

## INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

WWU - 34

UAR II: ASWAN &amp; A RED MAJOR

Shepherd's Hotel.

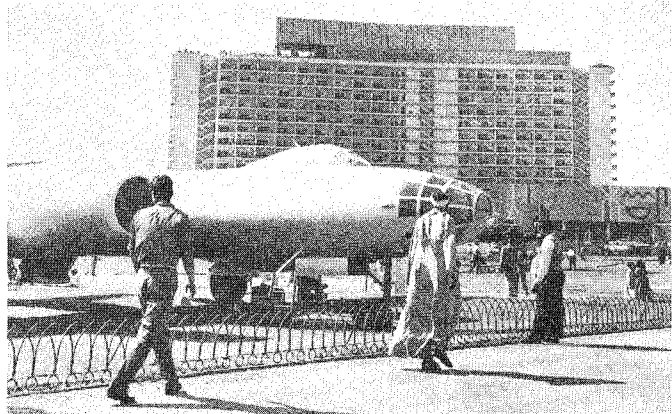
Cairo, United Arab Republic.

November 6, 1959.

Mr. Richard H. Nolte.  
Institute of Current World Affairs.  
366 Madison Ave., New York 17, N.Y.

Dear Dick:

The most repeated criticism I have heard of the U.S. and Mr. Dulles since arriving in the UAR is of the late Secretary of State's role in the financing of the High Dam at Aswan. I therefore sought out Dr. Ahmed Hussein who was UAR Ambassador to Washington from March, 1953 until May, 1958, a period which included Egypt's Revolution as well as the crisis over the High Dam, the Czech arms deal and Suez. I remember having watched Hussein at the head table of a National Press Club luncheon in Washington when his Foreign Minister, Mahmoud Fawzi, was the guest speaker. I found Fawzi thoroughly unconvincing and, looking at the fat, complacent smile on Ambassador Hussein's face, I spread my dislike to him as well. I got a considerable surprise therefore in visiting Dr. Hussein at his Nile-front apartment, finding him still fat and still smiling, but in a far more engaging way. Hussein is an agricultural economist by training and both he and his charming wife have spent a good part of their lives pushing social welfare schemes. Since Hussein originally was appointed under King Farouk, he is considered old regime and now sits at home in comfortable unemployment.



BRAVE NEW WORLD: WOODEN JET MODEL &amp; HILTON

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"I saw Dulles on either July 19 or 20, 1956, the day after I had returned from Cairo," Hussein began. "I always made it a point of seeing him just before I made my trip to Cairo and just after I returned. I had been told informally by the State Department beforehand that the U.S. had changed its mind about financing the dam. The memo was all typed when I saw Dulles. It listed two reasons: The uncertainty of the Egyptian economy; and our failure to get agreement with such countries as Kenya and Tanganyika on the division of the waters. We had never mentioned these countries before, only the Sudan. But apart from what was on the paper, Dulles complained about Egyptian propaganda, that we were not neutral, that we were playing both sides, and that we were helping the enemy and involving ourselves. And he didn't like our recognizing

Red China a few months before, in May (just after the French agreed to sell arms to Israel and the U.S. nudged Canada to do likewise). He also mentioned the September, 1955 Czech arms deal -- but that was done well before the World Bank approved our loan in December (A \$200 million loan from the Bank plus grants of \$54 million from the U.S. and \$16 million from Britain, with the promise of more to come for the dam's second and third phases). I told Dulles we were taking a calculated risk (in dealing with the East), that Russia may do it (build the dam). Dulles said he didn't believe Russia had the financial and technical ability. And secondly, it would hurt them much because there is a lot of deprivation in the satellite countries and they would get mad. Thirdly, Egypt would get into difficulty trying to finance the dam and who ever did help finance the dam would be cursed by the Egyptian people. So, on the contrary, Dulles said, it would be to 'our' (U.S.) interest if the Russians decided to build the dam."



"Dulles..was..polite"

How was Dulles' manner in telling you all this? "Mr. Dulles personally was very correct and polite and our individual relations were always good, then and before." (Hussein's testimonial differs sharply with the widespread charges that Dulles had read him the riot act.)

Hussein made no mention of other reasons I've been given for Dulles' action: Opposition to aiding a cotton country by U.S. Cotton State Senators; general Congressional annoyance at the time with neutrals in general and an Arab "Hitler" named Nasser in particular; foreign aid economizing; and Zionist pressure.

