

1960

V
LEVANT DEPARTMENT

V G. 1016/23.

FROM Mr. J. G. House, Cairo.

Confidential

No. 62(1014/60)
Dated August 17.
Received August 23.

SUBJECT:

Report on the first session of the national assembly.

References
-19.

MINUTES

This is useful for the record, and I recommend printing for Volume.

(Printing Instructions)
Volume.

2. I have sidelined the important points. The despatch confirms that Anwar Sadat now enjoys a high precedence, but no power - at least at present - in the councils of the nation. Mr. Wheelock, the American writer and author of "Nasser's New Egypt" told me that the whole Assembly proceedings had been elaborately stage-managed. He evidently subscribes to Mr. Crowe's conclusion that nobody seriously thinks that the assembly will use its nominal powers. It is, however, true (paragraph 10) that the Egyptian Assembly did show some signs of independence in 1957, and surely some members of the new Assembly will have ambitions in that direction. On the other hand, the Government have been forewarned and may be equally determined to keep the Assembly in its place. At any rate it will be something to watch closely.

(Outward Action)

Archie
(R. Archius)
August 25, 1960.

F.O.P.D. (M.F.) *del.* ²⁶/₈

W
Aug 25

(Action completed)	(Main Indexed)
<i>del.</i> <i>23.8.60</i>	<i>M</i> <i>23</i> <i>5/61</i>

A) Idleness. Cairo to Levant Department - 1014/60 - September 24

Please ensure that the connection is notified to the printers to correct for the volume.

-133.

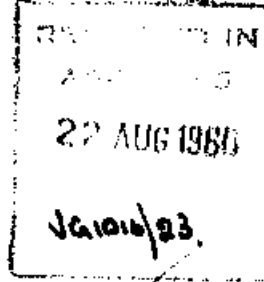
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1014/60 ✓

No. 62



BRITISH DIPLOMATIC MISSION,
CAIRO,
August 17, 1960.

1014/60/19

My Lord,

In my telegram No. 98 Saving of the 22nd of July I reported that the opening meeting of the National Assembly of the United Arab Republic had been held on the previous day.

2. Articles 13 - 43 of the provisional constitution of the United Arab Republic, which was promulgated at Damascus on the 5th of March 1958, define the composition and powers of the National Assembly in general terms. The number of its members, and the manner of their choice, are to be determined by presidential decree, but at least half of them must have been members of the former Syrian and Egyptian Chambers. The President has the right to convoke and dissolve the Assembly, which must approve all laws, and in particular the budget. It may, however, not amend the latter without the approval of the Government. It may address questions to Ministers, who must resign in case of a vote of no confidence. If the Assembly is dissolved, a new Assembly must be convened within sixty days. When the Assembly is in recess, the President may enact decrees, but these must be submitted to it when it reassembles; and if it opposes them by a two-thirds majority, they cease to be a law. Conversely, the Assembly may, by a two-thirds majority, pass a law against the wishes of the President.

The Right Honourable

The Earl of Home,

etc., etc., etc.,

The Foreign Office, S.W. 1.

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/3.

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- 2 -

3. It was not until the 19th of July 1960 that a law (a translation of which forms Annex "A" to this despatch) was promulgated to define more closely the competence, privileges, pay and other attributions of an assembly which was to meet two days later. Only the day before had a presidential decree announced the names of its members, of whom four hundred are from Egypt and two hundred from Syria, their members distributed among the provinces as set out in Annex "B" to this despatch. All members of the former Syrian and Egyptian Chambers who succeeded in the National Union elections and took part in the recent Regional and General Congresses, were chosen to be members of the National Assembly. These amounted to nearly four hundred and thus more than satisfied the requirements of the provisional constitution. The rest of the members of the National Assembly were chosen from persons holding important elective office in the provincial committees of the National Union. Thus, although the President selected the Assembly, his field of choice was limited to candidates whose eligibility depended ultimately on the popular vote of the 8th of July 1959. Although they are answerable to the Assembly, Ministers may not be members of it.

4. The opening session of the Assembly was held in the Chamber constructed in 1923 for the Egyptian parliament. During the previous months, carpenters had been busy enlarging the seating capacity until it was sufficient to accommodate, though in some discomfort, the more numerous members of the new Assembly. But there was

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- 3 -

not room for all the Ministers, many of whom stood helplessly around at the first evening meeting until they could find room to squeeze in beside members.

5. The oldest member presided at the first meeting and all members were sworn in. The Assembly then elected its Speaker and two Deputy Speakers.

