

SABRI, 'Ali

EGYPT

Appointed Minister of State for Presidential Affairs on August 3, 1957, 'Ali Sabri appears now to have functions similar to but probably greater than those exercised in his previous post. With the acquisition of Cabinet rank his role has become more overt; the U.S. Embassy at Cairo has reported his increasing prominence in the Egyptian Government. Educated at a Catholic school in Cairo, a member of one of Egypt's old, respected families, 'Ali Sabri seems at one time to have been favorably disposed toward the United States. However, he has dedicated himself to the furtherance of Egypt's national aims and as certain of Egypt's foreign policy objectives have appeared to come into conflict with those of the U.S., he has turned to other sources for support. Following the Anglo-French-Israeli invasion of Egypt, Sabri was reputed to be a leader of a group of senior army officers who wanted to move closer toward the Soviet Bloc. It is possibly more likely that Sabri is devoted to a policy of non-alignment or "positive neutralism" and is determined to use any means to strengthen Egypt's relations with and/or influence over Arab and African nations.

There is no evidence that Sabri has leftist convictions; a regular source (B) in 1956 indicated that Sabri was basically a middle-of-the-roader who tries to be all things to all men. The same source believed that Sabri reflected the influence of his frequent contacts with Soviet Bloc representatives. Sabri himself belittled the significance of his contacts with Soviet diplomats. Ambitious and shrewd, with keen analytical ability, 'Ali Sabri is not likely, under present conditions, to use his influence to seek improved relations between Egypt and the United States unless convinced that the positions of both his country and of himself would be strengthened.

It is becoming increasingly apparent that 'Ali Sabri is a man of several parts. In the first place, he made himself indispensable to 'Abd al-Nasir when he organized an efficient bureau ("cabinet") for the executive, and he has maintained a unique position as 'Abd al-Nasir's right hand by his dedicated and loyal service. While Director of the President's Political Cabinet, he appears to have had a leading role in Egypt's propaganda campaign; it is noteworthy that the PAO in Cairo on September 12, 1957 called Sabri Egypt's "propaganda mastermind." It is also of some interest to note that Sabri is managing director of al-Sha'ab, (gov't-nationalist and sometime left-wing paper edited by Khalid Muhi al-Din, controlled). Another of Sabri's roles has been as director (possibly deputy director)

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of Egyptian intelligence. Some sources believe he has been largely responsible for establishing the intricate intelligence and propaganda network of Military Attachés, particularly in the Arab States and Africa. Furthermore, he seems to have had a key position in the fedayin campaign. Certain officials in Egypt's Foreign Ministry are reported to have voiced strong sentiment in favor of Sabri's becoming Foreign Minister. They feel this would serve a twofold purpose: it would remove Sabri from close contacts with the Presidency and thereby lessen his influence on Nasir, and it would possibly force Sabri to regularize his foreign policy methods. Sabri also spent two years planning the nationalization of the Suez Canal Company (by his own admission), is believed to have played a significant part in the Czech arms deal, and is reported to have been one of the principal architects of Egypt's present constitution.

(Supplement to report dated August 1956)

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