What about the charges of Egyptian opportunism, playing one side against the other in order to get your dam built? "Nasser expected the American withdrawal," Hussein declared. "He said so when we reached agreement in December. He said it was not carried out with enthusiasm both ways." But what about the Egyptian hint that Russia would if the U.S. wouldn't, the bluff which, at first at least, Mr. Dulles successfully called? "I never made any announcement in Washington that Russia was willing to give \$200 million. I told reporters the Soviet Ambassador to Cairo had said so. And he did. He said Russia was willing to help Egypt in all economic projects, including the High Dam. In his July 26 speech (a week after the Dulles-Hussein talk in which the President dramatically announced the nationalization of the Canal), Nasser said the Russians have made an offer. Then Shepilov (who had been in Cairo the month before after having been made Soviet Foreign Minister while enroute from Moscow) said Russia was always willing to build the dam, but industrialization should be first. There were four Soviet statements in three days. Then the Soviet Embassy press attache said the official position was what Shepilov had said." (It was at this point that Nasser said the dam would be financed by the revenue from the nationalized Suez Canal. It was only later (last December) that Russia came up with her more bona fide offer, the one now being implemented.)

Another charge of "opportunistic neutrality" has involved your obtaining military equipment. What is that history? "A U.S. Assistant Secretary of Defense made an arms promise here in Cairo after the Revolution, but it didn't materialize. It was during the Truman Administration. It was refused because the British said 'No, not until they had their evacuation agreement (of British troops from the UAR).' Later (in the summer of 1955), I told

it frankly to Mr. Dulles that the Russians are offering us arms and if we don't get arms from you we will be forced to get it from the Russians. (Wilton Wynn, in his book, "Nasser of Egypt," reports that Nasser gave a considerably tougher "either, or" ultimatum to U.S. Ambassador Henry Byroade.) It was on July 28, 1955. Mr. Dulles agreed to give us arms at the same sitting. He told his assistant, 'It's all right. Tell the Pentagon it's ok.' Then, two days later, Mr. Byroade got the ok. An agreement with America was signed. It was the same as Mr. Tito's, for assistant military attaches at the Embassy, but no more than 10. Tito had 300. (I can't verify these figures but I heard elsewhere that the U.S. had agreed to supply \$27 million in arms and staff a 42-man mission.) But we didn't have the \$27 million. Mr. Byroade tried several alternatives for Egyptian payment but he was unpopular (presumably with Washington) at the time. He got no answers. Egypt didn't accept. But it was a courageous agreement for Mr. Dulles. He was helpful. He caused the maximum fight to get the British out of Egypt and he brought upon himself the anger of the Zionists. Then, in September, the Czech arms deal came. At that time, Mr. Dulles was refusing to sell Israel any arms. And when the Czech deal came he couldn't say, 'I offered to give them arms and they refused,' because why should he cause himself trouble with the Zionists?"

Ambassador Hussein, the man on the spot, obviously has some different thoughts on the late Secretary of State than those held by Col. Anwar Sadat. I met another Dr. Hussein here, Taha Hussein, the man who many consider to be Egypt's foremost scholar. Dr. Taha Hussein has been blind for all but the first three of his 70 years. He studied theology, taught Arab literature and was Egyptian Minister of Education under the monarchy. I saw him one evening in his villa West of Cairo, across the Nile and almost at the foot of the pyramids. The interview was conducted in French with Dr. Hussein's secretary periodically helping me out in English. Maybe it was my poor understanding of French, but I found Dr. Hussein to be a great disappointment. The interview bogged down at the very onset with the one subject I have tried to avoid here, Israel. I finally got mad and told Dr. Hussein he might as well get it out of his head that the rest of the world is going to stand by and watch the Arabs push Israel into the sea. He turned all innocence and claimed the UAR merely wanted all the UN resolutions to be implemented. (Several weeks ago, Nasser gave a joint interview to the AP and the Christian Science Monitor announcing a "new" policy: If Israel would abide by the UN resolution concerning the reabsorption of one million Arab refugees in the Gaza Strip, he was prepared to let Israeli ships through the Canal. Some are unkind enough to suggest that Nasser knew his offer was safely unacceptable.)



"Israel is our enemy."

