

SECRET

## USSR-EGYPT: DIRTY LINEN

B+A [As the removal of Soviet military personnel and equipment appears to be coming to an end, so do the efforts in both Moscow and Cairo to avoid public recriminations over the expulsions. The effort in Cairo, never very strong, seems to have cracked first with a series of articles in leading publications which rather specifically called Soviet good faith into question.]

B+A [Cairo's willingness to make its case public forced Moscow to react. And Soviet resentment over the expulsion, and especially over criticism of Soviet activities, boiled to the surface and will likely become more open. The Soviets had sought to avoid such exchanges which would harm their longer term interests in the Middle East and add fuel to world-wide speculation on their setback.]

1 [The first direct rebuttal of Egyptian criticism, which had been balanced to some degree by appeals for continued Soviet-Arab friendship, came in the current issue of the weekly magazine *New Times*. It was apparently triggered by 2 Egyptian editorials of 11 and 12 August which openly criticized Soviet behavior concerning Egypt. One was by *Al-Ahram* chief editor Haykal and the other by *Akhbar al-Yawm* chief editor Al-Quddus. In Soviet eyes they probably bore an official imprimatur.]

1 [The *New Times* article singles out Al-Quddus and charges him with anti-Soviet propaganda. It calls Egyptian claims of insufficient military aid "provocative" and sticks to Moscow's contention that Soviet military experts returned home with the thanks of the Egyptian leadership after completing their jobs.]

1 [The article also cites Golda Meir's appeal to Sadat to meet as equals and Secretary Rogers' call

for "active negotiations" as signs that "some people in the West and in Tel Aviv" feel Egypt has weakened itself. Egypt is exhorted to turn down these "old proposals for direct negotiations and interim agreements." ]

4 [The *New Times* article was only the opening shot. After Haykal and Al-Quddus again published critical editorials on 18 and 19 August, a Soviet Foreign Ministry official acknowledged in public that Moscow was particularly embittered by Egypt's handling of the expulsion in the press. He observed that this press treatment could only have the approval of the leadership in Cairo. ]

1 [The Soviets, in addition, are certain to react negatively if Sadat attempts to bypass Moscow in his avowed campaign to promote a peace settlement. *New Times*, for instance, encouraged the Arabs to rely on "the friendly support of the socialist commonwealth" in frustrating "intrigues" like those by Meir and Rogers. *Izvestiya* and *Pravda* on 21 and 23 August reflected particular concern about the Egyptian's turning to the US. *Izvestiya*, not surprisingly, blamed the US for most of the troubles in the Middle East over the past 20 years. *Pravda* underscored US support for Israel, saying this showed "how illusory the hopes of some Arab political leaders for 'mutual understanding' with the United States are." It warned that the Arab countries can achieve a fair peace only by relying on the Soviet Union and other socialist countries. ]

6 [These critical items in the Moscow press had been preceded by bitter comments made in private by Soviet diplomats in the Middle East. The US Embassy in Beirut states that Soviet Ambassador Azimov and other Soviet officials were making remarks highly critical of the Egyptians. As undiplomatic as these references may be, they are probably honest expressions of Soviet vexation at the Egyptians.

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