

REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT
OF THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY AT CAIRO
TO THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES
For the year 1937-38

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Gentlemen :

The life and work of the American University at Cairo is necessarily affected so greatly by the state of mind of the Nation as a whole during any given year that this Report for 1937-38 must begin with some reference to the mentality of the public and the general political situation during the past year. It will be informing to know upon what troubled seas the American University must sail.

Board of Trustees
20th Jan 1939

The year began with the Wafd (National) Party, led by Nahas Pasha, firmly in the saddle and apparently assured of a long tenure of office. The leadership of Nahas Pasha in carrying through a Treaty with Great Britain, then the Montreux Conference agreements which abolished the Capitulations, and finally the admission of Egypt to the League of Nations, seemed to give him a prestige that was unassailable. The death of King Fuad and the youth and immaturity of Prince Farouk gave freer rein to the influence of a Prime Minister in proportion as they reduced the counterbalancing influence of the Palace. Then, almost suddenly, for it came so rapidly, a far reaching revolution took place in the political situation, so that before the year ended Nahas Pasha and the Wafd are found completely out of office and the Palace is dictating practically everything in the life of the Nation. How can this reversal of the situation be explained? We can hint at various causes, but without wishing to be quoted publicly. For one thing, the Wafd Party may be said to have abused its power. The leader, Nahas Pasha, over addicted to popular adulation,

laid himself open to a charge of trying to outshine the King and of emulating a Mussolini policy where the Prime Minister would rule the country and the King would become a figure head. In addition to this sin of vainglory was added, by other members of the Party, the sin of widespread nepotism. Government staffs seemed to be identical with the family trees of the chief officials. Forms of graft were hinted at. Perhaps most serious was the stoppage of the wheels of Government administration because sub-officials refused to take the responsibility for important decisions and the chief officials were away speechifying all over the country to prove how right and righteous was the Wafd Party. Still another cause for the revolution can be found in a social and economic hostility to the Wafd Party on the part of the old Turkish aristocracy and landowning classes. These looked on the Wafd leaders as newcomers in national leadership, plebeian in origin, advocates of anti-capitalistic measures and in general gods of the hoi polloi rather than representatives of the aristocracy. With considerable skill the Opposition manoeuvred its forces. In addition, certain intangible factors exerted a great influence. The youth of the new King aroused the enthusiasm of the younger generation for one of their own age, and the sentimental sympathy of the older generation for one so inexperienced coming into such heavy responsibilities. This weighed against the Wafd and its seeming encroachments upon the prerogatives of the Throne. This enthusiasm for King Farouk increased materially as his engagement and wedding were announced. National festivities made people forget political issues. In vain did the Wafd argue technically as to rights under the Constitution, Oriental line of reasoning prevailed which said, "But

a King should have his way, otherwise why have a King; and anyhow the King is young, let no man cross him." These feelings and attitudes were made the most of by the Opposition until the issue seemed drawn between Palace and Parleментарian. Then, true to the oriental temper which inclines toward imperialism and in sharp contrast with Anglo-Saxon history which moved steadily toward democratic constitutionalism, when the issue was thus drawn, it was Palace that won and Parleментарian that lost in Egypt in 1937-38. Of course there has been no abandonment of the forms of constitutional government. The King called for the resignation of Nahas Pasha; really dismissed him rather harshly. A temporary Cabinet was formed, acceptable to the Palace. Elections were held. Charges of political pressure and intimidation have been numerous and widespread. The Palace group came into power and there we stand to-day. The present Government cannot be called popular or really representative, but there is widespread content in the final settlement of a disturbing political situation, in the resumption of Government business and in officials who talk business and not politics. The story of the upheaval would not be complete without referring to a movement which for a while assumed threatening proportions. In its efforts to win, the Palace party mobilized Moslem sentiment against the Wafd because of the prominence in it of a Christian, Makram Obeid, the Minister of Finance, who was indeed described as the brains of the Party and who was accused of undue favoritism to Christians. The Azhar (Moslem University) and its rector were used to arouse throughout Egypt anti-Christian sentiment and direct it into political channels. There were times when this development really looked threatening, but since the victory of the Palace party, this movement

and its influence have subsided. Its purely political character can be inferred from the fact that after all, the Palace group, even though aristocratic and capitalistic and plutocratic, is made up really of modern-minded, well educated and Europeanized men. They and the young King have no real zeal for the restoration of medieval and traditional Islamic ideals and practises.