But back to Dr. Hussein: "If all refugees are not going to have a home there will be a war between Israel, there will be a war. We don't know the result of this war. The Crusaders from Christian Europe one day were pushed into the sea by the Arabs." (The "push into the sea" phrase came right after Hussein's denial of such a tactic.) Hussein had other contradictions: "We have no fear of Russia or America. Neither have colonies. We fear from

Russia the communists. You aid very much Israel. Israel is our enemy. This gives us a doubt with regard to America." And on neutrality: "President Nasser is speaking in the name of the UAR only, only in the name of Egypt and Syria, that's all. This is not a third bloc. We, unlike the Atlantic bloc, defend ourselves against European colonialization with the Arab League." I was further confused in leaving. Dr. Hussein's secretary of 32 years standing guided me through the dark sidestreet to the main road bus stand. As we walked he declared everything was in "decline, decline." He told me he was Christian, Dr. Hussein was a Moslem, and the Moslems were pushing Arab Christians out of all positions in the country. And he said the Arab Christians were the only Arabs who really were trained to do anything.



HASSOUNA

Even though I found myself in argument with Hussein over Israel, things went much more pleasantly with the man who really should be touchiest on the subject, Abdel Khalek Hassouna, the Secretary General of the Arab League. And at that, I asked Hassouna a far ruder question: "Is it true, as some allege, that the only common denominator among the 10 states in the Arab League is enmity toward Israel?"

"This grouping existed in 1945. Israel was created only in 1948. Had Israel never been created, the grouping of the Arab States would have continued, and perhaps might have been more productive," Hassouna replied in a calm, friendly Oxford accent. Hassouna is a pre-Revolution Egyptian and does a lot of commuting to the UN to argue the Arab cause. He received me in what appeared to be a former palace in downtown Cairo. His public relations man scribbled far more notes than I.

What is your understanding of the "Arab Bloc"? "I don't like the word 'Bloc.' In Arabic, we call it 'Inner Circle,' another circle. There used to be 11 states until the UAR fusion. The aim of the League is to coordinate their policies. Federation or unity is left to the future. Egypt is in a key position geographically. Egypt has been the first to claim, fight and achieve its independence. Egypt has got the largest population. It is more developed than you get in other Arab countries. This has made Egypt in a position which catches more the eye than the others. It is like your country and the Organization of American States. Your country is always receiving some hits by the smaller countries for imposing its will -- even though I am sure it is always very careful not to. But when it comes to a common danger and responsibility, other countries recognize any small member of one family ends by recognizing the bigger position of the other member. The grouping of the Arabs has nothing to do with politics. Economic development, cultural unity, have nothing to do with Israel. It is going back to a heritage which is common, a renaissance of things in common, Iraq to Morocco." What about Iraq these days? "What worries me about Iraq is Iraq itself, not its relationship with the Arabs, because this will disappear. It's a phase through which Iraq is passing. I hope the Iraqis will get out of it safe and will assume all of their responsibilities." And Tunisia? "They had some complaints and we managed to take care of that complaint." Oh? "Tunisia joined the League last October. They complained against the UAR regarding a political refugee opponent of Bourguiba's. (Politician Salah ben-Youssef has been condemned to death in absentia for plotting against Bourguiba.) They wanted Cairo to release him and Cairo wouldn't. When they joined the League, Tunisia gave a declaration which Cairo wouldn't accept and Tunisia was offended. Now the UAR has asked that the record be expunged."

And Libya? "Cooperation with the UAR has been 100 per cent since they joined the League in 1953." I asked about Libya because a fellow journalist here had told me that it wasn't too long ago that the UAR military attache in Libya was caught in some breach of diplomatic behavior and, rather than be apprehended, took to the Embassy roof -- with a submachine gun.

What about the grouping of non-aligned Egypt with the Afro-Asia complex? "The Afro-Asia group was created in the UN in 1951: The 29 countries of Bandung (ed note: the Bandung Conference was held in 1955). There will be four more next year, Camerouns, Somaliland, Togoland and Nigeria. There is no bloc because each has different commitments, some West, some point North, some recognize Communist China, some have relations with Nationalist China. You can't call this a bloc because it is not homogenous in all of its policies." No common ground? "Yes, in the tendency of liberation of countries, human rights and things like that."

