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Soviet Policy Toward Sadat's Egypt from the Death of Nasser to The Fall of General

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With the death of Abdul Gamel Nasser, the diplomatic efforts of the U.S.S.R. in the Middle East received a severe blow. Begun in the early 1960's, the program had been predicated on the sale and finance of arms to a volatile leader in a hostile environment. Indeed, shortly after the succession of Anwar Sadat to power, this expensive attempt at influencing Arab politics became something of a nightmare for the Soviets. Internal Arab power struggles, an increasingly hostile Arab press, and ever more demanding requests on the part of Sadat culminated in the expulsion of Soviet forces from the U.A.R. in July of 1972. The lessons of this long-term fiasco are apparent, for when a state seeks to "purchase" allies the question of mutual exploitation is bound to lead to enmity.

SOVIET POLICY TOWARD SADAT'S EGYPT FROM THE DEATH OF NASSER TO THE FALL OF GENERAL SADEK

by

Dr. Robert O. Freedman

Introduction. At the time of Nasser's death the Soviet Union had reached the pinnacle of its influence in Egypt and throughout the Middle East.[1] The Russians had acquired air and naval bases in Egypt which greatly enhanced their military position in the eastern Mediterranean vis-a-vis the United States and had obtained port rights in Syria, Yemen, South Yemen, the Sudan, and Iraq, which gave increased Soviet access to the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf, and the Indian Ocean.

The Soviet position in the Middle East had, however, become very expensive to maintain. The Russians had assumed the role of military supplier and financier of economically weak and politically unstable Arab regimes while at the same time endeavoring to purchase influence in Turkey and Iran. Nor was this position which the Russians had achieved without its risks, since there were a number of Arabs who clearly hoped to involve the Russians in a war against Israel, irrespective of the international consequences. Indeed, one of the reasons for Soviet acceptance of the American cease-fire initiative in July 1970–2 months before Nasser died–may well have been a desire to cool its rapidly escalating conflict with Israel which might otherwise have soon involved the United States. Cooperation with the United States, however, only inflamed anti-Soviet sentiment in Syria and Iraq, Russian clients openly opposed to the cease-fire.

The reemergence of the United States as an active factor in Middle

Eastern politics made such Arab disunity even more serious a problem for the Soviets. The "Rogers plan," first announced on 9 December 1969, was a significant factor in preventing the Arab summit conference which convened at Rabat, Morocco, a few days later from issuing an anti-American statement as had been rumored in early December.[2] The cease-fire between Israel, Egypt, and Jordan which began in August 1970 was an American initiative, and, although it was violated by Egypt, it nonetheless seemed to set the climate for substantive peace negotiations. The strong American support for King Hussein's regime when Syrian tanks invaded Jordan in September 1970, during Hussein's crackdown on the guerrillas, helped restore a great deal of American influence in Jordan and Lebanon as well, and the Soviet Union's disinclination to support one of its erstwhile clients, Syria, against a client of the United States, Jordan, was not lost on the Arab world.

Thus the specter of rising American influence in the Arab world, together with the increasing disunity among the Soviet Union's Arab "clients," dominated Russian thinking in the Middle East when Gamal Abdul Nasser, the man who had been the linchpin of Soviet strategy in the region, departed from the scene.[3]

Soviet Policy Toward Sadat's Egypt: the First Phase. From the Soviet point of view, the most serious aspect of Nasser's death was that it removed the one man in Egypt so obsessed by his humiliation at the hands of the Israelis that he was willing to give up considerable Egyptian sovereignty in an effort to get revenge. Russia feared that Nasser's successor, not bridled with his mistakes, might prove to be a considerably more independent personage. As might be imagined, the presence at Nasser's funeral of a senior American official, Elliot Richardson, did little to allay the Russian concern. Indeed, *Pravda* correspondent Yuri Glukhov wrote on 17 October 1970:

> The period following the death of Nasser has witnessed the development of bitter psychological warfare by Western propaganda, which hopes to revitalize the forces of domestic reaction, smash the United Front in the U.A.R., foment internal crisis and *drive a wedge between the U.A.R. and its friends. Once again the alleged inconsistency of the U.A.R.'s policy of nonalignment with the particular nature of its friendship with the Soviet Union has been raised.* Rumors have been spread about Nasser's "behests" and his "last words" concerning the choice of a successor—words spoken literally on his deathbed. As might be expected, the persons named as successors were those in whom the West has a material stake.[4] [Emphasis added.]

In addition to a succession crisis in Egypt, the Russians faced government shakeups in Iraq and Syria. In Iraq, Hardan Al-Takriti, one of the Vice Presidents, was ousted, apparently for his role in the failure of the Iraqi troops in Jordan to come to the aid of the Palestinian guerrillas during their war with Hussein's troops.[5] A far more serious shakeup occurred in Syria where the pro-Russian group of Ba'athist leaders led by Salah Jedid was ousted by the Syrian Defense Minister Hafiz al-Asad—a man who had clashed with the Russians in the past.[6]

These domestic changes in their Arab clients led the Soviets to adopt a "watchful waiting" policy. Thus, while attempting to consolidate relations with the new regimes, Russia supported the 22 November resolution of the U.N. on the Arab-Israeli crisis. Still, the Russians were far from inactive in the area. Cairo-Moscow traffic was heavy, highlighted by the January visit of Soviet

President Nicholai Podgorny to celebrate the opening of the Aswan High Dam, and Syrian leader al-Asad visited the Soviet capital in February.

As stability returned to the Arab world, the Soviet Union began new efforts at Arab unification. A new drive for Arab unity was already underway in the proposed federation of Egypt, Libya, and the Sudan which was launched in October 1970 and to which Syria adhered on 27 November 1970. The Russians moved quickly to throw their support behind the federation and Syria's decision to join it since conflict between Syria and Egypt in the past had been one of the main obstacles to Soviet backed "anti-imperialist" Arab unity.

