

The Moslem Brotherhood— Terrorists or Just Zealots?

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CAIRO
WITHOUT the enthusiastic support of the Moslem Brotherhood, Mohammed Naguib's movement might already have met the fate of the half-dozen Egyptian Governments that preceded it in the year 1952. The Brotherhood was a full participant in Naguib's coup last summer, and much of his success since then can be attributed to the support he has received from the organization's two or three million Egyptian members.

Next to the Wafd, which is of course a political party, the Moslem Brotherhood is Egypt's largest and most powerful organization. Hassan el-Boukari and Ahmed Hussni, two of its former leaders, are now in the Cabinet. At least four members of the Officers' Committee which today runs Egypt are disciples. Army officers admit that nearly a third of their ranks participate in the Brotherhood's activities. University officials believe that about half their students, always a potent factor in Egyptian politics, belong to its campus chapters. Within the Brotherhood, however, there is a sharp division between those who want to make this organization into a political party and those who prefer to keep it a purely religious group.

The Supreme Guide

My first contact with the Moslem Brotherhood took place at the Cairo office of the Arab League. As I was leaving an interview with one of its officials, I was introduced to a young journalist whom I shall call Ibrahim, a correspondent for *Ed-Da'awa*, the unofficial weekly of the Brotherhood. Ibrahim complained that few Americans were interested in firsthand

information about the organization. Most of them, including the U.S. Embassy's political reporters, he told me, got their information from hostile sources, and he said he welcomed the opportunity to give me his version of the truth.

It was Ibrahim who arranged a meeting for me with Hassan al Hadibi, Supreme Guide of the Brotherhood. The meeting took place at headquarters one evening in the midst of a student rally of university chapters of the Brotherhood. Young men thronged the spacious courtyard and the surrounding streets, and it took us nearly twenty minutes to push our way into the building where we were to hold our rendezvous. Most of the students were dressed in western-style clothing, and I saw none who wore the red tarboosh, symbol of Egyptian nationalism. They were listening quietly to a religious leader who was commenting on a prayer which they

were all about to chant in unison. After the Supreme Guide arrived, the chanting began, and it continued all during our talk.

The Supreme Guide, a short, stocky man, was wearing a conservative western business suit. His dress and his dark-rimmed glasses suggested a college professor more than a religious fanatic.

BEFORE the interview, Ibrahim had told me that Hassan al Hadibi was not an original member of the Brotherhood but had been appointed Supreme Guide by King Farouk, now considered the Brotherhood's greatest enemy, three days after the assassination of Hassan al Banna, founder and first Supreme Guide. Hadibi had been a judge in Egypt's highest court and was the brother-in-law of Hussein Hussni Pasha, Special Secretary to the former King. Despite these connections, according to Ibrahim, the old guard of the Brotherhood felt a certain amount of gratitude to Hadibi because of his earnest efforts in the organization's behalf. However, they had frequently clashed with him on policy, since he was among those who insisted that the Brotherhood refrain from direct interference in politics.

When the 1936 treaty with Britain was abrogated by Egypt in 1951, Hadibi promised the King that his organization would not interfere, but the extremists ignored this promise and sent the Brotherhood's militia into the Suez Canal Zone to fight the British. As a result Hadibi's position as Supreme Guide became far from secure and subsequently his authority was openly questioned by many members.

In our interview Hadibi empha-



sized his conviction that the Moslem Brotherhood is primarily a religious organization whose purpose is to lead Egypt and all Moslems in a return to "the spirit of Islam." He criticized the western view of the organization as a band of religious fanatics. "We are not fanatics but zealots," he declared, "zealots for the basic Islamic principles of morality and social justice."

