounts of sophisticated military equipment to many of the states of the region; and more recently they have sought to consolidate their influence through long-term “Friendship and Assistance” treaties such as the ones signed with Egypt in 1971 and Iraq in 1972.

Yet, as the expulsion of the Soviet military forces from Egypt in 1972 indicated, with or without treaties, Kremlin influence in the highly volatile

Middle East remains quite limited. Soviet efforts have been plagued by the numerous interstate and intrastate conflicts common to Arab politics, by the incessant competition for leadership within the Arab bloc of nations—Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Libya, and Saudi Arabia—and by the problem of defining a proper role for the Communist Parties of the Middle East. Illegal in a number of Arab countries and viewed with suspicion in all of them, the Communist Parties have embarrassed the Russians on a number of occasions. Most recently, Russian support for the Sudanese Communist Party in the abortive coup attempt against Sudanese President Ja'afar Nimeri in July 1971—an attempt which resulted in the decimation of the Sudanese Communist Party's leadership—all but ended Soviet-Sudanese relations.

Finally, the Russians have had to cope with competition from the United States and Communist China which

actively oppose Soviet efforts to secure dominant influence over the Middle East. Capitalizing on the Soviet debacle in the Sudan, both the United States and China moved quickly to improve relations with the once strongly pro-Russian Nimeri regime. Similarly, as Soviet policy began to clearly "tilt" toward Iraq during its struggle with Iran, both the United States and China utilized the opportunity to consolidate their relations with the Shah and weaken Soviet influence. But, for the Russians, the most serious arena of Soviet-American competition for influence in the Middle East has been in Egypt, the most populous and militarily powerful of the Arab States in the region.

The Soviet Exodus from Egypt. After assuming power in October 1970, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat clashed with the Soviet Union on a number of foreign and domestic policy issues, the most important being the Soviet Union's failure to provide Egypt with sufficient support in its confrontation with Israel.¹ By the spring of 1972, Sadat faced a rising tide of criticism in Egypt. The prolonged "no war-no peace" situation led to increasing frustration as Israel, which was receiving a continual flow of American military assistance, seemed ever more entrenched in the Sinai Peninsula which it occupied in the 1967 war. This, combined with the friction between Soviet advisers and Egyptian officers and the fact that Egypt's position of leadership in the Arab world, once paramount under Nasser, was slipping away, led Sadat to decide on a dramatic action which would at once electrify his country and end the malaise which had been deepening in Egypt. Following the failure of a final arms shopping trip by Egyptian Premier Aziz Sidky to Moscow on 14 July, Sadat announced on 18 July 1972 the "termination of all military bases in Egypt under Egyptian control, and the

call for a Soviet-Egyptian meeting to work out a new relationship between the two countries."²

Sadat's reasoning in expelling the Russians seemed to have been that since the Soviet Union had been unable to get Israel to withdraw from Sinai by diplomatic means and was unwilling to expel her by force, Egypt would turn to the United States and Western Europe for assistance. The Egyptians had not forgotten that it was primarily American pressure which had forced the Israelis to withdraw from the Sinai in 1957, and high-ranking American officials such as Henry Kissinger and President Nixon had made no secret of their desire to get the Russians out of Egypt and thereby weaken the entire Soviet position in the eastern Mediterranean. The weakening of the Soviet presence in the Mediterranean was also of benefit to Western Europe, and Sadat may have hoped that the Europeans might reciprocate by bringing pressure on Israel by withholding Common Market tariff concessions then under negotiation as well as by selling Egypt advanced weaponry.³

While the Russians' position in the Middle East worsened, the position of their chief rival for influence in the area, the United States, was strengthened. In addition to the resumption of diplomatic relations with Yemen and Sudan, the United States also improved relations with Algeria. The American Federal Power Commission approved plans for the El Paso Gas Company to import a billion dollars worth of natural gas from Algeria and the Algerian Government promptly returned both the aircraft and the million dollars in ransom which a group of Black Panthers had hijacked to Algeria. Even the militant Iraqi Government recognized some benefit to be gained from an American Government presence in Baghdad, and an American Interest Section was subsequently opened in the Belgian Embassy in the Iraqi capital.

Thus, by the late summer of 1972, it

34 NAVAL WAR COLLEGE REVIEW

appeared as if the Soviet position in the Middle East was rapidly eroding, and the Soviet leadership was hard put to reverse the trend. The main Soviet loss was to its position in Egypt, and while the initial Soviet reaction to Sadat's expulsion decision was relatively mild, as time went on and as Soviet-Egyptian relations continued to deteriorate, the Russian and pro-Russian commentators became more explicit in their criticism of Egyptian policy.

Pravda itself warned on 23 July 1972 (the day after an Egyptian Government press conference in which Egypt's non-alignment was stressed) that in a number of countries, including Egypt, "right-wing reactionary forces" were trying to undermine Soviet-Arab friendship.⁴

Soviet-Egyptian relations worsened further following Sadat's rejection of the "language, contents and type" of a note from Brezhnev to Sadat requesting a high-level meeting.⁵ Indeed, on 13 August 1972 Egyptian Information Minister Mohammed el-Zayyat had stated that "there were many things to be settled before a Soviet-Egyptian summit meeting could settle future relations."⁶ The Egyptian President further stated that the Soviet Union's refusal to supply the requested arms "aimed to drive us to desperation and the brink of surrender," but that Egypt would, God willing, obtain the needed arms elsewhere.⁷ Two days later in an interview in *Le Figaro*, Sadat began his search for arms by stating that the Western Europeans now owed Egypt a response to the "initiative" he had taken to help them.⁸

It is clear that the Soviet position was much weakened in the Arab world, and there is no telling how much further this process would have gone but for a group of Palestinian terrorists who killed 11 Israeli athletes at the Olympic Games in Munich.

The immediate effect of the terrorist acts in Munich was to strike a major

blow at Sadat's diplomatic initiative in the West. Hardest hit were Egypt's relations with West Germany where the terrorists' acts took place. Willy Brandt, whose government had painstakingly negotiated the resumption of diplomatic relations with Egypt less than 3 months earlier (after a 7-year break following West Germany's establishment of diplomatic relations with Israel in 1965), criticized Egypt's lethargy in his efforts to negotiate a settlement with the terrorists. Egypt responded with the accusation that West Germany was trying to evade responsibility by making false charges against Egypt and other Arab nations. The deterioration of Egypt's relations with her second leading trade partner (after the U.S.S.R.) reached the point in mid-September that Egypt's new Foreign Minister, Hassan el-Zayyat, cancelled a scheduled visit to West Germany which was part of a planned tour of West European capitals in search of support against Israel.

Zayyat did make a trip to England, but here again terrorist activities hampered Egyptian diplomacy. Just as Zayyat arrived in London, the Israeli agricultural attaché, Dr. Ami Shachori, was killed by a letter bomb mailed to the Israeli Embassy—an action that inflamed English public opinion against the Arabs.⁹

The United States voiced its opinion when the American Ambassador to the United Nations, George Bush, exercised a rare U.S. veto when a Security Council resolution condemning Israel for its reprisal raids against Palestinian guerrilla bases in Syria and Lebanon, following the Munich killings, did not also condemn the terrorist acts which provoked the reprisal raids.

The events at Munich, with their repercussions on Egypt's relations with Western nations, probably hastened the pace of the proposed Egyptian-Libyan union as Sadat became more dependent on Libyan support. On 18 September, Sadat and Kaddafi reached an

agreement which proclaimed Cairo as the capital of the union and provided for a single government, a single political party, and a single president elected by popular vote.¹⁰ The process of union may also have been speeded by increased Egyptian fears of an Israeli attack following the Munich massacre, fears which the Russians did everything possible to encourage.

