

World news at a glance

by James Brennan



Middle East - Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko and US Secretary of State Cyrus Vance issued a joint statement on Saturday, which emphasizes the need to ensure the 'legitimate rights' of the Palestinian people and the establishment of normal relations between Israel and the Arabs.

Without mentioning the PLO by name, the statement maintains that a reconvened Geneva peace conference should incorporate all parties involved in the conflict. In the event of a peace settlement, the United States and Soviet Union would guarantee all borders.

The most significant aspect of the statement was in its wording. Until now the United States has referred to Palestinian 'interests'.

The term 'legitimate rights' which appears in the statement, is a diplomatic code phrase, believed to mean the right of the Palestinians to establish an independent state on the Israeli-occupied West Bank of the Jordan and the Gaza Strip.

Reaction to the statement was immediate. The Arab nations generally supported the statement though Egypt accused the Soviet Union of moving to the US position by not insisting on PLO participation at Geneva.

The PLO on Sunday announced approval of the statement and UN Secretary General Kurt Waldheim praised it as an 'important effort' in overcoming existing difficulties.

The Israelis however rejected the statement vigorously, claiming the superpowers are attempting to pressure them into making unacceptable concessions to the Palestinians and Arab states.

Ethiopia - The Western Somali Liberation Front claimed last week to control over a quarter of Ethiopia after winning the battle of Kara Marda Pass. Two weeks ago the tank and radar base of Jijiga fell to the Somali-backed insurgents.

The US meanwhile has rejected requests from Ethiopia for the resumption of arms supplies. Last April, Ethiopia ended its twenty-four year old military alliance with the US, by closing five US installations and expelling US personnel, after turning to the Soviet Union for aid.

Fighting now continues at the town of Babile, less than 50 kilometres from the strategic town of Harar.

Rhodesia - The United Nations Security Council has voted 13-0 to support a British proposal that a UN representative be sent to Rhodesia, to negotiate with all parties in the conflict there. The Soviet Union and China, both of whom reject the UK-US plan for Rhodesia, abstained from the vote.

According to the UK-US plan, the UN representative would accompany British delegate Lord Carver to Salisbury for talks with Smith and black leaders.

While Carver is integrating the guerrilla forces of the Patriotic Front into a new Zimbabwe army, the UN representative, along with a peace-keeping force, would help Carver ensure a peaceful transition to majority rule.

Although somewhat of a victory for the UK-US plan, it remains to be seen whether the Smith government will step down and whether all four prominent black leaders, Mugabe, Nkomo, Sithole and Muzorewa, will be prepared to participate in elections.

Pakistan - Speaking on radio and television, the leader of the Pakistan military administration, General Zia Ul-Haq, on Sunday indefinitely postponed the country's general elections scheduled for October 18. He said the country's military leaders had decided to ban all political activities because of mounting public unrest.

Ul-Haq had promised to hold free elections within three months, when he overthrew the Bhutto government last July.

United States - The six day annual meeting of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank has ended with a resolution calling on all countries to expand their economies.

The head of the IMF, Johannes Witteveen, concluded that the world economy was 'blown off course' in 1977 and is recovering more slowly than had been expected. Economically strong countries, he said, must boost internal demand and imports from other countries.

Europe - The European Economic Community is asking its member countries to enter into a trade agreement with China.

The agreement will run for five

years, and will essentially mean that both parties will make access to each other's products and markets easier. While trade with China represents an almost negligible proportion of the EEC's total trade market, for China the EEC is very important.

After Japan, the Common Market is Peking's biggest trading partner in the world. Unlike the Soviet Union and other East Bloc states, China has had an ambassador in the EEC since 1974.

India - India and Bangladesh have reached agreement on the sharing of the water of the river Ganges, a long-standing source of friction between the two countries.

India had built a dam just north of the Bangladesh border to divert water to the Port of Calcutta to prevent it from being shut down by a silt build-up. Bangladesh however needed the water for its agriculture.