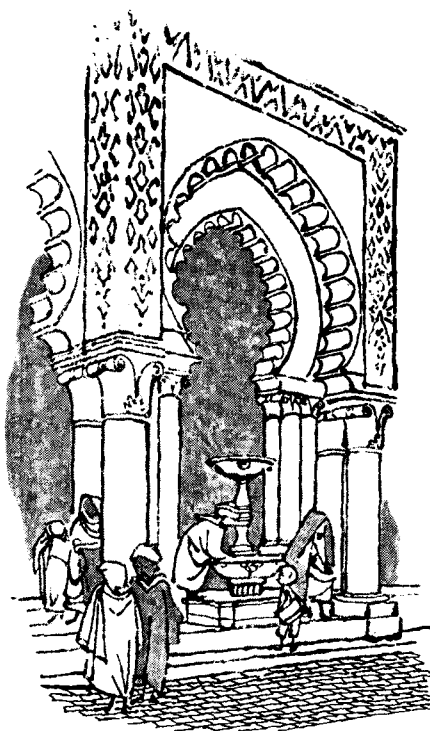
Social justice, he maintained, means a living wage, education, and social services for all citizens. His definition of morality heavily emphasized the modest role women should play in Islam, in contrast to their "brazen and offensive actions" in western society. When I asked if this would permit women to take advantage of university education, the Supreme Guide said: "I will answer your question in this way. I have two daughters. Both are university graduates. One practices medicine; the other is a university professor. I am proud of both of them. However, both observe modesty in dress and in their public appearances."

The Koran as Law

Hadibi declared that Egypt should adopt the Koran as its Constitution, and that the electoral process, public-utility legislation, and labor laws could all be built within its framework. True Islam, he went on, does not concern itself with external manifestations of daily life as expressed in the clothing or hat a man wears, the type of vehicle he uses for transport, or the way his shoes are made. True Islam is concerned with life's spiritual aspects and ignores its material side so long as it does no harm to the soul. He was therefore urging Moslems to accept the best of western technology and science and to use it in the interests of Islam.

After Egypt had its Islamic Constitution, Hadibi said, the ruler and form of government would follow the Koranic principle of *ijma*, or popular consensus of the citizens. Egypt might be a monarchy or a republic. It would make no difference as long as the people decided.

The financial system would be based on the Koran. Banking would be nationalized, and usury, that plague of the peasant, would be out-



lawed. Through social co-operation and an equitable taxation system, Moslems would help each other financially and social life would be protected from the evils of European civilization. Finally, there would be an attempt to unify Egypt and all the Islamic world under one Moslem ruler guided by the Koran.

"Is membership in the Moslem Brotherhood incompatible with socialist beliefs?" I asked.

"We believe in taking what is best from all social movements, from democracy, dictatorship, Communism, and socialism," Hadibi answered eagerly. "Let me use our mosque as an example of what I mean.

"There we practice something from all these beliefs. There we practice Communism because a man who comes to pray cannot be removed by another individual from any spot within the mosque he chooses for his devotions. A beggar is the equal of a caliph. In the mosque there is dictatorship when the imam who leads prayers determines when and what postures of worship are to be taken, and all must follow him. There is democracy because any worshiper may interrupt the imam and correct him should he make a mistake in his recitation. And, as I have already told you, there is socialism, because we preach that all citizens should

have adequate housing, food, clothing, education, and social justice."

The Meaning of *Kuwa*

Finally I asked the Supreme Guide about the means the organization would use to achieve the creation of a Moslem state. I questioned him about the Brotherhood's motto, "*Hok, Kuwa, Huriya*"—"Law, Power, Freedom." According to the explanations I had heard, the meaning of "Law" was clear enough and "Freedom" apparently meant simply that the British must go. Among the Brothers I had met there was little difference on these two aspects of doctrine. However, there seemed to be fundamental disagreement within the organization about the concept of *Kuwa*.

The Supreme Guide agreed that this was the aspect of doctrine most subject to misinterpretation. "*Kuwa*," he said, "does not mean force, violence, or assassination." He denied the organization's connection with the murder of Prime Minister Nokrashy Pasha in 1948. "Only for national ends," he insisted, "will we use *Kuwa*." His categorical denial that paramilitary formations are maintained by the Brotherhood was at wide variance with the role played by the Brotherhood in the Suez Canal fighting early in 1952.

The Activists

The broad philosophy expressed by the faction that opposes Hadibi within the Brotherhood is similar to his. The main disagreement centers on the interpretation of *Kuwa*. Ibrahim, an activist, introduced me to several others at their main center, the editorial offices of the weekly journal *Ed-Da'awa*.

