

**MIDDLE EAST:
WAY
TO A JUST
PEACE**



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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

NOVOSTI PRESS AGENCY PUBLISHING HOUSE
MOSCOW, 1970

Ближний Восток: путь к справедливому миру

на английском языке

Цена 3 коп.

To the reader

In the chain of explosive developments in the world today the Middle East crisis caused by the Israeli aggression against the Arab countries is among the most dramatic and dangerous.

The imperialists are doing their utmost to keep the embers of war smouldering in the Middle East, while their propaganda resorts to all kind of subterfuge to give a distorted picture of the situation in this part of the world, to shift the blame from the guilty to the innocent. Especially malicious are their inventions about the position and role of the Soviet Union in this matter.

Numerous questions from readers in different countries come to the newspapers and magazines of the Novosti Press Agency. The way some of these questions are worded shows that those who advocate world tensions are hard at work poisoning the minds of people by distorting and garbling the truth.

This pamphlet was written to introduce its readers to the Soviet point of view on the events

that lie at the root of the Middle East situation and also on ways of settling this crucial international problem.

Novosti Press Agency

Question: What is the Soviet Union's viewpoint on the real causes of the present conflict in the Middle East? In what way does the Soviet viewpoint differ from that of the West in this regard?

Answer: In the USA and other Western countries the Middle East conflict is, as a rule, presented as a purely national problem basically stemming from the clash between Arab and Israeli nationalism. This, for example, is how William Polk, director of the Middle Eastern Center at Chicago University, views the matter in his book *The United States and the Arab World*. The Soviet Union considers the root of the Middle East crisis to be not the clash of nationalist trends, although these are, no doubt, present, but the fact that the forces of imperialism, and primarily the ruling circles of the USA, are striving to strike a blow at the national-liberation movement in Arab countries with the help of the Israeli extremist circles, that also have their own expansionist ambitions, so as eventually to restore their economic, political and military position in the Middle East.

Facts supporting this conclusion may be supplied from the history of relations between the USA and Egypt, which, to a considerable degree, determined the course of developments in the Middle East area. Since the mid-fifties, that is, after the Egyptian revolution, the US Middle East policy has been spearheaded against Egypt, the Arab country with the largest population

and most developed industry, a country whose transformations at home and whose independent foreign policy have had a marked revolutionizing influence on the rest of the Arab world. Incidentally, the overthrow of King Farouk in Egypt in 1952 was not in itself regarded by Washington as a pretext for embarking on a policy aimed at overthrowing the new Egyptian regime. The crucial year was 1955, when Egypt put an end to the Western "monopoly" on the delivery of arms to the Egyptian army and concluded an agreement to obtain arms from the USSR and Czechoslovakia.

David Nes, ex US charge d'affaires in the United Arab Republic, pointed out at a press-conference on international affairs held by Colorado University in April 1969 that US economic aid was frankly oriented towards making Egypt dependent on the United States for food, a problem of vital importance for Egypt. In addition, he admitted that the United States was involved in various activities in Egypt to overthrow the regime along with attempts to isolate Egypt in the Arab world.

When the US ruling circles found they could not settle the question of power in Egypt to suit themselves by means of "traditional" methods, when it became perfectly obvious that, contrary to the stand taken by the USA and American activity, the United Arab Republic continued to go its own way and strengthen all-round cooperation with socialist states, the Soviet Union above all, Washington proceeded with the second phase of its anti-Egyptian activities—placing the emphasis on using Israeli extremists in its struggle against Cairo. At the same time,

US politicians were out to get rid of anti-imperialist regimes in a number of other Arab countries, including Syria. The "six-day war" was the direct continuation of that policy.

It should be noted that the true aims pursued by the US ruling circles in the Middle East are always camouflaged with "peaceable" statements by Washington officials. From time to time US diplomacy makes tactical manoeuvres to keep on the inside of the slowly but surely maturing, due to the persistent effort of the peace forces, process of peaceful settlement of the Middle East crisis. However, all practical activities of the US ruling circles and their diplomacy are aimed at supporting Israeli expansion. This is amply evident from the lavish financial and economic aid to Israel, arms supplies, etc.

Question: Is it true that in 1967 there was a plot to destroy Israel?