The Israeli Government, whose athletes were murdered at Munich, was under great domestic pressure to avenge them and did not hesitate long. Having suffered a similar terroristic attack at Lod airport near Tel Aviv which resulted in the death of 26 people only 3 months before, the Israelis apparently decided to attempt to strike a telling blow against the guerrillas by launching a series of airstrikes followed by an armored assault deep into Lebanon and Syria against suspected terrorist bases.

The Soviet Union seized the opportunity presented by the Israeli attacks to launch a special airlift of weapons to Damascus to reinforce the Syrian defenses. This airlift, which generated front-page headlines both in the Arab and Western press, underscored the Soviet argument that the Arabs could only turn to the U.S.S.R. in their time of need. Thus a *New Times* editorial stated:

Public opinion in the Arab countries is drawing the inference from Israel's provocative actions which the imperialists are encouraging. What if not encouragement is the US veto in the Security Council on a resolution condemning Tel Aviv's barbarous acts? All of it is helping the Arabs to realize how illusory are hopes that the imperialists are prepared to help curb the Israeli expansionists and eliminate the consequences of their aggression. And the danger of such illusion is greater than ever now. For Tel Aviv is using them not only to

hold on to the occupied territories but to make new aggressive moves against the Arab states.¹¹

The Russians also began to propagate the old myth about Israel's alleged desire to expand her borders "from the Nile to the Euphrates." Writing in *New Times* at the end of September, V. Rumyanstev claimed that the Israelis "... are seeking not only to induce the Arabs to accept the annexation of the territories seized in 1967, but to accustom them to the Zionist idea of creating a 'Greater Israel from the Nile to the Euphrates.'"¹²

The Russians also utilized the Israeli attacks on the Palestinian guerrilla camps to dramatize their position as supporters of the Palestinians and thus to win more influence in the Palestinian resistance movement. While the West unanimously condemned the Munich murders, the Russian press referred to them only as a "tragic incident."¹³ The Russians also denounced the Israeli attacks on Palestinian refugee camps (which often housed guerrilla bases) and underlined their concern for the Palestinian cause at this crucial time by airlifting medical supplies to Lebanon. Furthermore, the guerrillas acknowledged that the U.S.S.R. was now shipping them arms directly.¹⁴

The Soviet Union also began to improve its relations with the Sadat regime in Egypt. Despite Soviet predictions, Egypt was not hit by any Israeli retaliatory strikes (possibly to avert Egyptian recall of the Russian advisers), yet Sadat was clearly discomfited by the events in Munich. With his diplomatic turn to the West temporarily stalled, and condemned both at home and throughout the Arab world for failing to protect Syria and Lebanon from Israeli attacks, Sadat decided to try to stabilize Egypt's relations with the U.S.S.R.

Consequently, on 28 September 1972, the second anniversary of Nasser's death, Sadat delivered a major policy address. This statement he called for the

36 NAVAL WAR COLLEGE REVIEW

establishment of a Palestinian government in exile which would end the disastrous infighting within the movement; officially rejected the interim proposal offered by U.S. Secretary of State William Rogers at the U.N. by stating that "There will be no partial settlement and no direct negotiations . . .," and perhaps most important of all, changed his tone toward the Russians. The Egyptian leader declared that he had sent a letter to Brezhnev that was "friendly and cordial in spirit."¹⁵ It was revealed only 2 days after Sadat's speech that Egyptian Premier Aziz Sidky would undertake a trip to the Soviet Union on 16 October.¹⁶

However, the Russians were now in a much stronger bargaining position, and there appear to have been real limits on the accomplishments of Sidky's trip to Moscow. In the first place, unlike his earlier trip in July, the Egyptian Premier did not get to see Brezhnev but had to be satisfied with meeting Kosygin and Podgorny. Secondly, there was no mention of continued Soviet aid, either military or economic. The final communiqué described the talks as having taken place "in an atmosphere of frankness and mutual understanding."¹⁷

Following the limited success of Sidky's trip, a general debate began in the top ranks of the Egyptian leadership about the proper relationship toward the U.S.S.R. On 23 October 1972, Sidky delivered his report to a mixed Arab Socialist Union-Government meeting in which he stated that the Russians had promised to resume aid to Egypt, although he did not mention precise quantities. Sadat responded by replying that if Egypt should choose continued cooperation with the Soviet Union, its scope would never return to the pre-18 July situation.¹⁸

The Egyptian leadership apparently decided on continued cooperation with the Russians because, on the very next day, the strongly anti-Russian Defense

Minister Sadek either was fired or resigned from his position. Whatever the actual reason for Sadek's resignation, the Russians were clearly happy to witness the departure of the most outspokenly anti-Soviet leader in the Egyptian hierarchy. While *Pravda* reported his ouster in a brief two-column story of 28 October 1972 under the title "Resignation Accepted," the Soviet Party newspaper gave much more space to a speech by his successor, Ahmed Ismail, 4 days later. The new Egyptian Defense Minister spoke warmly of Soviet economic and military aid to Egypt and stated that the U.S.S.R. had fulfilled all the obligations it had pledged to Egypt. In addition, Ismail strongly attacked the United States for its aid to Israel and asserted that "nothing good" could be expected from the United States. Ismail also echoed the Soviet line on the goals of American policy in the Middle East: "The goal of American policy is to isolate the Arabs from the USSR and keep the Soviet Union as far as possible from the Middle East. The United States is also seeking to prevent unity in the ranks of the Arabs."¹⁹

Thus, thanks to the Munich massacre and the sharp upsurge in fighting between Israel and the Arabs which followed it, the Soviet position in the region was markedly improved. Indeed, the Soviet position had improved so much as a result of the post-Munich developments that on 26 October 1972 Sudanese President Ja'afar Nimeri, who had clashed so bitterly with the Russians the year before over the Communist-supported coup d'état, announced that the Sudan would restore full diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union by the end of the year.²⁰

While the Russians had clearly improved their position in the Middle East by the end of October, they still faced significant problems. North Yemen (the Yemeni Arab Republic) and South Yemen (the Peoples Democratic

Republic of Yemen) were on the verge of full-scale war. The South Yemeni Premier Ali Nasser stated in an interview with the Beirut newspaper *L'Orient Le Jour* on 6 October that "the Soviet Union will not stand with folded arms in the event of an invasion of South Yemen."²¹ Relations were scarcely better between Iran and Iraq, and serious clashes between the Kurds and Iraqi Government forces made the situation at the top of the Persian Gulf even more difficult for Soviet policymakers.

In an effort to settle the Yemeni conflict, the U.S.S.R. pursued their long-sought goal of a union between the two Yemens. This would enable the Russians to avoid being dragged into a war between them while maintaining influence at the Bab-el-Mandab Strait, the geographically strategic area which controls the entrance to the Red Sea. In fact, talks designed to halt the fighting between the Yemens were postponed in mid-November so that South Yemeni President Salem Ali Rubaya could visit Moscow at the end of the month.²² A joint communique published at the conclusion of the visit on 26 November stated that the Soviet side "greeted with satisfaction" South Yemeni measures to end military operations on the border with North Yemen and "supported PDRY efforts for the normalization of relations between the two Yemens."²³ The Soviet leadership was, consequently, more than satisfied when, only 2 days later, the two Yemens signed an agreement to unite.

If the Soviet leaders proved able to score a moderate success in calming tensions between North and South Yemen, they faced a much more difficult task in the Iran-Iraq conflict. Following a Moscow visit in September by Iraqi President Hassan Al-Bakr, a joint communique released stated that the Soviet Union and Iraq had reached agreement "on concrete measures for the further strengthening of the defense capability of the Republic of Iraq with a

view to increasing the combat readiness of the latter's armed forces."²⁴ This Soviet decision was viewed with deep suspicion in Iran, and when the Shah and his wife (who had visited Peking the previous summer) came to Moscow in October, there was no tangible progress toward an Iranian-Iraqi agreement, although the Soviet Union and Iran did agree to a 15-year economic treaty.²⁵ In arranging this treaty, the Russian leadership perhaps hoped to compensate Iran with economic aid in view of Soviet military assistance to Iraq.

