

On Eve Of Cairo:

Middle East Poised Between Geneva, U.S.-Soviet Showdown

The danger of the polarization of the conflict in the Middle East into a sharp U.S.-Soviet confrontation has increased in recent days, only two weeks after the historic visit of Egypt's President Anwar Sadat to Israel and just days before the crucial Egyptian-Israeli negotiations in Cairo, which are set for Dec. 14.

Although there remains a strong momentum toward an overall settlement of the Arab-Israeli and Palestine questions at a Geneva conference, a highly destabilizing tendency toward a separate Egypt-Israel deal has begun to emerge and is gathering force. The region is drifting in such a direction under pressure from circles associated with British intelligence, City of London banks, and their U.S. allies, Henry Kissinger and Walter Mondale.

The decision by Sadat this week to break diplomatic relations with Syria and other countries who attended the recent Tripoli, Libya meeting of the radical "rejection front," followed by the Egyptian expulsion of many Communist diplomats and threatened rupture with the Soviet Union and its allies, has exacerbated the polarization. The goal of the British forces destabilizing the Middle East is to wreck detente and pit the United States and its client states — Israel, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Sudan — against the Soviet Union and the radical Arabs — Syria, Iraq, Libya, Algeria, and the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Neither Washington nor Moscow desires a confrontation in the Middle East, a hot-spot whose detonation would have profound implications on every level of U.S.-Soviet relations.

But Henry Kissinger and his patrons in the boardrooms of the New York and London investment houses have called out their troops to exacerbate existing disputes and wreck the potential for a Geneva settlement. Like an octopus, the British networks operate on all sides of the Middle East conflict: On the Arab side, British intelligence and some Israeli networks penetrate radical Palestinian groups like Saiqa and the PFLP and certain factions in Iraq and Libya, along with the Western Sahara nationalist group Polisario, all provocateurs whose deployment is to wreck Geneva — although there is evidence that Syria, Iraq, and Libya are aware of such operations and are moving to expel British agents. In addition, radical Moslems within Egypt and Saudi Arabia opposed to a peace settlement are run by British circles, along with the British-allied faction of the Israeli military led by General Moshe Dayan.

Saudi Arabia Moves

But there is increasing evidence that powerful Saudi

Arabia is beginning to exert its muscle behind the scenes to reunite the Arabs and prevent the positive momentum of the Sadat-Begin meeting from devolving into a disastrous "separate peace." The *Washington Post* reported this week that Saudi Arabia has launched a "diplomatic offensive" aimed at reconciling Egypt and Syria, and that envoys have left for most Arab capitals from the Saudi capital of Riyadh in recent days with a view toward the convening of an Arab summit. As the *New York Times* put it, "only Saudi Arabia has the moral, political, and economic power to swing the majority of the Arab governments" behind a single Arab policy.

Both Syrian President Assad and Jordan's King Hussein have visited Saudi Arabia in rapid succession, and both Assad and Hussein plan to make separate tours of the states of the Arab Gulf. In addition, a top envoy of Sadat, Ashraf Marwan, was in Saudi Arabia this week.

The Saudi moves, probably backed by powerful U.S. forces and certain key West Europeans, might be able to stabilize the Middle East and ensure an early reconvening of the Geneva peace conference. The current trip of Secretary of State Cyrus Vance to the Middle East should parallel the Saudi efforts, unless Vance is tempted to encourage the tendency toward a separate peace. The *Jordan Times*, following a meeting in Damascus between Assad and Hussein, said calmly that things "are not as gloomy as they seem on the surface." Hussein, who then traveled to Cairo for a talk with Sadat, emerged to say that "the establishment of peace will occur in the Middle East in the near future."

Western Europe is also gearing up to stop Henry Kissinger's mad rush for a war. The Italian press has launched a blistering attack on Kissinger for sabotaging Middle East peace and plunging the region toward war. "The *New York Times* prints lies from Kissinger," said one leading Italian daily. Stated an informed West German diplomat, "Western Europe is not going to buy a separate peace."

Focus On Cairo

Much will be known after the start of the Cairo conference, called by Sadat immediately after his visit to Israel, to which only Israel of the states in the Middle East has responded.

With the State Department's Alfred Atherton as an observer, Egypt and Israel will get down to hard bargaining at the Cairo meeting. The attention of the world will be focused on Israel, expecting some general concessions to come from the Israelis that could pave the

way for a Geneva conference.

