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USSR - EGYPT

PRESIDENTIAL ADVISER ISMA'IL TALKS WITH BREZHNEV, GROMYKO

The 7-10 February visit to Moscow by Egyptian President as-Sadat's adviser for national security affairs, Hafiz Isma'il, marked the first high-level Soviet-Egyptian political discussions since Prime Minister Sidqi's talks in Moscow last October.* The TASS and MIDDLE EAST NEWS AGENCY (MENA) announcements of the visit, on 1 February, coincided with the arrival in Cairo of a Soviet military delegation, reported by MENA but given no publicity by Moscow. The military talks presumably are a followup to the discussions in Moscow last fall during the 15-29 November visit of an Egyptian military delegation headed by the air force commander, Mubarak--a visit also unreported by Soviet media.**

Cairo press comment in advance of the visit, as reported by the IRAQI NEWS AGENCY on 3 February, noted that Hafiz Isma'il would be conveying a message from as-Sadat to Brezhnev. AL-JUMHURIYAH observed that the discussions, part of Egypt's "general political move," would concentrate on political and military aspects of the Middle East crisis, the "international possibilities following the recent developments in Vietnam," and the stands of "the major states" and the United Nations. According to INA, the weekly AKHBAR AL-YAWM reported "political sources in Moscow" as viewing the visit as important in reaching a "new stage for reactivating" the Middle East question.

A Moscow commentary broadcast in Arabic on 5 February, anticipating the visit, claimed that the forthcoming talks again proved the importance of Soviet-Egyptian relations to the Arabs and to the

* Hafiz Isma'il accompanied as-Sadat on his three public visits to Moscow in October 1971 and February and April 1972; there is no indication as to whether he was a member of as-Sadat's delegation for the secret talks early in March 1971. He was not announced as a member of Prime Minister Sidqi's entourage for the latter's July and October visits last year.

** Moscow has not been consistent in publicizing exchanges of military delegations. Last December, the Iraqi defense minister's three-day "official visit"--so described by the IRAQI NEWS AGENCY--went unacknowledged by Moscow, but earlier the same month an "official visit" by the Syrian defense minister was given appropriate publicity.

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"development of the Middle East situation." Perhaps in response to Egyptian press speculation about a Soviet-U.S. understanding on the Middle East, the commentary conceded that the Soviet Union and the United States want to clear the atmosphere between them, but "under no circumstances will we do this if it harms the interests of our friends." Earlier, AKHBAR AL-YAWM chief editor al-Quddus, in a 27 January article, voiced suspicion that the USSR had reached agreement with the United States at the Moscow summit under which Washington would seek an agreement in the Middle East "as has happened in Vietnam." Cairo radio, reporting Brezhnev's statement in his 30 January speech that the Vietnam settlement illustrated the possibility of peaceful solutions to other conflicts, misquoted him to the effect that the USSR "now looks forward to cooperation with the United States" in settling the Middle East crisis.

MOSCOW TALKS TASS characterized Isma'il's 7 and 9 February discussions with Gromyko as "friendly," the same description applied to Prime Minister Sidqi's October meetings with Kosygin and Podgorny. Brezhnev--who did not meet with Sidqi last fall--received Isma'il on the 8th in a meeting which TASS called "warm and friendly." On his return home, Isma'il was reported by Cairo radio as stating that during his five-hour talk with Brezhnev various aspects of the Middle East situation and bilateral relations were reviewed with resultant "reciprocal understanding." A report on his statement broadcast by Moscow in Arabic on the 11th said Isma'il described the meetings with Soviet leaders as demonstrating the understanding between the two sides "regarding the methods" of settling the Middle East problem and the promotion of friendly Soviet-Egyptian relations.

