

**October 12, 1970**  
**Memorandum for the President, "The UAR  
Presidency"**

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**Summary:**

Kissinger provides an overview of Anwar Sadat, why he believes Sadat will likely be the next president of the UAR, and Sadat's main supporters.

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By AAR NARA Date 1/15/99

THE PRESIDENT'S SECRET

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MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

INFORMATION

October 12, 1970

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## MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: Henry A. Kissinger HK

SUBJECT: The UAR Presidency

Anwar Sadat's selection by the Arab Socialist Union (ASU) -- Egypt's only legal political organization -- as the party's candidate for the presidency virtually assures him of being Nasser's successor to the title of President. This solves the immediate presidential succession problem although there are likely to be further shifts in the Egyptian top leadership, and it is still unclear who or what coalition of interests will be wielding effective power in the UAR. Below are described the main elements in this situation.

Why Sadat?

As a member of Nasser's original revolutionary group and because Nasser named him Vice President in December 1969, Sadat brings an aura of legitimacy and continuity to the succession and to the presidency. He lacks, however, Nasser's charisma and as a perennial figurehead in the government with a lackluster record of public service he also lacks widespread respect and authority. Sadat's greatest claim to leadership would seem to rest on his extreme nationalism, his long record of loyal, if unspectacular service to Nasser and the apparent fact that he is acceptable to both pro-Soviet and more moderate factions.

Given Sadat's character and background it is unlikely that he achieved ASU endorsement on his own. He fits the general qualifications acceptable to the senior military officers -- that the new president be a member of Nasser's original revolutionary group -- but there is no evidence that he is the army's man. We do not yet know who specifically backed Sadat but it seems likely that his selection rests upon the support of other influential Egyptian political figures. There are indications that former Vice President and Soviet supporter Ali Sabri may have figured heavily in Sadat's selection as well as the powerful Interior Minister Sharawi Jumah. They may have found Sadat's selection the most convenient way of blocking selection of a stronger rival like the more moderate Zakaria Muhiedin. ~~Others among the top leadership who may have played important~~

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roles in the succession struggle include Nasser's shadowy intelligence adviser Sami Sharaf, propaganda chief Haykal, War Minister Fawzi and Foreign Minister Riad.

### Sadat's Supporters

It is, of course, impossible to determine at this point specifically who will ultimately hold the reins of power in Egypt. So far the military appears to have remained on the sidelines in terms of actually running the government, but it will exert considerable influence, if not a de facto veto, on decisions directly affecting its interests. Sadat may turn out to be more than a front man and as a probable compromise choice will still have some important influence, but the men around him will undoubtedly be more influential than those Nasser kept around. Below are short character sketches of these men.

Ali Sabri's political fortunes have ebbed and flowed over the years. In the months prior to Nasser's death he was in eclipse, but in the past has served as Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, has held several other ministerial posts as well as being secretary general of the Arab Socialist Union. He is presently a member of the ASU's Higher Executive Committee -- the group that chose Sadat as President. CIA regards him as a capable leader; an intelligent and able administrator with an impressive knowledge of Middle East problems. He has, however, long been identified as one of the leading pro-Soviet leaders and reportedly was favored by the Soviets to succeed Nasser although they did not apparently push the matter very far in Cairo. It has been rumored that he will be appointed the general secretary of the ASU.

Sharawi Jumah is a member of Nasser's original revolutionary group who has risen rapidly since the founding of the republic. He has held the very important Interior Ministry portfolio since 1966 and before that, among other things, worked in the presidential office as acting Chief of General Intelligence. Jumah is unpopular with the student community because of his role in repressing their opposition to the Nasser regime. It has been rumored that he will be Sadat's Prime Minister.

Sami Sharaf is a shadowy, behind-the-scenes figure. He is a senior intelligence officer who as the director of the President's Office of Information (intelligence) became one of Nasser's more influential advisers. Little is known about the

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circumstances surrounding his entrance in the mid-1950's into Nasser's inner circle of confidants. He is, however, regarded by CIA as capable but personally ruthless and cruel. Although he defends the UAR's anti-Western stance, he has argued that it is necessary to maintain some semblance of balance in relations with the U.S. and the USSR.

Mahammed Fawzi serves concurrently as commander in chief of the UAR armed forces and as Minister of War. Nasser appointed his friend Fawzi as commander in chief to shore up his own position after Egypt's defeat in the 1967 war, when he needed a loyal man to prevent the military from developing into an opposition force. Many observers saw General Fawzi as having little independence of action and as being completely subordinate to Nasser and the Soviet military advisers in the UAR. He reportedly has not been a very popular figure among military personnel and is said to have little interest in direct political involvement for himself.

Mahammed Haykal is Egypt's leading political journalist whose considerable influence has derived from his articulate, emotional and widely read editorials in al-Ahram and from Nasser's friendship and confidence. For years he has been a trusted out-of-channels source of information for and an informed spokesman of the government. Not long ago Haykal was finally brought into the government as Minister of National Guidance and as the regimes propaganda czar was thought to have moved even closer to Nasser. Haykal may have damaged his political standing when in the early maneuvering for the presidency he published an apparently untrue story in al-Ahram that Sabri and Sadat had both had heart attacks at the funeral.

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