Events in February and March 1973 forced the Russians to quicken their diplomatic efforts to keep the Iran-Iraq conflict under control. On 10 February both Iraq and the U.S.S.R. were publicly embarrassed by the discovery of 300 Soviet-made machine guns and 60,000 rounds of ammunition in the Iraqi Embassy in Islamabad, Pakistan.²⁶ The weapons were evidently destined for the Baluchistani Liberation Front which demands an independent Baluchistan to be made up of Baluchistani-populated territories now controlled by both Iran and Pakistan.

Less than 2 weeks later came the announcement that Iran had concluded the largest single military sales agreement ever arranged by the U.S. Defense Department—a \$2 billion dollar order for U.S. weaponry consisting of helicopter gunships, supersonic interceptors, Phantom jet bombers, and C-130 cargo planes along with other military equipment.²⁷ The arms race in the Persian Gulf was now on with a vengeance. It was perhaps in an effort to slow down this arms race—and avoid new arms requests from Iraq—that Soviet Premier Aleksei Kosygin, in a visit to Iran to celebrate the opening of the Soviet-built Isfahan steel works pointedly stated:

... We are pleased that good relations have developed between our countries and we intend to do everything in our power to make

38 NAVAL WAR COLLEGE REVIEW

Soviet-Iranian relations even firmer in the future. . . . But if we want the security of the states to be based not on an arms race—no genuine security can be built on such a foundation—but on the continuing relaxation of tensions and the strengthening of mutual trust among countries, then the efforts of each party concerned are required. Conversely, the militant policy of any one country will inevitably inflame the situation in an entire region, and often throughout the world, forcing its neighbors to take some kind of measures to defend their national interests . . .²⁸

No sooner had Kosygin returned to Moscow, however, then it was Iraq's turn to inflame the Persian Gulf conflict. On 20 March, Iraqi troops crossed into Kuwaiti territory and seized two Kuwaiti border posts. The lack of Soviet enthusiasm for the Iraqi move can be seen by the *New Times* comment on this episode. Citing "Arab capitals" (a usual Soviet technique to indirectly express displeasure) the *New Times* article stated:

The dispute has caused anxiety in Arab capitals, inasmuch as Zionist and imperialist quarters have seized upon it to sow dissension in the Arab world and to eliminate the consequences of the Israeli aggression. The leaders of a number of Arab countries have urged the Iraqi President and the Emir of Kuwait to make every effort to resolve the conflict without delay.²⁹

Although no definitive agreement was reached, the Iraqi troops eventually pulled out of Kuwait, and the Shah made it quite clear that Iran would go to Kuwait's aid if she requested future assistance. In addition, in an interview with the *Christian Science Monitor*, the Shah called for a NATO-like pact for the gulf's riparian states and announced

that Pakistani and Iranian army chiefs of staff had begun consultations in Tehran.³⁰

Thus, as the second Nixon-Brezhnev summit meeting neared, the escalating conflict between Iran and Iraq posed significant roadblocks for the Soviet program of "anti-imperialist Arab unity."

While the conflicts between North and South Yemen and between Iran and Iraq were serious, the central problem for Soviet policymakers dealing with the Middle East was American influence. To avoid the threat that United States and Egypt might yet work out a Middle Eastern arrangement contrary to Soviet interests, Soviet leaders stepped up their efforts to unite the Arabs against Israel. Kremlin planners seemed to feel that in an Arab union the moderately pro-Russian regimes of Syria and Iraq, together with the Palestinian Liberation organization whose leader Yasir Arafat was echoing the Soviet line in return for Soviet economic and military support, would prevent any anti-Russian policy from being adopted. Once again, events of the ongoing Arab-Israeli conflict helped facilitate their policy. Israel, bearing a terrorist attack, shot down a Libyan airliner which had strayed over the Israeli-occupied Sinai and appeared to be heading for Tel Aviv in February, and raided the Beirut headquarters of the PLO in April. Secondly, Egypt was also following a policy of Arab unity although Sadat's willingness to work closely first with Libyan leader Mu'ammarr Kaddafi and subsequently with Saudi Arabia's King Faisal was not particularly to the liking of the Russians—Arab unity on an Egyptian-Libyan or Egyptian-Saudi Arabian axis would fall far short of the Arab unity on a "progressive, anti-imperialist" basis, for which the Soviets had so long worked.

Indeed, in one of the first major Soviet policy statements following their expulsion from Egypt, the Russians had

been concerned about just such a development:

... The reactionary elements and certain nationalist elements seek to compromise the very idea of Arab-Soviet friendship and to counterpose appeals for "reliance on Arab forces alone" to the slogan of strengthening the united Arab front and militant solidarity with all the forces of progress on an anti-imperialist basis...

A fact well worth noting is that Arab reaction's anti-Soviet sallies have been accompanied by the weaving of plots against progressive Arab regimes—plotting that is supported by Saudi Arabia, which is performing the role of promoter of imperialist policies in the Arab East...

The Arab peoples realize the necessity of strengthening national and pan-Arab unity, however as the Lebanese newspaper *Al Shaab* points out, in present day conditions such a consolidation can be effected only on an anti-imperialist and progressive social basis and not at the expense of Arab-Soviet friendship.³¹

In September, during Hassan Al-Bakr's visit to the U.S.S.R., Podgorny developed this theme of "progressive Arab unity" further by asserting that there was a close relationship between Arab unity on an "anti-imperialist basis" and the unity of the "progressive forces" (i.e., the Arab communist parties) within each Arab State.³²

The Russians consequently continued their pan-Arabian efforts throughout the November-January period when a number of conferences were convened by Egypt in an effort to build a united Arab front against Israel. Having first sought Soviet and then American support against Israel and having failed in both quests, Sadat, under great domestic and foreign pressure to go to war, decided that the only

solution for Egypt was to mobilize the capabilities of the Arab world—including its oil power—against Israel and its supporters.³³ In a major policy speech on 28 December, Sadat stated that Egypt "realized the limits of Soviet aid" and that Egypt would take "new initiatives to make the battle a pan-Arab one."³⁴

The Soviet press not only commented favorably on Sadat's pan-Arab battle plan but used the opportunity to highlight American vulnerability to the oil pressure Sadat had recommended. In a *New Times* article in late January, Victor Kudryavtsev, one of the main Soviet commentators on the Middle East, stated:

A coordinated Arab policy in this [the oil] sphere could be especially effective inasmuch as Israel's main backer, the United States, is displaying an increasing interest in the oil deposits of the Persian Gulf and in Libya. Reference is made in Cairo to a survey made by a U.S. Senate committee showing that in the coming years between 20 and 30 per cent of U.S. fuel requirements will be met with Middle East oil. The Egyptian plan, newspapers say, also envisages an increase in the financial contribution by the oil-rich Arab countries to the common struggle against the aggressor...³⁵

However, Kudryavtsev warned the Arabs that "Experience has convinced the Arab peoples that they can achieve real unity only on a clearly expressed anti-imperialist basis and by promoting friendship and cooperation with the Soviet Union..."³⁶

Continuing the theme of oil diplomacy and its effect in the Middle East, the very next issue of *New Times* published an article by Dmitry Volsky which warned against Saudi Arabia's increasingly important role in the Arab world:

40 NAVAL WAR COLLEGE REVIEW

The Saudi monarchy . . . is bent on becoming the bulwark of reaction throughout the Arab world generally. Year after year it spends dozens, even hundreds of millions of dollars on what it calls "Arab policy," the aim of which is to thwart social and economic reforms in other Arab states and subvert their cooperation with the socialist countries.³⁷

Indeed, the Russians had good grounds for attacking Saudi Arabia on this point because in October, Sheikh Ahmed Yamani, the Royal Minister for Oil and Mineral Wealth, had come to the United States and said that Saudi Arabia would raise production from 6 to 20 million barrels of oil per day by 1980 in return for assured entry into the U.S. market.³⁸ Within a year, however, Saudi Arabia had joined in the 17-week oil embargo against the United States. Regardless of Russian pressure, the cause for this policy transformation may be found in the two Middle Eastern developments during this period: the steady escalation of the Arab-Israeli conflict, and the realignment of alliance relationships throughout the Arab world which saw a weakening in the developing Egyptian-Libyan union and the creation of an Egyptian-Saudi Arabian axis which, by October, was to emerge dominant.

