

June 16, 1967

**From the Conversation with the Romanian Minister
of Foreign Affairs, [Corneliu] Manescu, June 16,
1967**

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Summary:

Fragment of minutes of conversation of Romanian Foreign Minister Corneliu Manescu in Yugoslavia on the crisis in the Middle East. Manescu condemns the aggression of Israel and calls for a unified socialist response against the forces of imperialism.

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Contents:

Translation - English

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Our position is known and it is unchanged. It was the same before the Moscow meeting and it will remain so at the UN, where we will clearly demand that the aggressor be called the aggressor. Any other way, we would make the Arab's position more difficult. We will demand that the Israeli troops immediately and unconditionally withdraw to positions from June 4. We don't see opportunities to set any conditions for negotiations at this time, because it is necessary first to restore the situation that was before the Israeli aggression.

He doesn't want to prove who the aggressor is, because that is entirely clear, and even the Israelis themselves don't hide it. He does not want to justify some propaganda actions by Arab countries and some Nasser's statements, but he is certain Nasser had no intention of attacking first. Nasser's mistakes cannot be considered in any way to justify Israel's attack on Arab countries. The truth is those mistakes played right into the hands of Israel.

When it comes to analyzing these events and Yugoslavia's position, we think that the US stands in the background of this whole action in the Middle East. It is a war of local character, and it is not the first. If it succeeds to bring results to imperialist circles and the US, they will continue this practice of local wars, and as one can see, they are increasingly moving closer toward Europe. Because of that we think it is necessary to assume a firmer position against aggression and aggressor.

The right to free navigation through the Gulf of Aqaba and similar other issues cannot be discussed before the status quo before the Israeli aggression is restored. Only after that one can discuss and determine what the interests of the UAR, other Arab countries or Israel are.

If we accepted the challenge peacefully, and if the aggressor realizes that the aggression pays off after all, that would be a difficult precedent for all - for nonaligned, for socialist countries, as well as for the SU [Soviet Union]. It would show that we are not able to assist the victim of aggression, and then we should think about what kind the dire consequences of that could be.

I am for Israel to be preserved as a state, but I am firmly against these actions taken by Israel. In this war, it used methods no better than Hitler's Germany. If it wants to secure its normal life in that region, then it must not be a pawn of American imperialism and other imperialist powers.

The struggle of the Arab people, at the moment, is our struggle too. I am against the different Arab desires which have come to the fore in certain propaganda actions. Israel-Arab relationship in that whole complex of problems needs to be talked about, but later. It is now necessary to restore the status quo.

We regret that there's been a contrasting point of view, more so because these differences are not so small, but the issues of great importance. He asked Manescu to pass this on to the leadership.

We must think like communists and be aware that the whole imperialist world is against us. The imperialists' interest in that region was to protect itself from progressive tendencies that were becoming increasingly evident. If Israel were to come up as a progressive force, and the Arabs found themselves in the opposite position, then we would be on Israel's side. We must look at this whole thing from a broader perspective. If we were to allow the Arabs to capitulate, then we would allow the continuation of a series of local wars. The US would gain freedom to act. Vietnam is far from us and it is harder to help there, but we can and must be engaged here. We are very sorry to have different views on this.

We've always been against uniform, molded views. We did not go to Karlovy Vary because we felt that European security is not just about the German question. Now it is a very big problem and for us there are no two ways to look at the situation. We did not go to Moscow because of some formal unity, but because of our own assessment of the situation, and in Moscow, after all, our positions were taken as a basis.

Basically, in the ME the same thing happened that is happening in Vietnam. We have to make sure the Sixth Fleet withdraws from that part of the world as soon as possible. Israel's existence is a fact, and it is unrealistic to seek its destruction. I will tell the Arabs and Nasser, when the time is comes, but not now. I believe the Arabs

have learned good lessons from the current situation, but aggression must not pay off for the aggressor. We must discourage any such attempt.

When Manescu said that he saw no big differences between our views and that was only one thing in question, comrade President replied that that one thing was important. We need to say who the aggressor is. It would be good to agree that black is black and white is white. We cannot treat both sides equally. That kind of treatment would not even be moral. We had good relations with Israel before and the Arabs have never conditioned cooperation with us with our relations with Israel. Now, however, we don't have time for big discussion.

Israel and the Arabs have been in a state of war for almost 20 years. Israel has not abided the UN decisions before. Therefore, everything, including old things, such as refugees and other, should be discussed, and not just the Gulf of Aqaba. If Israel's interests are already discussed, then we should at least think equally of Arab interests.