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Raymond F. McLean
President

As ever yours,

I shall look forward to seeing you in November.

I am sending you with this letter mimeographed copies of the two reports prepared by the Stevenson Commission. The one covers the judgement of the Commission with respect to all three of the universities in the Middle East and the other is a more detailed report bearing only on our own University. We certainly are indebted to Dr. Stevenson and the members of his Commission for the study they have made and for their reports. While there will probably be no time in November at the meeting of the Board of Trustees for a lengthy reading and consideration of these reports, I am sure that all of our discussion of the day will be informed by such data as these. It would be splendid, therefore, if you could read them in advance. It would be well if you will bring your copies with you to the meeting.

Dear Friends:

To the Members of the Board of Trustees
The American University at Cairo

October 17, 1961

GRAMERCY 5-1769

American Office : 175 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK 10, N. Y.

The American University at Cairo
UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES
UNIVERSITY OF CAIRO

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At the same time, higher education in the Middle East has been rapidly developing. One of the primary interests of the new governments in the Middle East countries has been the establishment and expansion of national school systems, including universities. A generation ago, American institutions were frequently unique as pioneers in the field of higher education; today they are only a few of the growing number of educational influences serving the area. But most of these new educational influences and institutions are strongly nationalistic, stressing local culture and language, and claiming the prerogative of dominating higher education. Whereas, prior to the second World War, foreign education and culture were eagerly welcomed, today they are apt to be subject as possible infringements on national sovereignty. The new national governments of the Middle East have passed regulating legislation, placing many aspects of foreign educational institutions under the control of the local Ministry of education.

Moreover, in the development of American political interest, the United States Government has embarked upon economic and technical assistance programs in which these American institutions are playing a role. They are used as training centers for nationals under United States government programs and members of their faculty have been called upon to participate in the foreign aid programs. This involves the American institutions in operational and financial relations with the United States government - a position entirely new to them.

One of the most durable and continuing American influences in the Middle East emanates from the educational institutions operated in the area by American organizations. These ante-date the growth of American trade interests and political commitments. For nearly a century they were the chief representatives of the American presence in the area, typifying the American character and bringing nationals into touch with American persons and American ideas.

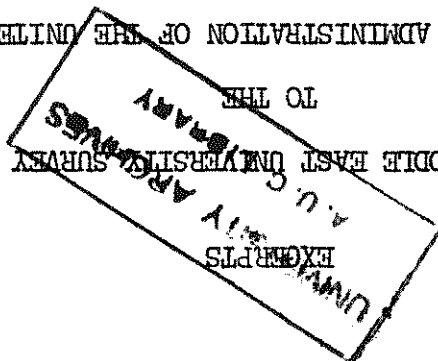
INTRODUCTION

I.

The Place and Prospects of the American Universities in the Middle East

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION ADMINISTRATION OF THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

REPORT OF THE MIDDLE EAST UNIVERSITY SURVEY COMMISSION



Blumenfeld
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II.

THE COMMISSION

Objectives

The purpose of the Commission was to study higher education in the countries of the Middle East with particular reference to the American University of Beirut, the American University at Cairo and Robert College at Istanbul. While the Commission was not expected to review the internal operations and problems of any of the three institutions mentioned in detail, the Commission did consider the objectives, accomplishments and roles, present and future, of each of the institutions in the light of economic and political conditions and expected developments in the countries of the Middle East and of the educational needs of those countries and also in order that the contributions of each of the three institutions might be of the highest standards and greatest possible value.

Egypt

From January 8th to 20th, 1961, the Commission was in Cairo studying the position of the American University at Cairo. Again, a series of meetings with administrative and faculty leaders occupied the Commission. Government officials, the Rector of Cairo University, prominent alumni, business and professional leaders were all consulted. American embassy officers and ICA representatives were also interviewed.

III

THE THREE UNIVERSITIES

B. The American University at Cairo

The American University at Cairo was founded in 1919 by a group of American business men concerned with international affairs. Their interest in Egypt grew out of the work of the United Presbyterian Church, which had been active in the country since the middle of the nineteenth century. The University, however, was not launched as part of the missionary organization, but was made an entirely separate institution. It is chartered in the District of Columbia and directed by a self-perpetuating Board of Trustees.

As originally envisioned, the University was to include a fully-rounded program of higher education, including colleges of engineering, medicine and agriculture, as well as science and liberal arts. This program has not been realized, partly because Egyptian state universities grew rapidly and pre-empted many of these fields, and partly because financial resources were not adequate.

Under these circumstances, the American University became an institution supplementing the work in higher education carried on at the national universities. It secured recognition and made its contribution by pioneering in new fields of subject matter and methodology. This has secured and maintained an appreciative attitude toward it by Egyptian educators, but has also raised the question in their minds as to its status as a university in comparison with the Egyptian state institutions. . . .

(6) Problems:

In making a place for itself amidst Egypt's burgeoning national university life, the American University has faced three difficulties. The first is that traditionally the Egyptian Government has refused to recognize degrees given by a foreign university within Egypt. The second difficulty arose from the fact that the Egyptian University system followed the French pattern and tended to adopt the French attitude toward American higher education. The third difficulty has been the limited nature of the American University curriculum and the small number of its faculties.