Anwar Sadat, who was the only candidate for the former post, was naturally elected unanimously. That this was prearranged was betrayed by the fact that the press had reported a day or two before that he was studying parliamentary systems. He now enjoys high precedence, but no power, in the councils of the nation. The two Deputy Speakers were Mohammed Fuad Galal (Egyptian) and Ratib el Husami (Syrian).

6. In the evening of the 21st of July President Nasser delivered the inaugural speech summarised in my telegram No. 98 Saving of the 22nd of July. This speech, which was in Nasser's classical vein, fell into three parts. It opened with a brief and familiar history of the creation of the United Arab Republic and its victories over imperialism and Zionism and their stooges. Its main body consisted of a detailed survey of industrial development projects; and it ended with an excursion into ideology, in which positive neutralism and socialist cooperative democracy were shown to be derived, not a priori, but from the whole experience of the United Arab Republic. After President Nasser's speech, the Assembly adjourned until the 28th of July.

7. On the 28th of July the Assembly was due to elect committees and debate its procedures; but it was

/decided

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- 4 -

decided (it is not clear by whom) that the meeting would instead be devoted to a discussion of relations with Iran, which President Nasser had broken off two days before. After listening to an explanation from Dr. Mahmud Fawzi, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Assembly passed unanimously its first resolution, which condemned the Shah's recognition of Israel, supported President Nasser's decision to sever diplomatic relations, appealed to Arab Governments to follow his lead, and denounced the hostile attitude towards Arab nationalism of the United States, Britain and France.

8. The National Assembly met again on the evening of the 30th of July. It began by approving the minutes of its previous meeting, after adopting two popular if trivial amendments; for one member proposed that the "people of Palestine" should be called the "Arab people of Palestine" and another that the term "the State of Israel" should be changed into "Israel". After transacting this momentous business, the Assembly approved its standing orders, which consist of 240 articles, and accepted the lists of members of its twenty-three committees, which were read out by a clerk of the House. The Assembly then went into recess until the 3rd of October.

9. This first session of the National Assembly was so short and formal that it is not yet possible to gauge its temper or guess at its future. Its theoretical powers are surprisingly wide: it can, for example, force Ministers to resign, and by a two-thirds majority it can override the President on legislative matters.

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- 5 -

matters. Yet nobody in Cairo expects any change in the present autocratic régime; and the formation and meetings of the Assembly aroused even less interest than the National Union. It is clear that nobody seriously thinks that the Assembly will use its nominal powers. There are no parties to give cohesion to an opposition, no alternative policies to pursue; while there are enough supporters of the régime to make manipulation comparatively easy.

10. Nevertheless, President Nasser had some trouble with the last assembly he created in 1957, and deliberative bodies of Arabs are apt to get out of hand. The Assembly's autumn session will deserve close attention: one of its first tasks is to work out a permanent constitution for the United Arab Republic - a task which, if the Assembly is to have a life of its own, should prove both exhausting and contentious. Much will depend on the precise nature of its relations with the National Union and the Government. The former is to have liaison offices with all Assembly committees, whilst relations with Government departments will be largely in the hands of "Under-Secretaries for National Assembly Affairs", whose posts seem to be modelled on those of Parliamentary Under-Secretaries in the United Kingdom. The President has not yet appointed these functionaries.

/11.

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- 6 -

11. I am sending copies of this despatch to Her Majesty's Representatives in Amman, Baghdad, Beirut, Khartoum, Tripoli and Washington, and to the Head of the Political Office with the Middle East Forces.

I have the honour to be,
with the highest respect,
My Lord,
Your Lordship's obedient Servant,


(C. F. Crowe)

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ANNEX 'A'

LAW ON THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY - THE 19th OF JULY 1960.

Article 1 - The National Assembly shall be convened annually for not less than three ordinary sessions. Each session shall last at least one month. The first session will start before the second Thursday in November. The session examining the budget will not be closed before the budget has been approved.

Article 2 - The President of the Republic may call the National Assembly to convene in extraordinary session in case of emergency or in compliance with an application signed by a majority of the members of the National Assembly.

The President of the Republic shall proclaim the closing of the extraordinary session after the Assembly has completed the business for which it was convened.

Article 3 - The President of the Republic shall address the first meeting of the ordinary session in November on the general policy of the Government and on the projects which it intends to carry out. The President may also make other statements on general questions which he considers necessary to communicate to the Assembly.

Article 4 - The National Assembly may take no decisions unless a majority of its members are present. Except in cases requiring a special majority, decisions should be taken by an absolute majority of those present. A motion will be considered as rejected if the voting is equal.