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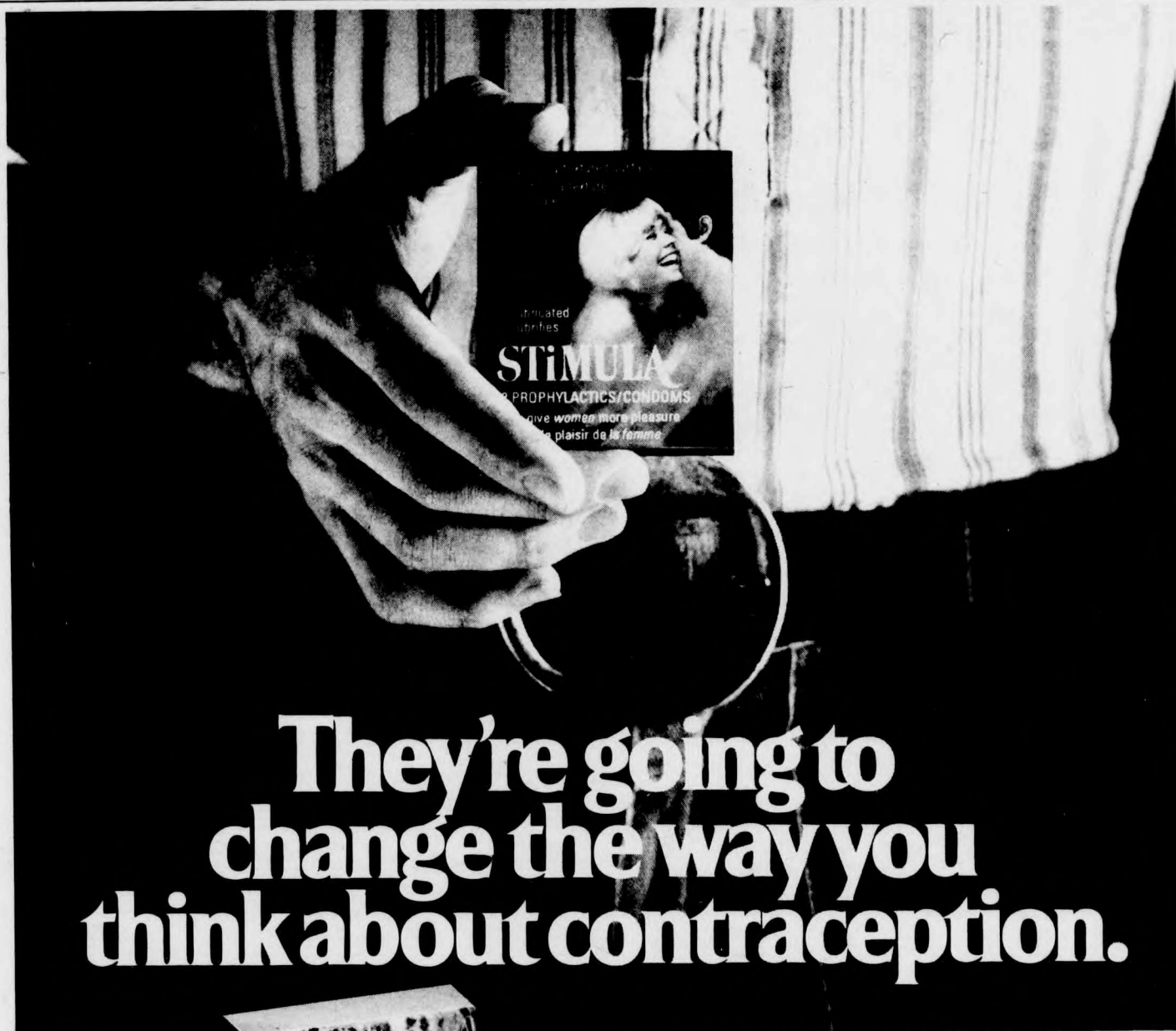
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