

# CONSISTENT SUPPORT

The Syrians claim with good reason that to gain an overall picture of the situation in present-day Syria one must study two towns situated at opposite ends of the country. One of them is El Quneitra, a ghost town, razed to the earth by the Israeli invaders, with deserted, overgrown ruins and the burnt-out shell of the town hospital which was used by the Israelis as a target for bringing their task forces from 1967 to 1972. It is situated in the area of the occupied Golan Heights and is the administrative centre of that region. In El Quneitra one can see the Israeli tanks on a nearby hill, scanning the Syrian sky, and it is clear just how explosive is the situation in the Middle East, with American warships cruising near the coast in combat readiness.

The other town is Al-Thawrah. A rapidly growing centre with a population of nearly 100,000, it has sprung up alongside the hydroelectric complex on the Euphrates. It has modern houses surrounded by trees and shrubs, kindergartens, schools, hospitals and cinemas, and lies amidst vast fields refreshed by the life-giving water, with electric pylons striding into the distance.

The power station, built by the Syrians with the aid of the Soviet Union, provides two thirds of the power requirements of the country. It supplies electricity to the growing national industry and the houses of local farmers, while the huge water reservoir created by its dam will water 640,000 hectares of fertile land. The power station attained full capacity in March 1978, and has already more than repaid the 1,200 million Syrian pounds spent on its construction.

An irrigation system is being developed jointly with Soviet experts. Over 21,000 hectares of land have already been irrigated and a further 50,000 are being brought under cultivation. Some idea of the significance of this huge project can be gained from the rich harvest of grain, cotton and vegetables obtained from the irrigated land this year, not to mention the vast number of Syrian engineers, technicians and workers who have acquired skills and experience at the Euphrates construction site and are now working in different parts of the republic.

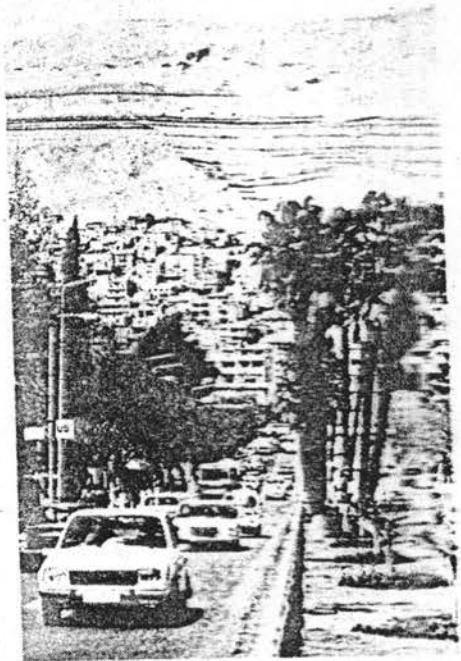
These two Syrian towns with their vastly different fates take on a particular significance just now as the Soviet Union and Syria mark the third anniversary of the Treaty of Friendship and Co-operation signed on October 8,

1980. The treaty raised Soviet-Syrian relations to a qualitatively higher level as the parties affirmed their resolve to expand and consolidate their friendship and co-operation in the political, economic, military, scientific, technical, cultural and other spheres on the basis of the uniformity of their goals in the anti-imperialist struggle, on the principles of equality, mutual benefit, respect for sovereignty and national independence, and non-interference in each other's internal affairs.

The treaty has enabled Syria to score notable successes during the past three years in industry, agriculture, irrigation, oil production, communication and transport, in the training of skilled national personnel and in the exchange of experience in the fields of science, culture, literature, the arts and education. Thirty-five out of the 60-odd joint Soviet-Syrian projects have been put into operation and are functioning successfully. Syria's sound economy is the basis of its policy of countering imperialist plans aimed against the peoples of the region. To ensure its security, which is under the constant threat of fresh Israeli aggression Syria has to allocate more than two thirds of its budget to defence at the expense of creative programmes.

The all-round military aid rendered by the U.S.S.R. enables Syria to enhance its defence potential and successfully to counteract the imperialist and Zionist plots in the Middle East. The Syrian leaders have repeatedly stressed that they possess the means to repulse the aggressor.

The Soviet-Syrian treaty has acquired particular significance in the present circumstances, with the imperialists constantly bringing pressure to bear upon Syria to make it change its steadfast Middle East policy. The country's capital Damascus is within firing range of the heavy artillery of the Israeli aggressors who have occupied nearly one third of Lebanon's territory. Both Israel and the U.S. would like to turn that country into a springboard for threatening other Arab countries, primarily Syria. They also resort to political pressure and economic sanctions. Some time ago the U.S. Congress voted to suspend economic aid to Syria. Damascus justly regarded this move as an obvious attempt to divert it from its chosen path of development. President Reagan has in effect publicly questioned Syria's right to enhance its security in face of Israeli aggression by receiving arms from the U.S.S.R.



View of Damascus.

ADN-TASS photo

It is not easy, however, to undermine the Soviet-Syrian co-operation. The people of Syria will not be intimidated because they rely on their own forces and the constant support of their friends, primarily the U.S.S.R.

"Year after year the Syrian-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Co-operation serves as the basis for rebuffing the aggressive policy pursued by the imperialists and Zionists and demonstrates its effectiveness against the background of events in our region and the world over," said Hafez Assad, President of Syria and General Secretary of the Arab Socialist Renaissance (Baath) Party, in his message to Yuri Andropov. "This treaty is a powerful factor of strengthening the Middle East patriotic forces that oppose capitulation, and imperialist and Zionist diktat."

Time has shown convincingly that this document meets the aspirations of the peoples of the U.S.S.R., Syria and other Arab countries, says a telegram sent by the Soviet leadership to Hafez Assad. The Soviet people express their solidarity with the struggle waged by the Syrian people on two fronts: that of military-political counteraction to imperialist and Zionist plots, and that of building a new life and continuing progressive reforms. They are convinced that the bonds of Soviet-Syrian friendship will grow stronger.

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