Article 5 - Every draft law shall be referred to one of the Assembly's Committees for examination. The Committee shall make a report on the draft.

/Article 6

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- 2 -

Article 6 - Every draft law proposed by one or more members shall be referred to a Committee for study and opinion on whether or not it should be brought before the Assembly. If the Assembly decides to examine it, the procedure of the preceding article shall be followed.

Article 7 - A draft law proposed by a member and rejected by the National Assembly cannot be brought up again before the elapse of one year.

Article 8 - The National Assembly alone is responsible for the maintenance of order within the Chamber. The President of the Assembly is responsible for the maintenance of such order. No armed force may enter the Assembly nor stay near its doors unless requested to do so by the President of the Assembly.

Article 9 - Whenever they ask to speak at the National Assembly, Cabinet Ministers shall be allowed to do so. They may assign leading officials to assist them and to speak on their behalf. The Assembly may compel Ministers to attend sessions. A Minister has no vote unless he is a member.

Article 10 - Members of the National Assembly shall not interfere in matters within the competence of the legislative or the executive authority.

Article 11 - Members of the National Assembly shall not be accountable for any views or opinions expressed whilst discharging their functions in the Assembly or in any of its Committees.

Article 12 - It is for the National Assembly to accept resignations of its members.

Article 13 - During his membership of the National Assembly, a member shall not be allowed to accept any decorations or orders; unless he holds a public post - which is not

/inconsistent

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- 3 -

inconsistent with membership of the Assembly.

Article 14 - Members of the National Assembly may not combine their membership with public posts of certain kinds. For the purposes of this law, a public post is one for which its occupant is entitled to a salary or remuneration from public funds. This covers officials and employees of local councils as well as Omdas, Mukhtars etc. Equally membership of the National Assembly may not be combined with membership of local councils or the committees attached to Omdas etc.

Article 15 - Those persons covered by the preceding article who have been elected members in the Assembly, must be regarded as having finally relinquished their posts by the very fact of having taken up their functions in the Assembly. This does not imply the whole or partial abatement of their rights to pension or indemnity.

Article 16 - No member of the National Assembly may be appointed to the board of directors of a joint stock company during the term of his membership unless he is either a founder, or a holder of at least 10% of the company's share capital, or a member of its board at the time of his election to the National Assembly. Equally, a member of the Assembly may not, during his membership, be appointed chairman of the board of directors of any joint stock company, or as its managing director, unless he was occupying that post at the time of his election to the Assembly. Managers of limited partnerships and limited liability companies are to be treated as members of the boards of directors of joint stock companies.

Article 17 - No member is allowed to take up an appointment on the board of any public corporation with commercial,

/agricultural,

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agricultural, industrial or financial activities, nor to represent these organisations on the boards of those companies whose shares are held by such organisations, unless he was occupying such a post at the time of his election to the Assembly.

Article 18 - A member of the National Assembly shall not be permitted to conclude contracts whether personally or through an intermediary, with the Government or with any public organisation, whether he be acting as a contractor, supplier, or middleman.

Article 19 - The President of the Republic may seek the assistance of members of the National Assembly to serve as his advisors in political, legal and technical affairs. Such members shall not receive any salary or remuneration beyond that which they get for their membership of the National Assembly.

Article 20 - Posts shall be established in various Ministries for Under-Secretaries for National Assembly Affairs. Appointments shall be made by Republican Decrees to be issued by the President.

Article 21 - An Under-Secretary for National Assembly Affairs has the special function of assisting the President of the Republic, or the Minister or Ministers to whose ministries he is attached or whom he represents. He also takes part with them in preparing draft laws and examining matters relating to the debates of the Assembly and other functions with which he is charged. He may thus contact an Under-Secretary of State directly, and when necessary heads of departments and sections, provided he does not interfere with the running of the department or with the relations between the Under-Secretary of the Ministry and the officials under him.

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/Article 22

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- 5 -

Article 22 - An Under-Secretary for National Assembly Affairs shall be chosen from the members of the Assembly. He must resign his post if he loses his membership of the Assembly, or at the end of the term of the President of the Republic who appointed him by decree. In both cases, he retains his pension and indemnity rights according to the regulations in force.

Article 23 - An Under-Secretary for National Assembly Affairs will receive a salary equivalent to that of an Under-Secretary of State.