While Egypt, Syria, Libya, and the Sudan moved toward a Soviet-approved federation, the Russians were careful to maintain good relations with Iraq, Egypt's main Arab opponent, which was highly critical of the proposed Arab federation. Thus, while the Russians agreed to give Egypt a $415 million loan on 16 March 1971 for rural electrification, desert reclamation, and a number of industrial projects, on 8 April 1971 the Iraqis were the recipients of a $224 million loan for the construction of an oil refinery and two oil pipelines. The Iraqi loan was not entirely altruistic, however, since it was to be repaid by oil—a commodity which the Russians were beginning to find more and more expensive to produce at home. The Soviet loan also served to strengthen the hand of the Iraqi leaders in their bargaining with the Western oil companies which had become very heated.

The Ouster of Ali Sabry and the Abortive Coup in the Sudan. As the Soviet supported Arab federation reached its final stages with a Cairo summit meeting of the member nations on 12 April 1971, serious difficulties arose. One faction of the Sudanese Communist Party came out strongly against the federation, and Sudanese Premier Ja'afar Nimeri was forced to leave the unity talks for Moscow in an effort to get Soviet support in pressuring the Sudanese Communists into giving up their opposition. The Russians, however, were either unwilling or unable to bring effective pressure to bear. The end result was that the Sudan was not a signatory to the preliminary agreement of 17 April 1971. Nimeri, however, was to get his revenge on the Communists 1 month later.

More serious opposition appeared in Egypt. Seizing on the Arab federation as an issue to challenge Sadat, Ali Sabry moved to oust the Egyptian President. Sadat proved too skillful a politician, however, and succeeded in removing Sabry from his post as Vice President.[7] What made this more than another Arab power struggle was that Sabry was fired on 2 May 1971—3 days before the arrival of U.S. Secretary of State William Rogers in the first official visit of an American Secretary of State to the Egyptian capital since 1953. Consequently, the removal of Sabry, perhaps the most influential supporter of close Soviet-Egyptian relations in Egypt, was interpreted as a gesture to Rogers that the Egyptians might be willing to move closer to the United States if the United States were to bring the necessary pressure on Israel. Whether these speculations were true is not the issue; they were believed to be true, and the follow-up purge of Sadat's other major opponents on 14 May 1971 including Shaari Gomaa, who as head of the Egyptian secret police was another individual widely rumored to be close to the U.S.S.R., made the speculations grow in intensity.

In addition to possibly signaling to the United States for an improvement of relations, the purges strengthened Sadat's position vis-a-vis the Soviet Union by making it far more difficult for the Russians to factionalize against him in the Egyptian leadership. The Russians, though disturbed, proved

powerless to do anything about these changes. Their true feelings may be understood by a *New Times* editorial:

> For, as the Beirut [paper] *Al-Anwar* wrote on May 14, [1971] the recent developments in Egypt had "disturbed the Arab nation and aroused anxiety among the masses at a time when the decisive clash with the enemy requires the mobilization of the forces and the unity of the revolutionary leadership in the face of the American-Israeli plot."[8]

Indeed, the Russians were disturbed and anxious themselves, because 1 week after the second purge Podgorny made a trip to Egypt which resulted in the signing of the now famous Soviet-Egyptian treaty. Not a few commentators at the time asserted that the Russians had spread the mantle of the "Brezhnev Doctrine" over Egypt, irreparably limiting Egypt's freedom in the international arena. In the opinion of this author, however, the impact of the treaty was far less significant. Egypt merely committed herself to continue regular consultation with the Russians and to not join any alliance hostile to Moscow. For their part, the Soviets limited their military involvement to, "assistance in the training of U.A.R. military personnel and in mastering the armaments and equipment supplied to the United Arab Republic with a view to strengthening its capacity to eliminate the consequences of aggression"[9] —hardly the delineation of master and satellite.

Perhaps the greatest importance of the treaty to the Russians was as a demonstration that the United States had failed in its attempts to "drive a wedge between Egypt and the U.S.S.R." Thus, in a dinner speech in Cairo following conclusion of the treaty, Podgorny stated:

> . . . the treaty between the Soviet Union and the United Arab Republic signifies a new blow to the plans of international imperialism, which is trying in every possible way to drive a wedge into the relations between our countries, to undermine our friendship and to divide the progressive forces.[10]

The Russians, however, were clearly not yet satisfied with the progress of events in Egypt or the reliability of Sadat. On 5 June 1971 *Pravda* published an article by Yevgeny Primakov which strongly criticized Arab politicians who advocated improving relations with the United States as a way of increasing pressure on Washington to cease its support of Israel. Significantly, Primakov stated that the purpose of Rogers' trip was to revitalize pro-American sentiment which was still "rather rife in a number of Arab countries."[11]

The sharp limits to Soviet influence in Egypt were revealed the following month by the tumultuous events in the Sudan. The Sudanese regime of Ja'afar Nimeri, which came to power in a military coup d'etat in May 1969, had received large amounts of Soviet economic and military assistance and appeared to many Western observers "lost" to the U.S.S.R. Nonetheless, the opposition of the Sudanese Communists to Nimeri's plan to join the Arab federation had become a serious challenge to his power, and on 25 May 1971 Nimeri cracked down hard on the Communists. He arrested 70 Communist leaders, including nearly all the central committee, and dissolved the unions which served as the Communists' bases of power.[12] While Nimeri was careful to pledge that such actions would not harm Soviet-Sudanese friendship, it is clear that the Russians were not at all unhappy when Nimeri was ousted on 19 July by a group of army officers. Soviet correspondent Dmitry Volsky, in reporting the goals of the new regime which, while not Communist, was supported by the Sudanese Communists, took the opportunity to comment negatively on Nimeri. In a *New Times* article, Volsky

complained that some nationalized factories had been turned back to private ownership by Nimeri and that businessmen had been included in his government as well.[13]

The Russians thus received a severe shock only 3 days later when, with the aid of Libya and Egypt, Nimeri was able to return to power. One of the Sudanese leader's first actions was to order the execution of the leading Communists in the Sudan, including the General Secretary of the party Abdel Mahgoub and Lenin prizewinner Ahmed el-Sheikh, who were blamed for instigating the abortive coup d'etat. Here again the Soviet leadership was faced with an old dilemma–should it sacrifice hitherto good relations with a Middle Eastern government for the sake of a Communist Party?

