

NEW HOPE FOR PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

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The crisis in the Middle East has in recent months become extremely grave and the danger of its explosion into all-out warfare, and with this of a U.S.-Soviet military confrontation, has become increasingly acute. Now, however, a possible way out of this grim situation has emerged, based on the U.S. cease-fire proposals.

The acceptance of these proposals by the UAR and Jordan on the one side and Israel on the other means that for at least ninety days the shooting will stop, and that during this period the two sides will hold talks with Gunnar Jarring on peace terms. This is a most welcome development. Especially significant is the agreement of the Israeli government to talk terms with Jarring, including withdrawal from occupied territories--a step which it has flatly rejected up to now.

The path leading in the direction of a peaceful settlement has thus been opened up. But there are many immediate problems to be overcome. More important, the basic differences remain to be resolved. The aggressive, expansionist line of the Israeli ruling circles remains unchanged. Hence the road to a political solution is a long and arduous one, and there are no guarantees that the ninety-day period will not end in the resumption of fighting.

It must be remembered that the primary source of the crisis is the escalation of aggression against the Arab countries by the Golda Meir regime. This escalation, launched with the encouragement and support of U.S. imperialism, included the bombing of targets in the interior of the UAR. The measures taken by the USSR to strengthen the Egyptian anti-aircraft defenses put an end to these raids and also rendered the Israeli attacks on the area bordering the Suez Canal much more costly.

But the daily Israeli bombings of the canal zone have continued up to this point. The Israeli leaders have insisted that they must retain air control of both banks of the canal. Without this they might be compelled to launch a new pre-emptive war against the UAR.

In this stand they have been supported by the Nixon Administration. In his television appearance on July 1, Nixon declared that U.S. policy was to "maintain the balance of power" in the Middle East--that is, to maintain Israeli offensive superiority. Toward this end the U.S. has continued to supply Israel with Phantoms and Skyhawks in the face of its already overwhelming air superiority, and is evidently prepared to go further if need be.

The aim of this policy, on the part of both U.S. imperialism and Israel's rulers, continues to be the destruction of the Nasser government. But this, it is becoming increasingly obvious, is but a sure road to nuclear war. Faced with the mounting strength of the anti-imperialist forces in the Middle East and the growing shift in the balance of forces against imperialism, combined with the strong, Soviet initiatives for peace, important sections of the U.S. ruling class have come to fear a new outbreak of full-scale warfare.

Hence the Rogers proposals and hence the pressure on Israel's leaders to accept them. But the policy of "maintaining the balance of power" has not been abandoned and the maneuvering toward this end will continue. The danger of sabotage of the proceedings from the U.S. end must therefore be guarded against.

The key to Middle East peace remains the U.N. Resolutions of November 1967. The chief roadblock to peace remains the refusal of the Israeli government to accept it in toto, specifically the refusal to agree to withdraw completely from the occupied territories and to a just settlement of the refugee question. A peaceful settlement is possible only if there is a reversal of this policy.

Within Israel there is a growing movement for such a reversal. The Israeli peace forces today extend far beyond the Communist Party of Israel, which at one time stood almost alone. They are growing in strength and in their ability to compel a break with the present policy of aggression and annexation.

For the people of this country the task is to oppose the continued arming of Israel for the waging of offensive warfare, and to demand that our government press instead for acceptance by Israel of complete withdrawal and resolution of the refugee question as essential conditions for an end to the conflict. Nixon must be made aware that the American people will accept nothing less than this.