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May 1976

Soviet Policy in the October 1973 War

William B. Quandt

A report prepared for

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF
DEFENSE/INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS

Rand
SANTA MONICA, CA. 90406

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PREFACE

The behavior of the Soviet Union during the Arab-Israeli war of October 1973 has been the subject of considerable debate. Most American observers have been concerned primarily with the question of whether Moscow's policies before and during the October war were consistent with the rules of détente politics. The answer given has generally been negative.

The primary objective of this study, however, is not to analyze Soviet views of détente, which are clearly at variance with the views of many Americans, but rather to understand Soviet capabilities for dealing with an acute international crisis.

The available evidence suggests that although the Soviets were not responsible for instigating the Egyptian and Syrian attack against Israel on October 6, 1973, they were quick to develop a policy designed to minimize the risks of both an Arab defeat and a superpower confrontation. The Soviets adapted their behavior to the unfolding events on the battlefield, alternately emphasizing diplomatic efforts to end the fighting on terms favorable to their clients and sending arms to prevent a military debacle. As the situation on the ground turned against the Arab forces, the Soviets pressed for a rapid end to hostilities. Their tactical intelligence, as well as their overall assessment of the military balance, appears to have been of comparatively high quality.

This report was prepared as part of a Rand research program for the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs (ISA) on Soviet behavior in crises. The sources used in the study were published primary and secondary material and interviews with American and Egyptian officials. The author has benefited from comments made by a number of specialists in Soviet and Middle Eastern affairs.

SUMMARY

Soviet behavior during the October 1973 war was neither a model of the new politics of détente, nor conduct aggressively aimed at exploiting a regional crisis to the maximum. As has been the case since the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, the Soviets face dilemmas in devising a viable policy to enhance their influence in the Middle East. Acute crises such as the October war accentuate the dilemmas by placing Soviet prestige as a superpower patron of the Arabs on the line and by increasing the risks of confrontation with the United States.

The available evidence suggests that the Soviets were not the motive force behind the Egyptian and Syrian decision to go to war on October 6, 1973. Within broad guidelines that had characterized their policy since 1967, the Soviet leaders adapted their actions to the crisis as it unfolded. To prevent an Arab defeat and the danger of confrontation, the Soviets tried for an early end to the hostilities that would preserve some of the gains made by the Arabs before the Israelis could mount an effective counterattack. Once that effort had failed, the Soviets began to deliver arms by sea and by air and to encourage other Arab states to send forces to help the embattled Syrians and Egyptians. Throughout the crisis, however, the Soviets remained in close touch with the United States, and on two occasions joint ceasefire efforts were made, finally culminating in U.N. Resolution 338 of October 22, 1973.

This study investigates the issue of Soviet foreknowledge of the war and concludes that the Soviets were generally aware of Arab plans to resort to hostilities at some unspecified date in the future, were probably skeptical of the chances for success, but were not prepared to sacrifice their political reputation in the Arab world by openly opposing the resort to arms. There is no compelling evidence that the Soviets instigated the Arabs to go to war, although there is some evidence that the Soviets did cooperate at a tactical level in the development of military plans and the acquisition of tactical intelligence.

When they became aware that war was imminent in early October, the Soviets initially reacted in a curious manner by ordering the evacuation of dependents from Egypt and Syria. This came close to revealing the Arab plan of surprise attack to the Israelis, but its purpose most likely was to dissociate the Soviets from the impending hostilities.

A second curious episode is examined: the alleged demarche by the Soviet Ambassador in Cairo urging President Sadat to accept an early ceasefire on October 6 and 7, the first two days of the war. Presumably the Soviets and Syrians had agreed that a short war would best suit their several interests, but Sadat was unwilling to go along with their view. The incident suggests that Soviet-Syrian coordination was greater in the early days of the war than that between Moscow and Cairo.

Once it became clear that the war would be prolonged and that the Israelis were capable of mounting an effective counteroffensive, the Soviets adopted a policy designed to prevent an Arab military debacle. This involved their urging other Arab countries to provide aid, and the launching of a military resupply effort to Syria and Egypt. The evidence on the military resupply is imperfect, but it suggests that both military and political considerations determined the recipients and the quantities of supplies delivered during the war. The timing and quantities of equipment involved in the military resupply effort are consistent with the hypothesis that the Soviets learned only in early October of the Arab decision to go to war. Although this does not eliminate the possibility of Soviet collusion in the Arab decision to attack, it does at least make an alternative interpretation possible.

As the Arab military position came under pressure after the first few days of the war, the Soviets, in talks with the United States, showed increasing interest in a ceasefire. An initiative jointly worked out between October 10 and 12 failed when President Sadat rejected it on October 13, but within a few days Premier Kosygin was in Cairo arguing again for a ceasefire. The result of this initiative was Egyptian acceptance of the idea, which led to U.S.-Soviet negotiations in Moscow on the terms of a ceasefire resolution.

When the ceasefire of October 22 failed to take hold, the Soviets showed great concern that the Israelis might move to destroy the nearly encircled Egyptian Third Army. On October 24, Brezhnev threatened to take "appropriate action unilaterally," prompting the United States to order a worldwide military alert. Although Soviet intentions are still obscure, it seems plausible that the option of sending a small military force to Egypt to deter further Israeli military advances, possibly to help resupply the Third Army, and to bring pressure on the Americans to stop the Israelis, was considered. It seems less likely that a large Soviet military force capable of expelling the Israelis from the west bank of the Canal was envisioned. In any event, with the reimposition of the ceasefire on October 25, the crisis subsided.

In assessing Soviet behavior in the crisis, it appears that the Soviets were motivated primarily by their twin desires to maintain their credibility as a superpower capable of defending the interests of its clients, and to avoid direct military confrontation with the United States. The balance struck between these two objectives depended heavily on the behavior of the United States and on the course of events on the ground. On the whole, the Soviets seemed very attentive to shifts in the equilibrium of forces and adapted their policies quickly to the unfolding regional situation.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Détente between the United States and the Soviet Union was widely acclaimed as both the major goal and a significant accomplishment of the foreign policy of President Nixon's first 4 years. More recently, however, détente has come under increasingly severe criticism, not so much because of its desirability, but rather because of suspicions that the Soviet Union is not living up to its end of the implied relationship. One of the key examples cited by skeptics of détente has been Soviet behavior during the October 1973 Arab-Israeli war.[1]

That drama-filled crisis, complete with Soviet threats of intervention, a worldwide U.S. military alert, an oil embargo, and large-scale resupply of arms by both superpowers in the midst of the war, has been cited as evidence that détente is not much different from cold war. The list of charges brought against the Soviets by American critics of détente is easily drawn up. Moscow provided arms to Egypt and Syria before the outbreak of hostilities and thus provided the means for offensive warfare; the Soviets apparently knew of the Arab plan to attack Israel in advance and did nothing to prevent the war; the Soviets rushed weapons to their friends during the fighting, thereby prolonging hostilities; Soviet propaganda supported the Arabs in the use of the oil weapon against the West; General-Secretary Brezhnev, after summoning Secretary Kissinger to Moscow to negotiate a ceasefire designed to save the Egyptian Third Army, subsequently threatened military intervention when fighting continued. Some would go so far as to argue that the Soviets planned and instigated the October war. And the list can be extended, including rather lurid,

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[1] See, for example, Foy D. Kohler, Leon Gouré, and Mose L. Harvey, *The Soviet Union and the October 1973 Middle East War: The Implications for Détente* (Miami: Center for Advanced International Studies, University of Miami, 1974); Gil Carl Alroy, *The Kissinger Experience: American Policy in the Middle East* (New York: Horizon Press, Inc., 1975); Edward Friedland, Paul Seabury, and Aaron Wildavsky, *The Great Détente Disaster: Oil and the Decline of American Foreign Policy* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1975); and Walter Laqueur, *Confrontation: The Middle East and World Politics* (New York: Bantam Books, Inc., 1974).

though false, accusations that the Soviets delivered nuclear weapons to Egypt during the war.

Whether the Soviets were or were not guilty of violating agreements with the United States in October 1973, or of ignoring the requirements of détente politics, clearly depends on one's expectations and definitions.[2] A full analysis of the issue would require information about the motives of Soviet decisionmakers in order to answer the question of whether considerations of détente in any way affected policy choices. Such a study cannot be done with available data. This report will therefore not try to label Soviet policy during the most recent Arab-Israeli war, but rather to describe it as accurately as possible and to analyze it as far as evidence allows. The evaluative task requires at a minimum a firm empirical base, which has thus far been lacking. In addition, predictions of Soviet behavior in future Middle East crises must be based on a clear understanding of how the Soviets have in fact behaved in the past.

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[2]The two most explicit agreements that the Soviet would appear to have ignored were (1) the third article of the agreement on "Basic Principles," signed in Moscow on May 29, 1972, in which the two parties committed themselves "to do everything in their power so that conflicts or situations will not arise which would serve to increase international tensions"; and (2) the agreement of June 22, 1973, in which they pledged to "act in such a manner as to prevent the development of situations capable of causing a dangerous exacerbation of their relations."

II. THE BACKGROUND OF SOVIET MIDDLE EAST POLICY AFTER 1967

Ample evidence exists that the lesson the Soviet leadership learned from the 1967 Arab-Israeli war was that their clients were incapable, in the absence of Soviet help, of fighting Israel in a full-scale war without running serious risks. Thus, after 1967, Soviet policy was initially aimed at achieving a political settlement of the conflict, the essential ingredient of which would be the return of the territory captured by Israel in 1967. The Soviets, unfortunately for their purposes, had little direct influence over the Israelis and could not hope to persuade them to withdraw for less than full peace. Nor could the Soviets press the Arabs to agree to "full peace" prior to an Israeli commitment to withdraw from their territory. Only the United States was capable of influencing Israel to compromise, but it was by no means obvious how this could be achieved.

Meanwhile, Egyptian and Syrian demands on the Soviets for arms and diplomatic support rose to new heights, particularly after President Nasser decided to launch the "war of attrition" in 1969. By early 1970, the Soviets were prepared to go to considerable lengths to ensure that Egypt would not collapse in the face of fierce Israeli counterattacks, and by mid-1970 the Soviets were directly engaged in the air defense of Egypt. At the peak of the crisis in July, at least four Soviet-piloted aircraft were shot down by the Israelis.

As the Egyptians, and probably the Soviets as well, had hoped, the United States responded to this mounting danger by intensifying its own diplomatic efforts, including a proposal by Secretary Rogers in late 1969 for virtually complete Israeli withdrawal in the context of an overall political settlement. The Soviet-preferred outcome seemed closer in the summer of 1970 than it had the previous year, and the policy of deliberately escalating the conflict was certainly one of the main reasons. The victory, however, was short lived. The Egyptian violations of the August ceasefire, in which the Soviets acquiesced, and the September Jordan crisis, soon brought an end to the U.S. diplomatic effort and led to a strengthening of the U.S.-Israeli relationship.

