

fact, restored to their desks on the eve of the October War). Heikal left for a visit to China in January 1973 sensing that his fall was imminent (his articles on China were to contain several digs at the Egyptian régime). His close links with Colonel Qadafi did him no harm so long as Sadat contemplated union with Libya; but they became an added danger after Qadafi's "children's crusade" attempted to force union on Egypt. Sadat blocked (non-violently) the one access road

from Libya—and privately decided to dismiss at a convenient moment the man whom the world regarded wrongly, as his trusted spokesman. But Sadat was then preparing the military action which was to prove him "one of the shrewdest statesmen of the century"; it was not the moment for a journalistic upset.<sup>7</sup> Heikal knew that his reprieve would be short. In the light of this knowledge he published, after the October War, a series of editorials which both made his fall certain and also radically changed his reputation with Arab readers.

<sup>7</sup> Michael Howard, *Sunday Times*, 3 March 1973.

## Cairo Crusader

Cairo

THE NEW MAN at the top of the newspaper "Al-Ahram" is wholly different from the man who used to be there. Ali Amin succeeded Mohammed Hassanein Heikal, confidant of the late President Gamal Abdel Nasser and, until February, considered the unofficial spokesman for President Anwar Sadat.

Mr Heikal, 49, usually devoted his weekly 5,000-word column "Frankly Speaking," to international politics. Dressed impeccably, he worked in one of the most spacious offices in Cairo and rarely met visitors, although he was editor of the most quoted newspaper in the Arab world. Mr Amin, 60, devotes his daily column, "An Idea," largely to the internal problems of Egypt, crusading for greater personal freedoms and less government red tape.

Ali and his twin brother Mustafa, founded the second largest newspaper in Egypt, "Al Akhbar," in 1944 and ran it together until the 1960s. Ali went into exile nine years ago when his brother, a graduate of Washington's Georgetown University, was jailed in 1965 as an alleged spy for the United States. He divided his exile between London and Beirut.

"When Anwar Sadat became President, I wrote him twice, saying I'd like to come back. The letters were never answered. . . . He told me later he had never received them," Ali said.

Before the October war with Israel, Mustafa, suffering from an enlarged spleen, diabetes, a heart condition, eye trouble and gout, wrote from a hospital that he would like to see Ali. Warned that he might be arrested upon his return, Ali took the precaution of getting assurances from Mr. Sadat before returning to Egypt on January 8. Eighteen days later, Mr. Sadat released Mustafa from prison and on February 2 Ali was appointed to replace Mr. Heikal at Al Ahram.

WHAT WAS IT LIKE in solitary confinement for eight years?

"It was hell," Mustafa said, explaining that his cell was 10 feet by 5 feet and furnished with pot and toilet bucket. He was permitted half an hour outside the cell each day to wash or walk in a little exercise yard. His daughters were allowed to visit once a month for 15 minutes.

Pencil and paper were forbidden, but the jail telegraph worked beautifully, Mustafa said, adding that he managed to write each evening as fellow prisoners smuggled paper and pencils into his cell, and took them away again before morning. Mustafa's writings were sent to London, where his brother Ali admits to censoring them to "reduce the political temperature a little bit."

Mustafa's writings—serialised romantic political novels dated 50 years back but carefully identifying people of Nasser's government—appeared weekly in a Beirut movie magazine, "Shabaka," under the byline "Mr X, the great Egyptian writer."

"The air of freedom was too much for me; I caught pneumonia right after I was released and spent three weeks in bed."

He has an office at "Al Akhbar," his old paper, and said that he had been offered the leadership of the publishing house but really wanted only to write.

ALI SAID there was a rumour while Mustafa was in prison that Ali would go to prison for him every other month, giving his identical twin brother a breath of freedom.

"I always felt half of me was free in England," Mustafa said.

"And I always felt half of me was in prison," Ali added.

Under Ali, "Al Ahram" columns have recently criticised the government's food rationing and distribution procedures, interministerial haggling that has led to a 14-year delay in completion of a major new Cairo hotel and government red tape in general. He has pleaded for greater individual freedoms, the release of all political prisoners and "human treatment after they are released."

"I believe that freedom is not limited to people expressing their views. It also means a press free to draw attention and criticise waste. Billions of pounds have been lost through inefficiency . . . money that could have built thousands of homes and many factories. . . . I'm fed up with government committees and sub-committees. . . . Change won't come all at once, it must come bit by bit and not wait until everything is studied and restudied."

