

Why Has Soviet Revisionism Changed Its Tune On the Middle East?

THE change in tune on the Middle East question by the Soviet revisionist leading clique in the past few months merits attention.

The concentrated expression of this change can be found in a speech by Soviet revisionist chieftain Brezhnev in the Moldavian Republic of the Soviet Union on October 11. He said that "the immediate, political settlement of the (Middle East) conflict" had emerged as the main task of the day, that it was necessary that "liberation of the Israel-captured lands be ensured, the legitimate interests of the Arab people of Palestine be met and their right to their national home be satisfied." He declared that "the U.S.S.R. resolutely comes out for the earliest and effective resumption of the work of the Geneva peace conference, with all the sides concerned, including Palestinians, participating."

Other Soviet revisionist chieftains and the Soviet press recently have also clamoured that it is necessary to find an "overall settlement," a "thorough settlement" or a "final settlement" to the Middle East question.

People still remember that for a long time the Soviet revisionist social-imperialists called for the "settlement" of the Middle East issue "stage by stage," and that they described the Palestine issue as a "refugee issue," asking the Arab countries and their people "not to overemphasize" this question. Now they are raising a hue and cry for an "immediate" and "overall settlement" and trying to present themselves as "supporters" of the "legitimate interests" of the Palestinian people. This contrast in attitudes makes it obvious that a sharp change has taken place in the Soviet revisionists' tune. One can only ask: What is behind it?

Is the Soviet revisionist leading clique now genuinely supporting the "legitimate interests" of the Palestinian people, as it claims? Of course not. If one examines Middle East developments, it is not difficult to understand why the Soviet revisionists have changed their tune on this issue.

As a result of several tours of the Middle East after the October Middle East war and particularly from the beginning of the year, U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, pushing the Soviet revisionists aside, got Egypt and Israel, Syria and Israel to reach agreement on troop disengagement. The United States resumed diplomatic relations with Egypt and Syria. In the contention for Middle East influence between the two superpowers, it is obvious that the United States has gone over to the offensive and its influence there has increased whereas the Soviet revisionists have been

forced on to the defensive and their influence has decreased. These are the changed circumstances causing the Soviet revisionists to strike up the tune of an "immediate," "overall" and "thorough" settlement of the Middle East issue. Meanwhile, they have reproached the United States for manipulating the Middle East peace talks and Brezhnev himself came out to accuse once and again the United States of putting forward "ersatz plans" for a Middle East settlement, which meant, he said, to "replace the overall settlement with 'partial' agreement of various kinds." "But it could in no way replace a real settlement."

The setting specified for the "overall settlement" advocated by Soviet revisionist social-imperialism is "the Geneva peace conference." In a speech last April, Brezhnev pointed out clearly that "a durable and just settlement (in the Middle East) can and must be" worked out in "the authoritative international forum, the Geneva conference." A recent TASS commentary said: "The Geneva peace conference is the most appropriate forum in the quest for a radical peace settlement that would satisfy all the sides involved in the conflict." Brezhnev unequivocally asserted that the Soviet Union intended to be present at all stages and in all aspects of a settlement in the Middle East. To put it bluntly, the Soviet revisionists' "overall settlement" and their choice of "the Geneva peace conference" mean that they want to have a hand in the Middle East settlement and are trying to prevent U.S. manipulation of it. Western news agencies recently pointed out that after some months' hesitation the Soviet Union is beginning to make a resolute effort for a come-back in the Middle East and to resist growing U.S. influence in this key strategic region. The aim of the Soviet counter-attack, they report, is to get the Geneva conference resumed for this will enable the Soviet Union to have a direct hand in the mediation.

People still have fresh recollections of the Soviet revisionist leading clique's attitude towards the Palestinian guerrillas. Attacks by the clique on the Palestine liberation movement appeared frequently in the Soviet press which defamed the Palestinian guerrillas' persistent armed struggle as "irresponsible adventurous riots." The aim was to negate the Palestine liberation cause and remove the "obstacle" — the Palestinian guerrillas — that stands in the way of the two superpowers which are contending in the Middle East.

At present the Soviet revisionist chieftains noisily boast about their "support" for the "legitimate in-

terests" of the Palestinian people and the participation of the latter's representatives in the "Geneva peace conference." Though there has been a change in tune and manoeuvres, their real intention has not changed. It still is to contend with U.S. imperialism for hegemony in the Middle East. The only difference is that now they are trying to use the Palestine Liberation Organization as a counter in their bargaining with U.S. imperialism.

In a recent commentary entitled "What Is Behind Soviet Support to Palestinian Nationalism?" Agence Arabe d'Information pointed out sharply: "In supporting the Palestinian people, the Soviet Union believes that through such practice it can group around it the forces that oppose the American plans for solution" and "find the means to again set foot in this region."

Despite different Soviet revisionist social-imperialist tunes and different tricks in different periods, the aim

remains unchanged: to expand influence in the Middle East and to compete with U.S. imperialism for domination there. The use of a "political settlement" in international issues as a means to expand influence and have a hand in the settlement is a familiar pretext which Soviet revisionist social-imperialism has used more than once and which people have come to see through.

Speaking of tsarist Russia's foreign policy of aggression and expansion, the great revolutionary teacher Marx pointed out: "Its methods, its tactics, its manoeuvres may change, but the Polar Star of its policy — world domination — is a fixed star." Marx's exposure of the old tsars serves as an excellent portrayal of the new tsars' aggression and expansion today in the Middle East.

*(A commentary by Hsinhua
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