The Russians at first adopted a relatively moderate stance to the events in the Sudan, condemning the crackdown on the Communists and the announced plans to execute the two key Communist leaders. When Mahgoub was executed, despite Soviet protest on 28 July, however, the Soviet tone became harsher. A *Pravda* comment by "Observer" on 30 July stated:

> The Soviet Union, and this is well known to all the Arab peoples, strictly adheres to a policy of noninterference in the internal affairs of other states. . . . However, the Soviet people are not indifferent to the fate of fighters against imperialism and for democracy and social progress. No one should have any illusions on this score. For this reason, the words of certain Sudanese leaders to the effect that the repressions against the Communists will not affect the close relations between the Sudan and the Soviet Union sound strange, to say the least.[14]

The Russians also complained about "unfriendly actions" against Soviet representatives in the Sudan, damage to Soviet property, and threats and "acts of violence" against Russian personnel in Khartoum.

Nonetheless, there was no official termination of Soviet economic or military aid to the Sudan. Nor, for that matter, were diplomatic relations broken, although Nimeri recalled his Ambassador to Moscow. Perhaps the most severe action which the Russians took at the time was to arrange a demonstration of about 200 Arab students outside the Sudanese Embassy in Moscow. Interestingly enough, however, the demonstrating students not only carried anti-Nimeri placards, they criticized Anwar Sadat as well,[15] since the Egyptian leader not only did not condemn Nimeri's execution of the Communists but in a major speech on 30 July after the executions publicly praised Nimeri and denounced the Sudanese Communists.[16] For Sadat to so defy the Russians on a matter which was of such importance to them (they had mounted a huge propaganda campaign to save the lives of Mahgoub and el-Sheikh) was a clear indication that, treaty or no treaty, Soviet influence with the Sadat regime was quite limited.

The most that the Egyptian leader would do to pacify the Soviets was to issue a joint communique with visiting Russian leader Boris Ponamarev which stated that hostility to Communist causes only "harmed the people's aspirations," "served the interests of the imperialists," and "caused dissension within the Arab revolutionary struggle."[17] That this was only lipservice, however, became evident on 21 August 1971 when Sadat flew to Khartoum and delivered a speech over the Sudanese radio in which he strongly praised Nimeri and hailed the "victory of the people's will" which brought Nimeri back to power.[18]

The Russians made public their criticisms of Sadat's regime in mid-August, following the execution of the Sudanese

Communists. In an article in *New Times* sharply critical of the new leadership of Egypt's Arab Socialist Union (Sabry had been one of its leaders before he was purged), the Soviet commentator V. Lykov, after pointedly reminding the Egyptians no less than three times of the importance of Soviet aid, commented:

> . . . there is no discounting the difficulties the Egyptians are confronted with in accomplishing what they have set out to do. The role that belongs in this to the ASU [Arab Socialist Union] would be hard to overrate. *But the ASU is still very young as a political organization, and its new functionaries are younger still in organizational political experience.* Survival of a specious, purely formal approach is still strong. There also persists, as a legacy of the past, fear of participation by the broad working masses in conscious working activity. And *local reactionaries do their best to cultivate the idea that people of the Marxist way of thinking must not be allowed to share in active political life, even under ASU slogans.*[19] [Emphasis added.]

Relations between the U.S.S.R. and Egypt continued cool in September. In that month came the visit of British Foreign Secretary Sir Alec Douglas Hume to Cairo, the first visit of a British Foreign Secretary to Egypt since the Suez war of 1956. Hume's visit to Cairo, which followed by only 4 months the visit of U.S. Secretary of State William Rogers, seemed to indicate another move to the West by Sadat's regime—a development not greeted with favor in Moscow, considering the enormous Soviet investment in Egypt.[20]

Sadat's Fruitless Journeys to Moscow. As the date of Sadat's October 1971 trip to Moscow approached, Soviet-Egyptian relations seemed to have hit a new low. Writing on the first anniversary of Nasser's death (and only 2 weeks prior to Sadat's scheduled visit), *Pravda* columnist Pyotr Demchenko stated:

> The imperialist states and in particular the United States are doing their best to undermine them [Soviet-Egyptian relations] and to isolate Egypt from the socialist states. It is no secret that the reactionary elements in Egyptian society would like to forget the course aimed at unifying the progressive anti-imperialist elements which had been pursued by the late President.
>
> The attempts of the imperialists and their allies within Egypt to destroy Nasser's policy were thwarted by the signing of the Soviet-Egyptian Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation in May of this year. However, the attempts to cloud Soviet-Egyptian relations, as an Egyptian journalist put it, have not ceased.[21]

While it was one of the goals of Sadat's trip to Moscow to remove the general "dark cloud" over Soviet-Egyptian relations, the primary issue, at least as seen from the Egyptian side, was more specific. Sadat had already committed himself to the thesis that 1971 was to be the "year of decision" in Egypt's conflict with Israel, and it appeared to be his main goal to obtain Soviet support for military operations against the Israelis. Indeed, on 19 August 1971, the editor of *Al-Ahram*, Hassanein Heikal, had pointedly stated: "Any Arab defeat which the U.S.S.R. does not help prevent will bring the Arab world and the Soviet position in it to the pre-1952 condition when imperialism was the absolute master and in full control of the Arab area."[22]