On edge because of Palestinian guerrilla threats to hijack an airliner and crash it into an Israeli city, Israeli Air Force pilots shot down a Libyan jet liner en route from Tripoli to Cairo. The aircraft had strayed deep into the Israeli-occupied Sinai Desert and the pilot refused Israeli orders to land.³⁹ The Soviet Union seized upon this incident to link the United States to the Israeli action and to discredit the American role as mediator. As *New Times* columnist V. Katin stated:

These new provocations were staged on the eve of Golda Meir's visit to the United States. By

whipping up military tension, the Israeli government seeks to create a situation in which it will be easier to wrest aid from the backers of Zionism in other countries, particularly the United States.

It is now perfectly obvious that the Israeli rulers patrons share the responsibility for their crimes . . .⁴⁰

The Middle East situation heated up further at the beginning of March when two American diplomats were murdered by Palestinian Arab terrorists in the Saudi Arabian Embassy in the Sudan. A week after this event, and perhaps partially in response to it, the United States announced the sale of 24 Phantom and 24 Skyhawk bombers to Israel. Upon receiving word of this announcement, following as it did the futile visit of Security Adviser Hafez Izmail to Washington, Egyptian President Sadat fired Premier Aziz Sidky and assumed the Premiership himself along with the post of military governor. In his speech the Egyptian President mentioned that the war could not be delayed and that Egypt's relations with the U.S.S.R. had resumed a "correct friendly pattern."⁴¹

Indeed, at this point, the U.S.S.R. had apparently decided to resume large-scale arms shipments to Egypt because on 24 March, Abdel Kuddous, a newspaper editor close to Sadat—who had been in the forefront of the Egyptian media attack on the lack of Soviet support the previous summer—could report in an *Akhbar Al-Yom* column that Egypt had now secured "a steady flow of arms from the USSR."⁴²

With Egypt now receiving a steady flow of Soviet arms, Sadat turned his attention toward Saudi Arabian King Faisal whose oil leverage over the United States was a critical factor in any Egyptian strategy against Israel. Faisal's willingness to use the oil weapon may have been a reaction to the 9 April Israeli raid on Beirut which once again

stoked Arab-Israeli fires to the limit. The purpose of the successful attack was to kill the three Palestinian guerrilla leaders suspected of masterminding the terrorist campaign against Israeli citizens in Europe and the murder of the Israeli athletes in Munich. As might be expected, the Soviet Union seized upon this incident to further discredit the United States and to again urge the Arabs on to "anti-imperialist Arab unity." Writing in *New Times*, Dmitry Volsky asserted:

... An examination of the Beirut provocation leads many observers to the conclusion that it was carried out with direct assistance from Western Secret Services. In its statement the Palestine Liberation Organization, for example, accused the CIA of complicity in the murders...

The need to unite on an anti-imperialist basis is one of the main conclusions of the Beirut events [and]... concerted actions by the Arab peoples, with the support of their friends, can create an insurmountable barrier in the path of Tel-Aviv's encroachments...⁴³

Whatever the cause, by the middle of April, Faisal threatened the United States that Saudi Arabia would not increase its oil production to meet American needs unless the United States modified its stand on Israel.⁴⁴ Following this warning, the United States, Britain, and France all scurried to sell Faisal modern weaponry, a development further underlining Saudi Arabia's growing importance in the Middle East and the West's growing vulnerability.

In his May Day speech, Sadat hailed the Saudi warning to the United States as further proof of growing Arab unity. Indeed, Sadat claimed that he now had Syrian, Kuwaiti, Algerian, Saudi, Moroccan, and even Iraqi support for the forthcoming battle with Israel. At the

same time he pointedly reminded the Russians:

Regarding a peaceful solution, our friends in the Soviet Union must know the true feeling of our people. From the first moment we believed that what was taken by force can only be regained by force. Our friends in the USSR must know that the peaceful solution which the US has been talking about is fictitious.⁴⁵

At this point, however, although supplying arms and urging the Arabs to use their oil weapon against the United States, the Russians appeared not yet willing to back Egypt in a war against Israel. Instead, with the Brezhnev visit to Washington approaching, the Soviet leadership limited itself to further discrediting Israel and its U.S. supporters in the United Nations and other public forums.⁴⁶

Thus by the time of the Nixon-Brezhnev summit, the Soviet position in the Middle East was a mixed one. On the one hand the United States position had deteriorated sharply due primarily to the willingness of Saudi Arabia to manipulate American dependence on Arab oil. On the other hand, Egyptian-Soviet relations, while improved, remained tense due to the Russians' lack of enthusiasm for another Arab-Israeli war. Furthermore, the escalation of the conflict between Iran and Iraq posed serious difficulties for the U.S.S.R. in the Persian Gulf region.

As in the 1972 summit, the leaders of the two superpowers appeared to pay little attention to the Middle East in their June 1973 meeting. Indeed, only 87 words out of a total of 3,200 in the final communique issued on 24 June dealt with the Middle East situation, and it appeared as if Nixon and Brezhnev wanted to deliberately downplay the conflict lest it interfere with their pursuit of détente.

As might be expected, the Egyptian reaction to the summit communique

42 NAVAL WAR COLLEGE REVIEW

was swift and bitter. On 25 June *Al Ahrām*'s managing editor Ali Hamadi el Gammal asserted in a column: "... Although we did not expect the [summit] talks between the two leaders to produce a specific position with regard to the crisis, we never thought that the problem would meet this strongly negative attitude on their part."⁴⁷

The Arab reaction to the summit's treatment of the Arab-Israeli conflict was, in fact, so hostile that the Russians felt constrained to publish a special statement on Soviet policy toward the Middle East. Issued by TASS on 27 June, it reiterated the main tenets of Soviet policy, including the need for total withdrawal of Israeli troops to the 1967 borders, a "peaceful solution" based on U.N. Resolution #242, recognition of the "legitimate interests and rights of the Palestinians," and Soviet support for the Arab States affected by "Israeli aggression" in 1967.⁴⁸

The Soviet leaders were also encountering difficulties trying to persuade the Egyptians that time was on the side of the Arabs. Through the judicious use of the oil weapon, they argued, the Israelis could be forced to withdraw because of pressure from the United States and that this process could be achieved without war. This rather intricate reasoning was most fully expressed by Dmitry Volsky, an associate editor of *New Times* in a major article in early August:

... The Arabs know the cost of bloodshed as well as anyone else. And the conditions in the world are increasingly favorable to paying no such price for the elimination of the consequences of Israel's aggression ...

Many observers believe, for instance that the energy crisis in the West, notably the United States, whose interest in Arab oil is, in the general view, increasing, will affect American Middle East policy. But more important,

... The Progressive Fronts in Iraq, Syria and South Yemen have strengthened. The progressive Arab countries are building up their friendship and cooperation with the socialist states ... The attempts of Right nationalistic quarters parading pseudo-patriotic extremist slogans to impose their own conceptions on leading Arab countries and steer them into adventurist courses are meeting with no success ...⁴⁹

The Egyptians, however, were neither convinced by these arguments nor by the Soviet decision to replace their "advisers" with North Koreans and North Vietnamese.⁵⁰ Indeed, Abdul Kouddous' newspaper *Akhbar al-Yom* attacked the entire concept of détente because it subordinated Arab interests to the interests of the superpowers. *Pravda*, taking this attack seriously, warned on 28 August:

... It looks as if the political line of this Cairo newspaper is acquiring a rather specific coloration. What purpose do the articles serve? The impression is being created that we are dealing with an attempt to sow distrust toward the Soviet Union among the Egyptian public and to distort the meaning of its support for the just cause of the Arab peoples who are struggling to liquidate the consequences of Israeli aggression.

