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How Begin's Initiative Became "The Sadat Initiative"

Before our very eyes Anwar Sadat has succeeded for the third time in six years in pulling the wool over the whole world's eyes. In July 1972 the sensational report was published of a drastic change in the relations between Egypt and the Soviet Union. Sadat announced the expulsion of the Soviet "advisers" and for many months thereafter noisy charges and countercharges were exchanged, with Cairo claiming that the Soviets had refused to comply with its requests for supplies of vital armaments.

In fact that breach in relations was one of the most successful hoaxes of the century— if not the most successful. Behind the mutual recriminations the movement of Soviet arms to Egyptian ports continued unabated. The whole crisis served for 15 months as a smokescreen for Egyptian preparations, with Soviet aid, for the Yom Kippur attack on Israel.

After 1973 the Egyptians did not conceal their feelings of justified pride at the success of their deception. A detailed description of the many-sided and many-pronged operation, whose secret was so wonderfully maintained, appeared in a book written by the military correspondent of the weekly *Raz el Youssuf*, "The Six-Hour War". The author had been given access to secret documents. Later on, Sadat himself revealed (in a radio address on the second anniversary of the Yom Kippur War) that the expulsion of the Soviet advisers had been "a strategic deception... a splendid stratagem in the preparations for war".

Sadat thus showed himself a wily tactician of the highest order, a leader capable of presiding over a complex of diversionary operations, and of maintaining a pretence of altogether imaginary international relations for a considerable period. In the light of this revelation one can only marvel at the naiveté of the Western statesmen when, after open collaboration between Egypt and the Soviets had been renewed during the Yom Kippur War and thereafter, Sadat began again to project the picture of a break with the U.S.S.R. Again a loud dispute began over the question of supply or non-supply of arms. In spite of the warnings of specialists and students of Soviet-Egyptian relations that a new hoax was being perpetrated, the decision-makers in Washington clung to the notion that their policy of appeasing Egypt (at Israel's expense) was achieving the expulsion of the Soviets from Egypt.

A week ago columnist Jack Anderson revealed in the *Washington Post* that in fact the U.S.S.R. continued to fulfill Egyptian orders for arms after 1973 and even restored the losses in arms sustained by Egypt in the war.

Now, since November 1977, Sadat has succeeded in throwing dust in the eyes of the world for the third time. Only this time the Israeli Government has been helping him.

According to reports in the media, as well as official statements and incidental revelations, it would appear that one fine morning, when Sadat was on his way from a visit to Rumania, the idea flashed into his mind that he should pay a visit to Jerusalem in order to seek a way of

making peace with Israel. According to him the idea came to him as the result of President Ceaucescu's words in praise of Begin, whom he described as a serious and strong man. Thereafter, in a speech in the Egyptian Parliament, ostensibly carried away by his own words about his desire for peace, Sadat added an impromptu statement that for the sake of peace he was prepared to travel to the ends of the earth, even to the Knesset in Jerusalem.

Because of this initiative Sadat has become a world figure of historic dimensions. Throughout the world, and particularly in the U.S., he has been accorded a measure of glorification usually reserved for cinema stars and sports champions.

The reaction of the Israeli Government — again according to the reports published throughout the world — was immediate and positive. No sooner had Sadat's readiness to come to Jerusalem become known than a hearty invitation was extended to him. Even the President of the United States would not expect a more enthusiastic welcome than that accorded to Sadat on his arrival in Israel. The warmth of Israel's welcome, however, did not make much impression in the world. Even the news that in response to Sadat's initiative Israel had offered him all of Sinai (with full sovereignty, though with a provision for an Israeli presence in two percent of its area) caused no excitement in the world. Sadat remained, and has remained to this day, an international hero. The "Sadat initiative" has captured the imagination of the world. In public opinion, as well as in the diplomatic world, Israel has suffered a stunning defeat.

For some reason the leaders and spokesmen of Israel, and its Information services — as far as they exist — have concealed the fact that the story of a Sadat initiative is a hoax, that the initiative for a sensational revolution in relations between Israel and Egypt did not come from Sadat at all, but from Begin. When Sadat announced, as though proclaiming a vision, that he was prepared to come to Jerusalem, and when jubilation greeted the news that he was actually coming, he already had in his pocket Begin's promise that he could have all of Sinai.

The Ha'aretz newspaper reported on 1 March that the offer of Sinai (in all its detail) was first made to Egypt not after Sadat's "surprise" visit, but in two earlier secret meetings of Foreign Minister Dayan in Morocco with emissaries of Sadat.

In place of the legend of the "Sadat initiative", the truth emerges roughly as follows:

- a) The Prime Minister, during his visit to Rumania (at the end of August, 1977) revealed to President Ceaucescu the far-reaching concessions that Israel was prepared to make;
- b) When Sadat later came to Bucharest, Ceaucescu gave him this news and Sadat conceived (perhaps, as he has claimed, in the plane) the brilliant idea of coming to Jerusalem and thus converting Begin's initiative into the "Sadat initiative";
- c) Dayan met his representatives (in mid-September) and conveyed to them the details of the proposal (including the security measures for the return of Sinai to Egypt's hands, now with sovereignty);
- d) Sadat (in November) announced his readiness to come to Jerusalem. Begin invited him to come, he came, and the world went overboard in praise of Sadat;

e) In “response” the Prime Minister (in December) drafted the “peace plan” for Sinai (as well as for Judea and Samaria) and brought it to President Carter for his comments ostensibly “before it was presented to Sadat”.

No wonder Sadat made the most of the opportunity and applied his tremendous talents as an actor and as a tactician to extracting, to the last ounce, the political profit and the glory thus offered to him on a platter. It is incredible, but there it is: the Israeli leaders actively collaborated with Sadat in disseminating his untruth which stole the “show” from their truth — with all the grim implications for the contest to win public opinion.