

Fe 37/1/23629
 Registry Number J3592/1451/16
 FROM Sir RIGamp bell,
 O to Mr. M. Wright.
 No. 4120/11/49
 Confidential.
 Dated 22.4.49.
 Received in Registry 30.4.49.

Press Censorship in Egypt.

Reports that censorship has been lifted except in respect of articles directly attacking King FAROUK or the Egyptian regime. Asks that Fleet Street be informed of the position.

Last Paper

(Minutes)

References

Will News Department take action?

73629

R. Barley
25.49

(Print)

W. Stewart
3/5.

(now disposed of)
 R. Campbell, Cairo.
 Mr. Wright.
 June

News Dept. (Mr. Ridstone)

It would seem that the passages in the British Press to which exception is taken are contained in messages from Cairo. While there is no sort of affection or respect for King Farouk here there has not been much in the way of editorial comment to cause offence. It would seem, therefore, that the most effective course would be to call in the authors of these offending messages in Cairo and reason with them. Apart from an approach to the press on the very highest level (which would not be justified) there is no other certain way of discouraging this sort of thing, for there is a strong disinclination on the part of respectable journals like the Observer, the Economist and the Illustrated London News to tamper with correspondents' copy. We can, of course, speak to our contacts and will do so. But the business end is Cairo.

As to the Economist, I called the attention of Mr. Stewart to a statement in a recent issue of that journal to the effect that the Embassy in Cairo was guarded by British soldiers in Mufti. The War Office

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(General/....

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(General Gale) was very indignant about this and declared it was quite untrue. I asked for the Department's observations early last week and left the copy of the Economist with them. I should like to be sure I was on safe ground before making representations to the Economist. As time is running on I hope I can soon have a line of comment to work upon.

N. E. Nash

N. E. Nash.

9th May, 1949.

Mr. Bailey

I asked you to discuss the "Economist" article with News Dept. last week. What is the position? Mr. P.

W.S.

After several attempts to see Mr. Nash last week I saw him on the 10th May and gave him the department's observations on the Economist article referred to. Mr. Nash said he would speak to the Economist.

Draft letter submitted.

R. W. Bailey
(R.W. Bailey)

12th May, 1949.

See J5137/1451/16.

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2.6

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submit

BRITISH EMBASSY,

CAIRO.

J 3592

Ref: 4120/11/49

CONFIDENTIAL.

22nd April, 1949

M. St. James

Dear Michael

As you know the censorship here, which despite the Palestine Armistice seems likely to remain in force for some time at least for internal security reasons, has been giving us a certain amount of trouble lately. Early in the new year two British Sunday newspapers, the "Sunday Express" and the "Observer", were banned for publishing articles unfavourable to King Farouk, and in the latter case we had to intervene to prevent the expulsion from Egypt of Miss Clare Hollingworth, the "Observer's" Middle East correspondent. More recently the "Economist" and the "Illustrated London News" also came under the censorship's ban.

The Information Department took the matter up with the Director of the Press Bureau of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and have been assured that the bans on both these latter publications are shortly to be lifted. At the same time they thrashed out the general censorship question and we have now, I think, arrived at a solution which represents about as much as we can expect in present circumstances.

Previously it appears that there were several officials authorised to ban publications to which exception was taken, and they certainly seem to have interpreted their instructions somewhat liberally. Now, however, we understand that as a result of our representations it has been decided that in future, so far as foreign publications are concerned, no such banning orders will be issued, with one exception, without the prior authority of the Director of the Press Bureau. And he has assured us that he will not resort to banning when the only objection is that a paper has published facts unpalatable to Egypt or indulged in legitimate criticism of her attitude, policy etc. In such cases, if they feel sufficiently strongly about it, individual censors will merely cause the offending pages to be removed and at this I do not think we can cavil.

The exception to which I have referred above is in the case of articles directly attacking the King or the regime, which will involve automatic banning, and it is here that I should be grateful for your assistance. I fully realise the difficulties involved but would it be possible for Fleet Street to be informed of this rather ridiculous position, and at the same time asked in the interest of better Anglo-Egyptian relations to lay off such topics? It is obvious that the

.../Palace

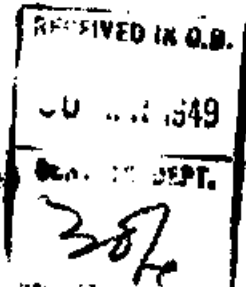
M.R. Wright Esq., C.M.G.,
Foreign Office,
London, S.W.1.

Reference:-

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Palace has made known King Farouk's views in no uncertain terms, and that every censor is now leaning over backwards to avoid further upset to H.M.'s susceptibilities. At the same time the Director of the Press Bureau said that since articles attacking the King were a fairly recent manifestation, i.e. since the Palestine hostilities, the powers that be were wondering whether there was some sinister Jewish-Communist influence in Fleet Street working against the Egyptian monarchy! We have, of course, reassured the Director on this point, to which I do not wish to attach undue importance, but I think it would be advantageous if, following this clarification, we could avoid further incidents. Criticism of the King, (as of the Head of State of any 'friendly' country) is after all in very questionable taste and is likely to do disproportionate damage to the good will which is now making itself felt.