During this first phase of Soviet policy after the 1967 war, arms supply and diplomatic efforts went hand in hand. There is no evidence that the Soviets saw the use of force by the Arabs as incompatible with a political settlement. Despite intervening developments in U.S.-Soviet relations, this remained true in 1973. The war of attrition had been supported generously, but the August 1970 ceasefire had also been acceptable to Moscow, although not to the point where the Soviets were prepared to help enforce the standstill provisions of the ceasefire that Washington and the Israelis were insisting on.

The Soviet leadership appeared to remain skeptical throughout 1973 of the ability of the Arabs to conduct a full-scale war successfully for the recovery of their lands. Such an effort could obviously be dangerous, not only for the Arabs, but also for the Soviets. If the Arabs did poorly, Soviet prestige and credibility as an ally would be in jeopardy; pressures could rise for direct Soviet involvement to save the situation; such involvement carried the risk of confrontation with the United States, and that the Soviets were apparently not prepared to contemplate. Even an Arab success on the battlefield entailed risks, since an imminent Israeli defeat might lead to U.S. intervention or an Israeli resort to nuclear weapons. Once again, the dilemmas facing the Soviet leadership would be acute.

After the death of Egypt's President Nasser on September 28, 1970, the position of the Soviet Union in the Middle East was exposed to considerable pressure. Nasser's successor, Anwar Sadat, was openly antagonistic toward the Soviets, beginning in the spring of 1971 when he unraveled a coup d'état plot in which he perceived the Soviet hand. Later that year he helped Sudan's President Numayri to crush a Communist coup attempt, and by early 1972 he was publicly criticizing the Soviets for colluding in the U.S.-Israeli design to freeze the Middle East in a "no war, no peace" situation. In particular, Sadat attacked the Soviets for withholding what he termed "offensive weapons."

POLITICAL DIFFERENCES AND THE SOVIET SUPPLY OF ARMS

The primary issue in dispute between Sadat and Moscow does not seem to have involved the quality of Soviet weaponry. With few

exceptions, the Egyptians were receiving virtually every type of equipment that they were capable of using effectively.[1] In some instances, the Soviets simply did not produce weapons with the characteristics that the Egyptians sought. For example, the Soviets did not manufacture a jet fighter bomber comparable to the American-made Phantom jet used by the Israelis. The more serious problem, it would seem, arose from what the Egyptians sensed as an unwillingness of the Soviets to assist the Arabs in preparing for and carrying out a future war.[2] If they were generous in providing arms, the Soviets were distinctly reserved when it came to their own military participation in the conflict. A group of prominent Lebanese politicians visiting Moscow in September 1971 was told that the Soviets would help the Arabs, but would not fight in their place.[3] In the spring of 1972, on the eve of President Sadat's trip to Moscow, *Al-Ahram* editor Heikal wrote:

> When the Soviet Union feels that we speak about an objective we can achieve, it will then save itself from sleeplessness caused by our rushing into something without calculation in which we take two strikes and halt and then raise our voices asking it to interfere.[4]

In July 1972, Sadat finally decided on the need for dramatic action to break the stalemate. If the Soviets could not guarantee against an Egyptian military defeat, then their presence in Egypt was more of a problem than it was worth. It prevented Sadat from dealing diplomatically with the United States, it worried the conservative Saudis, and it exposed Sadat to severe domestic criticism, especially

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[1] The most authoritative Arab source on Egyptian-Soviet relations during this period is Mohamed Heikal, *The Road to Ramadan* (London: William Collins, Sons & Co., Ltd., 1975), especially pp. 160-184. Heikal contends that Sadat was genuinely irritated by what he perceived as the Soviets' unnecessary delays in delivering some types of equipment.

[2] See the argument developed by Abraham S. Becker, "The Superpowers in the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1970-1973," in Abraham Becker et al., *The Economics and Politics of the Middle East* (New York: American Elsevier Publishing Co., Inc., 1975), pp. 83-84.

[3] *The New York Times*, September 17, 1971.

[4] *Al-Ahram*, March 24, 1972.

from within the army. Thus, the Soviets were asked to withdraw the bulk of their 15,000 to 20,000 advisers and technicians.[5] This led to a serious strain in Egyptian-Soviet relations, but not to a complete break. By October, Prime Minister Sidqi visited Moscow, the anti-Soviet General Sadiq was dropped as Minister of War, and soon arms began to flow once again.[6] In joint communiques, the Soviets continued to refer to the Arabs' right to use "all means at their disposal for the liberation of Arab territories seized by Israel in 1967," a formulation first used earlier in the year.

From the Soviet perspective, the supply of arms remained an essential element of policy. The Arab demand was no doubt always greater than the Soviet supply, but on the whole the Soviets were forthcoming. At a minimum, the Soviets needed to be responsive to arms requests as a part of their political relationship with the Egyptian and Syrian regimes. A superpower can only deny arms to a client so many times without damaging its reputation and influence. The Soviets certainly wanted to avoid the charge in any future hostilities that they had engineered an Arab defeat by withholding arms. If war was inevitable, it was in the Soviets' interest that their allies not be humiliated and that Soviet arms in Arab hands not be outclassed by American arms in Israeli hands. This had as much to do with superpower competition as with Middle East politics. And finally, if there was to be a test of strength in the Middle East, which seemed quite possible, it was preferable to have arms in place than to be called on to deliver them in the midst of fighting.

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[5]Uri Ra'anan has put forward the argument that the Soviets were not asked to leave Egypt, but rather that they chose to do so when the policy of deep involvement there no longer provided sufficient gains to justify its continuation. (See "The USSR and the Middle East: Some Reflections on the Soviet Decision-making Process," *Orbis*, Vol. 17, No. 3, Fall 1973.)

[6]By the time Hafiz Ismail, Sadat's adviser on national security affairs, visited Moscow in February 1973, the Soviets were apparently willing to meet most Egyptian arms requests. In April, Sadat declared himself satisfied that the Soviets were doing as much as they could, given their continuing commitment to a political settlement. (See Sadat's revealing interview in *Newsweek*, April 9, 1973, p. 11.)

Despite political differences, then, the Soviets continued to supply arms to Egypt and Syria during the early months of 1973, in the knowledge that the Arabs were seriously considering resort to force at some undefined time in the future. During this same period, however, the Soviets reportedly continued to advise caution, arguing that war was a serious and dangerous business, that it required careful planning, and that a political solution still offered better hope of achieving Arab goals.[7]

There is no evidence that the Soviets went beyond this somewhat reserved attitude toward an Arab policy of resorting to force. The hypothesis that the Soviets took the initiative in planning the October war and instigated the Arabs to attack in order to advance Soviet global objectives simply does not stand the test of evidence or plausibility. First, the Arabs did not need to be prodded; they were well ahead of the Soviets in their desire to fight. Second, the Arab response to such a Soviet initiative would surely have been to try to extract a Soviet commitment to intervene in order to ensure the success of the venture. The Soviets could no more make such a commitment in 1973 than in 1972, and without it a policy of instigating an Arab attack would lack credibility. This is not to say that the Soviets were unmindful that a Middle East crisis, whatever its risks, might also present them with opportunities elsewhere, especially in Europe, and that

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[7]Author's interview with a high Egyptian government official. Soviet opposition to an Arab-initiated war against Israel was certainly not based on principle. Such a use of force would qualify in the Soviet lexicon as a "just war." The tone of the Soviet position in 1973 may have resembled that taken by Central Committee Secretary Ponamarev toward the Syrian Communist Party political program in May 1971, when he warned that war, "without preparation, would lead to the liquidation of progressive [Arab] regimes" and "could also lead to a confrontation between Soviets and Americans." (From *Al-Raya*, June 26, 1972, as translated in *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 1, Autumn 1972, pp. 188-202.) Sadat's version of Soviet policy notes that during his April 1972 talks in Moscow, Brezhnev agreed with him that a political solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict could not be achieved without a military move. But Brezhnev nonetheless warned him on at least four occasions prior to October 1973 not to attack Israel within the pre-1967 borders. (Interviews in *Al-Hawadith*, March 19, 1975; and *Al-Anwar*, June 27, 1975.)

the Soviets would do well to capitalize upon such possibilities. But the October war was not decided by the Soviets, even though it clearly could not have been planned or initiated without the arms they supplied. Whatever the degree of Soviet cooperation in some aspects of military planning, it seems clear that the initiative for the war lay with the Arabs, not the Soviets.[8]

THE QUESTION OF SOVIET FOREKNOWLEDGE

In late April and early May 1973, signs began to accumulate of an impending Egyptian military offensive. Israel took the possibility seriously and ordered a limited mobilization of reserves. Nothing happened. But the following month in San Clemente, Brezhnev warned Nixon at length that the Middle East situation was very explosive and that further delays in launching a diplomatic initiative would result in war.[9] Subsequently, the Soviets were to remind Nixon that they had in fact forwarned him that the Arabs were planning to go to war.

By September 1973, the Soviet position toward an Egyptian-Syrian military campaign against Israel can be summarized as follows:

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[8]During the war, the Israelis claim to have captured some evidence that suggested direct involvement of the Soviets in drafting or approving the Egyptian and Syrian war plans. The documents, in Arabic and Russian, were several months old, however, and may simply have been normal contingency plans. Closer to the actual date of attack, the Soviets reportedly did provide the Egyptians with current photographs, taken by satellite or Mig-25, of Israeli installations in central Sinai. This may have been part of routine intelligence exchanges with the Egyptians. Finally, the Israelis point to the fact that in the months prior to the war, a small number of advanced Soviet weapons systems were sent to the Middle East, such as the BMP-1 armored personnel carrier, the SA-9 surface-to-air missile, the BRDM-2 armored vehicle, the SU-20 aircraft, the Kelt antiradiation missile, and late model T-62 tanks. The implication is that the Soviets, knowing that war was coming, wanted to see how some of their advanced equipment would perform in actual combat. If all of the above allegations are true, it would suggest that the Soviets were prepared to cooperate in military planning, although it would not prove that the Soviets instigated the October war. As with the supply of arms, some degree of responsiveness to requests for help in military planning is the price of maintaining a healthy political relationship.

[9]Brezhnev's warning, like those of King Faisal, was viewed as an attempt to get the United States to bring pressure on Israel to withdraw from the territories occupied in 1967.

- The Soviets were aware that serious preparations were being made for hostilities at an undetermined, but probably early, date in the future.
- The Soviets were probably skeptical of the enterprise, but did not want it to result in a military fiasco for the Arabs. Therefore ample quantities of air defense equipment, antitank missiles and a few SCUD missiles were being delivered to deter Israeli attacks on Cairo.[10]
- The Soviets did not take the initiative in pressing the Arabs to resume hostilities. The basic decisions were made in Cairo and Damascus.[11]

Up until mid-September 1973, the likelihood of Arab-Israeli hostilities in the immediate future appeared to be relatively slight. During September, however, several events took place that probably increased Soviet sensitivity to the possibility of an outbreak of fighting. During the second week of September, Sadat, Asad, and King Hussein met in Cairo in a series of talks designed to bring Jordan back into the Arab mainstream and to firm up military coordination between Egypt and Syria. On the day following their meetings, September 13, Israeli airplanes engaged the Syrian air force in unusual circumstances, and 13 Syrian planes were shot down.