Answer: The Western press usually presents Israel as a kind of "island" which the huge raging Arab sea is about to engulf. And this was precisely the propaganda stunt employed on the eve and during the Israeli aggression on June 5, 1967. This line was used to justify Israel's "preventive" blow against its Arab neighbours. But actually things were altogether different.

President Nasser said in an interview to a *Le Monde* correspondent in February 1970: "Despite the periods of great tension which led to the 1967 conflict, I have never said it is necessary to cast the Jews into the sea, even though persistent, hostile propaganda constantly ascribes this statement to me. I did not want to unleash a war in 1967, and the Israeli leaders know this very well."

One cannot deny, of course, the complex socio-political situation in the Arab world, the existence among other things, of ultra-nationalist trends of a petty-bourgeois nature. Some representatives of such trends do call, in a thoughtless way, for doing away with the Israeli state. But leading Arab political circles have never regarded this slogan seriously.

Furthermore, at the moment of spreading the version about "Israel's terrible plight," Washington and other Western capitals knew very well the actual correlation between the Israeli and the Arab armed forces. The United States knew of the blow Israel was preparing to strike and that the "initiative" was bound to put Tel Aviv in a winning position.

However, sometimes, in order to justify some tactical move to preserve US interests in the Arab world, US official spokesmen are compelled to speak publicly about Israel's military superiority. When asked at a press conference in March 1970 what was holding up the agreed-upon decision to grant Israel's request for additional deliveries of US supersonic fighter-bombers US Secretary of State Rogers replied that according to intelligence information Israel already had air superiority. But such statements are usually made in passing, and, in any event, are not meant to destroy the propaganda stunt about the alleged threat to Israel's existence.

It is noteworthy that Washington keeps clinging to this stunt even when Israel continues to occupy a considerable part of Arab territory and to make constant armed raids on its Arab neighbours. And all this is taking place at a time when the majority of the Arab countries had

already repudiated—through statements of their leaders or through the press—the irresponsible pronouncements of some Arab leaders made before the "six-day war." But even on July 1, 1970 President Nixon declared that the aims of the Arab countries were, allegedly, to cast Israel into the sea. It is highly symptomatic that the Egyptian press and newspapers of many other Arab countries have termed this statement "instigatory."

Question: Is the policy of Israel's present leaders in the interests of the Israeli people?

Answer: Not in the least. The Israeli people need a peaceful life and not territory acquired at the cost of permanent war with their Arab neighbours. But the present Israeli leadership has chosen force as the main trend of its Arab policy.

The policy of nationwide militarization and aggression against the neighbouring Arab countries pursued by the Israeli ruling circles entails growing economic difficulties and all sorts of adversities for the working people of Israel. It is significant that Israel has won world notoriety as the country of the highest taxes.

This policy cannot be justified either from the standpoint of strategy or tactics. There are 2.5 million Israelites and about 100 million Arabs. Granted that Israel is superior to the Arab countries from a scientific-technical standpoint at present. With the development of the world scientific-technical revolution the level of the two sides is bound to even up. "I have always said that time is not working for Israel," Nahum Goldmann, Chairman of the World Jewish Congress, wrote in *Le Monde* on May 29. "In this

respect, I differed not only with Ben-Gurion but with many present Israeli rulers as well."

Tel Aviv's "positions of strength" policy heightens the hostility and, in a number of cases, the hatred of the Arab people towards Israel. The appearance and rapid development of the Palestine guerilla movement is a manifestation of this. The Fedayeens started to gain strength precisely when the Israeli leadership openly took up a line of bringing military pressure to bear on the Arabs. The Arab circles which are against a political settlement with Israel justify their position by stating that Tel Aviv, judging from all the measures taken after the "six-day war," will not consent to a peaceful settlement.

Finally, the "positions of strength" policy with regard to the Arabs turns world public opinion against Israel. The same Nahum Goldmann, whom it would be hard to suspect of pro-Arab sentiments, wrote in *Le Monde*: "Israel's position in the world arena has deteriorated considerably as a result of its unyielding, inflexible policy."

The only way to safeguard the interests of the peoples of the entire Middle East area, including the Israeli people, is to establish a lasting and just peace on the basis of renunciation of territorial annexation.

