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The Soviet Union and the Middle East Arms Race

Today the Soviet Union represents the major obstacle to a peaceful settlement in the Middle East. It is clear that the 1967 war would not have taken place had the Soviet authorities not goaded and incited Nasser towards the confrontation that ultimately proved to be a debacle for the U.S.S.R. as well as for the Arabs. Since 1967 the Soviets have re-armed the Arabs and given them the most sophisticated weaponry available in their arsenal. As a result, the U.A.R. today has the use of arms and aircraft that the Russians were not even prepared to give to North Vietnam. Although Israel has obtained arms from the United States, the balance is again strongly weighed in favour of the Arabs.

- * The Institute for Strategic Studies in London published its yearly survey of the world military balance on September 2, 1971. Summarizing the array of forces in the Middle East, the Institute said that Israeli and Egyptian defence budgets for 1971/72 had each reached about 600 million sterling — approximately one quarter of the gross national product for both countries. The study indicated relatively greater quantitative increases in forces by Syria and Libya, which are obliged under the newly-formed tripartite federation treaty to co-ordinate their armies with Egypt.
- * The following are some of the statistics cited in the Institute report (figures appearing with a plus sign indicate the numerical increase over 1970/71).

FORCES IN THE MIDDLE EAST, 1971

	Egypt	Syria	Libya	All Three Federation States	Israel
Active armed forces	285,000 (+70,000)	111,750 (+37,000)	22,000 (+7,000)	418,750 (+114,000)	115,000
Fully mobile forces	400,000	111,750	22,000	533,750	285,000
Total warplanes	523 (+100)	210	7	740 (+100)	374 (+44)
Total tanks	1,600 (+264)	780	121	2,561 (+264)	1,075 (+25)
Ground-air missiles*	70 (SA-2) 65 (SA-3 and-4) (+43)				48 (8-Hawk)
Ships -					
Destroyers	5			5	1
Landing craft	18			18	7
Submarines	12			12	4
Missile boats	19	10	3	32	12
Torpedo boats	27			27	9

* Number of batteries, and type, in brackets

According to the Institute report, Soviet-piloted aircraft within Egypt now numbered 200, or fifty more than the figure in 1970/71. Soviet-operated plane and missile bases totalled a hundred, an increase of about twenty over the previous year. The *New York Times* military editor, William Beecher, reported from Cairo on August 31, 1971 that two new MIG-21 squadrons and five Sukhoi-11 squadrons were added to the four squadrons of MIG-21's delivered to Egypt early in 1970 (a squadron numbers from 12 to 16 aircraft). Three more Sukhoi-11 squadrons were delivered in October 1971, adding to the already operational four MIG-24 interceptors and ten Tupolev-16 reconnaissance planes based in Egypt.

"The number of MIG-21's and Sukhoi-7's that have been shipped to Egypt since last fall, more than 150, brings the Egyptian Air Force up to 550 combat jets, far in excess of the 330 jet-trained pilots in its ranks", the *New York Times* said. It is also estimated that there would now be about 20,000 Soviet military advisors, technicians and pilots directly involved in the Arab military establishment.

In addition to this involvement the Soviet Union has today emerged as the principal world-wide enemy of the Jewish people. Soviet publishing presses continuously produce and distribute on an international level the most venomous types of anti-Semitic propaganda seen since the days of Hitler. On occasions the word "Zionists" is utilized as a euphemism for Jews, but there is no question that the Soviet Union is indulging in a monstrous propaganda campaign calculated to create hatred of Jews throughout the world. Anybody reading a Soviet newspaper would believe that Israel and "international Zionism" represent one of the principal threats to the very existence of the Soviet system. The Soviet material continuously refers to an international conspiracy of Jews with headquarters in New York and Tel Aviv, in a manner reminiscent of the notorious Tsarist forgery "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion" merely phrased in Marxist vernacular. It is noteworthy that according to current Soviet ideological theory Zionists were responsible for the Czechoslovak uprising and disturbances in Poland and elsewhere. The latest publications even claim that Zionism is the motivating power behind "American Imperialism"!

In addition the helpless three to three and a half million Jews living in the Soviet Union have been continuously subjected to a virulent campaign of anti-Semitism appearing regularly in the officially-sponsored Soviet government and Communist Party newspapers, radios and publishing presses. Soviet Jews have responded with extraordinary courage and publicly demanded and demonstrated for their right to emigrate to Israel where they would have the opportunity of living and bringing up their children as free Jews. Many of them have been arrested and condemned in Stalinist-type show-trials on various trumped-up charges. Soviet authorities have also utilized other means to terrorise Soviet Jews and silence them. Certain prominent Soviet Jews not brought to trial were simply arrested and incarcerated in lunatic asylums, a favoured Soviet form of eliminating troublesome political dissenters without even going through the formality of a trial.

It is significant that at the United Nations, and elsewhere, Soviet and Arab representatives continuously bracket Zionism with Nazism and maintain that Israel's leaders are following in the footsteps of the Nazi war criminals, and practice the worst forms of racism. These obscenities stand in stark contrast to the temporary support the Soviet Union extended to the Jewish state in its infancy. This was prior to the alliance with the Arabs, at a time when Stalin mistakenly believed that the creation of a Jewish state would serve as a base for Soviet penetration of the Middle East.

Mr Andrei Gromyko, the Soviet Union representative to the United Nations, stated to the General Assembly (May 14, 1947):

The Jewish people suffered extreme misery and deprivation during the War. It can be said without exaggeration that the sufferings and miseries of the Jewish people are beyond description. It would be difficult to express by mere dry figures the losses and sacrifices of the Jewish people at the hand of the fascist occupiers. In the territories where the Hitlerites were in control, the Jews suffered almost complete extinction. The total number of Jews who fell at the hands of the fascist hangmen is something in the neighbourhood of 6 million ... It may be asked whether the United Nations, considering the very serious situation of hundreds of thousands of Jews who have survived the war, should not show an interest in the situation of these people who have been uprooted from their countries and from their homes ... The fact that not a single Western European state has been in a position to guarantee the defence of the elementary rights of the Jewish people or compensate them for the violence they have suffered at the hands of the fascist hangmen, explains the aspirations of the Jews for the creation of a state of their own. It would be unjust not to take this into account and to deny the right of the Jewish people to the realization of such an aspiration.

In the same speech, Mr Gromyko referred to the rights of the Arabs:

We have to bear in mind the incontestable fact that the population of Palestine consists of two peoples. Arabs and Jews. Each of these has its historical roots in Palestine. That country has become the homeland of both these peoples, and both of them occupy an important place in the country economically and culturally ... Neither history nor the conditions which have arisen in Palestine now can justify any unilateral solution of the Palestine problem, either in favour of the creation of an independent Arab state, ignoring the lawful rights of the Jewish people, or in favour of the creation of an independent Jewish state, ignoring the lawful rights of

the Arab population . . . A just settlement can be found only if account is taken in sufficient degree of the lawful interests of both peoples.

Mr Andrei Gromyko informed the Security Council a year later (May 21, 1948):

It is very difficult not to agree that the military operation in Palestine, in which eight states, the majority of which are members of the United Nations, are more or less involved, constitutes a threat to peace . . . The U.S.S.R. delegation can but express surprise at the position adopted by the Arab states in the Palestine question, and particularly at the fact that those states — or some of them, at least — have resorted to such action as sending their troops into Palestine and carrying out military operations aimed at the suppression of the National Liberation Movement in Palestine.