The leader of this faction is Saleh Eshmawy, founder and editor of *Ed-Da'awa*. His journal was established to replace the Brotherhood's daily and weekly publications, which were confiscated by the King after he outlawed the organization in 1949. Eshmawy is also director of the Moslem Brotherhood's Special Office. Until the trial of Nokrashy's assassin, the Special Office was unknown to outsiders and worked as a secret committee to execute the decisions taken by the Brotherhood's elected General Assembly. Its members continue

their work today as a tightly knit, secret inner council. They are believed to be the strongest group within the Brotherhood. The two Brotherhood members in General Naguib's Cabinet are believed to attend meetings of the Special Committee. Its hand is often seen in actions which, like the Canal Zone attack, are taken in specific contradiction to the Supreme Guide's wishes.

The evening I met Eshmawy he was just saying good-by to a group of Azhar sheiks and country clerics. They were the only people I ever saw in the organization who dressed in the traditional Egyptian *galabi'ya*. Ibrahim, Eshmawy, and I were joined by two of the editors of *Ed-Da'awa* in a well-furnished office. The only wall decorations were a photograph of Hassan al Banna, the first Supreme Guide, and one of General Mohammed Naguib.

Eshmawy is a slightly built man who struck me as a much more spiritually sensitive person than Hadibi. He speaks in quiet, soft tones, never raising his voice even when making the most violent statements.

Moderate Murder

Most of our conversation centered on the use of political violence to fulfill the aims of the Moslem Brotherhood. His first point of disagreement with the Supreme Guide was in the translation of *Kuwa*. He placed much more emphasis on its translation into English as "force" rather than "power." I explained to Eshmawy that the image most Americans carried of the Moslem Brotherhood is based on this interpretation and that, because of the organization's association with the Nokrashy assassination and the Suez Canal attack, many had come to think of it as a terrorist group.

Eshmawy rejoined that *Kuwa* was never used unless in the national cause, in defense of Egypt's freedom. When freedom is threatened, he argued, it is not only the right but the duty of Moslems to use force in its defense. The assassination of Nokrashy, according to this argument, was an obligation.

But how, I asked, can a modern state exist if minorities within the body politic use force to thwart the decisions of citizens at large?

Under King Farouk, Eshmawy said, Egypt was not a democratic state. The people were not in a position to take democratic decisions. It was therefore incumbent upon the Moslem Brotherhood to come to their defense against tyrants such as Nokrashy. Violence was never used without giving the target several chances to mend his ways or get out. "Assassination," he asserted, "occurs only after we have first advised the victim of his errors, then warned him. If he ignores our advice and warning, only then do we shoot him."

As director of the Special Committee, Eshmawy gave the orders for both the assassination of Nokrashy and the Canal Zone attack. He openly advocated converting the Moslem Brotherhood from a social foundation to a political party, because he believes that religion and politics are one.

When the Brotherhood's General Assembly was discussing a successor to Hadibi last winter, Eshmawy and Boukari, the latter one of the Brotherhood Cabinet Ministers, were the most popular candidates. Ibrahim and his friends believe that both these men are much closer spiritually and politically to Hassan al Banna than the Farouk-appointed Supreme Guide.



Banna long ago attempted to bring the Brotherhood into Egyptian political life. In 1944 he tried to run for Parliament as a Brotherhood candidate, but was disqualified by election officials. The first Supreme Guide also gave forceful interpretation to *Kuwa*. In the war against Israel he organized the first Brotherhood paramilitary formations and sent them into Palestine to wage guerrilla warfare against the Zionists.

According to Ibrahim, the King feared the growing strength of the organization as revealed by this intervention in Palestine, and so his "Iron Guard" of palace officers murdered Hassan al Banna as a royal birthday present on February 12, 1949. This was shortly after the King had banned the Moslem Brotherhood, confiscated its property, and sent about fifteen thousand of its members off to concentration camps in the Sinai Desert.

WHEN the Wafd came to power in 1951, it freed most of the imprisoned Brothers and let the organization come out from underground. The existence of the Brotherhood's militia is still a semi-secret, but its activity under General Mohammed Bey in the Canal Zone could hardly be concealed. When I asked one of Eshmawy's followers if the Brotherhood militia would be disbanded now that a Government of which the organization approved had come to power, he answered: "It's still too early to know whether or not we will need our military force."