Article 24 - A member of the National Assembly will receive a monthly salary of L.E.75 (675 Syrian liras), plus a daily subsistence allowance of L.E.5 (45 Syrian liras) if the session is held in a region other than that to which he belongs. Ministers, deputy minister and Under-Secretaries for National Assembly Affairs are exempted from the rules of this article.

Article 25 - The speaker of the Assembly will receive a salary equivalent to that of a Vice-President of the Republic. This salary may not be drawn in addition to that provided for in the preceding article, nor with any pension he may have earned, nor with subsistence allowances.

Article 26 - The salary is payable from the date of taking the oath and is subject to the rules relating to civil servants as regards renunciation or seizure.

Article 27 - Journeys of a member of the National Assembly between his place of residence and the place of the session of the Assembly will be at the expense of the State.

Article 28 - Every provision contrary to the provisions of this law will be cancelled.

/Article 29

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- 6 -

Article 29 - This law shall be published in the Official Gazette (U.A.R) and come into effect from the date of its publication.

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ANNEX 'B'

MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
IN EACH PROVINCE AND GOVERNORATE

EGYPTIAN REGION

Cairo	44
Alexandria	21
Port Said	5
Ismailia	4
Suez	3
Sinai	2
Red Sea	2
Western Desert	1
Southern Desert	1
Qalyubiya	13
Sharqiya	25
Daqahliya	30
Damietta	6
Menufiya	23
Gharbiya	27
Kafr el-Sheikh	18
Beheira	25
Giza	15
Fayum	15
Beni Suef	15
Minia	23
Assiut	22
Sohag	28
Qena	23
Aswan	9
Total Egyptian Region	<u>400</u>

/SYRIAN REGION

SYRIAN REGION

Damascus	42
Aleppo	43
Latakia	22
Homs	20
Hama	15
Deir ez-Zor	13
Hassetche	14
Adleb	12
Dera'a	8
Suweida	7
Rashid	4
Total Syrian Region	<u>200</u>

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British Consulate General,

JERUSALEM.

CONFIDENTIAL

September 6, 1960.

(1034)

Dear Chancery,

A member of our local staff, a Christian Arab who holds a British Passport, recently spent nine days on holiday visiting his brother in Gaza. He kept his eyes and ears open and you may be interested to have an account of his impressions.

2. He obtained a visa for the U.A.R. and a permit to visit the Gaza Strip without difficulty in Amman. In Cairo he called at the office of the 'Palestine Affairs' and obtained a "visa" for Gaza at a cost of £E.1.100, again without difficulty, when he explained that the purpose of his visit was to see his brother. The train journey from Cairo to Gaza took from shortly after 7 in the morning until 5 in the evening. There were checks by Egyptian customs officials before Kantara, and by Gaza customs officials after Kantara. The treatment he received was courteous and quick, and he believed that a British Passport commanded more respect than others.

3. His general impression of Gaza was favourable. The local saying was that the town had been "reborn" when the U.N.E.F. arrived after the Sinai Campaign. The U.N.E.F. had given the townspeople confidence and there was a fair amount of new building, including a good hotel on the sea front. There were numbers of new cars in the street, mostly Fiat, and about ten new Russian buses. The relative prosperity of Gaza came from three sources:

(a) "Large numbers" of people from Gaza had relatives in Kuwait, the Hejaz, and Libya who sent remittances home.

(b) After the years of stagnation before the Sinai Campaign, the orange groves were once more exporting, mainly to Russia and Czechoslovakia. One landowner who had been prepared to sell his 250 dunums of orange groves for £4,000. four or five years ago (since his oranges were merely rotting on the ground) earned £11,000. last year from exports.

(c) The U.N.E.F. provided some employment in the town.

4. The Presbyterian and Church Missionary Society missions were also doing some useful work on a smallish scale in and about the town, for instance, by distributing small shares of land on which people could build their own houses.

The Chancery,
British Diplomatic Mission,
CAIRO.

/5. Relations

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5. Relations with the Egyptians are not particularly good. There were no Egyptian troops in the Gaza Strip, but the Egyptians provide the senior officials for the Police and the local administration. Thus, the Police force was Palestinian up to roughly the rank of lieutenant but above that Egyptian. This led to jealousy, particularly between old Mandate officials and the Egyptian nouveaux, especially since the Egyptians were on a considerably higher scale of pay than that applied to the Palestinians. The Palestinians resented the fact that the Egyptians had a club from which they were barred. They also resented that fact that they required special permits to visit Egypt; these were difficult to obtain and involved considerable form-filling and questioning.

