

On the eve of his death As-Sadat felt that he was losing the ground beneath his feet and falling into ever greater isolation in his own country, and he rushed about, striking out in all directions. The "Muslim Brotherhood," which was opposed to Camp David, was proscribed, and more than 1,000 of its members, including its leader U. at-Tilmisani, were arrested. In September hundreds of representatives of various political trends were thrown into jail, including figures such as F. Siraj ad-Din, former leader of the "New Wafd" the Nasirite journalist M.H. Haykal, although by no means a leftwinger; Murad, one of the leaders of the Socialist Labor Party; and eminent Coptic priests. According to reports in the NPUG bulletin AT-TAQADDUM, almost one-third of that party's Central Committee was arrested. Thus, the point was that As-Sadat saw enemies in almost all the political trends that existed in Egyptian society.

The funeral of the assassinated president, for example, showed how far the regime had set itself up against the people's interests. Whereas several million people saw Jamal 'Abd an-Nasir off on his last journey in 1970 and the entire country mourned, only a few hundred followed As-Sadat's coffin guarded by thousands of soldiers from security units. Even Western journalists wrote: "The lack of grief in Cairo is striking."

President H. Mubarak's first weeks in power have made certain changes in the political atmosphere in Egypt. As the new president declared, the chief task in the coming period is to "ensure stability and internal security" and liquidate "terrorist elements." Within the framework of this task he set forth his action program, which provides, in particular, for contacts with opposition leaders.

The NPUG General Secretariat responded to this initiative by the president with a statement to the effect that the published program "contains many new factors in the spheres of the economy and foreign and domestic policy." And the results of a meeting between K. Muhyi ad-Din, general secretary of this party, and the president were evaluated as positive. At the same time the NPUG once again condemned Camp David. H. Mubarak has also had meetings with representatives of other parties. Some 31 detainees have been released, including Haykal, Murad, Siraj ad-Din, several members of the NPUG Central Committee and a number of other opposition representatives.

At roughly the same time an Egyptian court stripped certain prominent opposition figures outside the country of their political rights. These included General ash-Shadhili; a number of well-known figures of the An-Nasir period; M. Kamil, member of the Egyptian Communist Party Central Committee Politburo; and others.

It is thus obvious that the authorities' attitude to different sections of the opposition forces is not identical. But the emergence of new methods for the political leadership of the country is also obvious. Only time can show whether such actions signify the formulation of a new course.

Change of Direction

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[Aleksandr Timoshkin commentary]

[Summary] Discussion of the government's internal policy program announced by President Husni Mubarak will begin next Saturday. The discussion will be carried out in the People's Assembly and in the Consultative Council, with the participation of representatives of opposition parties and organizations. This shows a change of direction in the Egyptian president's internal policy.