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[10]Marvin and Bernard Kalb claim that on September 25, Soviet transports carrying SCUDs entered the Mediterranean en route to Egypt. (See *Kissinger*, Boston: Little, Brown & Co., Inc., 1974, p. 454.) *Aviation Week and Space Technology* (November 5, 1973, p. 12) gives the date of the SCUD shipments as September 12. Authoritative Israeli sources date the shipments from June 1973, if not earlier.

[11]Ra'anan (*op. cit.*, pp. 971-973) has argued that the Soviets were instrumental in both planning and initiating the October war. He offers a hypothetical eleven-point plan as a possible scenario guiding the decisions of Soviet policymakers both before and during the war. An alternative interpretation, which downplays direct Soviet collusion in the preparations for war, is found in a carefully documented manuscript prepared for the Center of Strategic Studies, Stanford Research Institute, by Galia Golan, entitled, "The Soviet Union and Egyptian-Syrian Preparations for the Arab-Israeli War of 1973," n.d.

In the aftermath of the loss of the Syrian aircraft, a well-orchestrated campaign began in the Syrian, Egyptian, and Lebanese press casting doubts upon Soviet willingness to help its friends in the Arab world in the face of Israeli aggression. Rumors were circulating, as part of what may have been a deliberate disinformation effort, that Syria had placed restrictions on the Soviet advisers in Syria and that soon they might be expelled altogether. Such questioning of Soviet intentions must have been particularly painful for the Soviets at a time when their inability to prevent the overthrow of President Allende in Chile was already a major embarrassment to their position in the Third World. It is tempting to speculate that the Soviets may have believed that the Americans, behind the mask of détente, had engineered the overthrow of the Marxist regime in Chile, and that now Saudi Arabia, the Americans' closest friend in the Arab world, was reportedly offering Damascus vast sums of financial aid if President Asad would only do to the Soviets what Sadat had done in July 1972. In any event, the Soviets refused to go along with the disinformation campaign, if such it was, and instead stoutly denied any strains in relations with Syria.[12]

If the Soviets had been actively colluding with Egypt and Syria to instigate hostilities on October 6, then one would have expected them to avoid giving any hints of the impending attack. After all, the Arabs had learned from 1967 the value of a surprise attack and were going to great lengths in the latter part of September and early October to mislead Israeli and American intelligence services.[13] If Israel were to conclude that an Arab attack was imminent, a decision for a preemptive airstrike and immediate mobilization of reserves could be anticipated. This might well rob the Egyptians and Syrians of any hope of military success.

If, instead of being active partners in planning a campaign against Israel, the Soviets remained skeptical of the outcome of such a venture,

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[12]Golan, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

[13]Apart from the rumors of an impending break in Syrian-Soviet relations, the Arab disinformation effort apparently included a diversionary guerrilla attack on Soviet Jews transiting Austria en route to Israel. This might serve to preoccupy Israel during the crucial days prior to the attack. The Palestinian group responsible for the attack was Saiqa, under Syrian control.

one might expect a somewhat more ambiguous policy. On the one hand, arms would continue to be delivered, perhaps even on an accelerated schedule, to ensure against subsequent charges that the Soviets had engineered the Arabs' defeat by withholding vital supplies; but the Soviets would not wish to be more visibly associated with what must have seemed like a risky enterprise. If the Arabs were determined to act, Moscow would not try to prevent them, nor would it publicly reveal their intentions; at the same time, the Soviets seem to have wanted to be in a position to avoid being drawn into the war against their will. Above all, the war must appear to be the primary responsibility of Egypt and Syria.

It was this latter posture that the Soviets adopted when they apparently concluded, on October 3, that hostilities were imminent.[14] Up until that date, the Soviets, like anyone else carefully watching the signs of military buildup along the Canal and on the Golan front in the last week of September, must have felt that war could happen. In early October (the first according to Heikal, the third according to Sadat), the Egyptian President decided to see the Soviet Ambassador to give him the message that a breach of the ceasefire was likely. The precise date and the scale of the fighting were not, however, revealed.[15] Vinogradov reportedly returned to see Sadat on the evening of October 4 with a message from Brezhnev. In Heikal's account, Brezhnev acknowledged that the decision to fight was Sadat's to take and that the Soviet Union would support him as a friend. He did, however, request permission to withdraw Russian civilians and their

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[14]The Kalbs (*op. cit.*, p. 453) claim that Sadat told Brezhnev on September 22 that the war would begin on October 6. This theme has sometimes been reinforced by reference to a story in *L'Unita* (September 21, 1973), which claimed that Sadat paid a secret visit to Bulgaria during this period. There is no other evidence that such a meeting ever took place. Walter Laqueur argues that Sadat probably informed Brezhnev by letter on September 22. (See *Confrontation: The Middle East and World Politics*, New York: Bantam Books, Inc., 1974, p. 83.) Once again, however, there is no convincing evidence that this occurred.

[15]Heikal, *op. cit.*, p. 25. The exact time of the Egyptian-Syrian attack was not set, according to Heikal, until October 3. (*Ibid.*, pp. 29-31. Sadat speech, September 15, 1975.)

families from Egypt. Sadat was reportedly puzzled by the request, but reluctantly consented.[16]

As Sadat apparently thought at the time, the Soviet decision to evacuate civilians was perplexing. It clearly ran the risk of signaling to the Israelis and Americans that war was about to break out. The Israelis might then react by mobilizing or launching a preemptive strike, in which case the Arabs would be sure to blame Moscow for revealing their plans. Fortunately for the Soviets, neither Washington nor Tel Aviv correctly read the signal.

If the evacuation cannot easily be interpreted as a deliberate signal to the United States that war was imminent, how then is it to be understood?[17] Perhaps it was the result of Soviet bureaucratic routines. When war threatens, dependents are evacuated; no one thought that this might tip off the Israelis, as it almost did.[18] This would imply a lack of coordination or a short-sightedness in Soviet policy that, while possible, was not apparent later on in the crisis. More likely, it seems that the Soviets were anxious to underscore that they were not involved in the final decision to go to war. This message was primarily directed toward Washington, with the intention, most probably, of preserving the benefits of détente; but it was also directed at Sadat and Asad, reminding them not to expect the Soviets to intervene directly if their enterprise ran into trouble.

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[16] *Ibid.*, pp. 34-35. Sadat's version of these events is carried in an interview in *An-Nahar*, March 1, 1974, and in his September 15, 1975 speech. He gives October 3 as the date for his meeting with the Soviet Ambassador in which he mentions the likelihood of impending hostilities, adding that Syrian President Asad told the Soviets of the precise time of the attack the following day, October 4.

[17] Some analysts have hypothesized that the Soviets, hoping that war would be avoided, tried to pass a discreet signal to Washington and Tel Aviv by evacuating dependents on October 4. Presumably the conclusion would be drawn that the Soviets knew war was imminent; Israel would react by ordering full mobilization; and then, as had happened during the previous spring, the Arabs would back off. To have made a more overt signal to the United States or Israel, of course, would have been seen as betrayal by the Arabs. While intriguing, this hypothesis seems to go too far in interpreting the significance of the evacuation.

[18] See Chaim Herzog, *The War of Atonement, October 1973* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., Inc., 1975), pp. 48-50.

III. POLICY DURING THE WAR

Hostilities began at 2:00 p.m. on October 6 when Egyptian and Syrian forces launched their combined offensive. The Soviets had anticipated the outbreak of fighting by sending up another intelligence satellite that day, although the Soviet Mediterranean fleet remained spread out in a normal pattern. Soviet ships in Egyptian and Syrian ports moved away from the area of conflict. In contacts with the United States that day, the Soviets adopted a generally cooperative stance, although neither superpower had as yet defined a policy on the convening of a UN Security Council meeting.[1]

The more extraordinary aspect of Soviet behavior on this first day of hostilities took place in Cairo. There, according to Sadat, Ambassador Vinogradov came to see him 6 hours after the war had begun. Vinogradov's message was reportedly that the Syrians were prepared to accept an early ceasefire and that the Soviets endorsed this policy. Sadat was incredulous, queried the Syrians himself, and angrily told Vinogradov that he was misinformed about Syrian intentions when the Ambassador returned the following day with the same request.[2]

Several interpretations of this demarche by Vinogradov can be made. First, it is possible that it did not happen exactly as the

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[1]Marvin and Bernard Kalb, *Kissinger* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., Inc., 1974), p. 462. Kissinger spoke to Dobrynin several times on October 6: once just prior to the outbreak of hostilities, at 7:00 a.m.; again in the mid-afternoon; and finally at about 10:00 p.m.

[2]Sadat interview, *Al-Hawadith*, March 19, 1975; Sadat's September 15, 1975 speech; and an interview in *Al-Jumhuriyyah*, October 24, 1975. Mohamed Heikal provides a detailed account of these exchanges, giving more emphasis to the second meeting on October 7. At that time the Soviet Ambassador reportedly told Sadat that the Syrians had been in touch with Moscow about their heavy tank losses, and the Soviets had urged them to turn to the Iraqis. He also repeated that the Syrians would not object to a ceasefire. Sadat then sent a message to Asad arguing against a ceasefire and received a denial from Asad the next day that he had ever made such a request of the Soviets. (See *The Road to Ramadan*, London: William Collins, Sons & Co., Ltd., 1975, pp. 209, 212-215.)

Egyptians have alleged. Second, Syria may, in fact, have favored an early ceasefire at the end of the first or second day, and the Soviets may have agreed just before the outbreak of the war to support such a policy. That would have left Syria in a comparatively good military position. Third, one account alleges that the Soviets misunderstood Asad's position and therefore misinformed Sadat.[3] Fourth, the Soviets may have expected a rapid deterioration of the Arab military position and were hoping to arrange an early ceasefire in place that would prevent that occurrence. They may have had reason to assume that the Syrians would not oppose this stand, since the Syrian military strategy, unlike the Egyptian, was clearly geared to a short war. In contrast to subsequent Soviet ceasefire efforts, this one did not grow out of U.S.-Soviet talks, but rather seems to have reflected Soviet apprehensions, if not a tacit understanding with the Syrians.