Yours ever

Ronald Campbell

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FOREIGN OFFICE, S.W.1.

1st June, 1949.

(J 3592/1451/16)
CONFIDENTIAL

My Dear Ronnie

In your letter 4120/11/49 of the 22nd April about censorship in Egypt you raised the question of hostile criticism of King Farouk in the British press and its deleterious effect on Anglo-Egyptian relations.

We have made enquiries in Fleet Street and from these it seems that the passages in the British press to which exception has been taken have in each case been contained in messages from the correspondents of these papers in Cairo. Whilst I think it would be true to say that there is very little affection or respect for King Farouk in this country, we have not noticed anything in the way of editorial comment that would be likely to cause offense.

News Department have undertaken to speak to their contacts here but they have pointed out that there is a strong disinclination on the part of responsible journals like the "Observer", the "Economist" and the "Illustrated London News" to tamper with correspondents' copy. We are inclined to think therefore that the most effective way of discouraging ill-timed articles of the kind you mention is for your Information Department to speak to the Cairo correspondents of the newspapers concerned. The News Department will meanwhile continue to do what it can.

Yours ever

Sgd.

(M.E. Wright)

Sir Ronald Campbell, G.C.M.G., C.B.,
Cairo.

P371/73629
1949

EGYPT AND SUDAN

Registry Number | J 5137/1451/16.

Further details regarding the banning of British publication in Egypt, and the suggestion that the offending articles could not have emanated from the press correspondents in Egypt.

FROM Sir R. Campbell, CAIRO to Mr. Wright.

No. (4120/47/49).

Refers to P.O. letter (J 3592/1451/16) of 1st June.

Dated Confidential.

Dated -

Received in Registry | 23rd June '49.

Last Paper.

J. 3592

(Minutes.)

References.

As there seems to be some doubt as to the facts of this matter, may we please have your comments, first.

John Hand

24.6

(Print.)

News Dept

(How disposed of.)

J. Sir R. Campbell. Alexandria. from Mr. Wright. 18 July

When I wrote to the Observer & the Economist I did so on the assumption that the offending passages occurred in despatches from their correspondents and as this assumption was apparently correct in this instance I left myself open to get off on the wrong foot in our reply to Cairo. I'm sorry about this!

I agree that it is important that Cairo should be put in the picture as early as possible in the despatch of the 22nd April. It is always unwise to make representations to newspapers about articles of which the press has not before us. We shall of course take full opportunities

26130 P.O.P.

(Action completed.)

(Index.)

[Handwritten signatures and initials]

Next Paper.

opportunities of impressing on our contacts the points made in the final para of the Ambassador's ~~last~~ letter of the 22nd April. Sir Ronald Campbell will however value the journal of the quality of the Economist do not make their leader notes lighthearted, or thoughtless, they meant what they said on the 1st January (cutting attached). We can however appeal to them to avoid comment which at this particular time might cause embarrassment. The Express outburst (cutting attached) is of a different character - gross bad taste. Stories of that kind are the subject of much gossip early in the year. The Express is pretty irresponsible or they would have suppressed the story about the "punchy flight" of the King^{etc} as did the Times & other newspapers which had it. There is not much we can do to anticipate Express articles. They would not be impressed by requests to suppress the march.

D. E. East
1/7

Draft reply.

John Aitland
Secretary

The original draft has been ^(a week) ~~in~~ in the post being first drafted. I apologise for this delay in submission.

W. Stewart
1/7.

fo31/73629

BRITISH EMBASSY,

CAIRO.

late?

CONFIDENTIAL

Ref: 4120/17/49

*Mrs Clutton
News Dept } for early
 } obs*

Dear Michael,

Many thanks for your letter J. 3592/1451/16 of 1st June about hostile criticism of King Farouk in the British Press.

*Mother
22.5*

I am grateful for what you have done but somewhat disturbed at the result of your enquiries. If I had thought that Fleet Street, when taxed, would react in this way I should have given you fuller details. It was, of course, because I was satisfied that the offending passages were not contained in messages from correspondents in Cairo that I felt obliged to raise the question with you.

As you know four British publications have been banned so far this year, the 'Observer', the 'Sunday Express', the 'Economist' and the 'Illustrated London News'. The 'Observer' correspondent, who also represents the 'Economist', denies all responsibility for the article of 20th February which caused the former newspaper to be banned. In support she points out that it was described as "By a Special Correspondent"; had she written it herself it would have been "From Our Own Correspondent". "Rudderless Egypt" in the 'Economist' of 1st January was responsible for the temporary banning of that periodical. Here the correspondent considers that messages received from her went to the making of the article, but maintains that it was a composite effort produced in London and completely disclaims the two vital sentences referring to the King and the regime. The 'Sunday Express' correspondent, who has since resigned, was an Egyptian subject. He told my Information Department that he had had nothing to do with the article of 16th January which caused all the trouble, and indeed it is completely out of character. The 'Illustrated London News' has no correspondent in Cairo.

