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Notes on Yasser Arafat's Vist to Moscow in July [1974]

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Summary:

Notes on meetings that took place from July 30th to August 3rd 1974 between PLO President Yasser Arafat and unnamed Soviet officials. Topics discussed included improving likelihood that the issue of Palestinian independence would be resolved, Arafat's approval of Soviet support for Palestine, the Soviets' expression, at length, that they do not support the destruction of Israel, and continuing cooperation between the Soviets and the PLO.

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Confidential

From July 30th to August 3rd of this year [1974], Moscow hosted a delegation of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), headed by its Executive Committee Chairman, Yasir Arafat. This delegation met and had discussions with the CC CPSU, the USSR Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Soviet Committee for Solidarity with Asian and African Countries.

During the course of the talks with Y. Arafat, it was emphasized that, in the wake of the October war, a more favorable situation has developed in the Middle East for reaching an equitable resolution of the mid-eastern crisis, including the Palestinian problem.

The changes in the political situation of the Middle East and the firm position of the Soviet Union in its negotiations with the USA have brought about an agreement by the American side in 1973 and 1974 to include in the Soviet-American communiqués articles acknowledging the legitimate interests of the Palestinian people. During the course of the latest meeting with President Nixon in Moscow, it was firmly stated that the Palestinian problem cannot be treated simply as a refugee problem and that, without resolving this problem, it is impossible to reach an equitable political settlement in the Middle East. Arafat spoke highly of the results of Soviet-American negotiations and of the Soviet Union's firm stand for the protection of the legitimate national interests of the Palestinians. At the same time, he expressed a serious concern over the efforts by Egypt and Jordan, voiced in their joint communiqué on June 19th of this year, to re-examine, under US pressure, the resolutions of the Algiers and Lahore conferences, which recognized the PLO as the only legitimate representative of the Arab people of Palestine.

Arafat viewed these efforts by the Egyptians as contradictory to the positions of the majority of Arab nations with respect to the Palestinian issue, and stated that the Egyptian-Jordanian communiqué creates a dangerous precedent for dividing the Palestinian people according to their place of residence. In addition, this allows the Americans to abandon their position regarding the legitimate interests of the Palestinian people, which had been codified in the Soviet-American documents.

Touching on the question of the Palestinian state, Arafat noted that, as a result of the October war, conditions have arisen that could allow the establishment of a national Palestinian government on the west bank of the Jordan river, in the Gaza sector, and to the south in El-Awahe and in the Himma region, and that the new situation has been reflected in the resolutions of the XIIth session of the Palestinian National Congress, which took place in June of this year.

Yasir Arafat was told that the Soviet Union supports the struggle of the Palestinian people for the re-establishment of their legitimate national rights, including the right for self-determination and the establishment of their statehood in West Bank and Gaza.

The Soviet side expressed support for PLO's participation in the Geneva peace conference on the Middle East, as an equal participant, so that the Palestinians could put forth and defend their own plan for resolving the Palestinian problem within the framework of a Middle Eastern peace settlement. The Soviet side also emphasized that it would be expedient to include the PLO at this current stage, in preparation for a new round in the Geneva conference.

Arafat, while in principle not objecting to the PLO's participation in the Geneva

conference, stated that this could only take place if the Security Council resolution #242, which mentions only the issue of Palestinian refugees, would not be examined as a basis for negotiations on the Palestinian problem. In addition, the position of the PLO delegation in Geneva, in his words, would be sufficiently strong only if it has the support of the Arab countries. However, the latest changes in Egypt's position reduce the PLO delegation's ability to go to Geneva.

The Soviet side considered with understanding the PLO point of view with respect to the deficiencies of the Security Council resolution #242 as it pertains to the Palestinian problem, but explained to Arafat that, without implementing this resolution in full and, in particular, without first reversing the consequences of Israeli aggression, including liberating all Arab lands captured in 1967, it will be impossible to fulfill the national aspirations of the Palestinian people. Under these circumstances, even the Palestinian resistance movement must unite all forces in the struggle to withdraw Israeli troops from all occupied Arab territories. In addition, the Palestinians could also use the upcoming session of the UN General Assembly, working with Arab countries to adopt a realistic resolution that would receive the support from socialist countries, as well as from independent and other peace-loving states.

The PLO delegation was given an exhaustive explanation that the USSR does not support extremist slogans of certain Arab countries and Palestinian organizations that call for the destruction of Israel and only help to seriously exacerbate the situation in the Middle East, which is against the interests of the Arab people.

Arafat, referring to the results of the XIIth session of the Palestinian National Congress, stated that the PLO is currently undertaking a more realistic approach to matters that pertain to resolving the Palestinian problem as quickly as possible, and does not encourage extremist elements.

During the course of the talks, the Soviet side repeatedly emphasized the importance of further unification of the Palestinian movement on a progressive and realistic foundation, and strengthening its cooperation with other anti-imperialist, patriotic Arab forces and socialist countries in the struggle for the fulfillment of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people.

In accordance with the request of the PLO Executive Committee, the Soviet side agreed to establish a PLO representative under the Soviet Committee of Solidarity of Asian and African Countries in Moscow.

On August 4th, an official announcement was published in Moscow about the meetings and discussions that took place during the PLO delegation's visit to the USSR.