

Changing News Changing Realities

MEDIA CENSORSHIP'S EVOLUTION IN EGYPT



Abdalla F. Hassan

Changing News
Changing Realities

Changing News

Changing Realities

MEDIA CENSORSHIP'S EVOLUTION IN EGYPT

Abdalla F. Hassan



Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism
University of Oxford

Research sponsored by the Gerda Henkel Foundation

Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism
Department of Politics and International Relations
University of Oxford
13 Norham Gardens
Oxford OX2 6PS
United Kingdom
<http://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk>

Copyright © 2013 by Abdalla F. Hassan
Design by Sally Boylan and Adam el-Sehemy
Cover photographs by Abdalla F. Hassan, Joshua Stacher, and Lesley Lababidi

The newspapers' sting at first seemed slight and was conveniently disregarded, but its cumulative effect proved dangerous. By aggressively projecting political messages to its readers and generating active political debate among an expanding reading public . . . the press helped create a climate for political action that would eventually undermine the British hold on the country.

(Ami Ayalon, *The Press in the Arab Middle East*)

*For Teta Saniya, my parents, and siblings with love,
and for all those brave souls and unsung heroes
who have sacrificed so much so that others can live free*

Contents

Acknowledgments	xi
Preface: The State and the Media	1
I: Since the Printing Press	5
1. Press Beginnings in Egypt	7
2. Nasser and the Era of Pan-Arabism	29
3. Sadat, the Infitah, and Peace with Israel	63
II: The Media and the Mubarak Era	79
4. Mubarak's Three-Decade Caretaker Presidency	81
5. Television's Coming of Age	119
6. Barriers Broken: Censorship's Limits	137
7. Free Expression versus the Right to Bark	189
III: Revolution and Two and a Half Years On	221
8. No Going Back: First Four Day of Revolution	223
9. Sustaining the Revolution	265
10. The Media after Mubarak's Downfall	315
11. What's Changed? Politics and the Press under Military Rule	355
12. Mubarak 2.0: Revolutionaries versus the Generals	433
13. Fall of Military Rule, the Islamists, and the Weight of Words	541
14. Conclusion: Lessons from Egypt's Experience with Censorship	649
Bibliography	669

Acknowledgments

I am grateful to my parents for all they have given me. From the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, I would like to thank David Levy, James Painter, John Lloyd, Sara Kalim, Alex Reid, Kate Hanneford-Smith, Amanda Armstrong, Anne Geniets, and Angela Julian. Eugene Rogan, director of the Middle East Centre at St Anthony's College, has been an extremely helpful and supportive adviser and always a pleasure to exchange ideas with. Most of all, I am grateful to my fellow fellows at the Reuters Institute and to everyone who has taken the time to be interviewed for this research. I have learnt so much from them. My thanks to Norman G. Finkelstein, David Levy, and James Painter for their suggestions on earlier versions; Jane Robson for her copy-edit of the manuscript; Sally Boylan for her layout design; Joshua Stacher, Elijah Zarwan, Lesley Lababidi, Andrew Sultana, the Dominican Institute for Oriental Studies (IDÉO), and the Bibliotheca Alexandrina for use of their photographs; Carlos Latuff for use of his cartoons; and Norman G. Finkelstein, Craig Duff, Lawrence Pintak, Doug Tarnopol, Jennifer Alejandro, Sally Boylan, Brian Childs, Jason Thompson, Courtney Kealy and Adam el-Sehemy for their support and encouragement.

I am honoured to have been a fellow at the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism and I am indebted to the Gerda

Henkel Foundation for their generous sponsorship. My research and stay at the University of Oxford, one of the world's foremost institutions of higher learning and scholarship, would not have been possible without them. Oxford for me will always be connected with many warm and happy memories. It is an experience I will cherish always.

PREFACE

The State and the Media

The media have long been used to shape public opinion. Stirring aspirations for social and political reform, the press has often been at loggerheads with the political elite. *Changing News, Changing Realities* examines the evolution of media censorship in Egypt from the monarchy to the present. It traces how direct censorship and government ownership of the media has given way to other forms of information management, looking into the processes and factors causing censorship walls to fall and the intricate dance between the authorities and the public that have contributed to a broader media space. Censorship and free expression involve a dynamic push and pull from various directions – the state, police, military, intelligence services, the religious establishment, and self-appointed protectors of social morality on one side versus journalists, artists, novelists, filmmakers, dissidents, and bloggers on the other.

