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NY 422/916

Attitude of organized movements in Egypt towards Communism

in R. Campbell Cairo 106

Re: W.F.O. circular 170 (N16976)-19 Report on situation.

led 3 Feb
rewed 10 Feb.

Last Paper.

NY 422

References.

8554/744/2P
11049/621/28 - AMY
115801/127/9 - 194B
4221-19

(Print.)

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Process No 698
to 17 June

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(Index.)

W/P

Next Paper.

(Minutes.)

This is a good & comprehensive report from which it appears that the predominantly Islamic movements, e.g. the Muslim Brotherhood Society & the Young Men's Muslim Association are not at present subject to any external influence either Communist or Fascist. Nevertheless the former has been inspired to some extent by the Fascist movement in that a para-military "Secret" organisation exists in the Society.
2. The N.M.S.A., which has a political complexion, is stated to be less radical in its ideals & methods than the M.B.S. & also less influential. It shows a tendency to interest itself in the Egyptian national cause & in this respect constitutes a semi-political force supporting the extreme nationalist politicians.

3. As regards the other organisations & movements it seems that:
(a) The Arab Union Society is fundamentally anti-Communist & anti-Fascist.
(b) The Egyptian Trade Union, in its infancy

F 37/63046

in January, & that since some of the
Unions are led by Communist the
movement on the whole is at present
anti-Communist; but unless the Communist
Party soon reconsiders the Trade Union
system, the present situation is likely
to change.

(c) The New Equilibrium...
object is to attract the working class
elements away from the Communist
movement.

Information

Mr. [Name]

N. Dept Just

Western Dept. wish to have the
printing and distribution of the replies to
Circular etc. 0170 to the geographical
Depts. with which the replies are sent.
Our chief concern is that citizens should see
copies of all the replies. This has been done
in the present instance.

Thomas Brinley
Thomas Brinley
27.2.47.

McE Sec ^{DMG} 2/13

F.O.R.D. R.C. 26.4.47

Executive Dept
✓
2/14

J. [Name]
19/3

D.S. [Name]
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BRITISH EMBASSY,

CAIRO.

3rd February, 1947.

TCR/TEA
No. 106 ✓
66/1/47G

SECRET

Sir,

N/Sydney

In accordance with the instructions contained in your Circular No. 0170 of 7th December, 1946, I have the honour to submit the following survey of the attitude of various organised movements in Egypt towards Communism or Fascism.

2. Of the Egyptian organisations which have, or seek, international affiliations and are of sufficient importance to exercise a perceptible influence on the public life of the country, the most notable are those which have drawn their inspiration from the principles of the Islamic faith. The predominantly Islamic movements such as the Moslem Brethren Society and the Young Mens' Moslem Association are not at present subject to any external influence, either Communist or Fascist but, particularly in the case of the former, they represent an ideology of a politico-religious nature which necessitates their classification as extremist political organisations. (It should be mentioned that before the war the Moslem Brethren were, with good reason, suspected of receiving money from German and/or Italian sources, particularly in connection with the Society's anti-British campaign regarding the revolt of the Palestinian Arabs). The very democratic social principles taught by Islam and Islamic law and traditions, which regulate personal status, property and inheritance rights etc., are in many respects at variance with, if not directly opposed to, the Marxist theory of Communism and its application or adaptation in Soviet Russia and elsewhere. The leader of the Moslem Brethren has indeed publicly proclaimed more than once that Communism is irreconcilable with the teachings of the Koran. The politico-religious revivalism of the Moslem Brethren Society is a reactionary force in that it stands for a reversion to a social structure founded on the religious and social teachings of a bygone age. At the same time, however, this Society has obviously drawn some inspiration from the Fascist movement in so far as concerns its internal organisation. It has, for instance, a ~~there~~ para-military organisation named "Scouts", who indulge in military drill and exercises and are suspected of secretly possessing arms.

3. The Moslem Brethren Society is purely an Egyptian creation, but its striking success in this country in recent years encouraged its leaders to extend its activities to neighbouring Moslem countries, notably Palestine, Syria and the Sudan. Its leaders also make a point of welcoming to their Headquarters prominent orthodox Moslems, and not infrequently political leaders, from other Moslem and Arab countries. The Young Mens' Moslem Association is less radical in its ideals and methods than is the Moslem Brethren Society and is somewhat less influential in Egypt. It is purely an Egyptian growth and does not receive directives from any international head-

/quarters

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Ernest Bevin, M.P.,
Foreign Office,
S.W.1.

quarters outside Egypt. On the other hand it co-operates with similar bodies in other Islamic countries or communities, but it is doubtful whether any such co-operation is so close as to amount to the promotion of an international campaign. This movement has been of a conservative nature. It has frequently shown a tendency to interest itself in the Egyptian national cause and in that respect constitutes a semi-political force supporting the campaigns of the extreme nationalist politicians. Thus, although originally founded on a non-political basis and in imitation of the Young Mens' Christian Association, it has tended to become more and more political, particularly under the presidency of Saleh Harb Pasha, who, since his election some half a dozen years ago, has given a much more pronounced political complexion to the Association. It will be remembered that owing to his anti-British activity, he was confined to forced residence in Aswan, his native town, during the latter part of the war.