6. The refugees were given the same level of assistance by the U.N.R.W.A. as in Jordan, but appeared to be in worse condition since there are fewer opportunities for work on the side. One of the chief benefits provided by U.N.R.W.A. was the supply of medicines from Beirut, which made its way to the general population. No medicine at all seemed to come from Egypt.

7. The attitude towards Israel was not as antagonistic as one would expect. During the Sinai Campaign, Christian Palestinians put crosses on the doors of their houses, which were respected by the Israelis. To keep the administration functioning numbers of Palestinians worked in co-operation with the Israelis and suffered in consequence upon the return of the Egyptians. A Mr. Shawa became Mayor of Gaza during the Israeli occupation; he was imprisoned when the Egyptians returned but is now released though kept under surveillance. The Israelis took particularly stern measures against all Palestinians suspected of being Fedayeen. It was understood locally (perhaps 'rumoured' would be more accurate) that the Egyptians, in their hasty departure from Rafah, left in their offices a complete list of the Fedayeen in the town and that these, totalling some six hundred, were all killed by the Israelis.

8. There were no Russians in Gaza.

9. We are sending a copy of this letter to Levant Department, and to the Chanceries at Amman and Tel Aviv.

Yours ever,

CONSULATE GENERAL.

CONFIDENTIAL

V
LEVANT DEPARTMENT

V G. 1016/28.

ARAB REPUBLIC

FROM Adamey, Sirie to
Levant Department.

Confidential.

No. 14150.

Dated September 23.

Received September 23.

SUBJECT:

MAJOR-GENERAL HONAMED HAFIZ ISMAIL has been appointed Under Secretary in the Foreign Ministry in place of DR. MURAD GHALEB.

References

Jan. 1955/11.

MINUTES

Mentham 22/9

I. B. D. all 27/9

F. O. R. D. (M.E.) 27/9

POSD. (Am. Reg.) 28/9

(Printing Instructions)

(Outward Action)

In some ways it is a pity that Mahmud Riad has not got the job, though Mr. Crowe thinks that General Ismail will be fairly easy to deal with. He has, of course, no knowledge of foreign affairs. He seems to be a right-hand man of Field Marshal Hakim Amer, and ought to be influential. We do not know how he stands with President Nasser himself. It is useful that we have already had some contact with him (para. 4).

R. Arculus
(R. Arculus)
September 27, 1960.

P. O. Ryan
28/9

John Bate
Sept. 28

all
28/9

(Action completed)

(Main Indexed)

20.10.60

23. 60



BRITISH DIPLOMATIC MISSION,
CAIRO.

(1901/60)

September 20, 1960.

CONFIDENTIAL

Dear Department,

In his letter to Beith (1901/60) of September 1, Wright reported the appointment of Dr. Murad Ghaleb to be United Arab Republic Ambassador to the Congo and added that it would not be easy to replace Dr. Ghaleb as Under-Secretary in the Foreign Ministry.

2. Rumour later gave the job to several different people, though Mahmud Riad (see Wright's letter (1901/60) of September 6 to Beith) was the favourite for some time. Finally, everybody seemed to agree (though nobody could quite believe it) that the choice had fallen on Abdul Hamid Nafeh Zadeh, the senior ambassador in the Foreign Ministry, who is at present Chief of Protocol. Zulficar Sabri, the Deputy Foreign Minister, confirmed to the German Chargé d'Affaires on September 15 that Nafeh Zadeh was about to get the job.

3. Cairo - or at any rate the diplomatic corps - was therefore surprised and confounded when a Presidential decree appeared on September 17 to appoint Major-General Mohamed Hafiz Ismail to the post of Under-Secretary, with the rank of Ambassador. Major-General Ismail was born in 1919. He passed out from the Military Academy in 1937 and from the Staff College, where he was top of the list for his year, in 1944. He was appointed Military Attaché in Washington in 1951 and Chief of Staff to Field Marshal Abdel Hakim Amer in April 1953. He has retained the latter post ever since. He is said to have taken part in the Anglo/Egyptian talks which led to the Suez Canal Base Agreement of 1954; and according to the press he was closely connected with the Czech arms deal of 1955 and the discussions which took place in 1957 about the possibility of a loan to re-equip the Army, and with further talks, in 1958, on the financing of the High Dam. In 1956 he was also appointed Chief of Staff to the Joint Command of Egypt, Syria, Jordan and Saudi Arabia.

/4.

Levant Department,
Foreign Office,
LONDON, S.W.1.