Such misinformation, of course, cannot harm the time-tested Soviet-Egyptian friendship. It is to be hoped that such attempts to sow seeds of distrust among our people will be properly rebuffed in Egypt itself.⁵¹

On the eve of the fourth conference of the heads of state of nonaligned countries in Algiers on 5 September, Volsky published yet another article in *New Times* describing the benefits to the "Third World" of Soviet-American détente. In it he pointed out that not

only had there been no "dangerous moves" against Iraq when it nationalized Iraq Petroleum but that the Popular Unity Government in Chile had been equally free of imperialist reaction.⁵²

Volsky must have soon regretted these words because less than 1 week later the "Popular Unity" government of Salvador Allende in Chile was overthrown, and Allende, who, together with Brezhnev had been the recipient of the Lenin Peace Prize in May, was killed.

Two days after the coup, linked by the Soviet media directly to the United States,⁵³ a major air battle over Syria resulted in the Israelis shooting down 13 Syrian planes while losing only one of their own. This combination of events may have undercut the supporters of détente within the Soviet Politburo—perhaps to the point where they agreed to increase shipments of Soviet weaponry such as tanks and antiaircraft missiles to Syria and Egypt. Although the U.S.S.R. still denied the Arabs both fighter bombers and ground-to-ground missiles, these shipments were sufficient for the Egyptians—who used the anti-aircraft missiles as a cover for the crossing of the canal and the tanks to spearhead the breakthrough—to make a final decision for war. The Russians evidently gave their tacit support for the Egyptian decision when they learned of it and consequently began to withdraw the nonessential technicians and other civilians from both Syria and Egypt well before the outbreak of the fighting on 6 October.

In taking these steps, the Soviet leaders may have been motivated by a number of considerations. First, it was conceivable that Sadat was again bluffing and needed the weapons primarily for domestic considerations. Secondly, should Sadat go to war and be defeated—the virtually unanimous feeling of the Western intelligence community and probably of a number of Russians as well—the Sadat regime would very likely

fall, perhaps to be replaced by a more pro-Soviet Egyptian regime led by Ali Sabry. At the very minimum, war would inflame anti-American sentiment among the Arabs and weaken the U.S. position still further in the Middle East.⁵⁴ In any case, the Soviet leadership did not tell the Nixon administration about the forthcoming Egyptian-Syrian attack, despite the agreement reached at the 1972 summit, and despite the "détente" that was supposed to exist between the two superpowers.

As the war began, the Soviet leaders faced one overriding dilemma—to provide aid to the Arabs while at the same time not destroying their détente with the United States. The initial Soviet reaction to the war was rather restrained due, perhaps, to some serious doubts about the Syrian and Egyptian Armies.⁵⁵ Indeed, if we are to believe Sadat's account of the first day of the war, the Russians tried to get him to accept a cease-fire after only 6 hours of fighting by claiming that Syria had requested a cease-fire.⁵⁶ *Pravda*, during the first days of conflict, gave far more space to the events in Chile than to the Middle East.⁵⁷ On 9 October, when it appeared that the Arabs were in fact winning, Brezhnev moved to exploit the situation by sending a note to Algerian President Henri Boumadienne and other Arab leaders urging them to: "... use all means at their disposal and take all required steps with a view toward supporting Syria and Egypt in the difficult struggle... Syria and Egypt must not be alone in the struggle."⁵⁸

At the same time, the Russians began a massive airlift of weapons to Syria and Egypt, thereby demonstrating that while it was to be the Arabs (and not the Russians) who did the fighting, the U.S.S.R. would provide the necessary supplies.

Interestingly enough, while supplying the Syrians and Egyptians with increasing amounts of weaponry, the Russians made a number of moves to

44 NAVAL WAR COLLEGE REVIEW

appeal to the Jewish and liberal communities in the United States in an effort to keep the spirit of *détente* alive. Thus, instead of reducing or cutting off the flow of Soviet Jews to Israel during the war, the emigration actually increased.⁵⁹ In addition, Soviet radio broadcasts to the United States during the war emphasized that the Soviet Union was not against Israel as a state—“only against its conquests.”⁶⁰

By 12 October the tide of battle in Syria had switched to favor Israel, although the Israelis remained on the defensive in the Sinai, and U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger indicated that the Middle East war had the potential for involving the great powers. While thus far the United States was able to “tolerate” Soviet actions, he stated “if Soviet behavior became irresponsible, the United States would not hesitate to take a firm stand.”⁶¹ On 15 October the threat became fact. Announcing that the “massive airlift of Soviet weaponry to the Arabs threatened to upset the military balance against Israel,” the United States began to airlift weapons to Israel.⁶²

The Israeli crossing of the Suez Canal on 16 October and the subsequent enlargement of their salient on the west bank quickly changed the character of the conflict. Having his fears about the Arab military confirmed, Kosygin flew to Cairo and met for 3 days with Sadat.⁶³ On the same day, 11 Arab countries, meeting in Kuwait, unleashed the threatened oil weapon and announced that Arab oil exports to countries “unfriendly to the Arab cause” would be reduced each month by 5 percent until the Israelis withdrew to the 1967 prewar boundaries.⁶⁴ If this action or the visit of Saudi Arabian Foreign Minister Umar al-Saqqam and other Arab diplomats to the White House was meant to deter the United States from granting further assistance to Israel, the attempt was a failure. On 19 October, Nixon asked Congress for

\$2.2 billion in aid for Israel. Seizing on this opportunity, Moscow Radio appealed to the Arabs to cut off the flow of oil to the West: “. . . Favorable conditions now exist for Arab use of oil as an economic and political weapon against capitalist states which are supporting Israeli aggression.”⁶⁵ Libya announced it was cutting off all oil exports to the United States that day and Saudi Arabia, once the United States closest ally in the Arab world, followed suit the next day, with Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, and Dubai acting similarly on 21 October.

The rapidly deteriorating position of the Egyptian Army, however, led Henry Kissinger to the Soviet Union on 20 October at the Soviet leaders’ “urgent request.”⁶⁶ The end result of Kissinger’s visit was a “cease-fire in place” agreement—a major retreat from the Russians’ call for a return to the 1967 boundaries. Although agreed to by both combatants and approved by the Security Council on 23 October, both sides continued fighting to improve their positions. The Israelis got much the better of the fighting, however, and appeared ready to march on Cairo. By 24 October Sadat was forced to appeal to both the United States and the U.S.S.R. to send troops to police the cease-fire.⁶⁷ Seeking to pressure Israel and the United States into better cease-fire terms, the Soviets alerted several airborne divisions and dispatched transport planes to the airborne troops bases, while at the same time sending a stiff note to Nixon. The United States quickly reacted to the Soviet threat by calling a nuclear alert. It appeared that not only had *détente* died, but that the two superpowers were on the verge of a nuclear confrontation. Cooler heads prevailed, however, and the crisis was defused by the decision to establish a U.N. emergency force to police the cease-fire, although the two superpowers were later to wrangle about the composition of the U.N. force.⁶⁸

As the war came to a close, Soviet policymakers, who had been hesitant about the war at the start, were able to total up a number of significant gains for the Soviet Union's position in the Middle East, although a number of these gains were to turn out to be transient ones. Perhaps the main Soviet gain was the creation of the "anti-imperialist" Arab unity they had advocated for so long and the concomitant apparent isolation of the United States from its erstwhile allies in the region. Not only had Syria, Iraq, Egypt, Jordan, Algeria, Kuwait, and Morocco actually employed their forces against Israel, but even such staunch one-time allies of the United States as the conservative regimes of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, in addition to sending troops to the front, had declared an oil embargo against the United States, while the tiny Gulf Sheikdom of Bahrain had ordered the United States to get out of the naval base it maintained there.⁶⁹

Evaluating the lessons of the war 6 weeks later, Georgi Mirsky, perhaps the dean of Soviet commentators on the Middle East emphasized this theme:

... The third myth dispelled [by the war] related to the alleged fragility and illusciness of Arab solidarity. Today this solidarity, founded on the sense of Arab brotherhood and an awareness of facing a common enemy, is an incontestable fact, one that was confirmed in the course of the October fighting. Iraqi, Moroccan, Jordanian and Saudi troops fought side by side with the Syrian army; the Palestinians, and the Kuwaitis also saw action, and Algerian aircraft took part in the air war.