4. The leading unofficial organisation concerned with the propagation of Arabism is the Arab Union Society whose basic object is to promote closer co-operation between the Arab peoples in a general way. This too is an Egyptian foundation and by virtue of its devotion to the cause of a general Arab renaissance must be classed as fundamentally anti-communist, anti-fascist and anti-imperialist. Its political importance is small and its ideology has a racial foundation. It has an international character in that it is seeking to establish itself in other Arab countries or to affiliate itself with existing organisations which have similar objects in those countries. Its membership is relatively small and indicates the limited nature of its popular appeal.

5. The Egyptian trade union movement is still in its infancy and, while some of the smaller trade unions are led by known communists, the larger and more responsible unions are not at present under the influence of communist propaganda to any extent, or at least have not openly aligned themselves with the communist movement. On the whole it may be said that the Egyptian trade union movement is anti-communist at the moment, but it is conceivable that unless the Egyptian authorities embark in the near future upon the overdue reconstruction of the trade union system and upon the promulgation of progressive legislation for this purpose, the sober-minded leaders and members may soon be overwhelmed by the more violent and demonstrative elements. The only trade union in Egypt which is affiliated to an international organisation is the Transport Workers' Union which is affiliated to the International Federation of Transport Workers' Unions. It cannot be said, however, that either of these organisations exercises much influence on the public life of Egypt.

6. Such co-operative societies as exist in Egypt, and they are mainly agricultural, are not within the category of ideological movements and are not capable at present of influencing the public life of the country.

7. There has recently been founded an Egyptian Labour Party, the nucleus of which was a small group of trade unions presided over by Nabil Abbas Halim, which is popularly thought to be an organisation subsidised by the Palace with the primary object of attracting the working-class elements away from the

/communist

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communist movement and providing them with an outlet for the expression of their particular political aspirations. In a sense therefore this Party may be regarded as anti-communist, and perhaps even reactionary, since it is obviously not a spontaneous growth. Its ideological background is somewhat negative, and there is nothing to show that it has or is seeking any international affiliation. At present it is politically of minor importance.

8. As regards the various churches in Egypt, there have been contacts between the different Orthodox churches and the Patriarch of Moscow who visited Cairo in 1945 (see Lord Killearn's despatch No. 940 of 5th July 1945). The Metropolitan of Leningrad also visited Egypt a short time ago as reported in my despatch No. 50 of 17th January. These contacts obviously have a political background, namely the promotion of Russian, and therefore also communist, influence among the Orthodox minorities of Egypt and the Middle East, but it seems evident that the higher authorities of the Greek and other Orthodox churches have been very cautious in their response to the Russian overtures, doubtless for fear of compromising their relations with the Egyptian Government.

9. In his despatch No. 1292 of 6th December, 1946, Mr. Bowker communicated a list of national organisations in Egypt in which communist influence was overtly or covertly predominant, together with a supplementary list of branches of international organisations in Egypt falling within that category. The organisations mentioned in the first of those lists were dissolved during the Egyptian Government's anti-communist drive in July 1946, and are only mentioned here to show that communist ideology has gained a foothold in Egypt among a section of young intelligentsia, some of whom are believed to have received directives from Russian sources.

10. I would also invite reference to my despatch No. 51 of 17th January, enclosing copies of memoranda by the Defence Security Officer, Egypt, illustrating the strategy and means of defence of the underground communist movement in Egypt.

11. I am sending a copy of this despatch to His Majesty's Ambassador in Moscow.

I have the honour to be,
With the highest respect,
Sir,
Your most obedient, humble Servant,

Ronald Campbell

1947

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Registry Number J3937/422/16.

FROM Mr. Bowker. Cdr No. 717

No. 65/72/47.

Dated 14th August 1947.

Received 21st August. in Registry

Communist Activities in Egypt.

Refers to Cairo despatch 649 (J359 5/422/16)

Gives details of contents of two memoranda received from the Security Services Representative, regarding communist activities in Egypt

Last Paper.

(J3595)

References.

(Print.)

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8) W.3a W.D
Aug 25

Library 27/8

(Minutes.)

Chamberlain 24/8

Specie sent to MIBA
W.D. & resubmit with J3595 &
ref. thereto.

