

Menachem Begin In Rumania On Peace Bid

Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin arrived in Rumania last week for five days of crucial talks with Rumanian leaders on the situation in the Middle East. Rumania, the only Communist country which maintains diplomatic relations with Israel, has reportedly offered its good offices to mediate contacts between the Arabs, including the Palestine Liberation Organization, and Israel.

The trip to Rumania, which is of momentous significance, has virtually gone unreported in the U.S. press.

Rumania will be seeking to solve the central impasse during the Begin visit: how to reconcile the PLO and Israel by obtaining "simultaneous" recognition of each other in the framework of a Geneva peace conference. In addition, there are unofficial reports that Begin will hold secret contacts with Soviet and-or Arab officials during his stay in Rumania. An Egyptian delegation is scheduled to be in Rumania during the Begin visit.

The Rumanian initiative was announced only one day after the disastrous tour of the Middle East by Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, and was immediately taken up by Prime Minister Begin. It comes at a time when the Soviet Union, key West European forces, and a small number of U.S. Whigs like Gen. George Keegan are coordinating a major diplomatic offensive to extricate the Middle East from the brink of the crisis into which it has been plunged by the Carter Administration.

The USSR and West Europe, especially Italy and France, are determined to find a formula to establish a peace settlement in the Middle East as the cornerstone of a broader effort for an overall Mediterranean political and economic accord. This would pave the way for the creation of a triangular new monetary system involving huge quantities of Arab capital, West European industry, and the resources of the Comecon sector.

On the eve of Begin's trip to Rumania, the three Arab states of Egypt, Syria, and Jordan reportedly offered to sign peace treaties with Israel in the event an overall accord is reached including effective guarantees of the rights of the Palestinians, according to the *New York Times*. The Arab offer was a crucial precondition for the possible success of the talks in Rumania, since Begin is committed to securing full Arab recognition of Israel and its right to exist in any negotiations that take place. Since 1948, the Arabs have never publicly stated their willingness to conclude a peace treaty with Israel.

But the central issue remains the Palestine question. The PLO has indicated numerous times that it is willing to conclude a detente with Israel, including Israel's right to exist, provided that it is allowed to establish a

Palestinian state on the occupied West Bank and Gaza. A key goal of the recent Vance trip to the area was to prevent the PLO from making a decision to recognize an "amended" version of Resolution 242, one that would include a reference to the "national rights of the Palestinians." On this question, Vance has committed the U.S. to support the Israeli position and refuse to accept any changes in the UN resolution, which now refers to the Palestinians as "refugees." As Begin left for Rumania, the PLO convened a meeting of its Central Council to discuss the overall Middle East situation.

PLO Leader: Use Oil Only As A Positive Weapon

The following are excerpts from a summarized interview given by Palestine Liberation Organization External Affairs Minister Farouk Kaddoumi to the Lebanese weekly Monday Morning. The account was distributed by the PLO news agency Wafa Aug. 19:

Farouk Kaddoumi, head of the Palestine Liberation Organization's political department, told *Monday Morning* last week that a new resolution will be proposed to the Security Council in its next session, scheduled to be held this fall.

The resolution, he said, will be tabled by "friendly" countries and will recognize the national rights of Palestinians, "including their right to return to the land they left in 1948."

If that resolution passes through the Security Council without colliding with the American veto, "we can describe American action as positive," Kaddoumi said.

Until then, however, the Palestinians will continue to regard American actions and statements as "deceptive tactics."

U.S. Secretary of State Cyrus Vance's 10-day Middle Eastern tour, which ended on Thursday, August 18, was aimed not at achieving a just peace, Kaddoumi said, but at:

1. Pushing the United Nations out of the Middle East peace initiative.
2. Pushing the Soviet Union out of the Middle East region.
3. Pushing the Palestinians out of the Middle East settlement.
4. Sowing the seeds of inter-Arab and Arab-