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[3]This is the interpretation contained in a document attributed to Ambassador Vinogradov, published in the Libyan-financed Beirut newspaper, *As-Safir*, and reprinted in the organ of the Lebanese Communist Party, *An-Nida*, April 17, 1974. The authenticity of the document has been questioned, although it does contain a number of plausible details. An Egyptian official, in an interview with the author, did give some credence to this version. According to his account, the Syrians, just prior to the war, had discussed with the Soviets a plan for a short period of fighting in which an effort would be made to seize the Golan Heights. This would be followed by a rapid effort to achieve a ceasefire that would allow the Syrians to hold onto their military gains of the first day or two of fighting. The report of this conversation reached Moscow as the war broke out, and the Soviets took it as an indication of Syria's current position. Thus they approached Sadat to determine his attitude toward a ceasefire, but were quickly disabused of the idea, particularly when the Syrians denied that they wanted a ceasefire. Heikal (*op. cit.*, pp. 208-209) gives October 5 as the date for Asad's talk with the Soviet Ambassador in which he discusses an early ceasefire. In view of the Syrian military strategy, it seems quite likely that the Syrians did hope for an early ceasefire. If true, this would suggest a higher degree of Syrian-Soviet cooperation than that which existed between Cairo and Moscow. A second high Egyptian official stated in an interview that Moscow and Damascus may have both favored an early ceasefire out of a fear that the Egyptians would fail to cross the Canal and establish a strong position on the east bank. Were this to have been the case, the Syrians might have been left to face the full weight of Israeli power unless an early ceasefire could be arranged.

On balance, the Soviet ceasefire effort in the first two days of the war seems best understood in terms of Soviet-Syrian relations and Moscow's desire not to become militarily involved. A short war would minimize dangers. The Syrians, if successful, might recover some territory, as would the Egyptians. The shock of the war alone might stimulate the Americans to press the Israelis for further concessions in the postwar diplomacy. The Egyptian plan for a long war was much more dangerous. It could lead to an Arab defeat, once the Israelis mobilized and recovered from their surprise. And it seemed designed to maximize the risks of superpower confrontation, which might suit Egypt's needs, but not necessarily Moscow's. Finally, Moscow had little reason to feel grateful toward Sadat, whereas Asad remained on friendly terms. When presented with the fact that war was imminent, the Soviets seem to have decided to throw their weight behind the Syrian concept of a short war rather than the more risky Egyptian strategy of a prolonged conflict.[4]

During the second day of the fighting, the Soviets maintained a posture of relative restraint. In addition to repeating to Sadat the request for a ceasefire, the Soviets ostentatiously moved their ships away from the zone of conflict to a point southeast of Crete. In reply to a message from Nixon, Brezhnev agreed late in the day of October 7 to a meeting of the UN Security Council, which in the U.S. view would serve to preempt a call by the General Assembly for an immediate Israeli withdrawal to the 1967 lines as part of any ceasefire resolution.[5] The first official public Soviet reaction to the war came in the evening in a relatively mild statement that made no mention of the United States, blaming instead the outbreak of fighting on Israeli intransigence, which had prevented a political solution.[6]

Soviet behavior remained generally restrained thorough October 8. By this time it was apparent that the Arabs had done better on the battlefield than had been anticipated, especially on the Egyptian

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[4]Sadat seems to subscribe to this interpretation and has added information that the Syrians were planning for a short war, while Egypt envisaged a long one. (Interview in *Al-Jumhuriyyah*, October 24, 1975.)

[5]Kalbs, *op. cit.*, p. 463.

[6]TASS, October 7, 1973 (16:59 GMT).

front. On the Syrian front, however, the Israelis were beginning to launch a severe counterattack, and Syrian forces were already being pushed back toward the 1967 ceasefire lines. Contacts with the United States were close and generally cooperative throughout the day, although the Soviets did not subscribe to Ambassador Scali's suggestion at the UN that a ceasefire should be established on the basis of the status quo ante, a position which was clearly unacceptable to the Arabs as long as they held territory beyond the 1967 ceasefire lines.

General-Secretary Brezhnev, in a toast delivered during a lunch for Japanese Prime Minister Tanaka on October 8, spoke of Soviet support for ". . . a fair and lasting peace . . . and guaranteed security for all countries and peoples of the area which is so close to our borders."[7] That evening in Washington, Kissinger made reference in a speech to the need for Soviet restraint in the Middle East if détente were to survive. Up until that point, however, he had no specific complaints about Soviet behavior. From Kissinger's perspective, the Soviets had not gone beyond the bounds of détente politics.

It seems fair to assume that the Soviet leaders were coming under pressure from Arab sources to adopt a more forthcoming posture. Certainly Sadat had not hidden his displeasure at the initial Soviet ceasefire initiative. Now, with the Syrian front rapidly crumbling, Algeria's President Boumediene apparently appealed for active Soviet support.[8] In reply, Brezhnev sent a letter to Boumediene, received and released by the Algerians on October 9, which struck an ambiguous note.[9] Brezhnev began by insisting that Egypt and Syria should not remain alone in the battle and urged Algeria to "assist and support on the widest scale" the two confrontation states. But immediately thereafter, Brezhnev referred to the "complexity" of the present situation, which seemed to suggest that there were limits on Soviet ability

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[7] Kalbs, *op. cit.*, p. 466.

[8] *The October War*, edited by Riad N. El-Rayyes and Dunia Nahas, An-Nahar Arab Report Books, Beirut, Lebanon, p. 24. Boumediene, one may recall, played a similar role in the June 1967 war.

[9] *Ibid.*, pp. 156-157, for text of Brezhnev's letter.

to aid Egypt and Syria directly. Read as a reply to Algerian pressure for active support, the Brezhnev letter seems to put the burden on the Arabs to help one another, while offering only modest hope of a direct Soviet role. Instead of providing an inducement to other Arabs to join the battle, Brezhnev seems to be excusing himself from taking the lead, although an implied Soviet promise to replace any arms diverted from Algeria to the other Arab fronts may be read into the message. It is noteworthy that the Soviets have never referred to this letter publicly; that they were not the ones to release the text; and that they have not treated it as an example of their high-minded aid to the Arabs in their moment of need.[10] Once again, the Soviets appear to have preferred to maintain a posture of noninvolvement as long as possible.

OCTOBER 9--THE TURNING POINT

Both on the Syrian-Israeli front and in Moscow, October 9 was a critical day. The Israelis, who the previous day had fought an intense battle in the northern Golan area and had launched an unsuccessful counterattack on the Egyptian front, decided on October 9 to undertake a campaign of strategic bombing of Syrian targets.[11] In addition, the decision was made to press beyond the 1967 ceasefire lines in the direction of Damascus. By noon, Israeli planes were bombing the Syrian Ministry of Defense, the Air Force Staff Building, the radio station, the Homs oil refinery, and, inadvertently, the Soviet Cultural Center in Damascus. At least one Soviet citizen was killed in the bombing, which prompted Soviet UN representative Malik to denounce Israeli aggression.[12]

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[10] Other letters were reportedly sent by Brezhnev to Arab leaders at about this time, but no texts are available.

[11] Zeev Schiff, *October Earthquake* (Tel Aviv: University Publishing Projects, Ltd., 1974), pp. 148-149.

[12] Despite the vehemence of Malik's denunciation of Israel, no direct threats were issued until later in the fighting.

Presumably in response to the rapid deterioration of the military situation on the Syrian front,[13] which must have been accompanied by urgent appeals from the Syrians for Soviet assistance, the Soviet leadership seems to have made its decision to begin an immediate airlift of military supplies to Syria and Egypt.[14] General-Secretary Brezhnev delayed talks with visiting Japanese Prime Minister Tanaka that day and failed to appear at a scheduled luncheon. Meanwhile, President Podgorny was talking to the visiting Iraqi Foreign Minister, and was most likely urging Iraq to send troops to the Syrian front.[15] Iraq no doubt insisted on Soviet military aid as a quid pro quo, and within a few days, on October 13 and 14, Soviet planes delivered about 450 tons of materiel to Baghdad.[16]

THE AIRLIFT BEGINS

The tangible results of the decisions taken on October 8 and 9

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[13] Although the Soviets had brought down *Cosmos 596* on October 9, it is doubtful that satellite reconnaissance was the primary means of intelligence on the course of the battle. More reliable sources would have been the Soviet advisers with the Syrian forces, agent reporting, public statements by the Israelis, and information from the Syrians themselves. The Soviets obviously took care to ensure satellite coverage of the area during the fighting, but the returns were probably not very great in terms of contributing to tactical decisions. Possibly of greater importance was the intelligence collection ship (or ships) maintained offshore in the eastern Mediterranean to intercept communications.

[14] Heikal (*op. cit.*, p. 214) states that on the evening of October 8, the Soviet Ambassador called Sadat to tell him that an airlift of arms would soon begin. If so, the events on October 9 would have underscored the urgency of going to Syria's help.

[15] Heikal (*op. cit.*, p. 218) states that the Soviets strongly urged the Iraqis to support Syria, and acceded to the Iraqi request to put pressure on Iran to end the conflict on Iraq's eastern borders so that troops could be sent to Syria without risk of Iran's exploiting the situation. Heikal (*op. cit.*, pp. 218-219) also says that on October 9, Vinogradov once again asked to see Sadat and discussed a ceasefire, still implying that the Syrians would accept. Later that evening, in a talk with Heikal, Vinogradov was reportedly quite concerned about the collapse of the Syrian front.

[16] On October 10, the Iraqi government announced that it was sending forces to the Syrian front; they entered battle in strength on October 12-13, with very poor results.

in the Kremlin were seen on October 10. By the end of that day, 21 AN-12 transport aircraft, each capable of carrying approximately 10 to 12 tons, had reached Syria. No planes flew to Egypt that day.[17] In addition, several reports refer to Soviet ships as loaded with war materiel on October 10, actually transiting the Bosphorous,[18] or arriving in Latakia.[19] In order to ensure continuous satellite coverage of the Middle East, *Cosmos 598* was launched the same day.[20]

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[17]The date of the beginning of the Soviet airlift has been the subject of some controversy. Roger Pajak ("Soviet Arms and Egypt," *Survival*, Vol. 17, No. 4, July/August 1975, p. 170) gives October 7 as the date, citing *The New York Times*, November 28, 1973, as his source. Schiff (*op. cit.*, p. 107) states that the airlift began on October 8, but gives no source; *The Yom Kippur War*, by The Insight Team of the London *Sunday Times* (p. 276), and Walter Laqueur (*Confrontation: The Middle East and World Politics*, New York: Bantam Books, Inc., 1974, p. 166) argue for October 9, but seem to rely on a single newspaper account. Golda Meir, in her October 16 speech, refers to the airlift beginning on October 10; so does Kissinger in his October 25 press conference. The Kalbs (*op. cit.*, pp. 468-470) give October 10 as the date that the airlift began, but erroneously state that 21 AN-22s flew to Damascus that day. In fact, 21 AN-12s, with one-fifth the capacity of the AN-22, did fly to Damascus on October 10. This was the first hard information received in Washington of a Soviet airlift. In this report, the figures on tonnage delivered on each day of the airlift and sealift are approximate calculations based on data available in a variety of public sources and confirmed in crosschecks with other sources. Tonnage is calculated at approximately 10 tons per AN-12 and 50 tons per AN-22. Golda Meir, in her October 16 speech, gave a generally accurate and detailed accounting of the airlift through October 15. Her figures were 125 AN-12s to Syria; 42 AN-12s and 16 AN-22s to Egypt; 17 AN-12s to Iraq. According to my calculations, this would account for deliveries of approximately 2750 tons of equipment. Brezhnev, according to one source, told Boumediene on October 15 that the Soviets by that date had delivered 4000 tons on 280 flights. (See Lawrence L. Whetten, *The Canal War: Four-Power Conflict in the Middle East*, Cambridge, Mass.: The M.I.T. Press, 1974, p. 286.) It should be noted that the actual composition of the Soviet deliveries is not known, only the approximate tonnage.