Despite these difficulties, the University has wielded an influence out of all proportion to its modest size. It has done this by a) specializing in neglected or underdeveloped areas of study, b) stressing individualized and creative instruction through small classes, the seminar method, use of the library and a more flexible examination system, c) developing both popular and academic programs focused on Egyptian problems in the field of social and economic developments.

Permeating such activities has been the success of the University in identifying itself with the Egyptian community. Prominent Egyptians have served on its advisory committees, faculty members (both Egyptian and foreign) have rendered special services to the Egyptian Government and its institutions and the University has served as a center for certain types of Egyptian cultural activities. Both its small size and its central location have prevented the University from becoming as separate from its local environment as has been true in some other foreign schools.

Since 1955, the University Faculty and Administration have been developing a plan to guide the University in its future activities. This has now been adopted in principle by the Board of Trustees and will be introduced into the University gradually beginning with next year. This plan comprises the following elements:

- (a) Strengthening of the teaching staff by appointing professors in the field of the Arabic language and literature, English language and literature, economics, anthropology, sociology, philosophy and adult education.
- (b) Reduction of teaching hours gaining greater opportunity for research and emphasis upon greater excellence in teaching.
- (c) Reducing the number of academic departments and making each department run through a six-year sequence.
- (d) Discontinuing the present departments of Journalism, Education and Business Administration, although some teaching in these fields may be offered as non-credit courses in adult education.
- (e) Stressing increased competence in Arabic and English as languages of instruction. Some basic courses outside the field of Arabic literature will be taught in Arabic. . . .

Through these changes it is expected that the University can continue its role in Egyptian education by strengthening the duo-cultural nature of the institution and making available the values of the broad, liberal arts approach that characterizes American higher education at its best.

In many ways, the American University at Cairo is perhaps the least "American" of the three American institutions of higher learning in the Middle East. It is just this fact that makes it an effective American influence and should enable it to continue serving within a strongly nationalistic cultural situation.

The second basic question faced by the University is its relations to the Government of the United Arab Republic. From its founding in 1919 until the Egyptian Revolution in 1952, the University had few problems in government relations. In contrast to other foreign schools of the country it consistently stressed the teaching of Arabic and understood the desire of the Government more closely to relate private schools to national education. Despite the official non-recognition of the University's degrees, its graduates were employed by the government, especially in the teaching profession.

In the early days of the Egyptian Revolution, the University continued these cordial relations. A number of the younger officers in the Revolution-ary Movement were American University graduates. At the time of the Suez Canal crisis, the University was the principal American influence remaining in the country and became the center of organizing relief work for victims of the fighting. All this has created a strong reputation for sympathy with, and service to, the Egyptian people.

SUMMARY:

The particular significance of the American University of Cairo lies in its position at the center of the United Arab Republic, from which presently emanates many of the strongest forces of the Arab world. The fact that the University has been able to continue when so many other foreign institutions have closed, gives it special significance. The reputation it enjoys and the contacts it establishes with significant Egyptian groups is a major source of American influence in the UAR. Were it to disappear, the foreign cultural field in Egypt would be left largely to neutralists and Soviet bloc influences, which would be both a loss to the Egyptian community and to the Western world. It is precisely because conditions are changing rapidly in Cairo and tradition- al bonds of friendship with the West are weakened that the American University faces a new, more significant and exacting role

IV.

BASIC ROLE OF THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITIES

Each of the three institutions surveyed plays a specific role in relation to the country in which it is located, the program it pursues and the general position of the United States in the area. These were considered in detail in the preceding section. In addition, there are these general observations which are valid for all three institutions.

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As educational institutions, the American University of Beirut, The American University at Cairo, and Robert College have each played a pioneer role. They are among the first institutions of higher learning in their respective countries; they pre-dated the emergence of national universities;

The Educational Contribution

In addition to this peripheral role as "American", the universities are directly related to programs of the United States government

Although the three American universities are not strongly committed in their curricula to the presentation of American cultural studies, they are the natural cultural centers to which the local community looks

In addition to this peripheral role as "American", the universities are directly related to programs of the United States government

Moreover, there gathers about the American University a group of nations who work in continued and close contact with Americans.

In addition to being a physical presence, the American universities are centers of non-political contact between American and Middle Eastern life. Here nationals and Americans are brought into continuing relationship around the common interests of education. Even when political tensions have circumscribed communications between official American missions and the local government, contact and communication has taken place through students and faculty and friends on the American campus. This is particularly important in view of the social and economic ferment that is ubiquitous throughout the Middle East.