In an even more open attempt to exploit the Soviet Union, the Egyptian Government spokesman, Tahsin Beshir,

interviewed by the foreign editor of the *London Times* in an article which appeared on 7 October 1971, commented that Sadat was preparing "to bring about a superpower confrontation between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R." if Israeli troops did not withdraw from the Sinai Peninsula. With what might be termed brash effrontery, Beshir went on to say that Sadat would be able to manipulate the Soviet leaders because "the Middle East is the only area outside Europe where the Soviet Union could exercise power and therefore it could not afford to offend Egypt."[23]

The Russians, however, who almost had been drawn into a military confrontation with the United States in June 1967, were not willing to let themselves be further exploited. Thus, in the official Soviet description of the Moscow talks with Sadat, there were frequent references to "a spirit of frankness" and "exchanges of opinions"—indications that there were a number of disagreements. In his speech of 12 October, Sadat continued his theme that war was the only way to secure Israeli withdrawal and that he expected the Soviet Union to support Egypt in its time of need.[24]

By contrast, Soviet President Podgorny emphasized the need for a peaceful solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, and the joint communique issued at the end of the talks was a clear reflection of Soviet, not Egyptian, priorities. The most the Egyptians were able to extract from the discussions was a somewhat vague statement that the two sides "agreed on measures aimed at the further strengthening of Egypt's military might."[25]

Complications to the Soviet goal of effective influence in the Arab world also resulted from the Indo-Pakistani war of 1971. The U.S.S.R.'s aid to Hindu India against Moslem Pakistan was unpopular in Egypt, although Sadat made no official comment. Mu'amar Kaddafi, the Islamic fundamentalist leader of Libya, however, openly denounced the Soviet role as "confirming the Soviet Union's imperialist designs in the area."[26]

Russian popularity dipped to new lows within the Arab world, and a number of Arab newspapers, once sympathetic to the U.S.S.R., began to openly criticize Soviet policy.[27] In addition, Sadat's "year of decision" had passed without a war, and the Egyptian leader openly blamed the Soviet Union for lack of support in Egypt's confrontation with Israel.[28]

Sadat made yet another trip to the Soviet Union in February 1972, but Russia, with Nixon's visit to the U.S.S.R. only 3 months away, was in no mood to pledge support for an Egyptian military venture against Israel. Once again the joint communique following the visit stressed the U.N. resolution of 22 November 1967 and the need for a peaceful settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Two months after his unproductive visit to Moscow in February, Sadat made still another visit to the Soviet capital—this time just before the Nixon-Brezhnev summit talks which both Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir feared might lead to an imposed Middle East settlement injurious to their interests. As he later remarked in a speech to Egypt's Arab Socialist Union, Sadat told Brezhnev during this Moscow visit that Egypt would never agree either to a limitation of arms shipments to the Middle East or to a continuation of the "no war-no peace" situation or to the surrender of "one inch of Arab lands" in an imposed peace by the superpowers. Perhaps even more importantly, however, Sadat once again expressed his desire for advanced weapons along with Soviet support for renewed hostilities against Israel.[29] The Russians, however, with more important global issues at stake, proved unwilling to sacrifice their relations with the United States. Although the joint communique at the

end of Sadat's visit contained the statement that Egypt had a right to use "other means" (*drygie sredstva*) to regain territories occupied by Israel should a peaceful solution prove impossible, the Russians committed themselves to nothing more than "considering measures aimed at further increasing the military potential of the Egyptian Arab Republic."[30]

Far more to the point was the communique released after the Soviet-American summit conference which reaffirmed the two superpowers' "support for a peaceful settlement in the Middle East in accordance with Security Council Resolution No. 242" and declared their willingness to play a role in bringing about a settlement in the Middle East "which would permit, in particular, consideration of further steps to bring about a military relaxation in the area."[31] Said *New Times* correspondent Y. Potomov in a commentary on the significance of the Soviet-American talks on the Middle East:

> It is in place to emphasize in this connection the great significance of the support expressed in the joint Soviet-American communique on the talks between the Soviet leaders and the U.S. President for a *peaceful* settlement in the Middle East in accordance with the Security Council resolution of November 22, 1967 .... All who really seek *peace* in the Middle East and the world should bar the way to the reckless adventurist forces that are prepared to sacrifice the interest of peace and security of the people for the sake of their own selfish interests.[32] [Emphasis added.]

Sadat's Decision to Expel the Russians. It should be noted that Egyptian disenchantment with the Soviet Union was by no means confined to Sadat. On 4 April 1972 a number of prominent Egyptians to the right of the political spectrum, including Abd al-Latif Baghdadi and Kamal ad-Din Hussein who, like Sadat, were among the original group of officers who overthrew King Farouk in 1952, complained in a memorandum to the Egyptian President:

> It is now time to reconsider the policy of extravagant dependence on the Soviet Union. That policy, five years after the defeat, has not deterred the aggression nor has it restored the rights .... The relationship with the Russians must return to the natural and secure framework of relationships between a newly independent country which is anxious to protect that independence and a big state whose strategy—by virtue of ideology and interests—embodies the desire to expand its influence ... It is time now for Egypt to return to a secure area between the two superpowers ... There is no doubt that going beyond the limits of that area was one of the causes of the catastrophe. The policy of alliance with the devil is not objectionable only until it becomes favorable to the devil ...[33]

Sadat made this note public in an interview with the Beirut daily *Al-Hayat* on 18 May, probably as a trial balloon to gauge public opinion toward an anti-Russian shift in Egyptian foreign policy. The *Al-Hayat* interview was followed in June and early July by a series of editorials by the editor of the Egyptian daily *Al-Ahram*, Hassanein Heikal, who went one step further by asserting that the Soviet Union, just like Israel and the United States, was actually profiting from the continuation of the "no war-no peace" situation.[34]