The person I found myself instantly warming to here in Cairo was Khaled Mohieddin, the "Red Major." Mohieddin is 37 and by his own admission, "a member of a bourgeois family. My father is a capitalist." I sipped Turkish coffee with Mohieddin in his far from proletarian apartment, facing the Little Nile from Cairo's fanciest neighborhood, Zamalik. His walls were singularly different from every other home and office walls I have seen here: Not a single picture of Big Brother, Gamal Abdel Nasser. Sometimes I've seen Nasser grinning down from several walls at once with a sort of multi-dimensional paternity. Mohieddin, like Colonel Sadat, was a member of the original Revolution Command Council (RCC). He offered Nasser his resignation soon after the Revolution because of his pronounced leftish views. Nasser told him to stay put. But sometime later, when Mohieddin sided with General Naguib, the popular grandfatherly soldier the RCC had put in as a figure-head leader right after the Revolution, he had a falling out.



The Red Major

"I took the side of Naguib against Nasser to go back to Constitutional life. From that time on they termed me the 'Red Major' because the Communists also wanted a Constitution, in order to be a legal party. I resigned from the RCC and they told me to leave the country. I chose Switzerland and stayed there from 1954 to 1956. After Bandung, they changed and I was allowed to come back and was made editor of 'Al Masse' ('The Evening,' a daily paper)." But since last March, Mohieddin is no longer 'Al Masse's editor, no longer even an Army Major. He is home, "writing." Iraq's Mosul Revolt broke out March 8. General Kassim's Iraqi faction, and quite a few non-Iraqis, have looked upon the revolt as Nasser-inspired, if not actually instigated. "I don't believe it's the communists only in Iraq who are against Nasser and the communists are not the biggest, although they are strong. There are many non-communists in Iraq who are against Nasser. To say that only the communists in Iraq make this trouble is wrong. I don't think that Nasser wanted to make unity (i.e., merge with Iraq as Egypt had done with Syria last year), but they understood this. I doubt that Nasser's arms were responsible (for the Mosul Revolt). But I was obliged to go (from the editorship of 'Al Masse') when I said it was wrong to print that the revolution against Kassim continued when it was over within a few days." Nasser apparently insisted that the UAR presses continue to make the Mosul Revolt appear to be alive for some 10 days.

What are your politics, Major? "I am not a member of the Communist Party, otherwise I would be in jail today. I know that the communists in Iraq commit mistakes. They only speak about the mistakes of the communists. Yet every man commits mistakes. Why not speak of the mistakes of the others? Why did the Mosul Revolt take place? Why by force? Why not use the democratic means? You can't say that there would be a Communist majority in this country -- Egypt or Iraq -- it would be very small. Why not have it? The communists are backed by Russia, morally, yes. As President Nasser is backing the Arabs in all the Arab world. But I don't think the inside communists in every country have to take orders from the outside. Why? There is no need for it. The aim is the same. Why get orders? (I noted that Yugoslavia has found difficulty in this scheme.) I am agreed to cooperate with any person, even if he is a communist." (Well, Mohieddin has nice friendly eyes even if he is a bit difficult to agree with.)



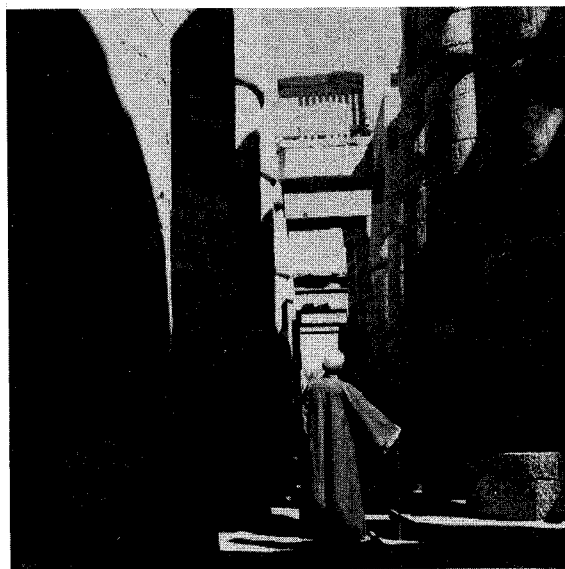
MURSI

Another affable type (gosh I'm getting soft on these Egyptians) is Mursi Saad el-Din. Mursi, at 36, manages to teach romantic poetry and English philology at the university, serve as head of research and cultural contacts for the High Council of Arts & Literature & Social Science, and also serve as technical affairs director of the Permanent Organization for Afro-Asian Peoples' Solidarity (hereafter, called, without official authorization, POFAAPS). It is because of his last capacity that I sought out Mursi. And I found him the one man in my nearly 12 months of traveling who readily admits there is such a thing as an Afro-Asian bloc and, besides, "What's wrong with it?"