The fact that these are American institutions takes on a new significance in relation to the interest and activities of the United States in the Middle East. Heretofore, "American" was chiefly identified with philanthropic activity, unrelated to political objectives. It is now inevitable that the United States Government has a particular concern for the operations of American institutions. For one thing, the universities are part of the physical presence of the United States in the area. Often, they are as well, or better known, than the American Embassy. In countries where other forms of American contact - chiefly business - have been minor, public attention is focused upon the American universities as a center of American activity. This role differs between Cairo, Beirut, and Istanbul, since the attitude toward the United States and the amount of American activity in each of the three countries differs. Yet in each, the American university is an important physical reminder that the "Americans are there" and are there in a favorable aspect.

The "American Contribution"

The American universities play a double role in the Middle East. They are related to and involved in the American position and the operation of certain American programs; at the same time they are part of and contribute to the general educational activities of the area. These two roles are not clearly separable, yet it will be useful to consider each by itself.

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and they entered: new fields of education not covered by local or national institutions.

Despite the significant pioneer role of these institutions, national universities in the Middle East have not followed the American pattern exemplified in them. This was partly due to the fact that the basic western cultural connection was with France, so that French educational methods and institutions have largely governed the development of Middle Eastern institutions

Perhaps the most basic and needed contribution of the American universities has been their insistence that education is a matter of mind, quality and character growth

Part of this educational emphasis is found in the liberal arts concept of education, used by American institutions

Another important contribution lies in the emphasis on excellence of work and high academic standards. The new national universities in the

Middle East are overcrowded with students and cannot meet the demand for popular education. In many cases they have expanded too rapidly with a resultant loss of standards. With large classes and lack of freedom to select the highest calibre secondary school graduates, they have geared their under-graduate work to the lowest common intellectual denominator. In contrast, the American universities, as free autonomous institutions, are able to restrict their enrollment, choose their students carefully and enforce reasonable standards of academic excellence. As the enrollment in national universities continues to increase, this role of the American institution will become more important.

A rather unique feature of the American institutions is their concern for the non-academic life of their students. Such American practices are extracurricular activities, planned recreation, health services, student guidance and counselling were first introduced into the Middle East in the American universities. This feature of their work has been of great interest to national educators, who have not hesitated to copy some of the American activities in this field. One of the three American institutions studied contributed over twenty non-academic services to the university life in the country where it is operating. The American universities have also been pioneers in specific fields of high education

To continue to serve effectively in the future, the American institutions need to uncover and enter into academic fields not now included in national education. In this regard they may always be supplementary institutions, justifying their existence by concentrating upon a few pioneer fields rather than by offering a completely rounded program of university work.

The American universities have also served as gateways into graduate study in the United States. This is one reason why some superior students come to these institutions in preference to their own universities

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Another special feature of the American institutions is their concept of higher education as closely related to the needs and problems of the community.

One of the most basic and undetermined aspects of the development of Middle Eastern states is the type of technological and social techniques that will govern the process. Traditionally, these techniques have been drawn from the Western world, i.e. Great Britain, France, Germany and the United States. With the rise and penetration of the Soviet Bloc, Middle Eastern technology is now feeling the effect of the Soviet social and technological approach to developmental problems. Even when this approach does not necessarily result in a pro-Soviet political orientation it does tend to bind the technological process to Soviet methods.

To strengthen and expand that role is directly related to our American institutions in cultivating a pro-Western attitude among those engaged in the process of national development.

VI.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Inasmuch as this Commission finds that the American University of Beirut, the American University at Cairo and Robert College are each effective centers of American influence creating good will for the United States and making substantial contribution to the welfare of the country where it is located as well as to the entire Middle East, this Commission makes these recommendations:

1. It is in the interest of the United States that these institutions continue and be strengthened.

2. Since the major problem of their continuance lies in financing and because funds from private sources are insufficient, it is imperative that United States Government funds be provided for both operating and capital costs.

3. To justify financial help from the United States Government, and from other sources, each of the three institutions, in planning and carrying out their respective programs should:

a. Insist upon quality

b. have in their service at all times adequate and competent administration to insure that the educational services which they undertake are wisely planned and are carried out with effective leadership.

4. In connection with any United States Government financial assistance to these institutions, the following considerations should be taken into account:

May 4, 1961

William E. Stevenson, Chairman

By:

John S. Badeau
James Terry Duce
Schuyler Wallace

THE MIDDLE EAST UNIVERSITY
SURVEY COMMISSION

Respectfully submitted:

In conclusion, the Commission is convinced that the American University of Beirut, American University at Cairo and Robert College are each performing an important task of furthering and supporting the American interest in the Middle East. They deserve the fullest assistance and encouragement of the United States Government.

CONCLUSION

- a. It is of the very essence of a successful educational enterprise that plans be made for several years ahead.
- b. These institutions require a continuing fund to meet essential operating and capital costs.
- c. So far as possible, grants to the respective institutions should be made with a minimum of restrictive provisions as to their use.
- d. It would be highly advantageous to each of the three universities and to the United States Government as well, if instead of the present complex system by which dollar aid is offered under the provisions of the Mutual Security Act, Public Law 480 and in other ways, a single unified system could be adopted so that both dollar and local currencies could be included in single grants.
- e. To make possible essential future planning it is urged that steps be taken so that government financial commitments be made for support to be provided over periods of at least five years.

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