Q 27/8

The attitude towards
the Sudan is interesting

N. Desp ^{RIS-1111}
to Herford
FOR ^(copied)

McCarthy
25/8

Q
19/11

(Action completed.)

(Index.)

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Next Paper.

T262/1262/16-19/48

F. 37/63046
No. 717
(66/72/47.)

BRITISH EMBASSY,
CAIRO.

14th August, 1947 J.

SECRET.

Sir,

With reference to Sir Ronald Campbell's despatch No. 649 of 26th July, regarding communist activities in Egypt, I have the honour to inform you that I have received from the Security Services Representative translations of two memoranda stated to have been submitted by a member of the local communist organisation to its central committee. The precise identity of the author is not known.

2. The first document, dealing with the Sudan, admits the diversity of races in the Sudan and the incompleteness of Sudanese evolution towards being a nation. This leads to the conclusion that present circumstances do not permit of the Sudanese having the right of self-determination which in effect would leave the Sudan under British influence. But the right of self-determination should be reserved for the Sudan until its national evolution is complete. To convince the Egyptians of this they must be taught the democratic and socialist spirit, since the Egyptian policy towards the Sudan is the result of confused bourgeois thinking in demanding artificial unity.

3. To assist the Sudan's growth towards self-determination a period of transitional guardianship is necessary. The main object is to eliminate British imperialism and Egyptian control with all its reactionary tendencies is preferable to a British monopoly in the Sudan.

4. It would be illogical to force union upon the Sudan. They should be assisted to complete their growth and to reach a stage where they can use the right of self-determination.

5. The second document mainly elaborates the theme that the political parties, including the Wafd, have been ineffective in national leadership in the struggle against the British and that the initiative in this struggle has been taken by the Committee of Students and Workers, who have infused a new consciousness into the Egyptian people. The document admits that the Wafd, as the Opposition party, participated in the Committee of Students and Workers (as we already know) but played only a secondary and ineffective role owing to its weakness resulting from its negative policy. The Wafd has now assumed a role of leadership in manoeuvring for power on a party basis but not in the interests of the national cause.

6. The existing political parties, it alleges, merely engage in discussions and issue statements. It is important

/for

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Foreign Office,
London, S.W.1.

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for the national struggle that a people's party should be formed to lead the proletariat, and there should be unity between the students, the workers and the whole people.

7. As regards the Committee of Students and Workers referred to above, it will be remembered that this organisation, in which Wafdist and left-wing elements combined, first gained notoriety at the time of the anti-British agitation in February, 1946.

8. I am sending copies of this despatch to His Majesty's Ambassador, Moscow, the Governor-General of the Sudan, British Middle East Office and Political Intelligence Centre Middle East

I have the honour to be
With the highest respect,
Sir,
Your most obedient, humble Servant,

James Sawkes

1947

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J. 3595
AUG 1947

EGYPT and SUDAN

Communist Activities in Egypt.

stry ber } J. 3595/422/16
M Mr. McDermott
Cairo.
649
55/56/47)
d 26 July.
ived } 2 August.
egistry

Refers to Cairo despatch No. 624 of 17 July. (J. 3477/422/16)
Transmits extracts from a Tract stated by the Security Services Representative to have been written by the Central Committee of Mameto and Shar organisations.
Gives an account of Communist activities in Egypt.

st Paper.

J3477.

ferences.

(Minutes.)

Space for Hiza work
resubmit with Cairo despatch
No 624

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Nov. 24

N. Dept
H. Halford
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T.
BRITISH EMBASSY,

CAIRO

26th July, 1947.

No. 649
66/66/47

SECRET.

J. 3595

Sir,

With reference to my despatch No. 624 of 17th July, 1947 regarding communist activities in Egypt, I have the honour to inform you that I have received from the Security Services Representative a translation of a tract stated to have been written by the Central Committee of Hameto and Shar and circulated among members of that combined organisation.

2. The following extracts from the above-mentioned translation illustrate the general lines of that tract:-

- (a) From the end of 1945 there was a great increase in the progressive movement, with a strong connection with the University and with technical workers in various districts. So the regular progressive press began a new role, which role further increased after the Workers' Vanguard had played its part of free progressive leadership in the days of the Evacuation, of March, and of Palestine. It was natural that the progressive newspapers should undertake propaganda and national democratic agitation side by side with the cultural part which it was formerly playing.
- (b) We are now passing through another stage. We have established ourselves in important sections of the workers and we have almost become the greatest political force in the University. Our influence has spread to the country and extends to different groups of intellectuals; we have also penetrated to the poor quarters in the capital. The two principal forces of the movement have joined together, and we are now quickly approaching the stage of a party of the masses.
- (c) The exposing of reactionarism to the people has increased, and so has the exposing of Fascist forces, but the parties of the Opposition have not succeeded in organising the people round themselves. So the people look to new forces for their leadership, for the realisation of their major demands which can only be fulfilled, as never before, with complete evacuation from the Nile Valley, democracy, and the raising of the standard of living of the proletariat."
- (d) As for the international field, the democratic forces with the Soviet Union at their head, have a positive role to play in international life; also her part in defending the peoples in the colonies and semi-colonies has begun to be apparent - in spite of the world reactionary skirmishes and their attempts to distort her attitude (let us remember her attitude towards Lebanon and Syria, and her latest stand about Palestine). So Egypt looks to her to assist her in the international field.