ASSOCIATED PRESS

THE FIRST ARTICLE, an interview with General (three weeks later Marshal) Ahmed Ismail, concealed (among fascinating military revelations) a troubling question: Had the invasion of Sinai been planned, not as a war of liberation, but as a limited operation with a political purpose?

Heikal had previously been accused of "pro-American" sympathies; he had, during the indecisive years argued the desirability of "neutralising America." He now questioned Egyptian reliance on the American initiative for peace. In questioning whether Dr Kissinger either could, or would, deliver a satisfactory settlement, Heikal was openly needling Sadat, who had publicly referred to the Secretary of State as his "friend and brother." Two of his editorials in particular—well-argued, un-Byzantine, candid—showed Heikal at the height of his polemical powers. Selling in editions of three-quarters-of-a-million, they were very widely discussed. In "The Israeli Style of

Negotiation" (18 January) Heikal argued that whatever Dr Kissinger might personally intend, the Zionist influence in America combined with the internal complexities in Israel ensured that Kissinger could never produce a solution satisfactory to the Arabs. As an example of the way in which the Israelis insisted on a concession for each movement of their own—which cast a gloomy light on the long panorama of mile-by-mile withdrawal—he quoted Kissinger's declaration that he had had to promise an advance of \$2,300 millions to get them to accept the cease-fire. The unspoken question was: after promising to recognise Israel, after returning the Israeli prisoners, after lifting the Red Sea blockade, after agreeing to resume diplomatic relations with America, what had Sadat still to offer in a system of negotiation depending on a *quid* for every *quo*?

Heikal's final editorial appeared on February 1st. "The Shadows . . . and the Glitter" of its title

## Nasser Re-evaluated

Beirut

THE LONG-AWAITED ERA of active "denasserization" has been launched in Egypt. Encouraged by his own popularity after the October war, President Sadat has lifted the veil on the subject which has been taboo—the debit side of the Nasser record. Egyptian newspapers have carried articles attacking not only the Nasser police apparatus but the socialism that was the very foundation of his régime.

Indeed, events have moved so quickly of late that Egyptians could be forgiven for thinking the political wheel had turned full circle. There have been calls for the public rehabilitation of the late Nahas Pacha, the Wafdist leader, and even a defence of the positive side of the monarchy in Egypt. It is now expected that the question of restoring the multi-party system will soon be raised.

Clearly President Sadat is paving the way for his so-called new era of hope. While Egyptian newspapers have begun to chip away at the Nasser edifice, President Sadat has taken his liberalization campaign a step farther. This week the Cabinet took steps to encourage the private sector, a lame duck under Nasser's socialism. Under the measures, Egyptian investors will be given the same guarantees as foreign investors with freedom from confiscation, sequestration and nationalisation.

Although the personality of Nasser has been spared public attack, it faces a trial by association. In one of the most outspoken articles, Dr Demerdash Ahmed, an Egyptian writer, declared that the socialist excesses of the Nasser era were no less damaging than the police state.

"The centres of power at the time launched a campaign of terror, degradation and humiliation that transformed Egypt into a gloomy world of need and distress that had never been witnessed even in the Middle Ages",

he wrote in Al Ahram,

"This nightmare has continued until the present day. The sequestration measures during this era were nothing more than highway robbery in disguise. . . ."

A similar theme was adopted by Mr Salah Gawdat, the editor of the weekly Al Mussawar. While praising the achievements of the Nasser era he declared that its "deviations" could not be overlooked.

"This era was full of oppression and torture at the hands of the visitors at dawn (the secret police). It muzzled freedom of expression and suppressed public liberties and committed the greatest crime in the history of Egyptian justice by the mass dismissal of the judiciary."

Mr Gawdat also accused the Nasser régime of creating what he called "innocent wards" in Egyptian prisons. These, he said, were to keep those who had been found innocent by the courts. He also declared that the legitimacy of the Nasser era ended with the 1967 defeat of the Arabs by the Israelis. "After that we lived in an illegitimate period until President Sadat established a new legitimacy different in quality, morals and practices."

The all-clear for the press campaign came when President Sadat dismissed Mr Muhammad Hassanein Heikal as editor of the authoritative Al Ahram and restored the Amin brothers. Mr Heikal was the last pillar of the Nasser régime and the guardian of Nasserism. His dismissal was followed by the decision to lift censorship on the Egyptian press. It was then that the officially sponsored "freedom" theme took on a more personal note.

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