The targets of censorship represent a challenge to entrenched interests. National security and maintaining public order have been high on the agenda of the censorship regime. This was the case during the era of the monarchy and British occupation and even more so in the aftermath of the 1952 Free Officers' revolution, where political expression was tightly controlled in a

manner unprecedented in Egypt's recent past. The press, film industry, and publishing houses were nationalised. An additional measure of control was instituted through a network of state-run cultural institutions that created a more restricted space for private initiative and the arts. Through the presidencies of Gamal Abd al-Nasser, Anwar Sadat, and Hosni Mubarak authoritarianism has remained a fixture in Egyptian politics and society. The press has been kept in check not just by laws but often through the reach and influence of the security apparatus.

Satellite television and the internet, modern methods of evading government minders, have signalled the collapse of the information regime, and the state has lost its near-total ability to set the media agenda. The sheer volume of information and communications movement is beyond the capacity of the state to apply the same controls that worked so effectively a generation ago. Private broadcast media represent a greater challenge to the authorities since they reach a mass audience in a nation where the illiteracy rate stands at just under a third of the population and newspaper sales are still low relative to population.

The media space has widened by the state willingly or unwillingly allowing greater room for expression, enterprising journalists and bloggers brave enough to break taboos, popular movements and activism expanding as much as security interests will allow, and social media – the newest mass communication tool – which has amplified the voice of the 'street', irreversibly altering the censorship equation. But was the media's new 'right to bark' having a negligible effect in undermining an entrenched security state or would the cumulative efforts of a freer press enable action capable of politically

transforming Egypt's future? The response to that question came when popular revolution erupted on 25 January 2011, on the heels of mass protests in neighbouring Tunisia that ousted that nation's dictator.

Eventually it was not enough simply to permit a wider space for speech. Political action was taking form online – Facebook was not only the freest press in Egypt, it was a mobilisation tool, pushing the barriers of speech and action in a tightly controlled police state. The call to revolution was announced on the 'We are all Khaled Said' Facebook page, begun in memory of a young man senselessly beaten to death by police in Alexandria seven months earlier. Khaled Said's image would become the icon of a popular uprising to bring down the country's present-day pharaoh. Eighteen days altered the future of Egypt's media, shattering barriers of fear and censorship that have held together an autocratic regime. Yet after Hosni Mubarak's downfall, the country's military rulers have used various strategies to fence in a discordant media. As Egypt's first freely elected president, turning his back on campaign pledges, consolidates the power of his office and dominant Islamist parties hold political sway, the struggles for democratic governance and a free press are far from over.

|

Since the Printing Press

1

Press Beginnings in Egypt

If all mankind minus one were of one opinion, mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one person than he, if he had the power, would be justified in silencing mankind. (John Stuart Mill, British philosopher)

If you speak out, don't be afraid, and if you're afraid, don't speak up. (Egyptian proverb)

Stimulated by the French experience with printing during Napoleon Bonaparte's expedition to Egypt in 1798–1801, the country's Ottoman ruler, Muhammad Ali (r. 1805–48), initiated the production of printing facilities by sending a delegation to Milan, Italy, to learn how it was done. Seven years later, in 1822, the Bulaq Press was inaugurated, with its first publication being an Italian–Arabic dictionary.¹ The new government press printed items such as technical manuals for the military and other official documents for civil servants, books in European languages, Arabic translations, medical and school texts, and an Arabic edition of the *Arabian Nights*. The press was also part of Muhammad Ali's commitment to broadening education.

The Bulaq Press was not restricted by official laws – until its supervisor, Nicola Masabiki, carelessly printed a poem by



Muhammad Ali

an Italian that demeaned the Islamic faith. When Egypt's ruler found out, he issued a decree on 13 July 1823 that became the first act of censorship, forbidding the publication of any work that did not have his official permission.² Muhammad Ali also supervised the first Egyptian newspaper, an official bulletin useful in managing a government bureaucracy called *al-Waq'i' al-misriya* (Egyptian Events), printed in both

Turkish and Arabic, which he founded in 1828. It was not long before newspapers in Arabic and French and other printed material became a regular part of Egyptian life.