The lack of Soviet support was compounded by a number of other serious irritants in Soviet-Egyptian relations. Friction was increasing between the Soviet military advisers and Egyptian officers, and Egyptian Defense Minister

Mohammed Sadek frequently complained to Sadat about alleged slurs made by the Russian advisers as to the capability of the officers and troops under his command. In addition, the Soviet bases in Egypt had been declared "off limits" to Egyptians, even, on occasion, to Sadat himself, and this revived unpleasant memories of the situation which had occurred when the British controlled Egypt only 20 years before.[35]

Another factor of considerable concern to Sadat during the prolonged period of "no war-no peace" was that Egypt's position of leadership in the Arab world, which had once been paramount under Nasser, seemed to be slipping away. Thus, despite Sadat's bitter denunciations of the United States in May and June 1972 because of its support for Israel, the regime in North Yemen, once closely aligned with Egypt, announced the restoration of diplomatic relations with the United States on 2 July 1972. At the same time, Sudanese Premier Ja'afar Nimeri, whom Sadat had helped to restore to power less than a year before, spoke very warmly of U.S. aid to the war-ravaged southern section of his country and reestablished diplomatic relations 3 weeks later.[36]

Thus Sadat, beset by internal frustration and rising domestic discontent and whose leadership was under increasing challenge in the Arab world, decided on a dramatic action prior to the 20th anniversary celebration of the Egyptian revolution to electrify his country and thus end the malaise which had been deepening in Egypt due to the apparently interminable continuation of the "no war-no peace" situation. Following the failure of a final arms seeking trip by Egyptian Premier Aziz Sidky to Moscow on 14 July and complaining that "while our enemy has a friend in the world [the United States] which acts rashly and escalates, we have a friend [the U.S.S.R.] which calculates and is cautious," Sadat announced on 18 July 1972 the "termination of the mission of the Soviet military advisers and experts, the placing of all military bases in Egypt under Egyptian control, and the call for a Soviet-Egyptian meeting to work out a new relationship" between the two countries.[37]

There is little doubt that these moves were popular both among the Egyptian masses and among the officer corps. Yet a greater degree of domestic popularity was clearly not the only motive for Sadat's action. The Egyptian leader was seeking to regain a freedom of action in foreign affairs and break out of the cul-de-sac which the Egyptian relationship with the U.S.S.R. had gotten Egypt into. His reasoning seemed to be that since the Soviet Union had been unable to get Israel to withdraw from the occupied territories by diplomatic means and was unwilling to expel her by force, Egypt would turn to the United States and Western Europe for assistance.

Despite the close American tie to Israel, the Egyptians had not forgotten that it was primarily American pressure which had forced the Israelis to withdraw from the Sinai in 1957. Indeed, Heikal had editorialized on 21 July in *Al-Ahram* that "no one can convince Egypt that the United States is incapable of bringing pressure on Israel."[38] High ranking American officials such as Henry Kissinger and President Nixon had made no secret of their desire to get the Russians out of Egypt and thereby weaken the entire Soviet strategic position in the eastern Mediterranean. The weakening of the Soviet presence in the Mediterranean was also of benefit to Western Europe, and Sadat may have hoped that the Europeans would reciprocate by bringing pressure on Israel by withholding Common Market tariff concessions then under negotiation, as well as by selling Egypt advanced weaponry.

In addition to courting the West,

Sadat's new policy involved a move toward union with oil-rich Libya. On 23 July, only 6 days after the expulsion of the Russians, Libyan leader Kaddafi saw fit to publicize his offer to Sadat of a union of Egypt and Libya—something which had been under consideration since Sadat's unsuccessful trip to Moscow in February 1972. In fact, given the strongly anti-Communist and anti-Soviet position of Kaddafi, it is quite conceivable that the expulsion of the Russians might have been the condition demanded by Kaddafi before the Egyptians could gain access to Libya's hard currency reserves, estimated by some Western sources as $3 billion.[39] With this money Sadat could afford advanced weapons on the Western market and need not depend on the Soviets. Also, the fact that the United States had major oil holdings in Libya would give Sadat a means of pressure against the United States to weaken its support of Israel, although the efficacy of such oil pressure remained very much in doubt.

The Soviet Union, of course, lost heavily by Sadat's decision to expel the Russian military forces from Egypt. Although they were now far less likely to get dragged into a war with the United States—and this fact must have sweetened the exodus somewhat—their strategic position in the Mediterranean was clearly weakened. Without the airfields in northern Egypt they were unable to give air cover to the Soviet Mediterranean fleet, and without their airfield in southern Egypt near Aswan they lost control over a major strategic foothold in northeast Africa. While the Russians retained the right to visit Egyptian ports, even this was contingent upon a modicum of Egyptian goodwill, which could be used as a bargaining chip to assure the continued flow of Soviet economic aid or, at the minimum, the completion of aid projects already underway. A Soviet presence in the vulnerable Egyptian ports also served to deter an Israeli attack in the unlikely possibility that an Arab-Israeli war would again break out. In fact, expulsion of the Russian forces and the consequent Egyptian loss of the "Soviet shield" (for what it was worth) made the possibility of an Egyptian-Israeli clash become so remote that on 11 August 1972 Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Dayan was quoted in an interview as saying that as a result of the Soviet exodus Israel could now reduce some of its forces and redeploy along the Suez Canal.[40]

The initial Soviet reaction to Sadat's expulsion decision was relatively mild, although as time went on Soviet-Egyptian relations continued to deteriorate and the Russian commentators became more explicit in their criticism of Egyptian policy. The communique, printed in *Pravda* on 20 July 1972, was both terse and brusque:

> The Soviet military personnel in the A.R.E. have now fulfilled their mission. In consideration of this fact and after a suitable *exchange of opinions* between the two sides, it has been deemed expedient to bring back to the Soviet Union those military personnel who were assigned to Egypt for a limited period of time. These personnel will return in the near future.
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> As was noted by A.R.E. President A. Sadat in his address to the July 18, 1972 session of the Arab Socialist Union Central Committee, the measures now being taken "in no way affect the basic principles of Egyptian-Soviet friendship."[41] [Emphasis added.]