To date relations between the Moslem Brotherhood and General Naguib have been more than cordial. However, now that the revolution's initial phases have passed, danger signals have begun to appear. Recently when Naguib addressed the students of Ibrahim University in Cairo, he was greeted with chants of "The Koran is our constitution!"

If compromises can be made between those who demand a monarchy and those who urge a republic, between those who want Egypt to be a western democracy and those who insist that it be an Islamic theocracy, the Naguib régime will succeed. If not, the activists of the "zealous but not fanatical" Moslem Brotherhood are waiting.

Iraq: Dilemma For the West

RAY ALAN

One of the most frustrating duties of world leadership is that it forces us to understand the internal politics of strange and distant lands, to keep in mind their cross-currents of power and interest, and to learn to pronounce the names of their leaders. Yet the politics of Middle Eastern countries are important to us. They illuminate the familiar dilemma we face, and have helped create through economic development, all over Asia—whether to support the entrenched leaders of the status quo or rely on unstable and unpredictable elements that favor social and economic progress but whose devotion to our anti-Communist cause is at least questionable.

Mesopotamia was the center of the world in the days of the Babylonian and Assyrian Empires. Today, renamed Iraq, it has a central position again, but this time as a prize in a game of world power—the prize consisting of a tenth of the world's oil reserves, some military airfields, and a desperate people groping for a way out of their wretchedness.

BAGHDAD

TWO MONTHS of military rule have only recently ended in Baghdad. As this is written the army is still a conspicuous feature of the landscape. All is calm; the régime's leading critics are in jail, and Opposition parties, newspapers, and meetings are banned.

Yet a scuffle between two vagabonds in the bazaar or the sudden closing of a couple of roller-shutters at an unusual hour (the merchants are generally the first to sense trouble, and the roar as they all pull down their metal shutters and bolt and bar their premises sounds like

the overture to Armageddon) is sufficient to crystallize the tension in an instant. Foreigners and upper-class Iraqis quicken their pace, and the street crowd turns and coalesces expectantly. Blackened walls, boarded-up windows, and security circulars prey naggingly on the peace of mind of a community that was still trying to forget the riots of five years ago when the bloodshed and arson of last November broke out.

Shifting Sands

The November riots grew out of a campaign by the Opposition parties for electoral reform, but were directed as much against the West and the Anglo-Iraqi treaty of 1930 as against the régime.

The 1930 treaty and its chief defender, Nuri Pasha es-Said, are the sole pillars of stability and continuity that stand out from the political quicksands of two decades of Iraqi independence. On the day they disappear Iraq will face anarchy. Nuri, aged sixty-four and in failing health, is already anxious to retire from politics, but events conspire to keep him, if not always at the helm, at least at the helmsman's ear. The treaty will either expire, be abrogated, or be replaced during the life of the present Iraqi Parliament.

It was the 1930 treaty that paved the way for Iraq's independence and membership in the League of Nations—until 1918 the country had been a province of the Ottoman Empire—but these initial benefits soon came to be overlooked. Most articulate Iraqis viewed the treaty from its inception with cynicism because it was negotiated and signed while their nation was still under British mandate.



The treaty permits Britain to maintain two airbases in Iraq—at Habbaniya near Baghdad and at Shaiba, in the extreme south near Basra. Their strategic significance has shrunk with the lengthening of range in combat aircraft and the construction of American bases in Turkey and at Dhahran in Saudi Arabia; but they are important to the internal stability of the country—the major consideration when they were sited. Habbaniya-based aircraft have on occasion been called out to crush Kurdish and Bedouin risings; both bases played a vital part in the defeat of the military putsch led by Rashid Ali el-Gailani in 1941; and withdrawal of this substantial British umbrella would expose both the western-owned Iraq Petroleum Company and the Hashemite royal family to heavy weather.

IRAQIS are split into two mutually intolerant Moslem communities—the fanatical, obscurantist Shiites, who are in a majority, and the orthodox Sunnis. The Sunnis are further divided racially into mutually contemptuous Arabs and Kurds. The Hashemite dynasty suffers from the double disadvantage of being both Sunnis and British protégés. It was Britain that found thrones for the family, in custom-built Jordan as well as Iraq.

On the whole the Hashemites have remained dependably loyal to their fairy godmother. It is largely because of them and their mainly Sunni allies, the feudal notables of whom Nuri es-Said is the most gifted