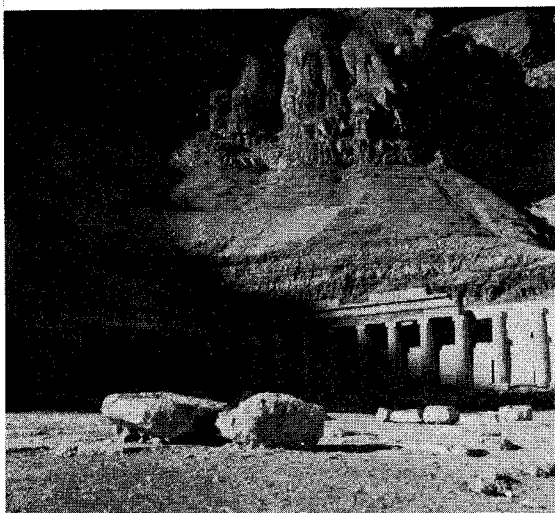
I saw Mursi just after he had returned from Peking where he was a member of an eight-man POFAAPS delegation invited in as guests by the Red Chinese. He was called outside for a few phone calls when I first arrived and this left me time to become acquainted with the pretty girl who was sort of encamped on one side of his desk. I noted that she was reading "Lady Chatterly's Lover." "Unabridged," she explained. I wonder if their Nine Honors on the Supreme Court bench know what an inundation of American D.H. Lawrence paperbacks their decision has caused in the Middle East. It's on every newstand.

Mursi's POFAAPS is composed of all 29 of the nations which attended the 1955 Bandung Conference, plus Africa, plus Russia (which qualifies as Asian through Siberia). Its headquarters, since it was established two years ago, has been in Cairo. Recently, the Russo-Chinese group has tried to take over and move its headquarters elsewhere. But as of this moment, Mursi and his colleagues have outwitted them. They've settled for a new conference outside of Cairo next January. But they've chosen Guinea, which is far too small for hotel space and precludes all consideration for it becoming a new permanent headquarters. Mursi's faction plan to find it unavoidably necessary to keep their toehold in Cairo before and after the proceedings. At the moment, Russia, Red China and the UAR are POFAAPS's three biggest sponsors. Each is contributing £10,000 Egyptian a year (roughly \$23,500) and Guinea now intends to match this patronage. Most of the rest is raised by various government solidarity committees.

"We are not directed by the governments. But we certainly have their backing. Otherwise we wouldn't be here," Mursi explained. "We don't get any orders. But naturally our policy follows. When Somalia went to plead its case at the UN we sent cables to the Afro-Asian delegates urging them how to



UPPER EGYPT. Here is the Nile at the scene of some of Egypt's most glorious history. The primitive sail boat (upper left) provides ferry service from the East, or Luxor, bank of the Nile, to the West, the remnants of old Thebes. At Karnak, the temple city adjoining Luxor, my guide Abboudi strikes an elegant pose. At the lower left is Queen Hatshensut's funerary temple at Thebes, built between 1505 and 1484 B.C. Apparently there was a good amount of family inbreeding and squabbling in these dynasties and the Queen's successor scraped her image off all the walls. On the lower right is the Valley of the Kings at Thebes, the royal necropolis. Despite all the to-do about secret burial places, most of the tombs managed to be denuded of all their treasure. Sometimes the priests themselves did a right-about-face after the burial ceremony, chucked the mummy into a convenient pit and mixed a considerable bit of Mammon with their God.



vote. But no pressure other than public opinion in the newspapers and magazines and radio. We are a popular movement, not set up by the governments, to implement the principles of Bandung and to create public opinion. We are interested in the emergence of an Afro-Asian bloc. I don't think our movement means to create a political bloc, so much as a public opinion which is conducive to neutrality and an anti-imperialist stand. But whatever we say, there is a neutralist camp when there is a grouping. The fact that they don't want to belong to one group or another makes them belong to a group. The UN voting shows a grouping. And in the UN it is an Afro-Asian bloc. What's wrong with it? I can see nothing wrong with it. Inside our group, the Arab movement does not exist, merely as a member. We've always been trying to avoid being accused of giving more care to the Arab world."

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Unna", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Warren W. Unna

Received New York December 3, 1959