

EGYPT: President Sadat's address to the nation last night was primarily a fence-mending effort designed to mollify and undercut domestic and foreign--primarily Soviet--opponents of his recent policy innovations. At the same time, he made no apologies for those policies and made it clear that he will pursue them. Although generally circumspect toward the US, Sadat made some uncharacteristically benevolent statements, reflecting a guarded optimism that Washington intends some action to break the Middle East impasse.

The most dramatic portion of the speech, made on the anniversary of President Nasir's death, came at its conclusion when Sadat announced an amnesty for a group of students arrested during demonstrations early this year, as well as the reinstatement of a large number of journalists purged for their leftist views. The conciliatory gestures are designed to head off the possibility of further student disturbances when the school year opens next month, to answer legitimate student grievances, and to give substance to Sadat's moves toward social liberalization.

On the subject of his domestic and foreign policy reforms, Sadat, in essence, invoked the memory of Nasir to support his program of change away from Nasirism and socialism. Noting that one of Nasirism's most important characteristics is "its ability to respond to constant movement," Sadat explained his own policy of "evolution" as both based on his predecessor's movement and unique in itself. Although intending to ease the misgivings of remaining Nasir devotees, Sadat could not resist the temptation to emphasize the greater merit of his own program over Nasir's; his government has proved, he said, "that the man came from the nation, and not the nation from the man."

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29 Sep 73

Central Intelligence Bulletin

1

25X1

Although Sadat derided the US for supporting Israel and echoed his usual rejection of an interim agreement to reopen the Suez Canal and institute a partial Israeli withdrawal, he expressed pleased surprise at Secretary of State Kissinger's meeting on 25 September with Arab representatives at the UN. Sadat noted that Egypt has already made its position clear to the US, but he did not use the occasion to spell out the controversial specifics of that position. Sadat remains skeptical of US intentions, but his approach reflects a sense of expectation toward possible US moves on the Arab-Israeli conflict and a desire to avoid dampening prospects for movement. He made a point of noting at the end of his speech that he had deliberately avoided rhetoric on "the battle."

Sadat took a balanced approach toward Egypt's delicate relations with the USSR. Without ever mentioning the Soviets directly, he explained policy changes that have been disturbing Moscow in terms intended to ease Soviet misgivings, but he did not give any indication that he plans to alter his new moves away from socialism. Sadat is not a friend of the Soviets, but he wants to maintain good relations with them, and he has been at pains, since initiating his policy realignment in July, to portray the Soviets as political allies.

This relaxed attitude has met with a testy Soviet reaction. Moscow is apprehensive at the implications of Sadat's moves for its interests in the area,

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29 Sep 73

Central Intelligence Bulletin

2

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