

Who's Behind Egypt's Rampage Against Palestinians?

The faction behind this week's riot and press attacks in Egypt against the Palestinians, not surprisingly, consists of the old British colonial networks inside the country. The roots of this faction go back to the pre-Nasser, Farouk era when Britain had a controlling voice in the press, military, and security apparatus. Although Nasser had succeeded in cleaning out most of Britain's networks from the country since 1952, the situation has seriously deteriorated since Anwar Sadat's arrival on the Egyptian political scene in 1971 and his subsequent

ran cartoons of PLO chief Yasser Arafat with his hands dripping blood while uncontrolled mobs roamed the streets of Cairo burning Arafat in effigy.

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An expert on Mideast affairs for the U.S. academic community analyzed the present situation as leaning heavily toward a separate peace.

Q: What groups within Egypt were responsible for the Cyprus affair and what effects will this tragedy have on Palestinian-Egyptian relations?

A: I don't know whose idea it was exactly. It is apparent that the Security Forces in Egypt are very anti-Palestinian. For example, I know Palestinians that have lived in Egypt for years because of their businesses there. When Sadat made his trip to Jerusalem, they were rounded up by the Security Forces for no reason at all. Sebai was known to have had very strong links with Security.

On another level, you have the upper echelon generals in the military apparatus. Those are the ones who came to power when Sadat reorganized the government in 1974-75. Actually these old generals have been in Egyptian political life since the time of King Farouk. On the lower level you have about 400 officers who are split down the middle on the question of policy. Many of them have not been promoted because of their Nasserite beliefs. But to reiterate, the upper military structure and the Security Forces are the ones that pull the strings in Egypt.

Q: Do you think that Sadat is headed for a separate peace?

A: He will sign a peace treaty with the Israelis although he will never call it a separate peace. Sadat is in a box. He has no more options to play and the U.S. can't put any more pressure on Israel, at least this Administration will not do it. In my opinion forget it, the Palestinians will never get that much from Sadat. It is not a question of whether he wants to deliver or not, he just can't operate because of the constraints upon him.

STATE DEPT. REJECTS SEPARATE PEACE

A high-ranking State Department official who specializes in Mideast affairs dismissed the idea of a separate peace outright:

Q: Do you see the prospects of Sadat going for a separate peace with Israel particularly in light of the spate of anti-Palestinian attacks coming out of Egypt recently?

A: A separate peace? No, I don't think there is much of a chance of that now. Everybody knows that the Egyptians would end up being worse off as a result of such a move. First of all, the Saudis would most probably cut off foreign aid to the Egyptians which accounts for about 25 percent of Egypt's needs. Second of all, while the

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conciliatory tone toward the City of London. Most recently, Sadat, no doubt under extreme pressure from these colonial networks, legalized the Neo-Wafd party, a reconstituted version of the former notorious Wafd party of King Farouk. The Wafd was the symbol of corruption and British colonial domination which Nasser outlawed in 1952.

According to their strategy, the British "old Boys" led by Prime Minister Mamdouh Salem and the "ultra-nationalists" of the *Al Akhbar* editorial board are attempting to blame the terrorist incident on Cyprus which resulted in the death of Youssef Sebai, Sadat's personal friend and noted editor of Egypt's semiofficial daily, *Al Ahram*, and the death of 15 Egyptian commandos on the Palestinians in general and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in particular.

By airing the completely unsubstantiated report that the PLO fired upon the commando squad in collusion with the Cypriots, these British agents would then have the pretext to sever Egypt's support for the PLO. Once Sadat's commitment to a just solution to the Palestinian problem can be broken, the way is open for an Egyptian-Israeli separate accord.

Whether Sadat will acquiesce to this anti-Palestinian campaign is still unknown. There are indications that he cannot go back on his word to solve the Palestinian issue, but he dangerously pandered to this hysteria last week by attacking the Palestinians in two separate speeches and breaking off diplomatic relations with Cyprus. London's networks are banking on the fact that they can progressively isolate Sadat and break him down psychologically, while simultaneously churning out the anti-Palestinian propaganda.

The first startling sign of anti-Palestinian ferment took place at the burial of Youssef Sebai during which the PLO representative Said Kamel had to be protected by Egypt's security apparatus against reprisals from the angry mobs. Then, on Feb. 22, at the burial of the slain Egyptian commandos, Sadat delivered his first major diatribe against the Palestinians who, he said, acted like "terrorists and murderers while Egypt was fighting for a Palestinian state." Simultaneously, the rightwing press

average man in the street in Cairo might want such an arrangement, the leadership in Egypt is solidly behind an overall framework for a solution. They know that they cannot be so clear-eyed and eager for peace overnight.