In the midst of all these political developments, the University has moved along for the most part undisturbed, although often perplexed by fears and anxieties and often embarrassed in its official relationships. The new Government, with Mohamed Mahmud Pasha as Prime Minister, is not as sympathetic with Christian and missionary institutions as the Wafd party was, although it is not to be described as aggressively opposed. It merely makes relationships less free and less cooperative. On the other hand, this Government has lifted education out of politics and suppressed those disturbing student demonstrations which the Wafd Party too frequently encouraged.

We are now beginning to realize the extent to which our past history has availed to establish the University in public respect and favor. Dr. Cleland, for example, says, "As far as attitudes toward the University are concerned, we have cause only for rejoicing. There has been no evidence of hostility, but rather the opposite. We have had more attention by the Arabic press than in any previous year, in fact 50 per cent better than the preceding year which had been the best up to that time. Lecturers have not been so hard to secure, and we have had more applications than ever by persons who had lectures to give. The continued approval of Egyptian leaders is seen in the renewal of gifts by Dr. Ahmed Maher and Madame Charaoui, as well as in

a new gift from Aly el Shamsy Pasha.

Dr. Amir Bektor of the Department of Education adds other instances of our position of influence growing out of the past. He reports the following :

"Early in the year the Controllers of the schools of Morocco came to Cairo to put a young prince into a Government School. During his visit to the Ministry of Education, he kept asking its officials whether there was any educational review in Egypt. Finally Mohammed Fahim Bey, Deputy Controller of Secondary Education, invited me to dinner in order that I might meet the guest from Morocco. A week later the guest visited our University, carried with him its catalogues, and bought for three of the schools of Morocco, three sets of the volumes of the last ten years of our Journal, a set for each school. He also paid three subscriptions for the coming year."

"Talking of contacts I was amazed to be asked to attend an educational meeting of a very religious nature, in the Royal Teachers Association. The meeting was called by a political leader from Morocco. Its idea was to link the Mohammedan countries from Persia to Gibraltar through cultural, religious and linguistic bonds. The audience was composed of higher officials from the Ministry of Education led by the Undersecretary, together with the important ulemas of Al Azhar. All the speeches including that of the Undersecretary stressed nothing but the legacy of Islam and Mohammedan culture. Out of some hundred persons at the tea I was the only Christian. Still I felt honored by the fact that even in such a gathering they wanted educational ideas from a Christian who represented a Christian institution."

The only other general comment I would make about the University as a whole during 1937-38 relates to the anxieties and burdens incident to the withdrawal of members from the staff and the unavoidable delay in searching for their successors. I refer to Prof. Arthur Jeffery who was called to Columbia University and to Dean Russell Galt who resigned at the end of his furlough year.

The work of the several divisions of the University may now be taken up in detail.

I. COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCES.

In the separate Report on the College written by myself as Chairman of the College Faculty, I undertook to make a number of comprehensive observations about this section of the University based upon my intimate contact with the College during the past year. There is no need to recapitulate these in this Report save to urge that they be studied carefully by the incoming Dean and perhaps by the whole College Faculty with a view to removing if possible the limitations which have hindered the growth of the College. Our most serious problems center in the Egyptian Government course where the quality of student has been disturbingly low, where the cramming methods requisite for passing Government examinations are extremely distasteful to our Western teachers and where the operation of the course for the most part in Arabic has compelled us to make chief use of Egyptian teachers unacquainted with much of our educational and Christian idealism. It will be remembered that at least twice in our history serious proposals were made to abolish the course and offer education only along lines of Western ideals.