

MIDDLE EAST HAZARD

Russia could side with militants

By AL COLLETTI
UNITED NATIONS (CP) —
The role of the Soviet Union in
a Middle East peace settle-

TODAY
IN HISTORY

Dec. 28, 1977

The last ruling monarch of Italy, Victor Emmanuel III, died 30 years ago today—in 1947—in exile in Egypt. He had divested himself of all powers in 1944, after the Allies entered Rome, and abdicated in favor of his son Humbert three weeks before the population voted to end the monarchy. During the First World War, Victor Emmanuel proved a sagacious and strong leader because he did not interfere in the conduct of the war but lived the life of an active soldier. But in 1922 he ratified the Fascist decrees which contravened his own oath to protect the people's freedom.

1065—King Edward the Confessor founded Westminster Abbey.

1694—Mary II, Queen of England, died of smallpox.

1734—Rob Roy, Scots outlaw, died.

ment cannot be discounted without risk deite Egyptian President Anwar Sadat's claim that the Soviets "excluded themselves" from the Egypt-Israel summit meeting in Cairo this week.

The Soviet Union says that the Geneva conference should be the main forum for negotiating a peace settlement and that it cannot be used as a rubber stamp for agreements between Israel and Egypt in which most of the Arab world is not taking part.

Being left out of the Cairo summit meeting has upset Moscow and might force the Kremlin to have second thoughts of Geneva and move even deeper into the camp of the hardline Arab states opposing Sadat's negotiations with Israel.

This might signal danger because Israel is not in a position to make the key concession Sadat feels he needs—the creation of a Palestinian state without strings—thus leaving Sadat open for even more criticism from his Arab opponents. Months of talks at the minis-

terial level between Egypt and Israel are ahead in the wake of the Christmas Day meeting between Sadat and Israeli Premier Menachem Begin. Official Soviet media have labelled the talks a failure, as have many others.

Political and military committees will do the spadework starting next month in Cairo and Jerusalem. They will report to the main Cairo plenary meetings to draw up a comprehensive settlement.

It is Egypt's hope that eventually other Arab states and Palestinian representatives also will participate.

At his Monday news conference, Sadat said there would be a role for the United States and the United Nations, if they wish, in the political committee but the military committee would be bilateral—Egypt and Israel, that is.

"As for the United States, it will be in the political committee, without the Soviet Union," Sadat said. "We didn't exclude them (the Soviets). They excluded themselves."

The Soviet Union called such talks "notorious" and would

have nothing to do with them. Soviet President Leonid Brezhnev, who outlined a peace plan considered to be conciliatory last March, said this weekend the Soviet Union still supports a Geneva conference. However, he rejected the negotiations going on in Cairo.

"We by no means consider that the road of unilateral concessions such as the notorious talks of the Egyptian and Israeli leaders leads to this goal," Brezhnev declared.

Sadat, however, has not close the door on Geneva. He said he always has believed that without preparation, going to Geneva would turn into another failure.

"What we are doing here in Cairo is the preparation for Geneva," he said. "Geneva is not excluded."

The Geneva conference on the Middle East is part of the machinery set up by the United Nations to negotiate a peace settlement after the 1973 Arab-Israeli war. The Soviet Union and the United States are its cochairmen.

Geneva, boycotted by Syria, was a failure in 1973, but in the United Nations it still is considered the best forum for achieving peace in the Middle East.

INTERPRETATIVE

MISCONDUCT ALLEGED

Paper cites postal hijinks

TORONTO (CP) — The Globe and Mail quotes two employees of the post office in Toronto as saying mail trucks have been used to perform farm chores, drive to a racetrack at Fort Erie, Ont., at least once a week and to move friends' furniture, once as far as Ottawa.

The newspaper also quotes the employees as saying the post office driver who did farm chores and drove the mail truck to Fort Erie also used to work as a cashier at a grocery store for three hours during his shift.

When the driver's activities were discovered by post office management, he was given a choice of resigning

or being fired, the employees are quoted as saying.

The Globe and Mail also quotes a former employee who said some guards and supervisors accepted gifts to remain quiet about workers' stealing from the mail.

Other former postal employees are quoted as saying they saw workers using a package marked fragile as a soccer ball and a packaged phonograph record, as a makeshift Frisbee.

The CBC carried similar reports from a former postal worker on The National newscast Tuesday night.

Post office officials in Ottawa have said they will conduct an inquiry into the allegations.

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Before Sadat opened a new era in Middle East diplomacy with his Nov. 19-21 visit to Jerusalem and his talks with Begin, both Moscow and Washington joined in calling for the reconvening of the Geneva talks this year.

Nobody, however, is able to agree who would represent the Palestinians at such a conference. It still remains a major sticking point between Cairo and Jerusalem.

In a joint news conference with Sadat, Begin repeated standing Israeli position that the Palestine Liberation Organization cannot be part of the negotiations because it is bent on the destruction of Israel.

"Everything is negotiable except the destruction of Israel," Begin said. "Therefore this organization is no partner to our negotiations."