Question: Is there any truth to the allegations by several Western papers that the Soviet Union is out to establish its domination in the Middle East?

Answer: First a few words on the coverage of Middle East events in the Western press. In the United States it is utterly impossible to get via the mass media, including the press, radio, television, books and periodicals, a factual and

accurate picture of the recent history or the current events in the Middle East—this was admitted at the Colorado University press-conference by David Nes, veteran State Department official, ex-charge d'affaires of the United States in the United Arab Republic. This is also true of Western press interpretations of Soviet foreign policy objectives in the Middle East.

The USSR has no interests in the Middle East aside from the desire to secure peace and stability in that area directly adjacent to Soviet southern borders.

It is quite natural that the Soviet Union's sympathies—as previously mentioned—are with the liberation forces which are under constant imperialist attack.

In view of the situation and on the strength of the principles underlying its policy the Soviet Union has taken a series of measures in the Middle East, including military aid to the countries that fell victim to Israeli aggression, in order to strengthen their defences.

But when was this aid given? Were the Arab armies invading Israeli territory? Quite the contrary. The USSR began to help the Arabs when Israel seized Arab lands.

The USSR did send its military experts to the United Arab Republic.

But when? Were Egyptian planes raiding Israeli cities? No, just the reverse. It happened when Phantom fighter-bombers given to Israel by the United States were raiding the interior of Egypt, bombing and strafing civilian targets.

The USSR sent its warships to the Mediterranean. But this was done after the Sixth US fleet had long established itself there.

In his personal messages to the US President, Prime Minister of Great Britain and President of France, A. Kosygin, Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers, emphasized the urgent need of making Israel abandon its policy of armed provocations and of securing stable peace in the Middle East. Therefore the Soviet Union has always urged the implementation of the Security Council resolution adopted on November 22, 1967.

Question: What is the Soviet Union's position regarding the existence of the state of Israel?

Answer: The Soviet Union has always upheld the right of all states and peoples of the Middle East to secure and independent existence. It never opposed the existence of the state of Israel. In his address to the United Nations in 1967, after Israeli aggression, Premier Alexei Kosygin unequivocally spoke of the right of Israel to existence. And he reasserted this position in an interview given to a *Life* correspondent in early 1968.

Two circumstances were emphasized in the July 1970 Statement issued by the Soviet parliament. First: "The USSR Supreme Soviet fully approves the Soviet Government's policy of rendering diversified assistance to the Arab states in their courageous struggle against Israeli aggression, a policy aimed at bringing about a just peaceful political settlement of the Middle East conflict." Second: "The USSR Supreme Soviet considers that every state in the Middle East has the right to independent national existence, sovereignty and security."

In 1947 the Soviet people sincerely hoped that, pursuant to UN decisions, along with in-

dependent Palestine, a peaceable state of Israel would be established.

But the Zionist Israeli leaders, taking advantage of the reactionary policy pursued at the time by feudal regimes in some Arab countries, immediately torpedoed a just and democratic settlement of the Palestinian question; they seized the areas intended by UN decisions for the Arab population of Palestine thereby creating the problem of Palestinian refugees. Thereafter the policy pursued by the Zionist ruling clique of Israel was openly directed against the national-liberation movement of the Arab peoples, against the young Arab states that had cast off the yoke of colonialism and imperialism. Israel has in effect turned into an outpost of imperialism in the Middle East and has begun to function vis-à-vis the Arab national-liberation movement, much in the same way as the Vorster racist regime in South Africa.

This is why the Soviet Union has always opposed the policy pursued by the ruling extremist circles of Israel, politicians connected with monopoly capital, "hawks" in civvies and in general's uniform anxious for territorial "acquisitions." The Soviet Union supports the Israeli working people and its progressive forces which seek peace and good-neighbourly relations with the Arab countries.

Question: What is the essence of Soviet proposals for settling the Middle East conflict?

Answer: The Soviet Union has advanced concrete proposals for settling the present Middle East crisis. Their purpose is the establishment of a stable, just peace in the Middle East.

