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Notes on Yasser Arafat's Visit to Moscow in October 1978

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Summary:

A synopsis of discussions between Moscow and PLO Leader Yasser Arafat that had occurred on October 29, 1978. The Russians expressed concern that Egyptian President Anwar Sadat has participated in peace agreements with Israel and the U.S. The Russians framed this as anti-Arab and assured Arafat that they supported Arafat and his "progressive" policies. The Soviet Union aligns itself firmly with the PLO and those in the Arab world that reject cooperation with the U.S. and Israel. Due to these discussions, the first joint Soviet-PLO communique was issued, which pleased the Palestinians.

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[signature]

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In addition to published material, we would like to confidentially inform the leadership of the fraternal socialist countries regarding the content of the discussions with the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the PLO, Y. Arafat, which took place in Moscow on the 29th of October.

Arafat had asked to meet in Moscow for the purpose of consulting with the Soviet leadership on the eve of the Baghdad conference. During the discussions, we adhered to the same well-known policy that had been coordinated with the friends of the socialist community regarding affairs in the Middle East. Evaluating the situation in the Middle East, we emphasized that the American-Israeli-Egyptian deal concluded at Camp David and the separate agreement on Sinai being prepared on its basis constitute a conspiracy at the expense of the fundamental interests of the Arab people. By taking this path, Egyptian President Sadat has thrown a noose on his neck and keeps tightening it at every step. He has betrayed shared Arab interests and openly went over to the camp of those who support Israel.

We told Arafat that under these circumstances, the Soviet Union gives particularly substantial meaning to the cooperation and coordination of actions between the progressive forces of the Arab world, their mobilization of all patriotic forces of the Arab people for the purpose of counteracting this capitulating line in Middle Eastern affairs. It is necessary to strive consistently towards fulfilling the decisions of the Damascus Conference of progressive Arab countries, which correctly orients Arab nations toward breaking apart the anti-Arab policy of separate deals. Clearly, the task of strengthening the vanguard of progressive Arab forces is still at hand, starting with the need to bring in other Arab countries, and Iraq in particular.

In connection with this, it was indicated that the Soviet Union welcomes the recently undertaken efforts toward normalizing relations between Syria and Iraq, with the signing of the charter of coordinated actions by their respective leaderships at the end of October. On our part, we have been energetically involved in preventing disagreements between these two countries, including during the recent Moscow visit of Syria's president Asad.

We expressed the opinion that, within the plan of counteracting the anti-Arab separate deals and developing a constructive position in the struggle for the establishment of a just and stable peace in the Middle East, an important role will be played by the Baghdad Conference of Arab heads of state. With this, it was emphasized that the success of this Conference will depend to a significant extent on the ability of the progressive Arab countries and the PLO to bring to their side other Arab countries, thwarting the attempts of reactionary Arab regimes to exploit the slogan of Arab solidarity.

We warned Arafat that Saudi Arabia and certain other countries will, one way or another, try to use the conference in Baghdad to bring Sadat out of isolation and erode the progressive front of countries rejecting his anti-Arab policy. Thus, the stronger the voice of the progressive countries, the harder it will be for Saudi Arabia and its cohort states to carry out their agenda. For that reason, it is necessary to employ certain positive elements in Saudi Arabia's and Jordan's positions on settling the Mideast problem in order to keep them from walking over completely to the side of Sadat and Israel.

Now we can note with satisfaction that it was the progressive line that came out ahead at the Baghdad conference.

On our part, during the discussions with Arafat we affirmed the principled stance of the Soviet Union for a multilateral settlement in the Middle East, an integral part of which is the fulfillment of the legal rights of the Arab people of Palestine, including their right to self-determination and the creation of an independent state. We affirmed Soviet Union's committed solidarity with the Arab people of Palestine and with other Arab nations carrying out the rightful struggle for their liberty and independence and against imperialist conspiracies.

Y. Arafat agreed with our view of the situation in the Middle East. He stated that at the all-Arab Conference in Baghdad, the Palestinian delegation, together with the representatives of progressive Arab countries, will carry out an agenda directed at thwarting separate deals and condemning the capitulating policy of Sadat, working towards the adoption of the appropriate resolutions by the conference, which would mobilize Arabs into the struggle to erase the consequences of Israeli aggression and the establishment of a just peace.

He stressed that the Palestinian Liberation Organization believes that further strengthening of friendship between the Arab people and the Soviet Union, as well as other countries in the Socialist community, will be one of the decisive factors in achieving an all-encompassing, multilateral settlement in the Middle East, and the PLO will work in every way to further this relationship.

The Chairman of the PLO Executive Committee spoke of the Palestinian people's struggle for their national rights and of their efforts to counteract imperialist and reactionary plans in Middle Eastern affairs. He noted that in order to implement their schemes, the imperialist forces in the Middle East may once again move toward escalating the situation in Lebanon, in the southern end of the Arabian peninsula, or along the Egyptian-Libyan border. This requires that Arabs always be on alert and comprehensively increase their assistance to Syria and the PLO.

As a result of the discussions with the PLO delegation, the first joint Soviet-PLO communiqué was published, which was highly valued by the Palestinian leadership as a sign of Soviet Union's support for the rightful struggle of the Palestinian people.

In all, we believe that the PLO delegation's visit to Moscow and the discussions with the Palestinian leadership had an important political significance and aided in strengthening the international position of the Palestinian Liberation Organization.