More to the point was an article in the pro-Moscow Lebanese Communist daily *Al-Nida* on 19 July 1972 which accused Sadat of surrendering to "the U.S. imperialist and reactionary influence" and charged the Egyptian leader with giving the impression that the U.S.S.R. was to blame for Arab suf-

fering resulting from the continued Israeli occupation of Arab land.[42]

Pravda itself warned on 23 July 1972 (the day after a press conference by Hassan el-Zayyat, then Egypt's Minister of Information, in which Egypt's non-alignment was stressed) that in a number of countries, including Egypt, "right-wing reactionary forces" were trying to undermine Soviet-Arab friendship.

Soviet-Egyptian relations worsened further following the Egyptian rejection of a note from Brezhnev to Sadat requesting a high-level meeting. Indeed, on 13 August 1972 el-Zayyat stated that "there were many things to be settled before a Soviet-Egyptian summit meeting could settle future relations."[43] On 19 August 1972 Sadat told the Egyptian Peoples Council that he had rejected the "language, contents and type" of the message he had received from Brezhnev. The Egyptian leader further stated that the Soviet Union's refusal to supply the requested arms "aimed to drive us to desperation and the brink of surrender" but that Egypt would, God willing, obtain the needed arms elsewhere.[44] Two days later it became evident where Sadat was looking for arms. In an interview in *Le Figaro,* Sadat blamed the Russians for not understanding Egyptian psychology and stated that the Western Europeans now owed Egypt a response to the "initiative" he had taken to help them.[45]

As could be expected, a war of words broke out between Soviet and Egyptian newspapers in mid-August. The editor of the Cairo daily *Akhbar-al-Yom,* Abdul Koddous, rumored to be a close personal friend of Sadat, charged the Russians with expansionist designs in Egypt, failure to supply the needed weaponry, and dividing the Middle East into spheres of influence with the United States in a "new Yalta agreement."[46]

On 29 August *Izvestia* attacked Koddous and indirectly warned Egypt of the danger of losing Soviet military support:

> The editor-in-chief of *Akhbar-al-Yom* dares to slander the Soviet Union, alleging that it is not fulfilling the article of the treaty dealing with cooperation between the U.S.S.R. and the A.R.E. in the military field.
>
> . . . This absurd assertion may gladden the imperialists and the Israeli rulers, but it is capable only of harming the Egyptian people and their just struggle for the elimination of the consequences of the Israeli aggression.[47]

The Egyptian press, however, refused to be cowed by Soviet attacks, with Koddous proposing on 2 September 1972 that the Soviet press, like Brezhnev, take a holiday on the Crimea. The next day Moussa Sabry, a columnist for the Egyptian daily *Al-Akhbar,* went even further than Koddous in his attacks on the U.S.S.R. by asserting that the Russians had been involved in the anti-Sadat plot led by Ali Sabry in May 1971.[48]

The Effect of the Munich Massacre on Soviet-Egyptian Relations. The downward spiral of Soviet-Egyptian relations was abruptly ended when a group of Palestinian terrorists killed 11 Israeli athletes at the Olympic Games in Munich[49] and set off a chain of events which greatly upset the pattern of Egyptian diplomacy.

The immediate effect of the terrorist acts in Munich was to strike a major blow at Sadat's hopes in Western Europe and America. Hardest hit were Egypt's new relations with West Germany where the terrorist acts took place. Hot words were exchanged, Arab nationals deported, and diplomatic relations resumed less than 3 months earlier (after a 7-year break following West Germany's establishment of diplomatic relations with Israel in 1965) were

painfully near the breaking point. The deterioration of Egypt's relations with West Germany, her second leading trade partner (after the U.S.S.R.) and a potential source of both economic and technical assistance, reached the point in mid-September that Egypt's new Foreign Minister, Hassan el-Zayyat, canceled a scheduled visit to West Germany which was part of a planned tour of West European capitals in search of support against Israel.

Zayyat did complete a trip to England, but here again terrorist activities hampered Egyptian diplomacy. Just as Zayyat arrived in London, the Israeli agricultural attaché, Dr. Ami Shachori, was killed by a letter bomb mailed to the Israeli Embassy—an action that inflamed English public opinion against the Arabs.[50]

The United States, whose close alignment with Israel Sadat had hoped to sever by his expulsion of the Russians, stood even more strongly behind the Israeli Government following the Munich massacre. Indeed, the American Ambassador to the United Nations, George Bush, exercised a rare U.S. veto when a security Council Resolution condemning Israel for its reprisal raids against Palestinian guerrilla bases in Syria and Lebanon, following the Munich killings, did not also condemn the terrorist acts which provoked the reprisal raids.

Terrorism, causing repercussions on Egypt's relations with the West, and Egyptian fears of reprisal probably hastened the pace of the Egyptian-Libyan union as Sadat became ever more dependent on Libyan support. On 18 September, Sadat and Kaddafi reached an agreement which proclaimed Cairo as the capital of the union and provided for a single government, a single political party, and a single president elected by popular vote.[51]

Despite Soviet predictions Egypt was not hit by any Israeli retaliatory strikes (possibly to avert an Egyptian recall of the Russians). Nonetheless, Sadat was clearly discomfited by the events in Munich. With his attempts to win over Western Europe and the United States, for the time being at least, having come to naught and condemned both at home and throughout the Arab world for failing to protect Syria and Lebanon from Israeli attacks, Sadat decided to try to stabilize Egypt's relations with the U.S.S.R. before they deteriorated any further.