But perhaps even more important is the solidarity of the oil-producing Arab states. Although the Arab press has spoken a great deal in recent months about the oil weapon, not everybody took it

seriously and many were astounded when after the outbreak of hostilities in October even such countries as Saudi Arabia and Kuwait announced an oil boycott of countries supporting Israel (including a total embargo on oil exports to the United States)...⁷⁰

In addition to the establishment of Arab unity on an anti-American basis and the consequent sharp deterioration of the U.S. position in the Middle East, the Soviet leaders could draw great satisfaction from the fact that their extensive aid to the Arabs and the conspicuous lack of anything except verbal support from the Chinese had greatly reinforced the Soviet position as champion of the cause of "national liberation." Indeed, the Russians claimed that by delaying the enactment of the cease-fire by the United Nations, the Chinese had actually hurt the Arab cause by enabling the Israeli Army to gain more territory. As an article in *New Times* put it:

... The latest aggravation of the Middle East crisis once again showed the Arabs who their real friends are. No amount of demagoguery will conceal the fact that at this critical hour for the Arab peoples Peking played into the hands of Israel. "The policy of the P.R.C.," the Beirut *Al Shaab* wrote on October 31 "does not accord with the interests of the Arab nation or the revolutionary concept of the national liberation struggle against world imperialism and Zionism." The efforts made by the Chinese leaders to undermine Arab-Soviet friendship, to weaken international solidarity with the struggle of the Arabs to liquidate the consequences of the Israeli aggression, are condemned by public opinion in the Arab countries. "Our people," the Syrian *Al Thawrah* wrote "are

46 NAVAL WAR COLLEGE REVIEW

well aware of the purpose of these efforts. They know that the object is to shake the Arabs' faith in their own strength and in our friends in order to impel us towards compromise and capitulation." The Lebanese press has stressed that Maoist slander cannot discredit the Soviet Union in the eyes of the Arab peoples who have seen for themselves that "Phantoms were shot down with weapons supplied to Egypt and Syria by the U.S.S.R. and not with Chinese verbiage." . . . ⁷¹

Yet another important benefit for the Soviet Union from the war was the reconciliation between Iran and Iraq. On 8 October Iraq announced its desire to restore diplomatic relations with Iran, and the Iraqi Government asked Iran to accept this gesture so that Iraqi troops could be moved from the border with Iran to Syria to join the fighting against Israel. Iran acceded to this request, perhaps in the hope of gaining Arab support to raise oil prices later.

On the strategic level, the Soviet world position was greatly enhanced. NATO faced its biggest crisis since the Suez war of 1956 because of West European opposition to the supplying of Israel from U.S. bases in Europe. Differences over policy and unilateral concessions made to ease the oil embargo exacerbated the strains within the alliance still further. Meanwhile, the Common Market was rent asunder by the failure of Britain, France, Italy, and West Germany to come to the aid of fellow EEC member Holland, hit by a total and relatively lengthy oil embargo. While the Russians welcomed the conflicts within NATO and the EEC, they nonetheless expressed some concern that West Europe might yet adopt a "go it alone" strategy and establish its own defensive alliance.⁷²

Thus the Soviet Union had scored a number of gains as a result of the war, although it had also suffered some

losses. Soviet-American détente had suffered a serious blow—so serious that Nixon, long a leading advocate of most-favored-nation status for trade with the U.S.S.R., thought it necessary in early November to postpone consideration of an administration bill to that effect.⁷³ Indeed, following the war the Soviet leaders faced the choice of either trying to capitalize on the serious rifts in the Atlantic alliance and the EEC to further undermine the United States position in the world or trying to rebuild détente by cooperating on a satisfactory peace settlement in the Middle East.

They chose to pursue both simultaneously. On the one hand, they called for continued détente and claimed that it had helped prevent a nuclear war during the Middle East crisis. On the other hand, the Soviet media urged the Arabs to maintain their oil embargo against the United States and emphasized the U.S. military threat against the Arabs. The main effect of this "dual" policy in the United States, however, was to shake the credibility of the Soviet détente posture. As a *New York Times* editorial on 16 March stated: "The propaganda campaign by Radio Moscow in Arabic urging the Arabs to continue their oil embargo against the United States . . . has been a useful reminder of the Kremlin's double standard on détente."⁷⁴

Unfortunately for the Soviet leaders, the Arab unity they had so warmly welcomed and hoped to foster through maintenance of the oil embargo began to disintegrate almost as soon as the war ended. The Ba'athist regime in Iraq, despite the presence of the Iraqi Communists in a national front, rejected the Soviet-supported cease-fire agreement as being "against the will of the Arab masses," much as it had rejected the Soviet-supported U.N. Resolution 242.⁷⁵ The Al-Bakr regime was, in fact, so opposed to the cease-fire that it refused to attend the Algiers summit conference of Arab leaders which took

place in late November. Similarly opposed to the cease-fire was Libyan leader Mu'ammar Kaddafi who characterized it as "a time bomb offered by the United States and Soviet Union."⁷⁶ By December frontier clashes had renewed between Iraq and Iran which soon escalated into such severe battles that the Russians had to publicly admonish the Iraqis in a *New Times* report of the clashes.⁷⁷ Thus Iraq, whose isolation in both the Arab world and in the region as a whole had impelled the Al-Bakr regime to request an alliance with the Russians in the first place, was, for all intents and purposes, again isolated except for its still tenuous relationship with Syria and its tie to the Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PDFLP). This Palestinian guerrilla organization, led by Naif Hawatmeh, had also rejected the cease-fire and with it the possibility of peace with Israel. This refusal undermined the work of Soviet leaders toward convincing Yasir Arafat and other Palestinian leaders that the time was ripe to settle with Israel. The Russians had pushed hard for the establishment of a Palestinian state not only to defuse the Arab-Israeli conflict (if this was their aim at all) but also to secure another area in the Middle East where they could exercise influence, along with South Yemen, Iraq, Syria, and, to a lesser degree, Egypt. Furthermore, the emplacement of a pro-Soviet regime in the midst of such pro-Western states as Israel, Jordan, and Lebanon would serve to further weaken the position of the United States in the region while strengthening that of the U.S.S.R.

As the time for the Geneva Peace Conference on the Middle East approached, the Russians seemed to grow even more emphatic as to the need to include the Palestinians on any Middle East peace settlement. The reason for this may have been because their influence in Egypt—

partially restored by massive shipments of military equipment including, at the end of the war, SCUD ground-to-ground missiles⁷⁸—had again begun to erode.