Furthermore, there may be some anti-Palestinian noise coming out of Egypt now but believe me I would be shocked if Sadat really departed from his support for the Palestinians in the context of a settlement. The Palestinian role is Sadat's fig leaf, he needs them as much as they need him. The thing to keep in mind now is that Sadat is popping mad at what happened at Larnaca. He's mad at the Cypriots and at his own boys. But that doesn't change his fundamental position on the terms for peace.

Also keep in mind that the Saudis and other moderate Arabs including King Hussein know that any break with the Palestinian cause would polarize the Arab world, pitting radical against moderate, which the Saudis want nothing to do with.

SADAT WON'T SELLOUT PALESTINIANS

Corroborating this analysis is an interview with an Egyptian banking official who also dismisses the separate peace option for Egypt.

Q: Do you think Sadat is being forced into an isolated position after the Larnaca incident which might have some eventual connection to a separate peace?

A: Absolutely not. If Sadat sold out on the Palestinian question, he would be overthrown in 24 hours. Sadat knows what the basic demands of the Arab world are: Palestinian self-determination and return of the occupied territories. Any Arab leader knows that Sadat cannot make concessions on these two issues. Besides Yasser Arafat and Anwar Sadat are very close friends.

War In Israel Over Separate Peace

A group of leaders in Israel's ruling Likud coalition and in the opposition Labour Party are engineering a cross-party destabilization of the government of Prime Minister Begin. Their aim is to weaken Begin's centralized leadership and build a national consensus for a separate peace with Egypt rather than a comprehensive regional settlement.

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Said one Israeli source, "Any number of issues could divide and wreck the Begin coalition." A break, he said, could come through the defection of Cabinet members belonging to the pro-Labour faction of the Democratic Movement for Change, several of whose leaders are close to U.S. National Security chief Zbigniew Brzezinski.

The forces around Begin currently include Defense Minister Ezer Weizman, Finance Minister Simcha Ehrlich, and Energy Minister Yitzhak Modai, and the Labour Party group around former Foreign Minister Abba Eban. This group seeks to get the peace talks with Egypt back on track as a crucial step toward expanded regional negotiations, and to continue the power of Israel's extremists and Dayan's intelligence-military networks.

In special Cabinet sessions called by Weizman to end Israel's controversial policy of establishing settlements in Arab lands, Dayan has blocked against Weizman with expansionist Agriculture Minister Ariel Sharon and with extremist ideologues such as Ze'evon Hammer, Minister of Education and former head of the fanatic Gush Emunim group. At the same time, Dayan has adopted a profoundly "pessimistic" posture on the possibilities of regional peace talks and has charged both Egyptian President Sadat and Jordan's King Hussein with "intransigence." Dayan is fueling a mood in Israel that only a Kissinger-like "interim arrangement" with Egypt can succeed.

Yet, remarkably, Dayan suddenly announced before Israel's Parliament Feb. 22 that the government should make "substantial changes" in its policy in regard to the Palestinians and that the Palestinian issue was the "core" of the difficulties in the current negotiations—a 180 degree shift in position! London's *Financial Times* Feb. 23 described Dayan's statements as "extraordinary" and "in conflict" with Begin's positions.

The logic behind this double game is Dayan's hope to create an axis with Labour Party chief Simon Peres, who has been making moderate-sounding statements since his meeting in Europe last week with Sadat. The meeting, arranged for social democrat Peres by Second International leader and Austrian Chancellor Bruno Kreisky, was, in fact, an attempt to entrap Sadat into looking to "the moderate" Labourites over the "intransigent" Begin. The trap is having its effect. In an interview with Egypt's *October* magazine last weekend, Sadat said he regretted that Labourite Golda Meir, who unlike Begin is a staunch supporter of the British, was no longer Israeli Prime Minister.

The Labour Party is simultaneously conducting a number of campaigns against Begin's "lack of leadership." Labour ideologue Shlomo Avineri, an international spokesman for the Second International, charged Begin in a Feb. 20 *Jerusalem Post* op-ed with "acting like he's still fighting the British madate" rather than leading a sovereign country and with sending so many of his ministers overseas that Israel has a veritable "government-in-exile." Avineri's castigations of the Begin government's expanded dealings with South Africa were the next day echoed by leaders of the Labour-led national trade-union confederation, the Histadrut, at a national convention.

According to the Israeli source, these eruptions threaten Israel with "chaos and confusion"—unless "the possibility emerges that Weizman can pull together a coherent group around himself."

Energy Minister Modai, a potential Weizman ally, told a Chicago audience during a three-day U.S. trip this