[18]The Kalbs (*op. cit.*, p. 470) refer to two Soviet transport ships transiting the Bosphorous on that day.

[19]Golda Meir, in her October 16 speech, referred to one Soviet vessel with heavy equipment arriving in Latakia on October 10, presumably the first since the beginning of the war.

[20]The first news of deliveries of U.S. arms to Israel via El Al aircraft became available on October 10. The shipments had begun the previous day.

The date of the beginning of the military resupply effort by air and sea, as well as its size and composition, is important in determining the degree of Soviet collusion in the Arab decision to launch the war and in judging the issue of foreknowledge. While a conspiratorial interpretation obviously cannot be disproved by the facts of the resupply effort, it seems possible, from a logistical standpoint, for the Soviets to have acted as they did on relatively short notice. Sadat's version of Soviet foreknowledge is not incompatible with the pattern of military resupply, given the date on which it began and its size.

Parallel to their stepped-up involvement in military resupply, the Soviets reportedly also began to shift their diplomatic position on a ceasefire. Initially the Soviets had favored an early ceasefire in place, but, when Egypt rejected that proposal, Moscow had reverted to an endorsement of the Arab position that any ceasefire must be coupled to a call for Israeli withdrawal to the pre-June 5, 1967 lines. Throughout this period, the American and Israeli position was that any ceasefire must be coupled to a withdrawal to the prehostilities lines. By October 10, the Soviets, in private talks with American officials, were speaking favorably of an immediate unconditional ceasefire.[21] U.S.-Soviet talks on a ceasefire began in earnest about this time, as the U.S. position began to shift to a simple ceasefire, and shortly thereafter the two superpowers agreed that a third party should introduce a resolution in the Security Council for a ceasefire in place. According to the Soviets, the Egyptians would go along, provided some face-saving device were available, such as a UN consensus. The Soviets seemed to believe, however, that Sadat would be reluctant to submit to a joint U.S.-Soviet appeal for a ceasefire. In any event, the Soviets were obviously reluctant to associate themselves publicly with a position that would fall short of Arab expectations and which Sadat had already rejected. Thus the idea arose, and was agreed upon in U.S.-Soviet talks, of asking Britain to introduce a ceasefire resolution immediately, with no provision for withdrawal. The Israelis, under

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[21]Kalbs, *op. cit.*, p. 469.

pressure from Washington, were reluctantly prepared to comply, hoping perhaps to trade additional Syrian territory for lost ground in Sinai in the postceasefire talks. By October 12, everything seemed to be in place for a standstill ceasefire. But the British, fearing Arab reaction, insisted on double checking with Sadat, and on the morning of October 13 the British Ambassador in Cairo was told unequivocally by President Sadat that Egypt would not accept a ceasefire unless there was a provision for full Israeli withdrawal from occupied Arab territory. Thus, the U.S.-Soviet supported initiative collapsed.[22]

Meanwhile, the Soviets were pressing ahead with the second track of their policy of military support for their clients, a policy aimed at preventing an Arab defeat that could lead to demands for Soviet intervention, thus risking a U.S.-Soviet confrontation. On October 11, the airlift to Syria continued at approximately the same level as on the previous day, and in addition five large AN-22 transports, capable of carrying between 40 and 60 tons, flew to Cairo. Perhaps fearing that Dayan was serious in his barely veiled threats to march on Damascus, the Soviets also placed three airborne divisions on alert; all seven had already been in an increased state of readiness.

The following day, October 12, the airlift increased slightly in size, with a total of about 700 tons flown to Egypt and Syria. By now, and for the next two days, Egypt was receiving more aid than Syria, perhaps because of greater need and perhaps in order to influence Sadat to accept a ceasefire. While the motives behind the Soviet resupply effort remain a matter of speculation, it does not seem implausible that the supply of arms during the fighting was meant to ensure against a military setback and, at the same time, to persuade Sadat to accept a ceasefire. This, after all, was precisely the way in which the United States used the supply of arms to the Israelis. An alternative explanation, also consistent with the data, would stress that

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[22]Kissinger, in his interview with *Al-Ahram* editor Heikal, gave a partial account of this ceasefire initiative. The interview was published in *Al-Anwar*, November 16, 1973, and was translated in the *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 2, Winter 1974, pp. 210-226. The interview, apart from a few flourishes typical of Heikal, seems to be genuine.

the magnitude and direction of the supply effort were dictated primarily by logistical necessity and military need, not by political considerations.

In addition to the airlift, the sealift was beginning to make itself felt. Prior to the October war, a steady flow of arms had been reaching Syria and Egypt by ship throughout 1973. In an average month, at least seven Soviet ships unloaded military equipment in Syrian and Egyptian ports. It is possible that the first ships to reach Latakia and Alexandria were part of this normal flow. But on October 13, three ships carrying about 7000 tons of equipment transited the Bosphorous, a high rate of delivery that was not reached again until October 20. (See Fig. 1.) Mig-21s and SA-6s were also reportedly being unloaded in Alexandria after the 2½- to 3-day transit from Odessa.[23] A Soviet freighter was sunk by Israeli bombing that same day in the Syrian port of Tartus, prompting a violent Soviet warning to Israel and an invocation of the need for respect for the freedom of the seas. This somewhat shriller tone in Soviet pronouncements was accompanied by the first Soviet accusations of U.S. involvement in the war on Israel's side.[24]

Sadat's rejection of a ceasefire in place on October 13, prompted most likely by his decision to launch an offensive the following day, happened to coincide with the entrance of Iraqi troops into battle on the Syrian front. A small Soviet airlift to Baghdad began that day and continued through the 14th. Airlifted supplies to Syria and Egypt dropped off considerably on October 14, from about 300 tons to Syria on the previous day to a low of 90 tons; and from 450 tons to Egypt on the 13th to 275 tons. Air deliveries to Egypt remained at this level on October 15, about 325 tons, and fell to the lowest point of the airlift on October 16, with only 175 tons. Kosygin's arrival in Cairo

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[23]Israeli sources claim that the Soviets must have prepositioned a great deal of equipment in Odessa in advance of the war. Some of the equipment captured by the Israelis came from Warsaw Pact stocks, and must have been moved by rail from Eastern Europe to Odessa well before the outbreak of the war.

[24]However, TASS did carry, on October 13, the State Department's denial of reports that American pilots were flying for Israel.

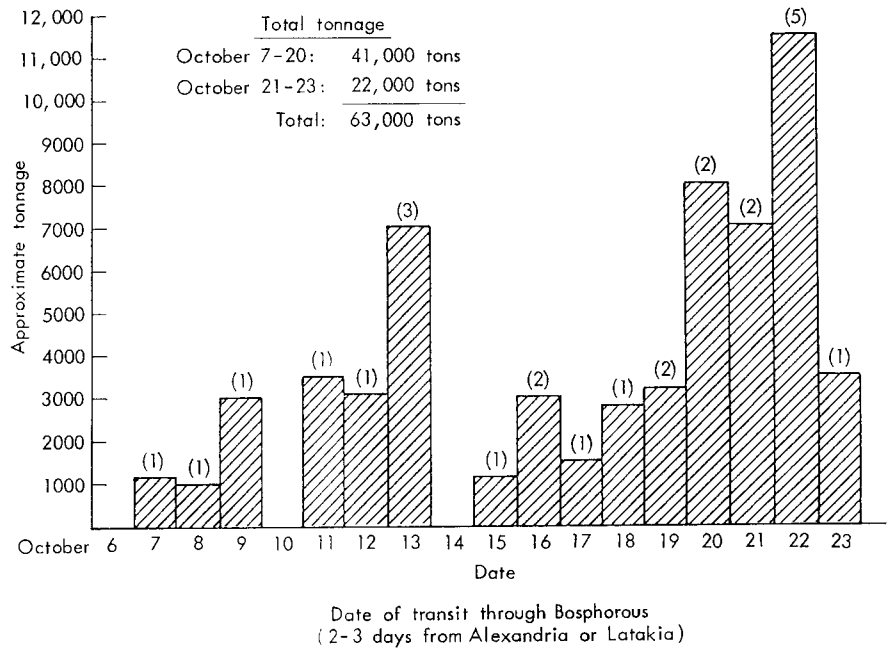

Fig.1 — Soviet sealift to the Middle East (parenthetical numbers indicate number of ships)

that same day may not have been viewed by Sadat as adequate compensation for the slowdown in deliveries, especially after the major military setback in the Sinai on October 14.[25]

[25]The military importance of the airlift has probably been overstated by most analysts. A few hundred tons of equipment was not likely to make much difference to either side in the high-tempo war that was being fought in the Middle East. In any event, stocks of most critical items were very high in both Egypt and Syria before the war, especially in the case of heavy equipment. In only one case did the Israelis note that the airlift affected the course of the fighting on the ground; at one point in the fighting on the Golan front, on about October 10, the Syrians cut back drastically on the rate of SAM firings, presumably because of shortages; within hours, Soviet planes were flying to Damascus, and the next day the Syrians were once again amply supplied with SAMs. Apart from its military importance, however, the airlift was politically significant as a tangible sign of superpower support. To keep the tonnage figures in perspective, one should note that a medium tank weighs approximately 40 to 50 tons, a truck several tons, and a bomb about one-fourth ton. According to Egyptian

In something of a repeat performance of his role during the 1967 war, Algeria's President Boumediene visited Moscow on October 14 and 15, reportedly pleading for increased Soviet aid.[26] According to Arab sources, the Soviets were quite tough in the bargaining over aid until Boumediene offered to pay for the arms in cash. He immediately arranged for payment for $200 million worth of equipment, half for Egypt and half for Syria. Arms deliveries to Syria picked up on October 15, reaching a high point of about 550 tons that day and 475 the next. Finally, on the 17th, a significant increase in the airlift to Egypt took place as well, reaching 750 tons. (See Figs. 2 through 5.)