There were no public speeches during the visit; Moscow merely reported that "friendly toasts" were exchanged at Gromyko's 7 February luncheon for Isma'il and "cordial toasts" the next day at a reciprocal luncheon at the Egyptian embassy. Among the Soviet officials present at Gromyko's luncheon was the first deputy defense minister, General Kulikov, but there is no indication that he participated in the talks. That the discussions may also have touched on party relations was suggested by an IRAQI NEWS AGENCY report on the 10th stating that Egyptian newspapers said Arab Socialist Union (ASU) official Ghanim, accompanying Isma'il to Moscow, had received an invitation from a CPSU official calling on ASU Central Committee first secretary Sayyid Mar'i to visit the Soviet Union. Ghanim was reportedly also given a "draft protocol concerning cooperation between the CPSU and ASU."

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Both Moscow and Cairo media briefly noted that Isma'il met with the UN envoy to the Middle East, Dr. Jarring, while in Moscow but gave no indication of the substance of their talks.

Presumably, Isma'il renewed previous invitations to the Soviet leadership to visit Cairo, but obtained no commitment. The final paragraph of the press statement merely recorded the sides' emphasis on the importance of "holding regular contacts between the leaders" of the USSR and Egypt to exchange views and coordinate steps and actions. It added only that this practice had "proved its soundness and efficacy." The communique on Sidqi's visit last October had noted agreement to "maintain contacts between leading figures" and went on to record acceptance of as-Sadat's invitations to Brezhnev, Podgorny and Kosygin to visit Cairo. Acceptance of invitations to the Soviet leadership had been noted in the communique on as-Sadat's October 1971 visit, and Brezhnev's acceptance of an invitation was included in the communique on as-Sadat's February 1972 visit.

MIDEAST PROBLEM In the press statement issued on the 10th, both sides placed standard stress on the need for Israeli withdrawal from all occupied territories and for insuring the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people. While the October communique on Sidqi's talks mentioned Security Council Resolution 242 only in denouncing Israeli occupation in disregard of the provisions of this resolution, the current document again positively affirmed the sides' determination to struggle for a just settlement in the Middle East based on implementation of all provisions of Resolution 242.

The Soviet side again declared that in light of Israel's rejection of a "just political settlement," the Arab states "have the full right to use any form of struggle" in liberating their occupied territories. (Versions of this formula in previous Soviet-Egyptian communiqués, since its introduction in the document on as-Sadat's April visit last year, have variously referred to "other means," "all means at their disposal," and "diverse means in accordance with provisions of the UN Charter.") But Moscow has continued to attribute to Cairo a commitment to a peaceful settlement: Thus Belyayev, in the commentators' roundtable broadcast on Moscow's domestic service 11 February, claimed that Isma'il's talks with Brezhnev and Gromyko "make it possible to assert that the Soviet Union together with Egypt now reaffirm their interest in the political settlement" of the problem on the basis of Resolution 242.

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The notion of an "interim" or "partial" Middle East settlement was addressed for the first time in a joint communique since July 1971. The Egyptian side separately announced its determination to seek a "full settlement" and its rejection of "any plans for a settlement on the basis of the so-called partial settlement." The Soviet side, while withholding endorsement of this position, expressed its "total understanding" of this attitude as responding to requirements of justice, the letter and spirit of UN resolutions, and the interests of peace in the Middle East. The July 1971 communique on then foreign minister Riyad's visit to Moscow declared that the problem of opening the Suez Canal for international shipping could not be solved in isolation from other problems of settlement, and should "be in context with an agreement on the withdrawal of all Israeli troops to the lines held before 5 June 1967."

Moscow's present expression of "understanding" of the Egyptian position is consistent with its previous practice of noting Egypt's position without flatly ruling out the possibility of a partial solution. A PRAVDA Observer article of 12 February last year set out Soviet objections to interim talks on a Suez Canal settlement when it decried the United States' "self-styled mediation" and questioned the value of Israel's agreement to start "indirect talks" with Cairo when it had not relinquished its territorial demands.* Most recently, a Demchenko article in PRAVDA on 20 January recalled as-Sadat's 1971 proposal to initiate a general settlement with the resumption of Suez navigation after a partial Israeli withdrawal from Sinai. Demchenko noted that Israeli and Western papers had said Tel Aviv might have withdrawn its troops from the eastern bank of the canal if the question of the remaining occupied lands had been "frozen." And Belyayev, in the 11 February commentators' roundtable, similarly remarked that "Western observers" stress their interest in a partial settlement because they would like to see the canal opened, but then liberation of the occupied territories "would all gradually be forgotten."

