

Egypt
1990

MIDDLE EAST: ADVANCE COPIES

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CABINET OFFICE DIO

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~~SIR J GRATTAN~~
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TEL NO 491 OF 4 SEPTEMBER

INFO PRIORITY AMMAN, BEIRUT, DAMASCUS, JEDDA, TEL AVIV, UKMIS NEW YORK,
WASHINGTON.

SAVING ALL OTHER MIDDLE EAST POSTS.

ARREST OF OPPOSITION ELEMENTS

1. ON THE NIGHT OF 2/3 SEPTEMBER THE STATE SECURITY SERVICE

ARRESTED 553 (633 ACCORDING TO REUTERS OFFICE HERE) OPPOSITION
FIGURES FROM ALL OVER EGYPT INCLUDING 40 FROM ALEXANDRIA.

AMONG THOSE TAKEN INTO CUSTODY AND ACCUSED IN THE MEDIA OF STIRRING
UP, DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY, SECTARIAN STRIFE ARE : MEMBERS OF THE
SOCIALIST LABOUR PARTY (THE OFFICIAL OPPOSITION), THE PROGRESSIVE
NATIONAL UNIONIST PARTY (THE MARXIST EXTRA-PARLIAMENTARY OPPOS-
ITION) AND THE NEW WAFD PARTY (WHICH DISSOLVED ITSELF IN 1979);
SEVERAL COPTIC BISHOPS AND PRIESTS; LEADERS OF THE ISLAMIC ASSOC-

ARRESTED 553 (693 ACCORDING TO REUTERS OFFICE HERE) OPPOSITION FIGURES FROM ALL OVER EGYPT INCLUDING 40 FROM ALEXANDRIA.

AMONG THOSE TAKEN INTO CUSTODY AND ACCUSED IN THE MEDIA OF STIRRING UP, DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY, SECTARIAN STRIFE ARE : MEMBERS OF THE SOCIALIST LABOUR PARTY (THE OFFICIAL OPPOSITION), THE PROGRESSIVE NATIONAL UNIONIST PARTY (THE MARXIST EXTRA-PARLIAMENTARY OPPOSITION) AND THE NEW WAFD PARTY (WHICH DISSOLVED ITSELF IN 1979): SEVERAL COPTIC BISHOPS AND PRIESTS: LEADERS OF THE ISLAMIC ASSOCIATIONS AND THE MOSLEM BROTHERHOOD: AND SEVERAL IMAMS AND PREACHERS KNOWN FOR THE FORTHRIGHT EXPRESSION OF THEIR VIEWS. THOSE ARRESTED ARE REPORTED TO INCLUDE 119 PERSONS INVOLVED IN THE ZAWIA AL HAMRA INCIDENT IN JUNE (MY TELNOS 366 AND 368). IN ADDITION THE GOVERNMENT HAS WITHDRAWN THE LICENCES OF SIX NEWSPAPERS AND MAGAZINES FOR HELPING TO FOMENT SECTARIAN STRIFE. THESE ARE : 'AL DA'AWA', THE MONTHLY MAGAZINE OF THE ISLAMIC ASSOCIATION: ' AL ITTISA' AND 'AL MUKHTAR AL ISLAMI', BOTH EXTREME ISLAMIC MAGAZINES: 'AL WATANI', THE NORMALLY VAPID COPTIC WEEKLY: 'AL KARAZA', THE JOURNAL OF THE COPTIC CHURCH: AND 'AL SHA'AB', THE WEEKLY NEWSPAPER OF THE SOCIALIST LABOUR PARTY.

2. THE GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED MEDIA HAVE ANNOUNCED THAT THE SOCIALIST PROSECUTOR GENERAL (WHO INVESTIGATES POLITICAL CASES BROUGHT UNDER THE SO-CALLED LAW OF VALUES) WILL ANNOUNCE CHARGES AND NAMES OF THOSE HELD WITHIN TWO DAYS. BUT ALL ARE SAID TO HAVE BEEN ARRESTED EITHER FOR TAKING PART IN, OR FOR EXPLOITING, SECTARIAN STRIFE.