Once again the Soviets combined the intensified delivery of arms with a renewed effort to reach a ceasefire. The key stimulus must have been the outcome of the Egyptian offensive in Sinai on October 14. In a departure from the cautious strategy pursued since the beginning of the war, Sadat ordered his armored forces to advance beyond the protection provided by the integrated air defense system. This gave the Israeli air force an opportunity to strike at the Egyptian forces without much danger. Israeli tanks could also engage in the type of maneuver warfare at which they excelled. The results were devastating. At least 200 Egyptian tanks were destroyed in a single day.[27]

As the Arab military position began to unravel, Soviet propaganda struck a new theme by referring to the Arabs' possible use of the oil weapon. In subsequent days, this became a major theme, and the Soviets publicly endorsed the OAPEC October 17 decision on reducing oil production and the subsequent decisions to boycott deliveries to the United States. Soviet encouragement, however, almost certainly had nothing

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sources, during the first hour of artillery firing on October 6, the Egyptian army used 300 tons of ammunition, an amount equivalent to the daily deliveries by air to Egypt from October 11 to 16.

[26]After the 1967 war, Boumediene flew to Moscow and chastised the Soviets for their caution. On that occasion, Boumediene is alleged to have censured the Soviets for their cautious behavior, blaming it on adherence to the doctrine of "peaceful coexistence." Brezhnev reportedly replied: "What is your opinion of nuclear war?" Heikal, *Al-Ahram*, August 25, 1967.

[27]The Soviets deorbited *Cosmos 598* on October 15, which may have provided some intelligence on the scope of the Egyptian defeat.

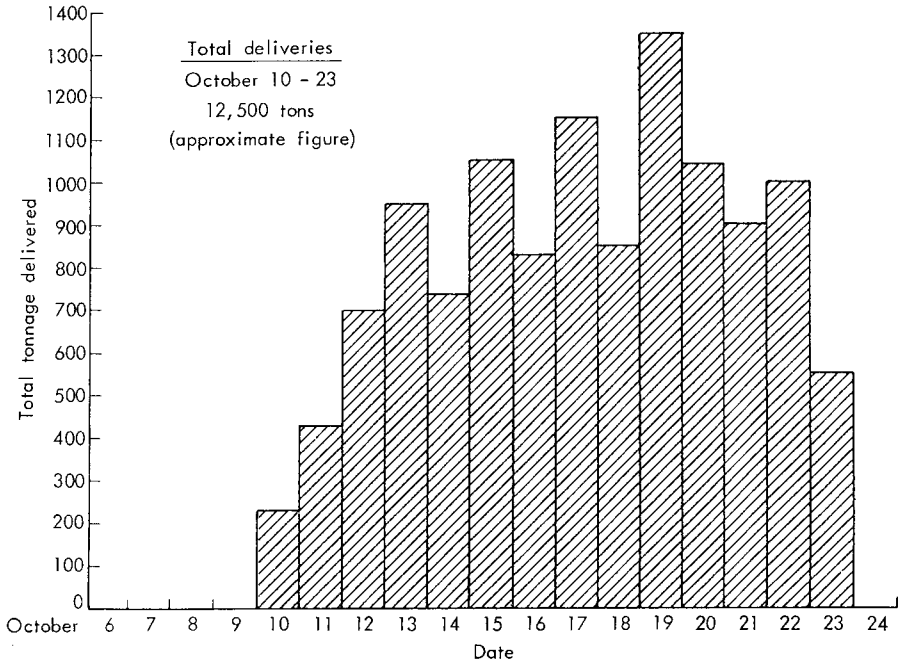

Fig. 2 — Soviet airlift to the Middle East (total of deliveries to Egypt, Syria, Iraq and flights to Middle East whose final destination is unknown)

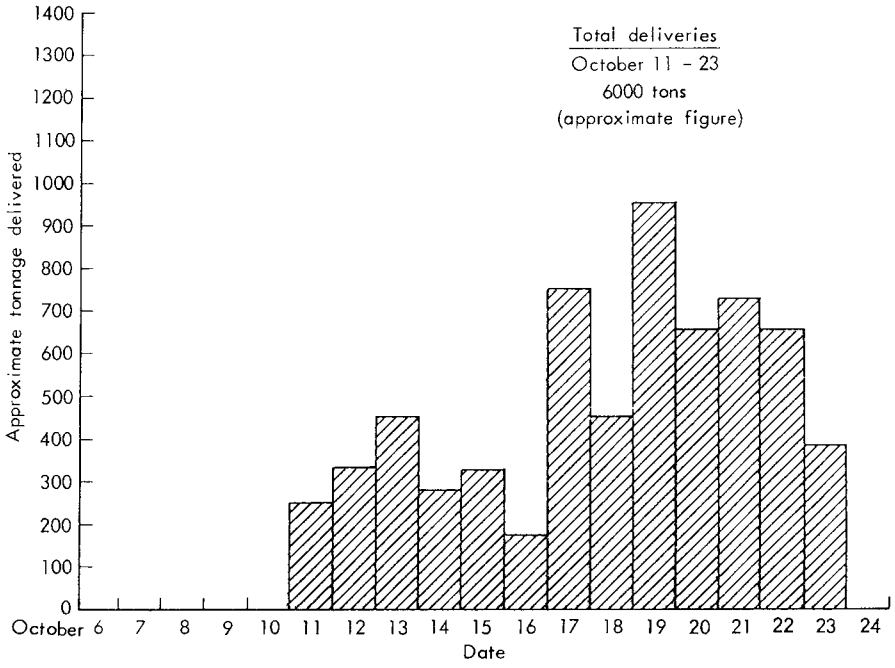

Fig. 3 — Soviet airlift to Egypt

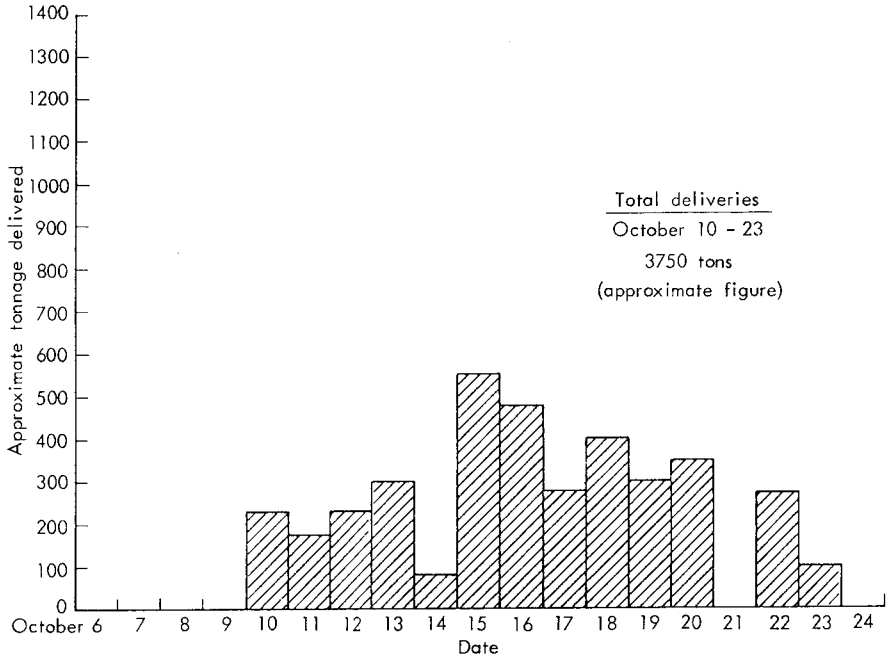

Fig. 4 — Soviet airlift to Syria

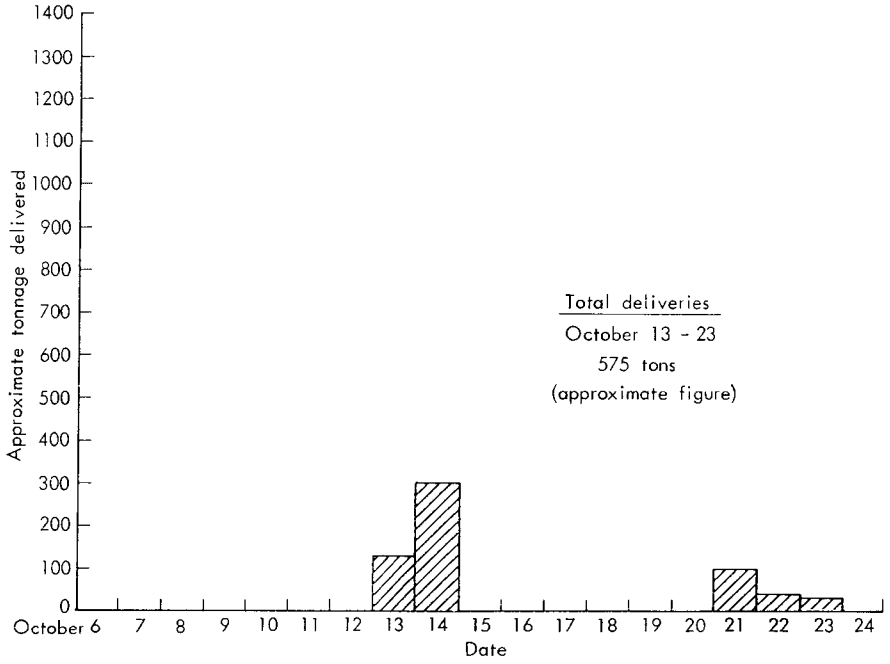

Fig. 5 — Soviet airlift to Iraq

to do with the Arab decision, in which Saudi Arabia and other anti-Soviet Arab regimes played the key role. Apart from associating themselves with the Arabs, the Soviets, by endorsing the use of oil as a weapon, were probably hoping to strengthen the Arab front in order to avoid a situation in which Soviet intervention might be required to prevent a total collapse. In addition, the Soviets no doubt anticipated, and hoped to gain from, the chaos that an oil embargo was bound to bring in the industrialized capitalist countries.[28]

KOSYGIN'S TALKS IN CAIRO

Propaganda and private diplomacy were not completely in tune by October 15. The anxiety revealed in the propaganda showed up in private talks as a renewed willingness to work for a ceasefire. Such an initiative appeared to be essential if the Arabs were to avoid another military defeat at the hands of Israel. Also, by October 14-15, American arms were being airlifted to Israel in quantities that came close to matching Soviet air deliveries to the Arabs. Thus, the Soviets decided to send Premier Kosygin to Cairo for talks with President Sadat. Sadat was by now clearly perceived by the Soviets as the key to the outcome of the war on the Arab side, and henceforth they devoted most of their attention to Cairo in terms of both military supplies and diplomatic consultations. While the Soviets had apparently coordinated their policy more closely with Syria than with Egypt at the outset of the war, Damascus was now treated as a virtual appendage of Cairo for purposes of arranging a ceasefire.