With the expanding influence of the written word, publication laws were drawn up during the reign of Khedive Muhammad Sa'id Pasha (r. 1854–63), applying separately to foreigners and Egyptians. Copies of publications had to pass through the Ministry of Interior and could not be printed if deemed harmful to interests of religion and state. Censors scanned newspapers for any hint of dissent. 'The slightest violation of these conditions by a printer exposed his press to closure and himself to punishment in accordance with the law,' writes historian Caesar Farah, 'and he who sought to make a living out of publishing had to commit himself beforehand to honor the conditions detailed in these laws.'³

Khedive Isma‘il Pasha (r. 1863–79), the grandson of Muhammad Ali, understood the importance of the medium. When assuming the throne at the age of 33, he dispatched an emissary to France to buy up shares in the leading newspaper, *Le Temps*, which had until then been critical of Egypt’s policy. He was not above bribing local papers via a network of agents in Istanbul to obtain glowing press coverage.⁴ Doling out generous government subsidies to foreign news agencies and publications in Egypt and abroad, Isma‘il knew how to make the press work to his advantage. The twice-weekly *Wadi al-Nil* (Nile Valley) was first published in July 1867 in a distinctive pamphlet size, branding itself as a privately owned and ‘popular’ paper. It was the first Egyptian paper to include Reuter telegrams and a literary section. All along it was financed by the government and loyally defended Isma‘il and his policies, while appearing to be objective.⁵

Truly private press ventures appeared as well. Isma‘il was favourably disposed to a freer press, and over 70 new periodicals and journals were founded during his reign, even publications that were critical of him and policies – at least up to a point.⁶ He granted a license in 1869 for a political weekly called *Nuzhat al-afkar* (Promenade of Thoughts), which lasted all but two issues before it was closed down. Two Syrian émigrés began a political and literary journal in 1873 called *al-Kawkab al-sharqi* (Oriental Star) but that met a similar demise.⁷

Young and ambitious, Greek Catholic brothers Salim and Bishara Taqla came to Alexandria from Beirut with the grand idea of establishing a newspaper that would set new journalistic standards by commoditising the latest and most reliable

news. They received a press licence in 1875 and the first edition of their paper, *al-Ahram* (The Pyramids), rolled off the printing press on 5 August 1876. The Taqlas cleverly charted the political waters; *al-Ahram* occasionally praised the khedive but also secured French patronage, which made it partisan towards that country's interests in Egypt. The brothers published two other papers, *Sada al-Ahram* (Echo of the Pyramids) and *al-Waqt* (Time), which lobbied for greater political freedom. Both papers were suspended for their dissident views and were later shut down.⁸ A stricter press law was issued in 1881, which authorised the government to close newspapers without advance warning.⁹

Political satire had its beginnings in the era of the Khedive Isma'il. Jewish Egyptian Ya'qub (James) Sanu' famously used the elements of satire and caricature to poke fun at the British occupation and Khedive Isma'il in his 1877 magazine *Abu naddara* (The Bespeckled One), which championed the slogan 'Egypt for the Egyptians'. Written in colloquial Arabic, which better suited humour and made it accessible to a wider audience, the magazine immediately became popular. *Abu naddara*'s humour and political cartoons – a first for an Egyptian periodical – did not endear it to the authorities, who were decidedly not amused. After 15 issues Sanu' was summarily exiled in June 1878. He settled in France, where he continued publishing his magazine under various names until 1910 and smuggled copies into Egypt, where they circulated clandestinely, being shared and read aloud with lively delight even in villages.¹⁰ Sanu' paved the way for a burgeoning satirical press, which proved to be an effective tool for delivering a message against the rulers.

Paris was the meeting place for other Egyptian dissident publishers. Philosopher and pan-Islamic advocate Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Islamic reformer Muhammad Abduh published the influential *al-'Urwa al-wuthqa* (The Enduring Bond), which advocated Islamic unity and an end to British domination in both Egypt and India, the jewels of the British crown. The first of 18 issues appeared in March 1884 and



BIBLIOTHECA ALEXANDRINA

Khedive Isma'il

the British were desperate to keep the publication out of the hands of a readership in territories they controlled.¹¹ Muhammad Abduh, who believed that Islam could be moulded to be relevant to modern times, would later become Egypt's Grand Mufti. After his passing in 1905, Britain's Lord Cromer wrote in *Modern Egypt*, a two-volume history, 'Egyptian patriots – *sua si bona norint* [only if they learn well] – will find in the advancement of the followers of Mohammed Abdu the best hope that they may gradually carry out their programme of creating a truly autonomous Egypt.'¹²