Moscow has from time to time claimed that Jordan occupies a "special place" in Israeli plans for holding direct negotiations with Arab countries in order "to impose surrender" on them separately. TASS on 9 February noted without comment King Husayn's denial of

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a statement attributed to him by the Washington EVENING STAR that Jordan is prepared for separate talks with Israel, and quoted him as saying "we refuse partial settlements" and wish an overall settlement within the framework of Resolution 242.

While the Soviet-Egyptian communique stated that the sides studied the "necessary steps" for intensifying the struggle for a just settlement of the conflict, it gave no indication of the nature of such steps. The Soviets did, however, go on to pledge that they would continue political and economic support of Egypt and "facilitate a strengthening of its military potential" in accordance with the provisions of the Soviet-Egyptian treaty. In praising the friendship and cooperation between Cairo and Moscow, the sides "stressed the need to give a decisive rebuff" to any attempts to weaken this "close relationship."

MOSCOW CIRCUMSPECT IN TREATMENT OF EGYPTIAN INTERNAL AFFAIRS

Soviet media have for the most part ignored developments in Egypt's domestic affairs stemming from the student arrests and disturbances in early January, although PRAVDA correspondents have displayed some concern over recent trends in economic policy. Moscow has usually provided at least brief reports on major speeches by President as-Sadat, typically singling out criticism of U.S. policy and praise of Soviet-Egyptian relations. But there was no Soviet account of as-Sadat's 31 January speech to the People's Assembly, which mentioned the USSR only briefly and the United States not at all. Focusing on the student and associated problems, as-Sadat outlined an alleged plot of the "extremist left" with the tacit connivance of the "reactionary right" and charged that there had been deviations from the basic policy of the Egyptian revolution.

The subsequent 3 February announcement of the dismissal of 64 persons from membership in the Arab Socialist Union (ASU) was also ignored by Moscow. But the inclusion of leftist journalist Lucif al-Khuli on a third list of dismissals prompted a brief item by TASS on the 7th noting that the ASU disciplinary commission had decided to expel "several persons" from the union, including ASU district functionaries, trade unionists, and journalists, "charged with deviating from the ASU's political line." TASS cited AL-AHRAM as reporting that those dismissed included al-Khuli, chief editor of the theoretical magazine AT-TALI'AH, and added that the disciplinary commission would continue its work. Moscow in the past had displayed some interest in al-Khuli, with Arabic-language broadcasts citing remarks by him in Beirut in January 1972

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when he led the ASU delegation to the Lebanese CP congress, while PRAVDA in October 1971 called attention to an article he wrote in AL-AHRAM on Soviet-Arab friendship as exemplified by as-Sadat's visit that month to Moscow.

The January student disturbances in Egypt were given only minimal attention: TASS on 4 January, citing the MIDDLE EAST NEWS AGENCY (MENA), reported that classes had been suspended at higher education establishments after student arrests for "instigation to rioting and violation of laws" had been followed by a strike at Cairo University, disruption of classes, and student-police clashes. TASS noted that MENA had pointed to the "unseemly role" of U.S. and Israeli radios and some "reactionary newspapers" in exploiting the student actions to undermine the Egyptian domestic front. TASS on 3 February, reporting resumption of classes, repeated this same charge--a line also taken in a 5 January Moscow broadcast in Arabic on the "tendentious attitude" of "imperialist and Zionist propaganda media" toward the Egyptian internal situation. Moscow had been similarly circumspect at the time of the student disturbances in Cairo a year ago. Thus a broadcast in Arabic on 25 January last year noted that Prime Minister Sidqi in a speech had praised the zeal of the Egyptian youth and "urged them to shift their legitimate anxiety about the country's destiny toward practical activities." The commentary had added cautiously that "zeal alone is not sufficient" and advocated knowledge and enlightened work.