Kosygin's mission is still shrouded in secrecy, but it is clear that he must have had a mandate to press Sadat for an early ceasefire, possibly offering arms as an inducement and some form of Soviet assurance that Israel would not be allowed to take advantage of a ceasefire

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[28] Insofar as the Soviets did gain from the October war, it was primarily in non-Middle East contexts that they did so, and not as a result of anything that they directly did. The disarray in NATO, strains between the United States and Japan, the economic impact on the capitalist world of the oil price hikes and the embargo, were all net pluses. The Soviets even managed to make monetary profits by selling oil to Western Europe at the new OPEC price.

as had occurred in 1967.[29] Prior to Kosygin's departure from Moscow, a small Israeli armored force had crossed the Suez Canal on the night of October 15. Whether this was known to the Soviets by the time Kosygin arrived in Cairo in the afternoon of October 16 is not clear. But they did appear to be better informed than the Egyptians about the dangers of the unfolding military situation.[30]

Kosygin met with Sadat on the evening of October 16, shortly after Sadat had delivered a speech in which he rejected the idea of a cease-fire, but in which he made complimentary references to the role of the United States. According to Sadat, no talks were held on October 17.[31] Airlifted supplies, however, did increase to an unprecedented high that day, and in the next two days another 1500 tons of supplies were brought in by air. On October 18, Kosygin had his last of five meetings with Sadat, and general agreement on a strategy for seeking an end to the war was apparently reached. That day, Ambassador Dobrynin hinted at

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[29]The Kalbs (*op. cit.*, p. 480) give an account of Kosygin's proposal, drawing on a Yugoslav press account. The plan reportedly involved a ceasefire in place; Israeli withdrawal to the 1967 borders, "with minor modifications"; an international peace conference; and a U.S.-Soviet guarantee of the agreement. (See also *The Yom Kippur War*, p. 369.) The Yugoslav Foreign Minister was in Cairo at this time proposing a ceasefire to Sadat; thus, the Yugoslavs might have been in a good position to learn about any Soviet proposal carried by Kosygin. Heikal's version of the talks is found in his book, *op. cit.*, pp. 245-246.

[30]Several sources indicate that the Soviets undertook important military moves in this period. Schiff (*op. cit.*, p. 196) says that on October 13 part of the staff of the headquarters of the Soviet airborne divisions was transferred to Syrian military headquarters at Katana. *The Yom Kippur War* (p. 409) carries a similar account, including the allegation that one Soviet airborne division was transferred to an airfield outside Belgrade. No confirmation for these stories is available. On October 17, however, the Turks noted four "fully loaded" Soviet landing ships passing through the Dardanelles, according to *The New York Times*, October 19, 1973. Heikal (*op. cit.*, pp. 235, 246) says that Kosygin had brought with him an expert in aerial photography, and that in one session on October 18 with Sadat, he showed him that more than 270 Israeli tanks were on the west bank of the Canal. Sadat, in his September 15, 1975 speech, refers to Kosygin's use of the Israeli crossing of the Canal as a form of pressure to get him to accept a ceasefire.

[31]Sadat interview, *Akhbar Al-Yawm*, August 3, 1974.

a new approach to a ceasefire in talks with Kissinger when he spoke of an immediate end to the fighting, to be followed by a withdrawal in stages to the 1967 lines.[32]

NEGOTIATIONS IN MOSCOW

Kosygin left Cairo early in the morning of October 19.[33] Before leaving Cairo, he had Sadat's explicit acceptance of a ceasefire in place.[34] At about 10:00 a.m. Washington time on October 19, the Soviets conveyed an urgent message to President Nixon in which they called for immediate talks on ending hostilities. Brezhnev reportedly suggested that Kissinger come to Moscow or, alternatively, that Gromyko travel to Washington. Nixon and Kissinger agreed that the Secretary of State should fly to Moscow and he left shortly after midnight on October 20. The first session of the talks began immediately after Kissinger's arrival that evening. The initial Soviet position was that of supporting a ceasefire coupled to a call for Israeli withdrawal to the 1967 lines, in accord with the known Arab position.

In talks with Kissinger on the following day, however, Brezhnev readily changed his position and accepted a simple ceasefire in place, plus a call for negotiations between the parties leading to the implementation of UN Resolution 242.[35] The language of a UN Resolution was agreed to by the late afternoon and shortly thereafter the Security Council was called into session to vote on Resolution 338, jointly

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[32]*The Yom Kippur War*, p. 370; the Kalbs (*op. cit.*, p. 481) state that on the evening of October 18, Dobrynin gave Kissinger a draft of a ceasefire resolution that still called for full Israeli withdrawal.

[33]Moscow Radio, October 19, 1973, stated that Kosygin returned that day to the Soviet Union, although some sources have alleged that he proceeded from Cairo to Damascus and Baghdad.

[34]Sadat interview, *An-Nahar*, March 29, 1974. In an interview with *Al-Hawadith*, April 26, 1974, Sadat said that he became aware of the Israeli threat on the west bank of the Canal only at 1:00 a.m. on October 19, at which time he conveyed to Kosygin his consent to a ceasefire in place. In his September 15, 1975 speech, Sadat gives approximately the same chronology, but suggests that the physical and emotional collapse of his Chief of Staff played a part in his decision to accept a ceasefire.

[35]Kosygin did not participate in the talks with Kissinger in Moscow.

sponsored by the United States and the Soviet Union.[36] The resolution was approved in New York after midnight on October 22, and the ceasefire was scheduled to go into effect 12 hours later.

In order to gain Egyptian acceptance of a ceasefire, the Soviets apparently offered not only promises that they would act to ensure Israeli compliance, but also seem to have implied that a U.S.-Soviet guarantee of Israeli withdrawal from all Arab territories occupied since 1967 had been obtained.[37] The Egyptians subsequently referred to such a guarantee on several occasions and appeared to be bitter at what, in retrospect, was clearly a deliberate Soviet overstatement. Needless to say, no such guarantee existed.

As part of their own commitments, however, the Soviets seemed to have taken some steps to strengthen their position in the event that the ceasefire did not save the Egyptians or Syrians from imminent danger of defeat. Intelligence collection activities were stepped up, including another *Cosmos* launch on October 20 and a Mig-25 flight along the Egyptian-Israeli lines a few hours before the ceasefire was to go into effect.[38] During the tense period following the ceasefire, on October 23, the Soviets also altered the alert status of their airborne divisions. Finally, a Soviet freighter transited the Bosphorous on October 22 en route to Alexandria, where it arrived on October 25. Rather ominously, neutron emissions, which indicated the presence of

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[36]The U.N. Resolution 338 stated the following:

The Security Council:

1. Calls upon all parties to the present fighting to cease all firing and terminate all military activity immediately, no later than 12 hours after the moment of the adoption of this decision, in the positions they now occupy;
2. Calls upon the parties concerned to start immediately after the ceasefire the implementation of Security Council Resolution 242 in all of its parts;
3. Decides that, immediately and concurrently with the ceasefire, negotiations will start between the parties concerned under appropriate auspices aimed at establishing a just and durable peace in the Middle East.

[37]Sadat refers to such guarantees in *An-Nahar*, March 29, 1974.

[38]*Ha'aretz*, October 23, 1973.

nuclear weapons on board, were monitored.[39] Whether this was intended as some form of signal to the United States that the Soviets would not allow the Egyptians to be defeated by the Israelis is unknown. Since the Soviet Squadron is equipped with nuclear weapons, it is possible that the freighter was supplying the fleet before proceeding to Alexandria.[40] Or perhaps the Soviets, expecting the Americans to monitor the ship's nuclear cargo, were engaging in psychological warfare aimed at convincing Washington of the need for an early end to the fighting. And, finally, it is possible that the ship did not have nuclear weapons on board. In any event, there is no reliable evidence that nuclear weapons ever entered Egypt, and it is virtually certain that the Soviets did not turn over the control of nuclear warheads for SCUD missiles to the Egyptians.[41]

THE ALERT

The two days following the ceasefire were critical ones for the Soviet leadership. Their credibility with Egypt, and also with Syria, which had not yet formally accepted the ceasefire, was on the line, especially as fighting continued and Israeli forces moved toward completely surrounding the Egyptian Third Army. Memories of 1967 must have been revived. Then, Israel had conquered the Golan Heights after the Syrians had agreed to a ceasefire. The Soviet response, on June 10, had been to threaten military intervention if Israeli forces continued their advance.

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[39] Kalbs (*op. cit.*, p. 488); Secretary of Defense Schlesinger press conference, *The New York Times*, October 27, 1973; Kissinger press conference, October 25, 1973.

[40] The strength of the Soviet Squadron in the Mediterranean rose from about 60 ships to more than 90 during the crisis. Its behavior, according to Admiral Bagley (*U.S. News and World Report*, December 24, 1973, p. 28) was not "overtly aggressive." The Soviets took care to avoid incidents at sea. "On the whole, their overt posture was restrained and considerate." But, noted Bagley, the Sixth Fleet was "targeted for instant attack from multiple sources."

[41] Several sources have claimed that U.S. aerial reconnaissance was able to identify nuclear warheads in the vicinity of SCUD missiles in Egypt. There is no reliable information that nuclear weapons of any sort have ever been introduced into Egypt by the Soviets.

During the day of October 23, Soviet media expressed irritation at Arab critics of the ceasefire, such as Libya's Qadhafi, as well as sharp disapproval of Israel for not respecting the UN Resolution. In contacts with Washington, Ambassador Dobrynin was also critical of the Israeli violations, but he and Kissinger were nonetheless able to work together that day on restoring the ceasefire.[42]

The next day, October 24, was filled with mixed signals. On the one hand, tensions appeared to be subsiding as the ceasefire gradually took hold. Syria finally accepted Resolution 338; the number of Soviet military flights to the Middle East dropped off suddenly; and Ambassador Dobrynin, in talks with Kissinger in the afternoon, seemed to be adopting a constructive tone concerning a peace conference and establishing a UN peacekeeping force. On the other hand, President Sadat, apparently fearing the destruction of the entrapped Third Army, made a public appeal for joint U.S.-Soviet intervention to guarantee the ceasefire. Dobrynin, who in his 4:00 p.m. meeting with Kissinger had expressed Soviet disapproval of the idea of a joint force, reversed this position several hours later, stating that the Soviets would support such a force if other UN members were to call for its creation.[43]

At about 9:30 p.m. Dobrynin called Kissinger with an urgent message from Brezhnev for Nixon. The text, which he read carefully to Kissinger over the phone, began by noting that Israel was continuing to violate the ceasefire, thereby posing a challenge to both the United States and the Soviet Union. Brezhnev then insisted on the need to "implement" the ceasefire resolution and "invited" the United States to join Moscow "to compel observance of the ceasefire without delay." The third paragraph was the most threatening:

> I will say it straight, that if you find it impossible to act with us in this matter, we should be faced with the necessity urgently to consider the question of taking appropriate steps unilaterally. Israel cannot be permitted to get away with the violation.

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[42] Kalbs, *op. cit.*, p. 488.

[43] *Ibid.*

In closing, Brezhnev said simply: "I value our relationship."[44] President Nixon's reply, at the recommendation of Kissinger and Schlesinger, was to order a stage 3 worldwide military alert of U.S. forces.

