

to Israel, it is certain that the French lent at least an indirect hand. Moroccan King Hassan II, who is closely connected to France and originated the "Arab and Jewish genius" formulation used by Begin in his Knesset speech, was directly involved in those arrangements.

In related actions, French Foreign Minister de Guiringaud initially blocked a Washington-inspired resolution of the European Economic Community executive in support of Sadat's initiative, because, as he explained on French national television, an EEC resolution at that time would enhance the wrong image of Sadat as acting on behalf of the "West" against the

radical Arabs. Prime Minister Barre supplemented these remarks by emphasizing that real concessions must be made by both Arabs and Israelis, especially regarding Israel's rights to secure borders and the rights of the Palestinians.

Barre, who visited Syria shortly thereafter, may have had something to do with the moderate stance the Assad regime has taken toward the Sadat-Begin talks. Accompanying Barre on that trip, de Guiringaud met in Damascus with Palestine National Council president Khaled Fahoum for what French press reported to be "friendly" discussions.

## The Dilemma Facing Hafez Assad

Publicly, Syria has studiously avoided getting too deep into the "rejection" track against Egypt's peace initiatives toward Israel. At a press conference held jointly with French Prime Minister Barre Nov. 30, Assad emphasized that there was "no divorce" between the Egyptian and Syrian regimes, only a difference of procedure on the question of how to reach an overall settlement. Similarly, Syrian Foreign Minister Khaddam declared Nov. 27 that "we have not said that we will not continue the dialogue with President Sadat, but we have said that he took an isolated step without consulting other Arab countries." Although attending the Libya "rejection front" summit this week, Assad has taken a public role of conciliator between the rejection group and Egypt.

This is not to underestimate the deep feelings of anger aroused by Egyptian President Sadat's go-it-alone diplomacy. In private, Assad told Barre and French Foreign Minister Louis de Guiringaud that Sadat was "the Arab Petain, shaking the hands of the enemy in occupied territory."

At this point, four distinct factions can be identified in Syria. Aside from the *Baathist* group, believed to be represented in the government by Information Minister Iskander and Khaddam, there is the *Syrian military*, both air force and ground forces, who are heavily penetrated by Soviet and French influence; the "praetorian guard" elite corps units run by Assad's brother *Rifat*, which has gained notoriety in Syria for its primary concern for preservation of the regime rather than the nation itself; and considerable *Sunni Muslim* tendency in the Syrian bourgeoisie and intelligence units which is heavily penetrated by both Saudi and British influences.

There is danger of a confrontation developing between the Baath ideologues and the Sunnis. Four years ago, Syria was hit by a wave of "Sunni extremism" which was known to be organized out of Saudi Arabia. This week the *Financial Times* of London has begun to predict "Sunni unrest" on the horizon in Syria.

In a lead front-page story Nov. 28 headlined, "Sadat Predicts Bloodshed in Lebanon and Syria," the *Financial Times* quoted Sadat, in an exclusive interview, as warning, "For sure there will be bloodshed in Lebanon and Syria. President Assad is in a difficult position, and the Syrians are in a very delicate position." London's *Daily Telegraph* interpreted this statement to mean that "the powerful and efficient Egyptian intelligence service might take a hand in Syria." According to *Le Monde*, Sadat's warnings have been treated "with diffidence," and Assad in a press conference calmly declared that Syria and Lebanon were both stable countries.

### Congressional Resolution Lauds Middle East

*The following is the text of House Concurrent Resolution 417 introduced into the House of Representatives Nov. 29 by House Majority leader Jim Wright. The resolution was passed that day by voice vote and approved the same day by the Senate.*

"Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring) that it is the sense of the Congress that Anwar el-Sadat, the President of Egypt, and Menachem Begin, the Prime Minister of Israel, be commended for the courageous steps they have taken to resolve the differences between their nations and to bring peace between Israel and her Arab neighbors, through face-to-face negotiations in the context of a Geneva Conference. We hope this will result in further face-to-face negotiations which will lead to a comprehensive, just and durable peace...."