British Occupation and the Monarchy

In 1882, the British occupied Egypt, remaining for seven decades. Evelyn Baring, later Lord Cromer, was appointed British agent and consul-general on 11 September 1883. He held the belief that Egyptians were incapable of self-government and

required British assistance and preparation. 'It may be that at some future period the Egyptians may be rendered capable of governing themselves without the presence of a foreign army in their midst,' he wrote in 1908, 'and without foreign guidance in civil and military affairs; but that period is far distant. One or more generations must, in my opinion, pass away before the question can be even usefully discussed.'¹³

The power of the press is intrinsically linked to the level of education. Muhammad Ali initiated pioneering efforts to advance education, which continued under Isma'il. Yet the literacy rate hardly changed under the British, who saw no need to divert funds towards education and even discouraged it; no more than 3% of the budget was spent on education. By 1897, illiteracy stood at 94.2% of the population and two decades later was still a very high 92.1%.¹⁴ The British stalled in setting up a national university, believing that it would be a magnet for nationalist activities.¹⁵ 'The factor that most hindered the introduction of the press and its acceptance by the public, more than traditional concepts, was illiteracy,' concludes press historian Ami Ayalon. 'The inability of the great majority of Arabic-speakers to read was a crucial detriment in shaping the fate of the Arabic press during the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries.'¹⁶ Yet illiteracy did not prevent the circulation of information. Those who were literate read to others, sometimes for a fee.

In 1889, British occupation authorities supported the introduction of the periodical *al-Muqattam*,¹⁷ named after a hilly plateau east of the capital, which lasted until the eve of the Free Officers' revolution in 1952, and achieved the widest circulation in Egypt as the mouthpiece of the British. But the nationalist

press also grew, clamouring for national liberation and an end to imperial control. In just the eight years between 1892 and 1900, roughly 150 newspapers appeared, largely due to the relative freedoms granted to the press.¹⁸ In the succeeding decade Egyptian nationalist fervour coalesced, representing a more pronounced danger to the British occupiers.

Distrusting the British and harbouring antagonism towards

Lord Cromer, Khedive Abbas Hilmi Pasha (r. 1892–1914), who owed his throne to the British, turned to nationalism, leading a secret nationalist society that appealed to the affluent classes and becoming a patron of the nationalist press. Underestimating its force, Cromer initially made little effort to control the press, thinking it would have negligible impact given that only a small minority of Egyptians could read. The press was accessible to an educated elite in Egypt and abroad. The British agent and consul-general saw in the local press the same ills that have often been levelled against the press. ‘He treated the Press with amazing restraint,’ writes Cromer’s authorised biographer, the Marquess of Zetland.

He did not ignore the vernacular press; on the contrary, he studied it with diligence, in the hope that he might find in it



MODERN EGYPT

British agent and consul-general Lord Cromer

from time to time practical suggestions which might prove worthy of consideration. In this hope he was disappointed. He found instead that facts were generally misstated and often willfully perverted; that vague declamation, wholly erroneous and even fantastic ideas as to the motives and intentions of Great Britain and the other Powers, and sweeping generalities unaccompanied by any semblance of proof, formed the principal stock-in-trade of its contributors.¹⁹

While Egypt's newspapers served an essential function in the cause of nationalism and independence from foreign occupation, they were criticised for being scandalous and lacking moral respectability. That image carried over to the journalistic profession, and in 1904 Egypt's supreme *shari'a* (Islamic law) court saw fit to annul the marriage of the owner of *al-Mu'ayyad* (The Supporter), Ali Yusuf, whose paper championed the cause of Britain's evacuation from Egypt, to Safiyya al-Sadat, the daughter of a high-society family, because Yusuf's occupation and humble origins did not make him an acceptable suitor. The court's religious scholars, while stating they held no qualms about the press, considered Yusuf's profession as shamefully preoccupied with scandal, spreading rumours, and spying on the private lives

BIBLIOTHECA ALEXANDRINA



Khedive Abbas Hilmi Pasha

of individuals.²⁰ The bride's father had sought to annul the marriage, which took place without his consent, and the saga drew national attention and debate about patriarchy and class barriers. The couple was eventually reunited following an arrangement that allowed for a marriage ceremony in the presence of the bride's father.²¹