According to Egyptian sources, if the Israelis fail to make some important step toward an overall settlement, then — as he had promised — Sadat may be forced to resign, and the entire complexion of the Middle East situation will be completely altered.

The Soviet Union is playing it cautiously. Although TASS and the Soviet press have warned strongly that the Cairo meeting “is a cover for a separate peace” between Egypt and Israel, privately Soviet officials are saying that “while there is real danger of a catastrophe coming out of the Cairo meeting, let us wait and see what happens.” According to the *International Herald Tribune*, U.S. envoy Philip Habib — who met with Vance in Brussels two days ago following Habib’s visit to Moscow — was told by the USSR in no uncertain terms that the Soviets would vigorously oppose any steps toward a separate peace coming out of the Cairo meeting.

An ominous sign emerged this week with the arrival in Cairo of a Palestinian delegation from Gaza, and the expected arrival of a second group of non-PLO Palestinians from the West Bank. There is speculation — fed by such Kissinger conduits as the *Washington Post’s* Joseph Kraft — that Sadat may be considering a move to by-pass the PLO and encourage Jordan and “moderate Palestinians” to negotiate with Israel. This move, which would permanently alienate Syria, the PLO, and the USSR, would be a step toward a nuclear Armageddon in the Middle East.

Dr. K’s Warpath

Sadat’s decision to break with Syria reflects a growing split in the Arab world that, if widened further, could destroy the chances of reconvening the Geneva conference. Instead of trying to conciliate Syria after the Tripoli meeting, Sadat chose to expel the Syrian Embassy from Cairo. Sadat took this action despite the fact that Syria had exerted great efforts to restrain the more radical Arab states and, in fact, had achieved a victory in that the anti-Egypt Tripoli meeting did not condemn Resolutions 242 and 338 of the United Nations, which form the basis of a Geneva conference.

The Soviet Union, fearing Sadat’s conclusion of a bilateral Egypt-Israel pact, threw its weight behind the anti-Sadat Arab forces and condemned the recent Egyptian-Israeli diplomacy in harsh terms. “In reality, Sadat dances to the tune of imperialist circles,” commented the Soviet news agency, TASS. “Let’s call things

by their proper names. We are confronted here by Cairo’s actual capitulation to imperialism, to militant Zionism.”

The Soviet response to the crisis in the Middle East is the essence of stupidity. Rather than capitalize on the positive aspects of the Sadat trip to Israel in cooling Arab-Israeli tensions, the Soviets have adopted a rigid, hardline opposition to what they see as a U.S. conspiracy. This paranoid response directly reflects the input of British intelligence in the Kremlin, not unlike the way the British puppet-masters manipulated the 19th century czars.

The *New York Times* and U.S. Secretary of State Cyrus Vance — who had met for an hour with Kissinger Dec. 2, just before deciding to announce his Dec. 9-15 tour of the Middle East — immediately jumped on the Soviet support for the Arab hardliners. “An outmaneuvered Soviet Union seeks to profit from turmoil by encouraging radicals” in the Middle East, the *Times* warned, calling Moscow a “poor partner for peacemaking.”

Vance’s criticism was more moderate than that of the *Times*. At a Washington press conference before he left for a NATO meeting in Brussels and then the Middle East, Vance delivered a cautious and balanced view of U.S.-Soviet relations in the Middle East that reflected the State Department’s factional position in the Administration in favor of detente. Some of the Soviet Union’s statements “have not been helpful” and “raise questions about what their ultimate objectives are,” said Vance, but he added: “We still believe that the Soviet ultimate objective is to see a comprehensive settlement of the Mideast problem.”

Vance stressed that he intends to push for a Geneva conference and that “the time has come to really begin to come to grips with the question of substance” (that is, the nuts and bolts of a Middle East peace that Israel has long resisted facing). However, he hinted that an indefinite postponement of Geneva is not undesirable, and he put undue stress on the upcoming meeting in Cairo Dec. 14 at which Israel, Egypt, the U.S. and a UN observer will convene a “pre-Geneva meeting.”

A serious Israeli negotiating posture at that Cairo meeting, combined with efforts by Jordan and Saudi Arabia to reconcile Egypt and Syria, might swiftly clear the way for the reconvening of a Geneva conference. If Vance can accomplish that, with French and Soviet assistance, then peace is a virtual certainty.