What is sought is not a time-serving, temporary decision but a stable settlement. For Arab countries, victims of Israeli aggression, this is the withdrawal of Israeli troops from the territories occupied during the aggression in July 1967. For the Arabs of Palestine this is recognition of their national rights. For Israel this is the establishment of recognized borders, the ending of the 22-year-long state of war with the Arabs and freedom of shipping on all sea routes. For all the peoples it would mean the renunciation of war as a way of solving territorial disputes.

The Soviet Union holds that the UN Security Council resolution of November 22, 1967 can serve now as the basis for a political settlement of the Middle East crisis.

The Soviet proposals do not reduce to a mere declaration of peace in the Middle East. They contain a mutually-binding agreement between the parties on the basic issues, whose solution is provided for in the Security Council resolution.

This is the main thing. The question of forms which this mutually-binding agreement should take is of secondary importance.

The Soviet proposals envisage that in view of their obligations under the UN Charter and confirming their obligations under Security Council Resolution No. 242, dated November 22, 1967, and expressing their readiness to carry out all its provisions conscientiously, recognizing the impermissibility of acquiring territories by war, and the need for a just and stable peace in the Middle East, whereby every state in that area could live in security, the Arab countries participating in the settlement and Israel should agree, with the help of contacts made through Gunnar Jarring,

to work out a final and mutually-binding agreement on concrete ways of implementing the Security Council Resolution.

According to the Soviet proposals the Arab countries participating in the settlement and Israel must mutually agree to respect and recognize each other's sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence and their mutual right to live in peace, within safe, recognized borders, without being subjected to the threat or use of force. Both sides must refrain from direct or indirect interference in each other's internal affairs for political, economic or other reasons.

Is it not clear that if both sides were to assume these concrete commitments it would be a realistic basis for a stable peace?

The Soviet Union has always supported the Jarring mission. This mission is definitely not an end in itself. There exists a principle whereby the sides could contact through Jarring. This principle is contained in the 90-days ceasefire agreement.

However the "hawks" in the Israeli Government use sundry pretexts to procrastinate the negotiations and in effect threaten to wreck the new Jarring mission. They do not hesitate to build up tensions in that area, which may have tragic consequences.

Question: Israel's and the USA's "semantic" interpretation of the part of the resolution stipulating the need for Israeli troops to withdraw is well-known. What can be said in this connection?

Answer: It is true that by taking advantage of the fact that there is no definite article before

the words "occupied territories" some people would like to have it that the resolution does not envisage the withdrawal of Israeli troops from all the Arab lands seized by them in June 1967. Claude Roy, a well-known French journalist, wrote the following in this connection in the *Nouvelle Observateur*: "I was amazed by the grammatical inventiveness displayed in comparing the English text with the other texts of the resolution passed by the UN Security Council on November 22, 1967. The discussion centered around the English term 'occupied territories.' In our presence, responsible Israeli interlocutors made incredible efforts to ascertain whether the term meant the 'withdrawal from all the occupied territories' or only from 'part of these territories.' It would be very good if the same attention to grammatical precision and the same scrupulous interpretation were displayed, for example, with regard to President Nasser's statements."

It would be in place to recall a curious "detail": The United States, which now interprets the question of the evacuation of Israeli troops depending on the definite or the indefinite article before the words "occupied territories," some time ago, in September 1967, voted at the General Assembly for the so-called Latin American resolution demanding the withdrawal of Israeli troops from "the occupied territories." What has changed since then? Is it, perhaps, that the seizure of a smaller territory is to be regarded as illegal and a demand should be made to return it while the seizure of a bigger territory might be looked upon as legitimate?

Question: How is the term "safe and recog-

nized borders" in the Middle East understood in the Soviet Union?

Answer: As L. I. Brezhnev, General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee, stated recently: "The Soviet Government has proceeded from the understanding that a just and lasting peace in the Middle East cannot be ensured by rewarding the aggressor, in one way or another, for the crimes it has perpetrated. Such a peace can be ensured only by the complete liquidation of all the consequences of Israeli aggression, in particular by the complete withdrawal of Israeli troops from all captured territories. We stood and continue to stand for guaranteeing the national rights, security and independence of all states of that area, including the legitimate rights of the Arab people of Palestine."