It is impossible to know on the basis of available evidence whether the Soviets were in fact contemplating large-scale military intervention to save the Egyptian army. Although 7 airborne divisions were on high alert and transport aircraft were available, it is hard to imagine the Soviets sending 50,000 to 100,000 troops to Egypt. A smaller, more specialized contingent, however, under the guise of "peacekeeping" forces, might have been as effective at deterring further Israeli advances and in carrying supplies through to the Third Army. On October 25, before the superpowers had successfully reached agreement on another ceasefire resolution in the United Nations, the Soviets did in fact dispatch a small contingent of 70 "observers" to serve as part of the UN force. In addition, between 6 and 9 Soviet combat ships in the Mediterranean began to move from their rendezvous point near Crete in a southeasterly direction. Two amphibious landing craft were included in this force. When the crisis subsided by noon Washington time on October 25, the ships changed course. Thus ended the acute U.S.-Soviet confrontation over the Middle East.

While any interpretation of the Soviet threat to take "appropriate steps unilaterally" to compel Israel to respect the ceasefire must remain speculative, it is clear that the Soviets were worried about the consequences for their regional position of the defeat of Egypt's Third Army. To prevent this from happening, the Soviets acted so as to convince the United States to bring pressure on the Israelis to stop, as well as to move on their own if necessary.

From the evidence available, it seems unlikely that the Soviets ever contemplated a massive military intervention. But even a small force sent to Egypt in its moment of peril might have yielded significant dividends. After all, it would not take very many Soviet troops

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[44] *The New York Times*, April 10, 1974, p. 9. The Kalbs (*op. cit.*, pp. 489-490) quote the same third paragraph and give the same chronology as that used here.

to help dissuade the Israelis from marching to Cairo or Damascus. Nor would it take very many to mount a resupply effort to the entrapped Third Army. Nor would the risks of confrontation with the United States be large unless the Soviets were to commit their forces to offensive operations against the Israelis. Thus, it seems plausible that the Soviets did contemplate sending a small force to Egypt. When the United States reacted strongly by ordering the alert, and by pressuring Israel to stop its advances, the risks of intervention increased and the need for it declined. Without loss of face, the Soviets could back down, claiming that the United States had "overreacted," which is not an unfair characterization of the alert. Many in Washington agreed, adding only that the "overreaction" was deliberate.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

There are several lessons to be learned from Soviet behavior and policy in the Arab-Israeli war of 1973. First, the Soviet leadership demonstrated an impressive ability to follow the rapidly changing situation in the Middle East and to adapt decisions to the course of events on the battlefield. Within less than 24 hours of each of the critical turning points in the crisis, the Soviet leadership appeared to have been aware of the significance of the events, to have reached a decision to act, and then to have actually executed the decision.[1] For example, shortly after learning that hostilities were imminent, the leadership, for whatever reason, ordered the evacuation of dependents and advisers from Egypt and Syria and took steps to ensure that information on the Middle East would be available on a priority basis. Once hostilities had begun, within 6 hours the Soviets had taken a unilateral initiative aimed at achieving a rapid ceasefire that would leave the Arabs with their limited gains without risking defeat. Presumably the Soviets shared the U.S. and Israeli assessment of the likely outcome of a prolonged war, hoped to help the Syrians preserve their early gains, and were determined to avoid a situation in which they would be called upon to intervene. Although the Syrian position never did completely disintegrate, it was true that a ceasefire on October 7 or 8, for example, would have left the Syrians in control of some of the territory lost in 1967. Even the Egyptian position on the ground at that time was much better than it proved to be on October 22, the day the ceasefire finally was voted in the UN. But, the Egyptians were not ready to stop fighting at such an early date, and the Soviets were not prepared publicly to oppose them. In a variety of ways, however, particularly from October 10 to 12, and

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[1]This level of ability may not be particularly surprising, but it does tend to cast doubt upon theories of Soviet decisionmaking that emphasize rigidities stemming from the structure of the bureaucracy, the conspiratorial mentality of the decisionmakers, or the distorting effects of ideology.

again during the Kosygin visit to Cairo from October 16 to 19, the Soviets kept pressing for an end to the war. In this aspect of their policy, they came closest to living up to the expectations of détente politics, at least as interpreted and conveyed to them by Kissinger and Nixon. The two architects of détente on the American side did not view the Soviets as delinquent in this aspect of their behavior.

On the Syrian front, the critical period of the war was October 8 to 9, as the Israelis pushed the Syrian forces back to the 1967 cease-fire lines and beyond, and began strategic bombing deep within Syria. The Soviets clearly hoped to prevent further Syrian losses, and, as part of a policy of helping Syria, the Soviets launched an airlift of military equipment on October 10 and encouraged Iraq to join the battle. This aid may have helped somewhat to stabilize the Syrian front by October 13 to 14, by which time the focus of the war was shifting to the Egyptian front.

In Sinai, the critical moment of the war came on October 14, when the Egyptians suffered a major defeat, and on the night of October 15, when an Israeli force crossed to the west bank of the Suez Canal. On the basis of the first item alone, the Soviets must have foreseen the danger to the Egyptian position, for within 36 hours Kosygin was on his way to Cairo to urge Sadat to accept an end to the fighting. As the size of the Israeli force on the west bank grew, Kosygin's appeal for a ceasefire must have gained greater and greater weight with Sadat, who seemed very slow in drawing the appropriate conclusions from the military developments of October 14 and 15.

A second lesson of the war is that the Soviets have a well-developed and responsive airlift and sealift capability. Perhaps some contingency planning had been done for speedy deliveries of military equipment to the Middle East from the moment that hostilities seemed imminent on October 3. Some equipment must have been prepositioned for rapid delivery prior to that date. In any event, the airlift was clearly managed in response to both political and military considerations. Syria, where the needs were initially greatest, received the first infusions of aid. The airlift to Egypt was considerably larger, and may have been partly used as a form of inducement to get Sadat's

agreement to a ceasefire. At one point Iraqi participation seemed important to help stabilize the Syrian front, and on October 14 Iraq received more supplies by air than any other country. Within overall constraints set by logistics, the pattern of resupply seems to reflect a mixture of military and political considerations.

The Soviet sealift capability, although much greater than the airlift capability, is by its nature slower and less responsive. Several seaborne shipments of arms were probably in the pipeline when hostilities erupted on October 6. It was not until October 13 that an upsurge in Soviet shipping to Egyptian and Syrian ports can be noted, but the sealift did not really peak until the last days of the fighting, from October 20 on. The quantities of arms that were carried by ship, of course, dwarfed the airlift, and by the end of hostilities more than five times as much equipment had reached Egypt and Syria by sea as by air.[2] The surge in seaborne deliveries came just as the war was ending, with one-third of the total tonnage shipped during the war transiting the Bosphorous between October 21 and 23. By this time the airlift was no longer of much use and was discontinued on October 24.

The third noteworthy aspect of Soviet behavior in the October crisis is that Moscow treated President Sadat as the key actor on the Arab side after the first few days. Soviet-Syrian relations had certainly been better than those between Moscow and Cairo, and there is evidence that the Soviets geared their initial policy to Syrian needs, and yet it was Egypt, the more powerful country, that ultimately received most Soviet attention. In particular, the Soviets dealt almost exclusively with Sadat on the ceasefire issue after the war had begun, to the point where President Asad claimed that he had not ever been informed prior to the UN call for a ceasefire on October 22.[3] According

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[2]The Soviet airlift during the war was responsible for the delivery of about 12,500 tons of equipment. The sealift delivered nearly 63,000 tons. The composition of the deliveries is, of course, not precisely known. The sealift continued well after the ceasefire, resulting in the rapid rebuilding of the Syrian army and air force, and a somewhat slower resupply of the Egyptian forces. Throughout most of 1974 and 1975, the Egyptians received very little military equipment from the Soviets.

[3]President Asad's speech, October 29, 1973, makes this point.

to reliable sources, the Syrians were preparing for a major counter-attack on October 23, which the Soviets reportedly went to some lengths to prevent once the ceasefire had been voted in the Security Council.

Finally, Soviet behavior in the October war suggests a sensitivity to shifts in the balance of forces as a major factor in making decisions. Some observers have detected a Soviet master plan governing their behavior in the October war, but it appears more plausible that policy was bounded by several general principles, and, within that framework, it was primarily events on the ground that determined specific decisions. The general principles that can most readily be discerned were a desire to retain credibility as a superpower patron with both Egypt and Syria; a determination to avoid full-scale confrontation with the United States; and probably a generalized wish to profit in non-Middle Eastern arenas from the conflict between Israel and the Arabs. Each of these guidelines pulled Soviet leaders in somewhat different directions. Some indicated caution and restraint; others implied involvement and militancy. It is probably safe to say that some key individuals in the Soviet hierarchy were inclined to support an aggressive policy and that others favored greater restraint. Grechko and Shelepin, generally identified as among the most skeptical of the value of détente, seemed to have been most anxious to place the October war in the context of an anti-imperialist struggle.[4] Brezhnev, Kosygin, and Gromyko, by contrast, were more disposed to work toward joint solutions on a ceasefire with the United States.

The Soviets, of course, did not act in the crisis according to textbook rules of détente politics as understood by many Americans. On occasions, Soviet propaganda was inflammatory; the delivery of military equipment may have prolonged the fighting; the threat of unilateral intervention at the close of the war brought the superpowers to a point of near confrontation. And yet, the Soviets, for whatever motives, clearly did try to work for an earlier ceasefire than the Arabs were

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[4]Grechko's views were reportedly echoed in *Krasnaya Zvesda*; Shelepin's in *Trud*. Galia Golan, in an unpublished manuscript, has gone into this issue in considerable detail.

prepared to accept; and they were prepared to endorse a UN Resolution that called, for the first time, for negotiations between the parties to the conflict.

This mixed record suggests that the Soviets, in an acute crisis such as that of October 1973, are likely to see force and diplomacy as complementary rather than as opposing courses of action. In their view, it is not inconsistent to follow a policy of favoring a "political settlement," while at the same time delivering the means to launch a war; nor is it inconsistent to work for a ceasefire while mounting an airlift and sealift of military equipment to clients engaged in actual hostilities. What the Soviets were not prepared to do was to see their relations with Egypt and Syria destroyed by their unwillingness to help the Arabs recover their territory in a war that the Soviets had repeatedly termed as justified. In large measure, this had to do with the position of the Soviet Union as a superpower. Its prestige was clearly on the line. At the same time, the Soviets were not anxious to become directly involved in the fighting, with all the dangers of confrontation that this held. To this end, they remained in close contact with the United States throughout the war and, from the perspective of the White House, they seemed generally cooperative in efforts to achieve a ceasefire in place.

The basic rule governing Soviet policymaking in an acute crisis would seem to be to use enough force to retain credibility with one's friends and clients; to engage in enough diplomacy to ensure that the crisis does not lead to superpower confrontation. The proper balance of these two key ingredients will be determined by the behavior of the United States, internal Soviet politics, and, very importantly, by the actual course of events in the crisis area.