3. AMONG THE NAMES THAT HAVE EMERGED SO FAR ARE: MOHAMED HASSANEIN HEIKAL, THE FORMER EDITOR OF AL AHRAH: FUAD SERAGEDDIN PASHA, THE FORMER WAFDIST MINISTER OF THE INTERIOR AND FOUNDER OF THE NOW DISSOLVED NEW WAFD PARTY: DR HILMI MURAD, THE DEPUTY LEADER OF THE SOCIALIST LABOUR PARTY AND ONE OF THE MOST OUT-SPOKEN CRITICS OF THE PRESIDENT AND MRS SADAT IN HIS PARTY'S PAPER: HAMID ZEIDAN, EDITOR OF 'AL SHA'AB': OMAR AL TILMASANI, THE EDITOR OF 'ALDA'AWA' AND DE FACTO LEADER OF THE MOSLEM BROTHERHOOD, TOGETHER WITH VIRTUALLY THE ENTIRE STAFF OF 'AL DA'AWA': HILMI AL-GAZZAR, THE NATIONAL LEADER OF THE ISLAMIC ASSOCIATIONS: DR MILAD HANNA, A PROMINENT COPTIC FORMER POLITICIAN: AND AHMED AL FARGHALI , THE SLP MEMBER RECENTLY EXPELLED FROM THE PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY. NOTABLE OMISSIONS ARE KHALID MOHIEDDIN, THE FORMER FREE OFFICER AND LEADER OF THE PNUP: OBRAHIM SHUKRI, THE LEADER OF THE SOCIALIST LABOUR PARTY: AND MONTAZ NASSAR, A PROMINENT SOCIALIST LAWYER MP. (THE LAST TWO WERE PROBABLY SAVED BY THEIR PARLIAMENTARY IMMUNITY, AND THE FIRST BY HIS PROMINENCE AND STATUS AS A FREE OFFICER).

SAVED BY THEIR PARLIAMENTARY IMMUNITY, AND THE FIRST BY HIS PROMINENCE AND STATUS AS A FREE OFFICER).

4. THESE ARE THE MOST SWEEPING ARRESTS IN RECENT EGYPTIAN HISTORY (CERTAINLY SINCE NASSER'S TIME), AND FORM PART OF THE BUILD-UP TO A SPEECH TO BE MADE BY SADAT ON 5 SEPTEMBER TO AN EXTRAORDINARY JOINT SESSION OF THE PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY AND SHURA COUNCIL IN WHICH HE INTENDS TO DEAL WITH THE PROBLEMS OF SECTARIAN STRIFE AND THE OPPOSITION. THE MOST RECENT ISSUES OF 'AL SHA'AB' AND 'AL DA'AWA' HAD ALREADY BEEN CONFISCATED. IN SANCTIONING THIS OPERATION WHICH IS THOUGHT TO HAVE BEEN COORDINATED BY VICE PRESIDENT MUBARAK, SADAT WAS AIMING BOTH TO DAMP DOWN SECTARIAN STRIFE AND, MORE IMPORTANT FOR HIM, TO SILENCE HIS CRITICS ON THE LEFT AND AMONG THE ISLAMIC RADICALS. HE WILL ALSO HAVE WISHED TO ENSURE THAT HIS SPEECH IS TAKEN SERIOUSLY, AND THAT THOSE WHO WOULD REACT MOST UNFAVOURABLY TO THE NEW GUIDE-LINES FOR THE OPPOSITION WHICH HE IS EXPECTED TO ANNOUNCE ARE OUT OF CIRCULATION. WE CAN EXPECT THE GRADUAL RELEASE OF MOST OF THOSE ARRESTED IN THE WEEKS TO COME, POSSIBLY WITHOUT TRIAL.

5. SADAT WILL CERTAINLY SUCCEED IN HIS OBJECTIVE OF TEMPORARILY SILENCING HIS CRITICS, BUT AT THE COST OF STET DAMAGE TO THE CREDIBILITY AT HOME AND ABROAD OF HIS CHERISHED DEMOCRATIC EXPERIMENT. BY INVOKING SECTARIAN STRIFE TO HIT AT HIS CRITICS, SADAT ALSO RISKS INFLAMING WHAT WAS PREVIOUSLY LARGELY A LOCAL PROBLEM CONFINED TO DEPRIVED AREAS AND UNIVERSITY CAMPUSES. HE IS ALSO IN DANGER OF GIVING THE HETEROGENEOUS OPPOSITION ELEMENTS AN ISSUE ON WHICH TO UNITE. THE REGIME IN RECENT YEARS HAS TRIED TO PLACATE THE ISLAMIC OPPOSITION AND DISCOURAGE IT FROM SEEKING LINKS

WITH MORE ESTABLISHED OPPONENTS. THESE ARRESTS MARK A SHARP CHANGE OF DIRECTION, AND TO MY MIND A LOSS OF TOUCH. FURTHER REACTIONS AND COMMENT WILL DEPEND ON TOMORROWS SPEECH.

FCO PSE PASS SAYING ALL OTHER MIDDLE EAST POSTS
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