The Geneva Conference opened on 22 December with the Soviet Union again acting as champion of the Arab cause. Gromyko made a point of stating, however, that "the Soviet Union has no hostility to the state of Israel as such."⁷⁹ After several days of meetings, the Geneva Conference adjourned for the Israeli elections, but in the interim period, meetings of the Arab oil producing countries and the Persian Gulf oil producing countries more than doubled the "posted price" per barrel of crude oil, in effect, therefore, quadrupling the price they charged for it. This move was certain to aggravate the balance of payments problems of the West European states and hamper both Common Market and NATO unity. In fact, it appeared that the Western nations might have to engage in a trade war to pay for their oil imports. The Russians also profited from the fact that, as a net exporter of oil, their hard currency income would rise with the market price of the oil they sold to West European nations. The decision of the Arab oil producers to extend their oil embargo against the United States was also warmly welcomed, although the *Izvestia* article discussing these developments urged the Arabs to go one step further and nationalize the holdings of the Western oil companies, much as Iraq had done.⁸⁰

However, Soviet leaders were apparently caught by surprise by the Kissinger arranged Israeli-Egyptian disengagement agreement on 18 January, and Egyptian Foreign Minister Ismail Fahmy had to make a hurried visit to Moscow to explain the Egyptian position. Perhaps fearing their exclusion from a peace settlement, the Russians put into *Pravda*'s description of the talks the assertion:

48 NAVAL WAR COLLEGE REVIEW

... It was stressed that an important factor in the struggle for a just settlement in the Near East is the close coordination of the actions of the Soviet Union and Egypt at all stages of this struggle including the work of the Near East Peace Conference and all the working groups which come out of it...⁸¹

The fact that following the disengagement agreement Sadat began to urge the lifting of the embargo was a further blow to the Russians. *Pravda*, in a feature article by "commentator" on 30 January warned that:

... It should be emphasized that the agreement on troop disengagement can be a positive step only if it is followed by other fundamental measures aimed at ensuring the withdrawal of Israeli troops from all occupied Arab territories and guaranteeing the legitimate rights of the Arab people of Palestine. Without the solution of these problems, which are cardinal to a Near East settlement, a lasting peace cannot be achieved, and the possibility of new military outbreaks, fraught with serious international convulsions, cannot be ruled out. It can be said that the positive significance of the concluded agreement depends to a decisive extent on its linkage with other fundamental questions of a settlement...⁸²

Even the decision by the United States to host a conference of energy consuming nations did not serve to arrest the slow splintering of the facade of Arab unity. While the Russians hailed the decision of the mid-February Arab minisummit not to lift the embargo, an article in *New Times* about the minisummit clearly recognized the dilemma:

... In this intricate situation, the Arab press believes joint Arab action and co-ordinated Arab policies are of the utmost importance.

All the more so since the Israeli militarists, who still count on being able to avoid withdrawing from occupied Arab territories, are trying to set the Arab countries at loggerheads with one another... Further, the fomenting of Arab differences has a definite place in the designs of the Western oil monopolies, who are out to use the present energy crisis to preserve and even multiply the profits derived from Middle East oil...⁸³

By this time, however, it appeared to be only a matter of time until the embargo was lifted since now Sheikh Yamani as well as Sadat spoke openly about lifting it. Kissinger, making use of the atmosphere of conciliation, made yet another journey to the Middle East, this time shuttling back and forth between Damascus and Jerusalem and procuring from the Syrian leaders the list of Israeli POW's the Israelis had demanded as a precondition for talks with Syria. It appeared that once again Kissinger would be able to pull off a diplomatic coup. However, having seen the United States replace the U.S.S.R. as the leading foreign influence in Egypt—however temporarily—the Russian leaders had no desire to see the process repeat itself in Syria. Consequently, Gromyko followed Kissinger to Damascus and worked out a highly bellicose communique with the Syrian leaders which threatened renewed war if Syrian demands were not met.⁸⁴ Strengthened by new shipments of Soviet arms and encouraged by Soviet support, the Syrian regime of Hafez Assad, less willing (or able) to make peace with Israel than Egypt, adopted a very hard bargaining position and, upon Gromyko's departure, began a war of attrition against Israel which involved daily artillery and tank battles.

Despite the action on the Golan Heights and pleas from Syria and the U.S.S.R. for "Arab unity," the

oil-producing states, under Egyptian and Saudi pressure, agreed to end the oil embargo against the United States on 19 March. As a sop to the Syrians, Algeria stated that it would reexamine its embargo policy on 1 June. Arab unity on the oil-embargo issue was clearly broken, as Libya and Syria refused to abide by the majority decision to lift the embargo.

At this point Soviet-Egyptian relations began to deteriorate rapidly. Just as in 1971 when Sadat refused to support Soviet policy in the Sudan, he again was strongly opposing a major Soviet policy—despite all the economic and military aid the Soviet Union had given Egypt. The Soviet leaders retaliated by branding Sadat a traitor to Nasser's "legacy," while Sadat attacked the U.S.S.R. for lying to him on the first day of the war.⁸⁵

Events continued in this pattern in April and May, with Sadat openly appealing for arms from the United States and the Soviet leadership further castigating Sadat's policies while continuing to supply large quantities of arms to Syria and giving Syrian President Hafiz Al-Assad a warm welcome during his visit to Moscow in mid-April. Additionally, in an effort to compensate for Sadat's move toward the United States, the Soviet leadership moved to improve relations with the volatile Libyan Government, whose leader, Mu'ammarr Kaddafi, shared the Soviet distaste for Sadat's rapprochement with the United States. Finally, the Soviet leadership deepened its ties with the Iraqi Government by pledging full Soviet support for an all-out Iraqi offensive against the Kurds.

Meanwhile, however, Kissinger was painstakingly working out a disengagement agreement between Israel and Syria. Despite two bloody Palestinian terrorist attacks on the Israeli settlements of Kiryat Shemoneh and Maalot—the latter resulting in the death of 24 schoolchildren—and severe Israeli

retaliatory attacks on guerrilla bases in Lebanon, Kissinger was ultimately successful in his task and disengagement agreement was signed between Israel and Syria at the end of May. The agreement gave Syria back all the land it had lost in the 1973 war and the city of Kuneitra, which it had lost to the Israelis in the 1967 war.

Following the disengagement agreement, which the Soviet leadership tried to belittle, U.S. President Richard Nixon toured the Middle East, receiving a hero's welcome in Egypt, and a very warm welcome in Syria as well, where an announcement was made restoring diplomatic relations between the two countries. With American influence clearly on the upswing in the Middle East—however temporarily—the Soviet leadership sought to counter this most unwelcome trend by embracing one of the most anti-Western forces in the Middle East, the Palestine Liberation Organization. The PLO's leader, Yasir Arafat, was invited to Moscow at the end of July and this visit received extensive coverage in the Soviet press. Arafat was rewarded for his strong anti-Western pronouncements with pledges of increased Soviet support and permission to open a PLO office in Moscow.

Nonetheless, despite such moves as improved relations with Libya, Iraq, and the PLO, the Soviet position in the Middle East had clearly deteriorated as it appeared that the Egyptian-Saudi Arabian axis, backed by the United States, had become the dominant force in Arab politics. This was indeed an ironic development, given the extensive Soviet military and diplomatic support to the Arabs during the October war and U.S. support for Israel. It serves as yet another example of the Arab leaders' ability to exploit the superpowers to achieve their goals in the region.

Given the volatility of the Middle East, the possibility of another Arab-Israeli war, Arab-Western conflict over

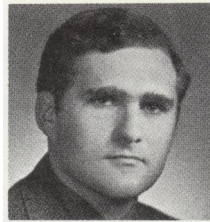
50 NAVAL WAR COLLEGE REVIEW

oil prices, and the still unresolved issue of the Palestinian Arabs, it is far too early to see the trends mentioned above as permanent or even long-lasting ones. Indeed it is still quite possible to foresee the Soviet leadership exploiting yet another outbreak of war between Israel and Egypt in an attempt to rebuild the Soviet position in the region.