Consequently, on 28 September 1972, the second anniversary of Nasser's death, Sadat delivered a major policy address in which he sought to regain some of the momentum in Middle Eastern events. In the first place he issued a call for the establishment of a Palestinian government in exile; he also officially rejected the proposal offered by William Rogers at the U.N. for an interim agreement and proximity talks; and, perhaps most important of all, Sadat changed his tone toward the Russians. The Egyptian leader declared that he had sent a letter to Brezhnev that was "friendly and cordial in spirit."[52]

It is quite conceivable that the reply Sadat was expecting was delivered by Hafiz al-Asad, Premier of Syria, who made a hurried trip to Cairo after returning from a secret visit to Moscow. In any case, it was revealed only 2 days after Sadat's speech that Egyptian Premier Aziz Sidky would undertake a trip to the Soviet Union on 16 October.[53] Nonetheless, the tone in the Government-controlled Egyptian press remained quite cool to the U.S.S.R. until the very eve of Sidky's departure. Thus Sadat himself, in an interview published in the Lebanese weekly *Al-Hawadess* on 5 October and reprinted in Cairo newspapers 2 days later, stated that a peaceful settlement as desired by the Russians meant "surrender to American and Israeli terms" and complained openly that, "The Russians had become a burden to us. They would not

fight and would give our enemy an excuse for seeking American support and assistance."[54]

This negative tone, however, was reversed shortly thereafter, perhaps prompted by an incident in Cairo's Hussein Mosque on 12 October where an Egyptian captain tried to stir a mass protest by calling for immediate war with Israel.[55] In any case, Sadat had changed his tone considerably on 15 October when, in a speech to Egypt's Peoples Assembly, prior to Sidky's departure, he stated that Egypt would never have a "two-faced" foreign policy but would always value fully the friendship of the Soviet Union. In addition, the Egyptian leader called the Soviet-Egyptian friendship "strategic" and not "tactical," while warning the United States that it would have to "pay a price" for its support of Israel.[56]

However enthusiastic Sadat may have been, the real accomplishments of Sidky's trip to Moscow were limited at best. In the first place, unlike his earlier trip in July, the Egyptian Premier did not get to see Brezhnev but had to be satisfied with meeting Kosygin and Podgorny. Secondly, there was no mention of continued Soviet aid, either military or economic, in the final communique which described the talks as having taken place "in an atmosphere of frankness and mutual understanding." About the only thing the Egyptians could point to from the talks (assuming there were no secret protocols) was a rather *pro forma* Russian pledge, frequently found in joint communiques, that the Russian leaders had accepted an invitation to come to Egypt, although no date was set for their visit.[57]

Upon Sidky's return to Egypt, a general debate developed in the top ranks of the Egyptian leadership about the proper relationship toward the U.S.S.R. On 25 October 1972 Sidky reported to a mixed Arab Socialist Union-Government meeting that the Russians had promised to resume aid to Egypt, although he did not mention precise quantities. Sadat followed with a speech in which he told the assembled delegates that "it was up to them" whether or not Egypt should continue to rely primarily on Soviet support but cautioned that there was little hope in the foreseeable future of replacing the U.S.S.R. as Egypt's principal supplier of arms. Sadat went on to say that if Egypt should choose continued cooperation with the Soviet Union, its scope would never return to the pre-18 July situation.[58] Hassanein Heikal, editor of *Al-Ahram*, added in his weekly column that, "We are able to get some weapons from sources other than the U.S.S.R. under certain conditions and in certain quantities; just the same, I am worried about unknown factors in the international arms market."[59]

The Egyptian leadership apparently decided on continued cooperation with the Russians, and on the very next day Defense Minister Sadek, one of the most anti-Russian of the Egyptian leaders, either was fired or resigned from his position. His ouster was followed by that of the navy commander, Rear Adm. Fahmy Abdel Rahman, another of the outspoken anti-Soviet Egyptian leaders. Sadek was replaced by Ahmed Ismail, Egypt's Military Intelligence Director who, unlike Sadek, had neither alienated the Russians nor possessed sufficient popular appeal to pose a challenge to Sadat himself.[60]

Sadek's fall from the second most powerful position in Egypt gave rise to a great deal of speculation both in Egypt and abroad. While most commentators saw Sadek's ouster as the price demanded by the Russians for a resumption of military aid (and the arrival in Egypt of Sam-6 antiaircraft missiles together with Russian technicians soon after Sadek's "resignation" reinforced this belief),[61] Abdul Koddous, writing a front page article in *Al-Akhbar* sought to put an end to such speculation. According to Koddous, Sadek had been

dismissed because of insubordination and failure to carry out Sadat's orders when the Egyptian President discovered that "some directives to General Sadek had not reached the various commands, while others had not been implemented."[62] Another factor was doubtless Sadek's inability to quell the rising tide of unrest in the Egyptian Army, the base on which Sadat's power rested.