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4. Some members of the staff met General Ismail in connection with the recent discussions about pre-Suez contracts with the Egyptian Army. He makes a very good impression. He speaks English well, is young, and appears to be vigorous. He will certainly be more effective than Nafeh Zadeh, who is an amiable nonentity. But it is a strange commentary on the state of the United Arab Republic Foreign Ministry that its only hope of exercising any influence is through a permanent head drawn from outside itself.

Yours ever,

CHANCERY.

D.

CONFIDENTIAL

V

LEVANT DEPARTMENT

V

G.1016/31.

FROM Mr. M. J. A. [unclear]
 Subject to Mr. J. J. A. [unclear]

Confidential

To: 1/102.

Dated: 11/10/52.

Received: 11/10/52.

SUBJECT:

Conversation with HASSAN MAHER who denounced NASSER and the U.A.R. government who "is preparing the way for Communism"

References

MINUTES

PAR Blaker.
28/11.

Dep. } FOR 2 (M/S) } in any des. first.

(Printing Instructions)

(Outward Action)

(Action completed)	(Main Indexed)
<i>AP 5.12.52</i>	<i>AM 8.6.1</i> <i>23</i>

I do not think much weight should be given to Hassan Maher's views. On the points he criticised:

(i) Nasser is certainly becoming less accessible and it would be surprising if he were not getting swollen-headed; his prestige may no longer be at its highest point, but he is still the popular leader, without rivals;

(ii) the head of the Suez Canal administration, Younis, is an odd choice for criticism, since he is conspicuously able and has surely earned his country's gratitude for his running of the Suez Canal; if he has been enriching himself on the side I doubt if anybody minds very much; on the whole the leading members of the régime have avoided ostentation and corruption to a remarkable extent;

(iii) I dare say a good deal of feeling has been built up against army officers placed in key positions, as they are in factories, businesses and elsewhere; but there were also a great many grievances against the old ruling classes;

(iv) the urban public must be conscious of a good deal of visible progress, whatever the dissatisfaction among the mercantile classes; of course if the Aswan Dam project is a failure it will be a grave blow to the prestige of the régime;

(v), (vi) and (vii) These are not likely to be

causes of significant population disaffection in the near future.

It by no means follows that those who are critical of the régime would necessarily regard communism as an acceptable alternative.

M. Arculus
 (R. Arculus)
 November 28, 1960.

Number of copies.....

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I am sceptical of Maher's remarks on communism in Egypt. Arabs like nothing better than to urdle the blood of a western listener by telling him about the threat of communism. I wonder whether the final paragraph gives the due to the interview? When ^{an} Arab says that such-and-such a job can only be done by someone who combines qualities 1, 2, and 3, he is often hoping that the listener will recognize the description of himself.

J. Bullard 30/11

How true.

Robley 2/12

*W
Dec 5*

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Mr. Beith has not seen
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BRITISH LEGATION,

BUDAPEST.

November 18, 1960.

My dear John,

The Ambassador of the United Arab Republic, Hassan Maher, called on me yesterday after an absence of several months which ensued upon the death of his wife.

After I had given him a brief disquisition on recent events and trends in Hungary, Maher embarked quite gratuitously upon a lengthy and evidently prepared diatribe against the Government of his own country. It amounted to a denunciation of Nasser and all his works. He said that as a professional diplomat he had always tried to sympathize with the régime and see its better points, but that now he had no good word to say for it after three months' close observation of its workings in Cairo. He criticized especially

- (i) the Nasser personality cult: the popular leader had become the unapproachable dictator;
- (ii) vulgarity and corruption in public life (he denounced in this connexion the Head of the Suez Canal Administration);
- (iii) the concentration of political and administrative power in the new officer class, which was presumptuous but inefficient;

(iv)/....

J.G.S. Beith, Esquire, C.M.G.,
Levant Department,
Foreign Office,
LONDON, S.W. 1.

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- 2 -

- (iv) the lack of real economic progress and the stagnation of major projects, including the High Dam;
- (v) the all-pervading baneful influence of the Ministry of National Guidance;
- (vi) the appalling decline in intellectual and educational standards;
- (vii) the unintelligent xenophobia of the authorities.

All this, my colleague thought was rapidly preparing the way for Communism. The masses were already becoming disillusioned with Nasser and despite the universal presence of spies and informers people were beginning to grumble against him. The élites no longer existed and intelligent young people who felt opposed to the régime could find no outlet for their feelings except in Communism. He instanced members of his own family and various "fils et filles de Pachas". He is of course a nephew of the former Prime Minister Ali Maher. The only consolation was that the Communists were disorganized and split into squabbling factions. He gathered from conversations with Hungarian party figures that no great things were expected from the Egyptian Communists in the near future.

