

SOVIET'S DILEMMAS

(Continued) 15/8/77

statement was cautiously phrased. It urged both sides to sit down and talk.

On the Mideast, the Soviet reaction to the new round of monthly contacts between senior U.S. and Soviet officials (agreed to in Geneva last May) remains critical.

Western diplomats here are pessimistic about any new Geneva peace conference this year.

From the first day of the Vance tour, the Soviet press accused him of presenting to the Arabs proposals actually put to President Carter in July by new Israeli Prime Minister Menahem Begin.

The Soviets were angered by Mr. Begin's sudden legalizing of three Israeli settlements on the West Bank of the Jordan River. Arab leaders were on guard against Mr. Vance, Tass said.

Nine days later about halfway through the Vance tour, the basic Soviet line was set. It has not changed since, as indicated by another report in Pravda Aug. 14.

Mr. Vance is seen as trying to freeze both the Soviets themselves and the Palestinians out of effective peace talks.

He was doing this, Tass said, by excluding the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) from the proposed working group of foreign ministers, to which Egypt agreed and Syria objected.

Mr. Vance was portrayed as trying to substitute the working group for the actual Geneva conference. Moscow objected strongly and daily.