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CONGRESSMAN
GERALD R. FORD
HOUSE REPUBLICAN LEADER

**NEWS
RELEASE**

--FOR RELEASE AT--
6:30 p.m., Monday, June 12, 1967

EXCERPTS FROM A SPEECH BY REP. GERALD R. FORD, R-MICH., HOUSE MINORITY LEADER,
AT A REPUBLICAN DINNER MEETING IN WILMINGTON, DEL.

Resolution of the Middle East crisis has produced a victory for the West. To whom do we owe this fortuitous result? To the Johnson Administration? No, not at all. The Administration's diplomatic moves were completely ineffective.

It was little Israel which saved itself and the West. The United States can claim no credit. Neither can the United Nations. And to suggest that the Soviet Union played the role of peacemaker is absolutely ridiculous.

Without one grain of partisanship, I must make the observation that the United States simply "lucked out" in a situation which could have wrecked all of our efforts at minimizing Soviet influence in the Middle East and preserving the balance of power there.

It is little Israel--not the Johnson Administration--which has prevented the Soviet Union from suddenly becoming the big power that calls the tune in the Middle East.

It is because of little Israel--not the Johnson Administration--that the Soviet Union has in fact suffered a serious loss of prestige in the Middle East.

Gallant little Israel has handed the Soviet Union a severe setback because the Israelis displayed a courage which has been sadly lacking in the western democracies in recent years.

The Johnson Administration succeeded in only one respect--that of establishing a new credibility gap.

The Administration failed miserably in trying to get other maritime nations to join with the United States in declaring the Gulf of Aqaba an international waterway and moving to lift the blockade which was the direct cause of the war.

When the trustworthiness and the effectiveness of the American commitment to oppose aggression against any Middle East nation crumbled, the entire American policy in the Middle East crumbled with it. The Johnson Administration succeeded in creating a credibility gap in that part of the world.

Americans were reluctant to risk getting into war in the Middle East while 500,000 of our men are fighting in Vietnam. I firmly believe the Middle East

(more)

crisis could have been resolved without war if the Administration had been on top of the situation from the very beginning--if U Thant had not been allowed to pull out the UN peacekeeping force on his own authority--if the United States and other maritime nations had called Nasser's bluff on the blockade of Aqaba.

The Johnson Administration may now seek to revive its East-West Trade proposals on the ground that the Soviet Union acted reasonably and with great restraint in the Middle East crisis. This is just another Johnson Administration pipe dream. The truth is the Soviet Union helped create the crisis.

The truth is that the Soviet Union later had no choice but to act reasonably in the face of the swift and stunning Israeli military successes. The Soviet Union opposed a UN cease-fire when it thought Egypt would prevail and supported a cease-fire when it became obvious Israel was winning. The Soviets backed Egypt in its war-provoking blockade of the Gulf of Aqaba, branded Israel the aggressor and now continues to condemn the Israelis.

It was not the Soviet Union which removed the danger of a Soviet-U.S. confrontation in the Middle East. The Soviets in fact laid the groundwork for just such a confrontation. It was the lightning-like swiftness of Israel's victory over Egypt that dissolved the possibility of a direct Soviet-U.S. clash.

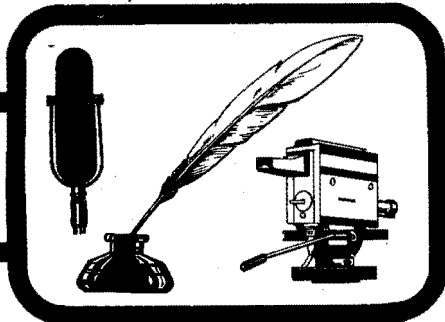
No credit is due the Johnson Administration for the West's victory in the Middle East. No credit is due the Soviet Union for avoidance of a wider war. We can only be thankful for the bravery shown the world by the Israelis. Otherwise the result might have been total disaster.

Now this Nation must diligently seek a settlement of all the problems that led to the brief Arab-Israeli War.

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Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Dayan, after a visit to Vietnam in 1966, observed that we had failed to tighten the noose on the Viet Cong. The Administration record in its "war of measured response" speaks for itself: Stalemate.

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