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TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TEL NO 497 OF 7 SEPTEMBER

INFO PRIORITY AMMAN, BEIRUT, DAMASCUS, JEDDA, TEL AVIV, UKIMIS NEW YORK, WASHINGTON, MODUK (FOR D14.)

SAVING ALL OTHER MIDDLE EAST POSTS.

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MIPT : SADAT'S SPEECH ON SECTARIAN STRIFE.

1. SADAT'S PROFESSED AIM IN TAKING THE MEASURES ANNOUNCED IN HIS SPEECH, AND IN ARRESTING OVER 1500 PEOPLE, WAS TO PUT AN END TO SECTARIAN STRIFE IN EGYPT ONCE AND FOR ALL. THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT HE WILL SUCCEED, TEMPORARILY AT LEAST, IN CURBING THE ACTIVITIES ON OF THE BROTHERHOOD AND THE ISLAMIC GROUPS, ON AND OFF THE CAMPUSAS AND IN PRIGHTENING THE COPTS, AT LEAST INSIDE EGYPT, INTO REFRAINING FROM PUBLIC CRITICISM OF THE PRESIDENT. BUT BY HIS OWN ADMISSION THE INCIDENTS AT ZAWIA AL HAMRA WERE CONFINED TO ONE POOR SUBURB OF CAIRO, AND INVOLVED AT MOST SEVERAL HUNDRED PEOPLE. APART FROM A BOMB EXPLOSION AT A COPTIC WEDDING (MY TELNO 320), THERE HAS BEEN NO FURTHER TROUBLE. YET HE HAS BROUGHT THE ISSUE OF SECTARIAN STRIFE TO THE CENTRE OF THE STAGE, CREATING AN ATMOSPHERE OF NATIONAL CRISES, AND USED IT TO JUSTIFY THE MOST SWEEPING ARRESTS SINCE NASSER AND A SERIES OF DRACONIAN MEASURES INCLUDING THE SACKING OF THE COPTIC POPE.

2. THE EXPLANATION FOR THIS LAST MEASURE CAN ONLY LIE IN SADAT'S NEED TO BALANCE HIS CRACK-DOWN ON ISLAMIC RADICALS WITH A MOVE AGAINST THE CHRISTIANS, AND IN HIS PERSONAL ANTIPATHY TO SHENOUDA'S CONFRONTATIONAL STYLE OF LEADERSHIP. BUT SHENOUDA HAS GIVEN SADAT LITTLE OR NO CAUSE FOR COMPLAINT SINCE SADAT'S SPEECH OF MAY LAST YEAR (MY TELEGRAM NUMBER 318 OF 1980). THIS MOVE WILL MOREOVER HAVE OFFENDED MANY COPTS WHO, WHILE HAVING PRIVATE DOUBTS ABOUT SHENOUDA, WILL REGARD SADAT'S OVER-TURNING OF GODS' WILL BELIEVED TO BE INHERENT IN THE ELECTION OF THE COPTIC POPE AS CLOSE TO BLASPHEMY.

3. THE MAIN AIM OF THIS PURGE MUST THEREFORE BE TO ELIMINATE OPPOSITION TO TO THE REGIME FROM THE ISLAMIC RADICALS AND THE LEFT. AGAIN AND IN HIS SPEECH SADAT ASSERTED THAT HE WAS NOT STRIKING AT THE OPPOSITION FOR ITS OWN SAKE, BUT BECAUSE IT HAD INCITED SECTARIAN STRIFE. HE SIGNALLY FAILED TO ESTABLISH THIS CHARGE. (THE MINISTER OF THE INTERIOR IS BUSY RECTIFYING HIS OMISSION BY PUBLISHING FURTHER DETAILS). NOR DOES THE APPOINTMENT OF RELIGIOUS ADVISERS BY THE TWO LEFTIST PARTIES, AND VISITS BY ONE OR TWO LEFTISTS TO MOSQUES, AMOUNT TO PROOF OF A NATION-WIDE CONSPIRACY. PROBABLY SADAT HIMSELF DOES NOT MAKE THE DISTINCTION, AND REGARDS ALL WHO ARE NOT WITH HIM AS AGAINST HIM. HE WILL HAVE PERSUADED HIMSELF THAT THE RIOTS COULD NOT HAVE TAKEN PLACE UNLESS THEY HAD BEEN INSTIGATED FROM POLITICAL MOTIVES.

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(C) EGYPT'S TRANSITION FROM TOTALITARIANISM TO A MULTI-PARTY SYSTEM COMPARED FAVOURABLY WITH PORTUGAL'S DEGENERATION FROM TOTALITARIANISM TO CHAOS IN JUST TWO YEARS.

(D) HE WOULD WAIT UNTIL THE PUBLIC PROSECUTOR HAD COMPLETED HIS INVESTIGATIONS BEFORE SAYING WHETHER THERE HAD BEEN A FOREIGN HAND IN THE DISTURBANCES.

(E) AFTER ALL THE DAMAGE HE HAD DONE TO EGYPT SHENOUDA WAS LUCKY TO HAVE MERELY BEEN REMOVED FROM OFFICE. HEIKAL HAD BEEN ARRESTED BECAUSE HE HAD WRITTEN ARTICLES AND GIVEN INTERVIEWS ABROAD WHICH HAD DAMAGED EGYPT. THE SOCIALIST PROSECUTOR WOULD PUT THIS BEFORE THE WORLD. HEIKAL'S EDITOR FRIENDS COULD NOT GIVE HIM IMMUNITY.

4. SADAT DWELT AT LENGTH ON THE AMERICAN RELATIONS. 230605
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4. SADAT DWELT AT LENGTH ON THE AMERICAN RELATIONSHIP. EGYPT WAS INDEBTED TO THE AMERICAN PEOPLE FOR THEIR "GALLANT ASSISTANCE", AND FOR THEIR HELP IN THE PEACE PROCESS FROM THE FIRST DISENGAGEMENT AGREEMENT TO THE FINAL EVACUATION OF SINAI. AS ALWAYS, EGYPT WAS READY TO GIVE THE UNITED STATES FACILITIES, BUT NOT BASES, TO AID ANY MOSLEM COUNTRY. JOINT EGYPTIAN /AMERICAN MANOEUVRES WOULD TAKE PLACE SHORTLY. BUT EGYPT'S DECISIONS WERE HER OWN. SADAT BECAME VERY ANGRY WHEN ASKED WHETHER REAGAN HAD BEEN CONSULTED ON THE RECENT MEASURES.

5. SADAT VIGOROUSLY ATTACKED FOREIGN NEWS COVERAGE, IN PARTICULAR DAVID HIRST (THE GUARDIAN CORRESPONDENT WHOM HE EXPELLED IN 1973) AND ABC TELEVISION. HE ALSO READ OUT AND CORRECTED LONG PASSAGES FROM AN ARTICLE BY WILLIAM SAFIRE QUESTIONING THE STABILITY OF HIS REGIME.

FCO PSE PASS SAVING ALL OTHER MIDDLE EAST POSTS.
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