PRAVDA ARTICLE PRAVDA correspondents Glukhov and Demchenko, in a Cairo dispatch in the 2 February issue, obliquely but unmistakably underscored Egyptian internal difficulties by opening their article with a description of interruptions of public services in Cairo as a result of torrential rains. They explained that the disruption of telephones, electricity and traffic was not due only to the caprices of nature "or to somebody's negligence or carelessness, although this also is not to be excluded," but could be attributed as well to financial strains brought on by the continuing Middle East stalemate. The references to the Cairo public services would be clearly understood in Egypt: Such complaints were included in the People's Assembly reply in mid-December to the government's policy statement presented by Prime Minister Sidqi in late November. Among other criticisms of the government statement, the assembly called it regrettable that "the recent torrential rains paralyzed our most important utilities; this does not reassure us." And President as-Sadat, in his 31 January

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speech, implicitly referred to the assembly criticism when he abruptly mentioned "the rain" and "the telephones" and referred to "the acute transportation crisis," the need for overhaul of the sewage network and "many things."

The PRAVDA correspondents indicated concern over recent measures to increase private investment in the economy as well as to invite foreign--Arab and Western--capital. The article cited the Egyptian journal AT-TALI'AH as pointing out that the proportion of the private sector in the total volume of industrial production was growing at a relatively faster rate than the state sector, and the correspondents remarked that "the bourgeoisie plainly feels more assured."

As for the basic problem of the Israeli occupation, PRAVDA's correspondents said they encountered a "quite wide" range of opinions in conversations and in press articles as to how the occupied lands should be liberated. They noted that the most frequently voiced view was that efforts in the political sphere "should be backed up by other means at the Arab countries' disposal." Glukhov and Demchenko remarked that as-Sadat's appeal to the Egyptians "to 'be ready for the battle for liberation' has met with the approval of many."

OTHER COMMUNIST
REACTION

A Budapest domestic service commentary on 3 January recalled student frustrations in Egypt a year earlier over the "indecisiveness of the 'year of decision'," as President as-Sada. had described the year 1971. It noted that the students had again become active when "it became obvious that because of internal strife among various groups vying for power," efforts to settle the Mideast crisis were being relegated to the background. The commentary added that internal conflicts "reached the boiling point first" in the army, and although army demands for assistance to Syria, for example, were confined within narrow limits, they were indicative of the "disquiet and impatience." Budapest concluded that army and student demands for action are unfounded, since Egypt is in no position to regain its territories by military force and, in any case, the Egyptian leadership "has given priority to a political settlement." But it criticized the regime's practice of creating more committees instead of taking more "effective" measures.

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The Lebanese CP has also been critical of Cairo policies. The weekly AL-AKHBAR in a 27 January article charged that while Egyptian official sources had declared their rejection of "the new Rogers initiative," the way the Egyptian regime was tackling the situation did not suggest that it wanted to take the "natural step of action and decisiveness." The paper further complained that the Cairo regime did not follow the policy of placing the country on the road of the battle, mobilizing the capabilities of the masses, "safeguarding the necessary conditions for utilizing the aid of the friend," confronting Arab reaction "instead of reaching an understanding with it," and striking at imperialist interests instead of trying to court imperialism.

And the Lebanese CP daily AN-NIDA', in an 8 February article, expressed surprise at the ASU decision to dismiss "an elite group of Egyptian democratic intellectuals." The paper called it illogical and objectionable to accuse these intellectuals of having interfered with the students and to accuse the students in turn of accepting "such 'foreign elements.'" It praised the past struggles of the intellectuals as well as their recent attitudes during the debate in Egypt over a "program of conciliation with U.S. imperialism and Arab reaction."

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