

Britain's Cyprus Plot Threatens Middle East Cold War

The British intelligence terrorism on Cyprus last week achieved a partial success in driving a wedge between Egypt and the Palestine Liberation Organization and thus pushing President Sadat toward an abandonment of his strategy for Palestinian "self-determination" by signing a separate peace with Israel. But, according to most observers, the Egyptians cannot afford to break with the PLO entirely or Sadat "would be overthrown in 24 hours," in the words of a high-level New York banking source.

The orchestrated riots and demonstrations against the Palestinians in Egypt, and the emotional, provocative speech by Sadat attacking the Palestinians as "assassins," have certainly boxed the Egyptian President further into a corner. The conspirators against Sadat, which include British and Israeli intelligence and a powerful faction inside Egypt itself linked to the daily *Al Akhbar* and Prime Minister Mamdouh Salem, intend to take advantage of the fact that Sadat's recent peace initiative has failed and inexorably drive the Egyptian President toward a separate deal.

The consequences of a bilateral Egypt-Israel pact, even if King Hussein of Jordan suicidally joins the deal, are widely recognized to be disastrous. A near-irreversible breach would be opened in the Arab world, pitting Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, and Sudan against a "pro-Soviet" Arab bloc led by Syria, the PLO, Algeria, Libya, and others. In the view of a former Arab diplomat, the immediate consequence would be the eruption of an

expanded civil war in Lebanon, reflecting the Egypt-Israel alignment against Syria and the PLO. According to several reports, the Soviet Union — which just gave President Assad of Syria a military reception in Moscow — is prepared to back its allies with military force if necessary.

Saudi Arabia, politically aligned with the Rockefeller faction and John Connally in the United States, is terrified of the consequences of an Egypt-Israel pact. The Saudis, said a high State Department official, are not prepared to back Sadat in such a venture. Because of the immense influence wielded by the Saudis in both Egypt and Jordan, this official believed that it is virtually impossible for either Sadat or Hussein to go along with the plan.

Nevertheless, in Sadat's desperation there is no guarantee that the Egyptians might not lunge toward such a deal. Israel, under the influence of Foreign Minister Moshe Dayan, is refusing to deal seriously with Egypt's demand for Palestinian "self-determination," and the United States has not shown sufficient sympathy for Sadat's plight. Further, Sadat's channels to the Arab world have been cut off at least since 1975.

The chaos that would result from such an act of desperation by Sadat, including his overthrow, would be worsened by an expected sharp rise in British intelligence-orchestrated guerrilla activity and terrorism throughout the entire eastern Mediterranean, including the Arab world, Cyprus, and Turkey.

The Larnaca-Sebai Affair

On Saturday, Feb. 18, Egypt's Youssef Sebai was gunned down in a Cyprus hotel during a meeting of the Afro-Asian Peoples' Solidarity Organization (AAPSO) by two men later identified as Palestinians, one reportedly carrying an Iraqi passport and the other a Kuwaiti passport.

The two men had, oddly, spent *four days* in Cyprus before the assassination and had been seen at Cypriot nightclubs during the week. One was suspected of earlier involvement in the killing of leading Palestine Liberation Organization moderate Said Hammami in London last month.

At the hotel itself, security was remarkably lax, with at least 20 Cypriot security officials present failing to provide any meaningful protection for the meeting. This is especially noteworthy in view of the fact that Sebai's name had appeared on "hit lists" issued by extremist Palestinian rejectionist groups because of his qualified

support for Egyptian President Sadat's November trip to Jerusalem.

The *New York Times*, on Feb. 21, admitted the lack of security at the Nicosia Hilton:

The contention here (in Nicosia — ed.) that the Cypriots had mismanaged their response to the terrorists was supported by an Egyptian hostage who escaped at the outset of the incident and complained that security precautions had been sloppy at the Nicosia Hilton Hotel, where the shooting of Mr. Sebai took place

He contended that Cypriot authorities, despite prior assurances, had provided almost no protection for Egyptian participants in the conference. After he was seized by the gunmen, he said he saw two Cypriots, presumably security men, start to pull pistols from their pockets and then decide not to intervene.