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REVIEW

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OCI No. 1758/71

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
14 May 1971

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INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

DEVELOPMENTS IN EGYPT

(As of 1500 hours)

1. There is no overt sign of resistance to the bloodless purge that President Sadat is conducting. Aside from some increase in police strength on the streets of Cairo last evening, no unusual security measures have been reported. [REDACTED] the US Interests Section in Cairo believe that Sadat has effectively destroyed his opposition and do not anticipate any counter moves. The Associated Press says that many Egyptians received the news of the purge with "visible delight."

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2. Sadat has reportedly moved to undercut potential resistance by placing under house arrest a number of senior officers previously on the staffs of the ministers of interior and war. The minister of war and 23 high-ranking officers formerly assigned to his office are said to have been detained, as well as the ex - chef de cabinet of ousted Interior Minister Goma and the former chief of general security.

3. The editor-in-chief of Cairo's left-leaning daily newspaper, Gumhuriyya, is also said to be under house arrest. His newspaper is considered to be an organ of the Arab Socialist Union (ASU) and is one of the forums that Sadat's critics in the ASU have used in their indirect attacks on the President and his policies.

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4. In his address to the nation today, Sadat alleged that he had foiled what amounted to a "coup" attempt by his political opponents. He accused Ali Sabri and Goma of leading the plot and said they had sent men to the radio station on Thursday night to prevent him from announcing a referendum on "party reform" (presumably the ASU). We have no other information that would tend to confirm Sadat's charges of an attempted coup.

5. Sadat's intention to mold the ASU in his own image, or possibly discard it completely, was evidenced in his remarks that "sooner or later" the party would be dissolved and a new body elected. He vowed that free elections would be held from "top to bottom" under his own supervision.

6. In announcing his new cabinet today, Sadat issued a decree reappointing Mahmud Fawzi as prime minister, and Husayn ash-Shafi as vice president.

7. The Soviets have likely been taken aback by Sadat's bold move, and now are probably assessing the significance of the dismissals for their own position in Egypt. For the short term, Moscow will probably maintain a low profile while allowing the dust to settle somewhat, the same approach it followed after Nasir's death last year. Should Sadat's moves appear at some point to endanger or diminish the Soviet position, however, Moscow would likely feel compelled to take a more active hand in Egypt's domestic affairs.

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