Assuming these trends *do* continue, however, the U.S.S.R. would be in a position where the best policy would simply be one of "watchful waiting." A Middle East peace agreement that established a Palestinian Arab State would well suit Soviet leaders by giving them another government over which they could expect to exercise some influence. They may also reason that the conservative monarchies of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates will eventually be replaced by radical regimes of the Iraqi or South Yemeni type that would call on the U.S.S.R. for support. Furthermore, such a policy would allow the Soviet Union to rebuild its *détente* relationship with the United States, and judging from the extent to which American investment has been sought, this is an important consideration.

Whatever the Soviet move in the Middle East, whatever its immediate objective may be, one cannot forget the overall goal: to strengthen the position of the U.S.S.R. in the region while destroying that of the West. Kremlin leaders have made a basic decision on the importance of the Middle East to Soviet ambitions, and far too much has been invested to expect them to abandon the project now.

BIOGRAPHIC SUMMARY



Professor Robert O. Freedman did his undergraduate work at the University of Pennsylvania and earned both his M.A. and Ph.D. in international relations and Soviet studies from Columbia University.

He has traveled in the Soviet Union and in the Middle East, authored *Economic Warfare in the Communist Bloc* (Praeger), and in the spring this same publisher is scheduled to publish his forthcoming book, *Soviet Policy Toward the Middle East Since Nasser*. Dr. Freedman was a line officer in the U.S. Army, served on the social sciences faculty of the U.S. Military Academy, and is currently on the faculty of Marquette University.

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SOVIET POLICY—MIDDLE EAST 51

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41. Cited in *Washington Post*, 27 March 1973.
42. Cited in *Brief: Middle East Highlights* (Tel Aviv) Hereafter (BRIEF), No. 54, p. 3.
43. Dmitry Volsky, "The Beirut Crime," *New Times*, No. 16, 1973, pp. 12-13.
44. See report in *Washington Post*, 18 April 1973 and in *Jerusalem Post* (AP report) on 20 April 1973.
45. Cairo Radio, 1 May 1973, reprinted in *Middle East Monitor*, vol. III, No. 10, pp. 3-4.

52 NAVAL WAR COLLEGE REVIEW

46. Cf. The International Conference for Peace and Justice in the Middle East, Bologna, Italy, 13 May 1973. For a description of the results of this conference see *New Times*, No. 21, 1973, pp. 16-17.
47. Cited in "A Cairo Newspaper Criticizes Mideast Policy at Summit," *The New York Times*, 26 June 1973, p. 20:3.
48. Reprinted in *Middle East Monitor*, vol. III, No. 14, p. 1.
49. Dmitry Volsky, "New Opportunities and Old Obstacles," *New Times*, No. 32, 1973, p. 15.
50. Cited in "Israeli Forces Say North Koreans Pilot Some Egyptian Jets," *The New York Times*, 16 August 1973, p. 13:1.
51. Translated in "Near and Middle East: Egypt," *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, 26 September 1973, p. 18.
52. Dmitry Volsky, "Soviet-American Relations and the Third World," *New Times*, No. 36, 1973, pp. 4-6.
53. See, for example, Radio Moscow Domestic Service, 13 and 14 September 1973.
54. For a different view of the Soviet position on the eve of the war see Uri Ra'anani, "Soviet Policy in the Middle East 1969-73," in *Midstream*, December 1973, pp. 23-45; and the article by Jon Kimhe, "The Soviet-Arab Scenario" in the same journal, pp. 9-22.
55. For an example of the Israeli leaders' lack of mental preparedness for the war, see Defense Minister Moshe Dayan's lecture to the Israeli Command and Staff College on 9 August. (Reprinted in BRIEF, No. 63, pp. 3-4.)
56. Henry Tanner, "Sadat Says Soviet Misinformed Him on Syrian Stand Early in Mideast War," *The New York Times*, 30 March 1974, p. 9:1.
57. See *Pravda*, 7-9 October and the coverage on Moscow Radio for the same dates.
58. Text of the message is printed in Radio Paris Domestic Service, 9 October 1973.
59. Cited in UPI report from Moscow, "Emigration Figures Reported," *The New York Times*, 2 November 1973, p. 5:1. See also Hedrick Smith, "Flow of Soviet Jews Is Undiminished," *The New York Times*, 19 October 1973, p. 17:3.
60. Cf. Radio Moscow in English to North America, 15 October 1973.
61. Cited in report of Bernard Gwertzman, "Kissinger Says U.S. and Soviet Union Acted to Keep War Restricted to Mideast," *The New York Times*, 16 October 1973, p. 1:8.
62. Cited in report by Bernard Gwertzman, "U.S. Resupplying Israel's Arms to Offset Airlift from Soviet: Moscow Offers Arabs Full Aid," *The New York Times*, 16 October 1973, p. 1:8.
63. *Pravda*, 20 October 1973.
64. Cited in *Middle East Monitor*, vol. III, No. 20, p. 3.
65. Cited in report by Murray Marder in the 20 October 1973 issue of *Washington Post*.
66. Cited in report by Bernard Gwertzman, "President Sent Another Message to Brezhnev as Kissinger Left for Moscow Talks," *The New York Times*, 21 October 1973, p. 26:1.
67. Cited in *Middle East Monitor*, vol. III, No. 20, p. 5.
68. The American alert and the nature of both the Soviet message to Nixon and the exact nature of Soviet moves are not yet clear. For Kissinger's statement about the alert at a press conference and a description of the alert, see Bernard Gwertzman, "Kissinger Speaks at a News Parley," *The New York Times*, 26 October 1973, p. 1:1, 19:1.
69. For a detailed description of the actions of the Arab States during the war, see *Middle East Monitor*, vol. III, Nos. 19 and 20.
70. Georgi Mirsky, "The Middle East: New Factors" in *New Times*, No. 18, 1973, pp. 18-19. The other "myths" which Mirsky claimed were dispelled by the war were: (a) Israel would always enjoy military superiority, (b) Arab weaponry was inferior to that of Israel, and (c) détente had no value (Mirsky said that, thanks to détente, a worse "flare-up" was avoided.)
71. G. Apalin, "Peking Provocations," *New Times*, Nos. 45-46, 1973, pp. 29-30. Apalin also claimed, as did much of the Soviet media, that the Chinese attempted to use the Middle East war "to provide a confrontation" between the United States and the U.S.S.R.
72. See *Pravda*, 21 November 1973 and 9 December 1973.
73. Theodore Shabad, "Impact of U.S. Trade Tie on Russians Is Debated," *The New York Times*, 5 November 1973, p. 61:1.
74. "Limits of Détente," *The New York Times*, 16 March 1974, p. 30:1.
75. Cited in BRIEF, No. 68, p. 2.
76. *Ibid.*, p. 2.
77. *Middle East Monitor*, vol. III, No. 22, p. 5; "Scanning the News: Crisis Abates," *New Times*, No. 8, February 1974, p. 13. For a Soviet view of the Kurdish-Arab problem in Iraq, see Vladimir Shmarov, "The Baghdad Dialogue," *New Times*, No. 5, February 1974, p. 10.
78. See AP report cited in BRIEF, No. 69, p. 3.

SOVIET POLICY—MIDDLE EAST 53

79. Gromyko's speech is translated in "Gromyko Speaks at Geneva Peace Talks," *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, 16 January 1974, pp. 1-4.
80. *Izvestia*, 30 December 1972. (Translated in "Foreign Affairs: World Economy," *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, 23 January 1974, p. 11.)
81. *Pravda*, 25 January 1974 (Translated in "Near and Middle East: Egypt," *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, 20 February 1974, p. 25.)
82. Translated in "Reviewing the Middle East Situation," *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, 27 February 1974, pp. 11-12.
83. "Four Nation Conference," *New Times*, February 1974, p. 16.
84. Text of communique in *Pravda*, 8 March 1974.
85. See reports in Hedrick Smith, "Cairo Under Soviet Attack for Drift from Socialism," *The New York Times*, 26 March 1974, p. 1:2; Tanner, "Sadat Says Egypt Misinformed Him."