In any case, even were I to doubt the statements of the two correspondents concerned, which I see no particular reason to do, you will realise that with the present stringent censorship it is virtually impossible for correspondents in Cairo to send anything objectionable to the Egyptian authorities in their messages to London. I hope, therefore, that you will be able to persuade News Department to speak to their contacts with added conviction. On the assumption that the articles in question were written in London the question of tampering with foreign correspondents' copy is really irrelevant to this letter, but the impression I have gained from correspondents here is that their copy is by no means as sacrosanct as they would wish.

Yours ever

Barclay Campbell

M.R. Wright Esq., C.M.G.,
Foreign Office,
London, S.W.1.

Rudderless Egypt

Will Nokrashy Pasha's death by murder make any difference to Egypt's politics at home and abroad? To judge by the names in the new cabinet, the likely answer is No. All suggest that there will be no change of policy over Palestine, or the Sudan, or relations with Britain. The premier who succeeds Nokrashy, Ibrahim Abdel Haki, is a choice from palace circles and is therefore likely to rubber-stamp commitments in Palestine for which King Farouk bears personal responsibility. The new appointment to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Ibrahim Dessouki Abaza Pasha, promoted from the Ministry of Communications) displaces Khashaba Pasha—the only member of the Nokrashy cabinet who had the strength of mind to swim against the stream of public emotion over the Sudan, and to see the virtues of an agreement with Britain.

At home, too, the murder seems unlikely to leave any significant mark on the course of events. For Egyptian politics have become a sort of babel, in which everyone is ready with criticisms and slogans but no one has the courage or the following to step forward and master the din. The voice of common sense is drowned in a welter of street cries. "We want a republic" mingles inconsequently with "We want Farida." As no one knows where either slogan would lead, the country slithers on its slow progress towards a violent climax—always threatening but

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never in sight. In such a situation the loss of one honest but ineffective leader makes little difference. The chief immediate outcome of the murder is to attract attention to the Muslim Brotherhood as a contributor to the long-drawn-out deterioration.

The Brotherhood, when started by Hasan el-Banna in 1930, simply preached return to the pure forms of Sunni worship and abandonment of the materialism and corruption that had arrived with western civilisation. As such it was against the foreigner and so, through the fallibility of its leaders, became more and more enmeshed in politics. Islam is always a useful rallying cry. Attracted by the thought that the Brotherhood had the power to collect a crowd, first the King, later Nabus and the Wafd, and later still the anti-Wafd parties, paid its leader for support which was, in numbers, impressive. These patrons one by one lent themselves to a practice that might well have made of Hasan el-Banna the ace in Egyptian politics; but despite his title of "supreme guide," he seems to lack the qualities that would make him so. When, a year ago, he quarrelled with his principal lieutenants over their accusations of selling out to politicians, there followed a bout of dirty-linen-washing which suggests that he is now little more than another Egyptian on the political make.

Though he lost ground following the split in the Brotherhood's ranks, he is still—thanks to the devoutness and the religious fervour that his name connotes—able to draw a zealous crowd and to inspire fanatical young men to do his bidding. His Brotherhood is certainly responsible for some—probably for all—of the recent terrorist activities in Cairo. These range from planting bombs in foreign offices such as the Sudan Agency to the vengeful murders of the Vice-President of the Court of Appeal and of Nokrashy, who had banned the Brotherhood on December 8th.

Egypt has, or had, an efficient police force and a courageous judiciary, but the course of justice has not lately run as smooth as it did. It has deviated from the straight when anti-foreign feelings have been allowed to sway it, notably during the trial of the murderer of the anglophile Amin Osman. But no anti-foreign implications will be involved when Nokrashy's assassin stands his trial. To shout on his behalf: "Down with the government that lost the Sudan" is to lose sight of essentials. The issue is whether or no there is to be public security in Egypt. Without it no man has a chance to execute a policy. The Egyptian public needs to clear its mind quickly, for this year is election year.

FO 371/73629

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(S 5137/1451/16)

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

18th July, 1949.

Dear Ronnie,

Thank you for your letter No. 4120/47/49 about criticism of King Farouk in the British press.

I am sorry that we misinterpreted your letter of the 22nd April. News Department spoke to their contacts in Fleet Street on the erroneous assumption that the offending articles were based on despatches from correspondents in Cairo, for this was the meaning we read into the first paragraph of your letter. (The association of the move to expel Miss Clare Hollingworth with the banning of the "Observer" and the "Economist" suggested that the articles were written by correspondents in Egypt, and incidentally, we could not check, as no dates were given as to when the offending articles appeared. This was cleared up in your last letter).

News Department are now re-opening the question, but they have pointed out that they cannot guarantee that articles critical of the King and the present regime will not appear in future. They can appeal for restraint to reputable papers of the quality of the "Economist" with some hope of success, but the more popular and less responsible papers such as the "Sunday Express" are unfortunately not so likely to be impressed by requests to respect the King's person.

yours ever,
(sig.) Michael Wright

(M.R. Wright.)

Sir Ronald Campbell, G.C.M.G., C.B.,
ALEXANDRIA.