I took this all in without comment. Presumably I was meant to pass it on. Maher, who is probably a genuine Anglophil, expressed the hope that the first United Arab Republic Ambassador to be appointed to London would be an Egyptian, a career man and one who would establish an atmosphere of confidence before trying to solve in a hurry the tricky problems at issue between the two countries.

I am copying this letter to Crowe in Cairo.

*Yours ever,
John*

(N.J.A. Cheetham)

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Sir R. [Signature]
29/11
enter

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BRITISH DIPLOMATIC MISSION,

CAIRO.

November 26, 1960.

(1014/60)

My dear John,

Tony Parsons had a revealing conversation recently with Lutfullah Sulaiman, one of the so-called Communists who were released from the Kharga concentration camp last July. (Lutfullah says that he actually left the Communist Party in 1942 and now describes himself as a radical socialist.)

2. Lutfullah said that he was summoned by one Hassan Masalhi, whom he thought to be the Head of U.A.R. Intelligence, the day after his release. Masalhi told him that the U.A.R. Government were sorry that they had imprisoned him and that they now realised that he was an "intellectual" and not a Communist. He should consider himself immune from further arrest and the Government particularly wanted him to carry on with his writings and researches. He could have any books he wanted, including books banned in the U.A.R. When Lutfullah expressed his surprise Masalhi explained the reason for this liberal treatment. Early in the summer Nasser had decided that he must have an ideology and had appointed a commission of four University professors to find out what a socialist, democratic and co-operative society meant, and to report back to him! Masalhi then handed Lutfullah a thick file containing the commission's preliminary findings and asked him to study it and produce his comments. (Lutfullah now receives regular visits from members of the security services who engage him in heavy-handed conversation and try to keep him up to the mark in his researches on the socialist, democratic and co-operative society.)

3. According to Lutfullah, no actual members of the Communist Party were released from the concentration camp this year. He thinks that the only reason he and his friends were let out was that the U.A.R. Government panicked after a Communist who had been tried and sentenced, was beaten to death by the police in the concentration camp. They were afraid of the possible reaction to this, both in Communist countries and in the West, and hastily released a number of people whom they knew were in contact with foreigners, in the hope that they would give the impression that the regime had become more liberal. He was contemptuous of the mentality of the regime and said that their psychology closely resembled that of the Soviet authorities as portrayed by Koestler in "Darkness at Noon". Rather like Communists, who hated Social Democrats more than Fascists, the U.A.R. regime was far more suspicious of, and hostile to, its friends (when they showed honestly critical tendencies) than to its declared opponents.

*On that basis
we must
keep at
his length!*

Yours,
C.T. Crowe

J.G.S. Beith, Esq., C.M.G.,
Foreign Office.

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No. 92
(1014/60)

BRITISH DIPLOMATIC MISSION
CAIRO.

December 8, 1960.

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My Lord,

In my despatch No. 62 of the 17th of August I described the powers and composition of the National Assembly of the United Arab Republic and gave an account of its opening session.

2. The Assembly resumed its first session on the 3rd of October and on the 15th of November went into recess again, until the 9th of January 1961. During this session it held twenty-one sittings, regularly on Mondays and Tuesdays and occasionally on Wednesdays. Its committees sometimes met on other days, and some of them are still functioning during the recess. But membership of the Assembly could scarcely be described as burdensome.

3. It was not an exciting session. Except for foreign affairs, which took up much of the Assembly's time, the press showed little interest in its proceedings; and reports of its debates and resolutions on foreign affairs were scarcely distinguishable from other forms of official propaganda. It duly condemned the Jordanian Government on several occasions, for the murder of the Syrian pilot Adnan Madani, for aggressive movements against Syria and
/provocation

The Right Honourable

The Earl of Home,

etc., etc., etc.,

FOREIGN OFFICE.

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provocation, with British backing, on the Syrian border, for kidnapping U.A.R. citizens in Amman, and for adopting an un-Arab attitude on the question of Jordan waters. It passed resolutions supporting the Government's policy towards Israel, the Congo, and Algeria. It cabled its greetings to the parliament of Mexico and its support to President Nasser at the United Nations General Assembly. It heard statements from Ministers, usually in reply to obviously inspired questions, on all these matters; and on October the 12th it listened to President Nasser's report on his visit to New York. No discordant voice marred the unity of which these sittings gave eloquent proof.