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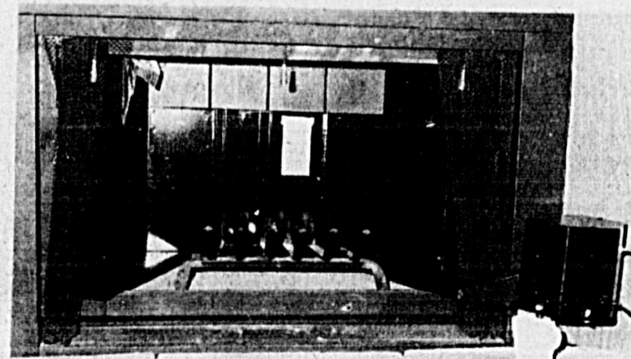


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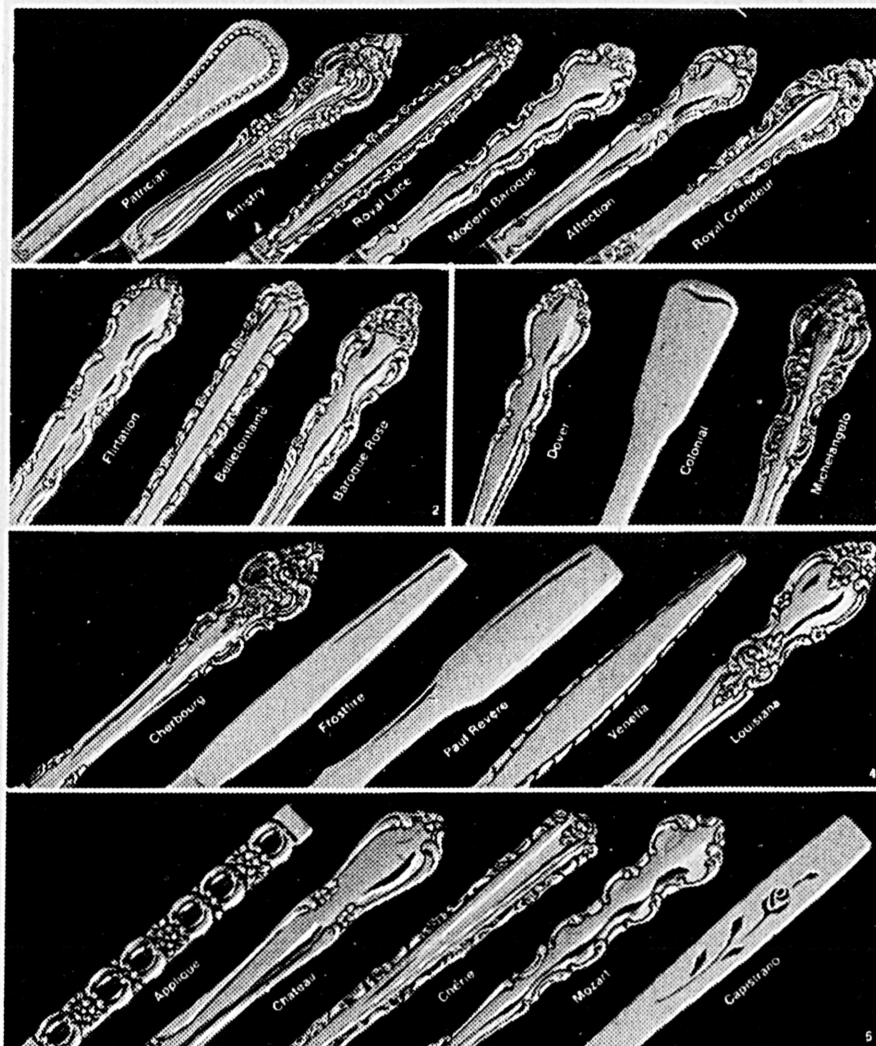
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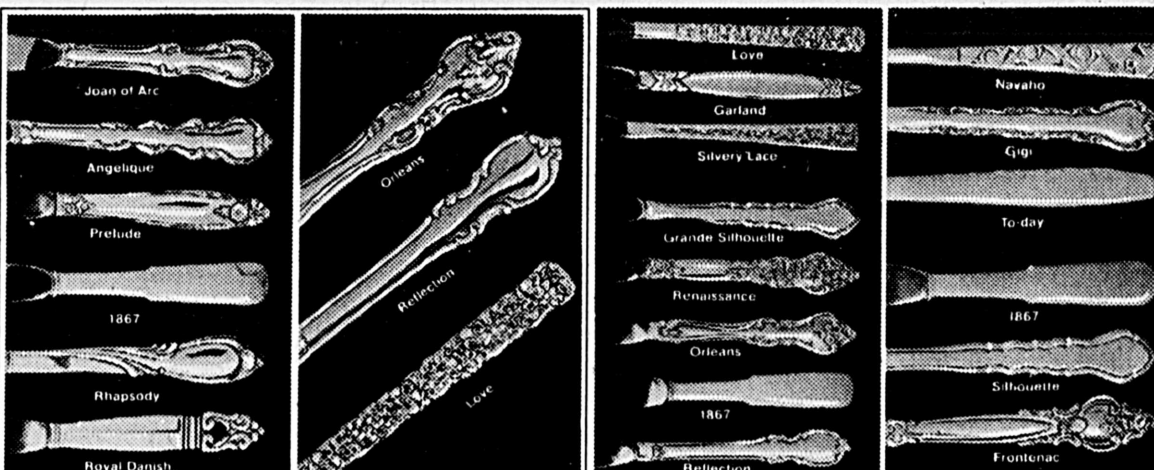
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