

SECRET

EGYPT-USSR: The extent of the withdrawal of Soviet personnel from Egypt that Cairo is demanding remains in doubt.

Several hours after President Sadat publicly insisted that Soviet military personnel leave Egypt, the semi-official Cairo daily al-Ahram appeared to be hedging on the extent of Cairo's demand. Al-Ahram said that Soviets engaged in training the Egyptian armed forces are not affected by the president's decision, nor are Egyptian-Soviet relations and the bilateral treaty of friendship and cooperation between the two countries. Al-Ahram continued that Egypt is eager for the provisions of the treaty to remain in force, because in essence they are a "faithful expression" of the great cooperation between the two countries.

In his speech before the Arab Socialist Union's Central Committee as summarized by the Egyptian news agency, however, Sadat announced he had made three important decisions. As of Monday he had terminated the services of Soviet military advisers and experts in the country and had replaced them with Egyptians. He had also ordered the Egyptian military to take over exclusive control of all installations and equipment established since the June 1967 war, apparently an allusion to important Soviet facilities in Alexandria, Mersa Matruh and Aswan. Finally, Sadat said his action was taken in order to facilitate consultations on a "new stage" in the Soviet-Egyptian relationship, although he insisted that there was no intention of altering the basic friendship and cooperation between the two countries, to which he repeatedly paid tribute.

Sadat's theme--which follows that of a current series of articles by al-Ahram editor Muhammad Haykal--was that Egypt requires complete freedom of action in dealing with Israel. Sadat alluded to disagreements with Moscow on the supply and control

19 Jul 72

Central Intelligence Bulletin

2

SECRET

SECRET

of Soviet weapons and said he could not accept restrictions on Egypt's ability to make its own political decisions. He observed that Egypt had no desire that the "friendly advisers" should fight Egypt's battle, and he implied that by taking over equipment and missions formerly controlled by the Soviets he would free the Soviet Union from authority and responsibility for Egypt's future actions.

The number of Soviet military personnel currently in Egypt is estimated at about 13,000. Some 1,000 are with the Soviet naval air squadron; 6,500 in Soviet air and air defense units; 1,000 in the Foxbat reconnaissance detachment, and 4,500 advisers to Egyptian air, army and naval units. About 2,000 personnel associated with SA-3 battalions are believed to have left Egypt in late 1971.

Although the Soviets in the past two years have become accustomed to Sadat's surprise moves, the far-reaching nature of these latest steps may have caught them off guard. The communiqué winding up Prime Minister Sidqi's recent visit to Moscow, for example, carried no hint of the new direction that Sadat had chosen. TASS, moreover, routinely announced that Sadat would be chairing yesterday's meeting of the Arab Socialist Union's Central Committee, adding only that the Egyptian press attached "great significance" to it. Presumably the Soviets would not have carried even this brief announcement if fully apprised of the Egyptian president's speech.

There has been no reaction thus far from the Soviets, who may be waiting until they can be certain which forces must leave Egypt. There must be some confusion in Moscow on this score, particularly in view of the contradictory and incomplete information available in the Egyptian press.

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25X1

19 Jul 72

Central Intelligence Bulletin

3

SECRET