Whatever the actual reason for Sadek's resignation, the Russians were clearly happy to witness the departure of the most outspokenly anti-Soviet leader in the Egyptian hierarchy. While *Pravda* reported his ouster in a brief two-column story on 28 October 1972 under the title "Resignation Accepted," the Soviet Party newspaper gave much more space to a speech by his successor, Ahmed Ismail, 4 days later. The new Egyptian Defense Minister spoke warmly of Soviet economic and military aid to Egypt and stated that the U.S.S.R. had fulfilled all the obligations it had pledged to Egypt. In addition, Ismail strongly attacked the United States for its aid to Israel and asserted that "nothing good" could be expected from the United States. Ismail also echoed the Soviet line on the goals of American policy in the Middle East, "The goal of American policy is to isolate the Arabs from the U.S.S.R. and keep the Soviet Union as far as possible from the Middle East. The United States is also seeking to prevent unity in the ranks of the Arabs."[63]

Nonetheless, despite the warmth of his speech toward the Soviet Union, Egypt's new Defense Minister also reportedly told Western diplomats, soon after taking office, that the "Egyptian Army Command will never again allow Russian advisors to get key command and advisory posts in the Egyptian armed forces"—a policy goal which Ismail evidently shared with Sadat.[64]

Subsequent events were to prove that the reconciliation between Sadat and the Russian leadership following the Munich massacre was a very limited one indeed. Egyptian Prime Minister Aziz Sidky, whom the Russians appear to have trusted more than anyone else in Sadat's entourage, was ousted by Sadat less than 5 months after General Sadek was fired. In addition, Sadat carried out a sweeping purge of the Egyptian mass media, and a number of Egyptian Marxists, including Lufty al-Khouly, editor of *Al Talia* and a member of Sadat's Cabinet, lost their government posts. A Moscow visit by Sadat's national security adviser Hafiz Izmail in February 1973 bore little fruit as Brezhnev, preparing for a visit to the United States, remained unwilling to provide Sadat with the military support the Egyptian leader requested.

Conclusions. All in all, the Soviet position in Egypt has sharply deteriorated in the period since Nasser's death. The Russian military position in the eastern Mediterranean had been gravely weakened by the loss of air and naval bases in Egypt, and Soviet diplo-

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matic efforts have led to bitter disappointment at high cost. Russia tied billions of dollars in its Arab investments but was able to exert little, if any, reciprocal influence.

In addition, Moscow's role as leader of international communism suffered as the goals of local Communists were not always those of the U.S.S.R. Incidents such as the Sudanese Communist Party's opposition to the Soviet-backed Arab federation frequently plagued Russian efforts.

In short, in the great power game of the Middle East, there developed a real question of who was exploiting whom. The purchase of friends has never been particularly effective (as we in the United States know so well), and the Arab States clustered around Egypt were an exceptionally poor target for such efforts. It is doubtful in an era of both Soviet-American and Sino-American rapprochement that the Russians will be willing to pay Sadat's price to regain their position in Egypt.

NOTES

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5. "Iraq Ousts Vice President Considered Leading Hawk," *The New York Times*, 16 October 1970, p. 4:3; see also Michael Field, "Iraq—Growing Realism Among the Revolutionaries," *New Middle East* (London), February 1971, p. 27.

6. For an analysis of the events in Syria, see J. Gaspard, "Damascus After the Coup," *New Middle East*, January 1971, p. 9-11.

7. For an analysis of the effects of the power struggle in Egypt, see Peter Mansfield, "After the Purge," *New Middle East*, June 1971, p. 12-15.

8. "The Course of the U.A.R.," *New Times*, May 1971, p. 16.

9. The text of the treaty is found in "Treaty of Friendship and Co-operation Between the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the United Arab Republic," *New Times*, 23 June 1971, p. 8-9; for a different analysis of the treaty see Nadav Safran, "The Soviet-Egyptian Treaty," *New Middle East*, July 1971, p. 10-13.

10. *Pravda*, 29 May 1971, translated in "Podgorny Winds Up U.A.R. Visit," *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, 29 June 1971, p. 5.

11. "Near and Middle East: U.S. Maneuvers in the Near East," *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, 6 July 1971, p. 17.

12. For a discussion of these events, see Anthony Sylvester, "Muhammed versus Lenin in Revolutionary Sudan," *New Middle East*, July 1971, p. 26-28.

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14. "Bloody Arbitrary Rule in the Sudan," *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, 17 August 1971, p. 5.

15. Cited in report by Bernard Gwertzman, "Soviet Warns Sudanese as Relations Deteriorate," *The New York Times*, 30 July 1971, p. 2:1.

16. OFNS report from Cairo by Colin Legum, cited in *Jerusalem Post*, 9 August 1971.

17. *Ibid.*

18. Radio Sudan Domestic Service, 21 August 1971.

19. "New Stage in the Life of the U.A.R." *New Times*, August 1971, p. 8.

20. For a suspicious Soviet account of the British official's visit, see "Douglas Home [sic] in Cairo," *New Times*, September 1971, p. 17.

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23. Cited in Jon Kimche, "Where Do We Go Now?—Agenda for 1972," *New Middle East*, November 1971, p. 4.

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25. *Ibid.*, p. 7-8.

26. Cited in *Jerusalem Post*, 17 December 1971.

27. See the examples cited in *New Middle East*, March-April 1972, p. 63.

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29. For the full text of Sadat's speech, which gave the Egyptian leader's view of the development of Soviet-Egyptian relations, see the Radio Cairo domestic service broadcast, 24 July 1972.

30. Text of the communique in *Pravda*, 30 April 1972.

31. The text of the joint Soviet-American communique, which gave very little space to the Middle East situation, can be found in "Joint Soviet-U.S. Communique," *New Times*, June 1972, p. 36-38.

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37. Text of the statement in "Summary of Sadat Talk on Soviet Ties," *The New York Times*, 19 July 1972, p. 15:1.

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62. Cited in the report of William Dullforce in the 30 October 1972 issue of the *Washington Post.* Interestingly enough, *Pravda,* on 1 November 1972, in reporting a speech by Egypt's new Defense Minister, Ahmed Ismail, gave the same version.

63. *Pravda,* 1 November 1972.

64. See the report by John K. Cooley, "West's Refusal Leads Egypt to Continue Relying on Soviet Aid," *The Christian Science Monitor,* 11 November 1972, p. 3:1.

An alliance with the powerful is never to be trusted.

Phaedrus: Fables, 1st century A.D.