4. Ministers also answered or evaded a number of questions, mostly of local interest, on internal affairs. Here again, no opportunity for propaganda was missed. On the 3rd of October, for example, Kemal ud Din Hussein, in his capacity as Chairman of the Executive Council of the Egyptian Region and Minister of Local Government, took up nearly the whole of question time to answer a question on the new local administration law, extolling it at length as an exercise in practical democracy, a wonderful device to ensure the rule of the people, by the people, for the people, and so on. At other times the Assembly was reduced to resolving its thanks to President Nasser for expressing confidence in it during a speech in Damascus, or to Nureddin Kahala,

/Central

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Central Minister of Planning for the Syrian Region, for securing an agreement with the Soviet Union for economic aid. I have not heard of an occasion on which a Minister was pressed or Government policy challenged.

5. As far as I can discover, the Assembly passed twenty seven laws, all of them initiated by the Government, and referred some other private members' bills to committee. Most of those passed were minor measures or amendments dealing with agricultural credit and reform, taxation procedures, regulations for ports and territorial waters, and so on. Only three attracted the public interest - the first providing for three year loans to civil servants at $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent interest, secured on salary or pension; the second authorising an internal loan of £E 25 million for the development budget; and the third guaranteeing to Sudanese nationals employed by the U.A.R. Government the same treatment as citizens of the U.A.R. None of these bills seems to have encountered any opposition in the Assembly; and the only measure which may possibly prove contentious - a draft law on rent restriction - was sent to committee on the 1st of November and will be taken next year.

6. It will be clear from the short account of its proceedings which I have given in the previous paragraphs that the Assembly has so far acted simply as a sounding board for Government propoganda and a rubber stamp for Government legislation. As a body it has given no sign of life, its members no hint of independence. The general

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public has shown no interest in it at all; and most Egyptians who are asked about it turn the conversation to a more interesting topic. It is accepted as part of the paraphernalia of a modern state.

7. The Government itself seems to be in no hurry to foster the Assembly's growth or to test its mettle. The President has not yet charged it with what was supposed to be its first task, the elaboration and enactment of a constitution. Indeed the recent session was more notable for what it left undone than in its accomplishments. Some of the committees scarcely met at all, and whilst less than one hundred questions were dealt with, five hundred were never reached. It was supposed that the Assembly would make at least a formal beginning with the work of co-ordinating legislation in the two Regions of the Republic; but this subject was never raised. The Assembly showed no inclination for hard work.

8. Its poor performance did not pass entirely unnoticed. On the 7th of November the weekly "Rose el Youssef" published what can only have been an ironical account of an interview with Anwar Sadat, the President of the Assembly. The reporter's questions were often strikingly pertinent, Anwar Sadat's answers correspondingly feeble. What was the most remarkable feature of the session? - The regularity with which members left the chamber for a smoke! Why should some
/members

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members, for example Mahmud Yunus, combine membership with public positions, contrary to the law? - Because the law did not apply to public corporations such as the Suez Canal Authority! Why were so many questions not reached? - Because time was short, and the Government wanted to postpone answering them! Why were sessions so short? - Because deputies must visit their constituents, and the Syrian Region was a long way away! What was the point of the Parliamentary Committee of the National Union when all members of the Assembly were members of the National Union too? - Coordination! And so on, until, as the report concluded, "everything about the National Assembly was clear".

9. One of the few points in the interview I have described at which Anwar Sadat was happy was on the importance of the Assembly as a symbol of unity between Egypt and Syria and as a meeting place for the elect of both Regions. This has probably been its chief importance so far, and its unifying role should not be underestimated. Nearly two hundred Syrians will, or should, spend at least three months a year in Cairo, and it is possible that double that number of Egyptians will flock to a session in Damascus. There is much talk of holding the next session in Damascus - Anwar Sadat went to Syria, allegedly to discuss this, on the 3rd of December. But it seems doubtful whether he will find a suitable chamber there; and there are others who argue that

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to hold sessions in Damascus would be a confession of weakness, as though the House of Commons should sit in Edinburgh or the United States Congress in New York or San Francisco. But wherever it is held the Assembly is bound to promote closer acquaintance, for better or worse, between representative Syrians and Egyptians from all parts of the Republic. If it can help to draw the two Regions together and at the same time broaden the Government's support in the country, it will probably have achieved all that President Nasser would wish.

10. I am sending copies of this despatch to Her Majesty's Representatives in Amman, Baghdad, Beirut, Khartoum, Tripoli and Washington and to the Head of the Political Office with the Middle East Forces.

I have the honour to be,
with the highest respect,
My Lord,
Your Lordship's obedient Servant


(C.T. Crowe)

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