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Foreign Office,
London, S.W.1.

(e)/....

- (e) We will just have to change our method to suit the requirements of the new stage, so that when we write about progressive culture we must appreciate that we are writing to a wide section of the masses and to realize the cultural stage of these masses and their consciousness that we may raise them up to ourselves.
- (f) When we write, our writing must not be dry and theoretical, unconnected with current happenings, but must be connected with those subjects which are of interest to people - if there is a lot of talk about Zionism, then we bring out a theoretical study of it.
- (g) If we want to write about the 'set-up' of the country, we should begin with a specific instance of persecution, and so on.
- (h) Here we must take note that our propaganda and our democratic agitation may often coincide with the other Opposition, but it differs from us because we must make clear the theoretical class foundations upon which our propaganda is based, something which the other papers of the Opposition do not possess; there is another difference, which is that our plan and our commentary on events is a sound one containing no opportunism, which is also something which the other Opposition does not possess....
- (i) Thus our paper must provide the members and helpers with the most important internal and external news and must provide a point of view. It must also continually indicate days of special occasions and the like, which the people must be prepared for and must give the slogans appropriate to them.
- (j) The papers must certainly play a part in everything touching the life of the masses, that is, it must become a pulpit for expressing the pains and hopes of the peasants, students, small government employees and women, and the way for exposing every persecution and oppression wherever such persecution and oppression shall appear. Our task must not be merely publication, but we must take up a positive line of action. We must set up trade unions where there are none and form a general union of trade unions, and direct the peasants to fight the existant exploitation from the present-day co-operative societies, and publishing the complaints of the slum districts and pointing out to them their rights etc.
- (k) In this way we can firmly bind the paper to the life of the masses in their daily struggle and can attract a large section of them to the political struggle.
- (l) As for the extension of constitutional rights, and the preservation of them it is something very firmly linked with the liberation movement, and our position regarding the Sudan and the unity of the struggle and the naturalness of democratic unity which joins it to us and the danger of separation from the side of Imperialism.

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- (m) Also, we must make our internal programme clear - the distribution of ownership, the setting up of companies and monopolies, the raising of the wages of workers and small government employees.
- (n) The paper must not forget its role towards the Near East, for these countries read Arabic and we are joined to them by the unity of the struggle against Imperialism. We must concern ourselves in their news and make the peoples of these countries feel the unity of this struggle. Thus the distribution of our paper must not be restricted to the Nile Valley, but must extend to these countries so that it may help in the ideological and fighting link in the Near East.
- (o) The conclusion of all this is that the task of the newspaper is to follow its previous path of educating, making propaganda, and doing national democratic agitation, together with the care of the masses, its readers. But the new departure in the growth of the progressive forces puts on to it new fundamental burdens, which are that it must undertake the general political formation for the members and supporters and must increase its connection with the masses by guiding them in their daily economic struggle and linking up between this struggle and the political one so that we can attract a larger number of the masses to this field under the standard of the workers' vanguard, just as we must bind the masses round the party whose formation has been decided upon and make clear its programme. Added to which is the help in linking up the struggle with the Near East.
- (p) Has this newspaper undertaken this role?..... not at all, it still lacks a great deal. It lacks connection with the problems of the country areas and the problems of women, and its cultural page and story page is weak. Often too, it lacks clear direction in many matters.

There are actual reasons for this deficiency, which is that it is a newspaper with a limited number of pages and words. Also up to now it has not been equipped with a sufficient number of skillful editors, and its editors still lack experience.

3. The Security Services Representative states that it is thought that the newspaper referred to in this tract "Al Gamaheer" ("The Masses"), which is mentioned in the penultimate paragraph of the enclosure to my despatch referred to above.

4. I am sending copies of this despatch to His Majesty's Representatives in Moscow, Baghdad and Beirut, to Governor-General of the Sudan, British Middle East Office, and Political Intelligence Centre, Middle East.

I have the honour to be,
With the highest respect,
Sir,
Your most obedient, humble Servant.

G. L. McDermott.