Meanwhile, what Israeli leadership means by "safe borders" is consolidation of the occupied Arab territories and continuation of its expansionist course. For example, the Chief of Staff of the Israeli army regards the River Jordan as a "safe" border for Israel. Some representatives of the Israeli leadership, including those who were in the government until recently, would stretch these so-called safe borders even further. M. Begin says that they should be extended almost to the Nile and the Euphrates.

It is perfectly obvious that now, in this age of the rapid development of military techniques, it is impossible to ensure the safety of any given border of Israel by shifting it even several score miles. This safety can only be ensured by the agreement on and general recognition of borders.

It is perfectly obvious that the Arab countries cannot be forced to reconcile themselves to the loss of their territories. That is why Israel must first of all honour the Security Council resolution and withdraw its troops behind the demarcation line which existed prior to June 4, 1967. This would provide the basis for a final settlement of the question of safe and recognized borders as a result of a mutually acceptable agreement between the Arab states and Israel.

If the Israeli rulers are actually concerned about questions of security and not about new expansionist designs for territorial acquisition, Tel Aviv must pay much more attention to proposals regarding the recognition of Israeli borders by the Arabs on the basis of the demarcation lines existing on June 4, 1967.

The following should be noted: until recently, the only recognized borders of Israel were the 1947 borders stipulated in UN decisions, and within these borders Israel was a third smaller in territory than what is encompassed in the line held on June 4, 1967.

The Soviet proposals envisage a number of concrete and important measures to ensure real guarantees for the safety of the borders of states in this area in future. These measures for ensuring the territorial inviolability of states in the area contain a proposal for establishing demilitarized zones on both sides of the borders. Such zones would not provide advantages for either side, and the limitations to be enforced would be of a purely military nature. Should both sides agree, the UN Security Council could work out measures to ensure the demilitarized status of such zones.

Besides the demilitarized zones, the safety of the borders could be also guaranteed by stationing contingents of UN troops on both sides of the border between the Arab countries and Israel and also in the Gaza sector and in Sharm el-Sheikh at the entrance to the Gulf of Aqaba.

Finally, under the Soviet plan it could be up to the four great powers—the USSR, the USA, Britain and France—or the UN Security Council as a whole to ensure the safety of the above-mentioned Arab-Israeli borders.

Question: What is the Soviet attitude to the question on free shipping along the Suez Canal and in the Gulf of Aqaba?

Answer: The Soviet Union is of the opinion that one of the elements of a peaceful settlement should be not merely the proclamation but also the ensuring of freedom of shipping of vessels of all states without discrimination both through the Suez Canal and Gulf of Aqaba (through the Tiran Strait).

It is well known that the President of the United Arab Republic, through which the Suez Canal runs and whose territorial waters include the Tiran Strait, has more than once announced his country's readiness to guarantee freedom of shipping along these routes without any discrimination, providing Israel agrees to abide by all the provisions of the Security Council Resolution of November 22, 1967. Besides that, shipping through the Suez Canal is regulated by the Constantinople Convention of 1888 which remains in force up to the present moment.

Question: How can the problem of the Palestine refugees be solved?

Answer: In the opinion of the Soviet Union,

the implementation of the resolutions already approved by the United Nations will make it possible to solve this difficult problem. As is known, these resolutions envisage that refugees desiring to return to their homeland (i.e. former Palestine) be given the right to do so. Other refugees would be entitled to compensation for their property. Israel does not wish to abide by these resolutions. In this matter the present Israeli leadership still adheres to the line mapped out by the founder of Zionism, Herzl, who wrote in the last century that the task of the movement he started was to "transfer a people without a country to a country without a people." Palestine was by no means a deserted zone at the time the Israeli state was formed; it was populated by the Palestinian Arabs—about 1,500,000 of them—who were driven from their native land. But can the support of the right of the Israeli people to self-determination, be based on depriving another people of its national rights?

By the way, the war expenditure of Israel in the last two years alone would be more than enough to solve the problem of the Palestine refugees economically.

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Thus the aim of the concrete proposals worked out by the Soviet Union is to find a way out of the Middle East impasse. If these proposals were taken as a basis, all the peoples of the Middle East, including the Israeli people, would stand to gain. It would be a way of establishing a just and stable peace in this troubled region where current developments are a threat to international security as a whole.