Cromer eventually restricted the liberties of a free press; warnings were issued and suspensions occurred, although he came to realise that silencing the press was not easy given that foreign powers were sometimes the patrons. He shut down in June 1893 the satirical periodical *al-Ustadh* (The Professor) of the poet, orator, and social reformer Abdallah al-Nadim²² – nine months after it first appeared – for its attacks on the British opposition.²³ A leader in the nationalist movement who saw journalism as a tool of mass education, al-Nadim cleverly employed the Arabic vernacular, fictional allegory, and satire into his publications to broach political and social issues. 'The newspapers' sting at first seemed slight and was conveniently disregarded, but its cumulative effect proved dangerous,' argues Ami Ayalon. 'By aggressively projecting political messages to its readers and generating active political debate among an expanding reading public . . . the press helped create a climate for political action that would eventually undermine the British hold on the country.'²⁴

An incident in June 1906 became a rallying cry for Egyptian nationalism and against a foreign occupation. In the Nile Delta village of Dinshaway, British army officers shot the wife of a local imam while pigeon hunting, which ensued into a struggle between villagers and the officers. A soldier died on the way back



Sir Eldon Gorst, Lord Cromer's successor

to the camp, either from a head injury or sunstroke. The British returned to the Dinshaway, killing a villager. More severe action followed. The British set up a court presided over by three officials that sentenced four villagers to hanging and many others to imprisonment with hard labour or public flogging. Poets penned verses that expressed a sense of national humiliation and the memory became enshrined in a novel, a play, and a film.²⁵

It was not until 1909, under Cromer's successor, Sir Eldon Gorst, that the British attempted to rein in an uncontrollable Egyptian press by placing it under tighter controls. 'The virulence of the vernacular press' and 'the intemperate criticism of the actions and motives of the government . . . have gravely added to the difficulties of administering the country', he wrote. Gorst described the local press as being nothing more than 'violent nonsense' that injured British interests and Egypt, 'demoralised' the youth, 'terrorised' the 'respectable middle classes', and stirred up 'fanaticism'.²⁶

An active forum for the educated class to debate a range of issues, including political and social reform and religious and national identity, the press found ways around the new restrictions, issuing suspended publications under different names, for example. Reining in the press proved to be a difficult feat since

freedom of expression was intrinsically linked with the nationalist struggle for independence.²⁷ British agent and consul-general Horatio Herbert Kitchener (1911–14) aggressively restricted the activities of the nationalist press: newspapers like *al-Liwa'* (The Banner), *al-'Alam* (The World), and *Misr al-fatat* (Young Egypt) were closed, proprietors and editors were placed on trial and imprisoned, and newspaper licences became more difficult to obtain.²⁸ Censorship of theatre was introduced by the British colonial authorities in July 1911, since the performing arts were seen as propagating a nationalist message. During the First World War marshal law was in effect, public gatherings were prohibited, additional censorship on the arts was enforced, and films from Germany and its allies were outlawed.²⁹

The war brought political upheaval for the press in Egypt as well. Many papers could not financially survive and new publications were not allowed to appear. The ones that were still around faced a number of difficulties: shortage of newsprint meant the cost of the periodicals increased dramatically, public demand was low, and spare parts for the printing presses were in short supply. Newspapers saved pages by using smaller print and eliminating sections. The press no longer played a role in the national struggle during the war years. As a British protectorate, Egypt was subject to direct censorship of the press. Censors banned items determined to compromise the war effort and empty columns in the periodicals of that era were evidence of the censors' interference and, in some measure, of editorial acquiescence.³⁰

Strophic poetry, rhymes, and burlesques – written, recited, or set to music – were an instrument of nationalist struggle

and a potent mode of cultural expression because they were easily memorised and passed on. This proved remarkably useful during the imposition of marshal law in November 1914 and the strict censorship of the war years. Editorialising in the press took the form of verse for decades to follow. It was in this backdrop that poet and publisher Mahmud Bayram al-Tunisi flourished, his ditties a source of provocative amusement expounding on the circumstances of the day. His rhymes spread far and wide through the earliest of social networks: the café. Scholar and literary translator Marilyn Booth writes, ‘the café was a relatively insulated and very indigenous public forum where gatherings of more than five individuals, prohibited under martial law, could continue under the guise of commercial services – a situation of which the British wartime censors were aware. It was this environment, wherein literature and politics were inseparable, that provided the cultural and political wellsprings of Bayram’s artistic vision.’³¹

In 1916 al-Tunisi began publishing his poetry in a daily in the Mediterranean city of Alexandria. On May 1919, he founded a satirical newspaper, *al-Misalla* (The Obelisk), published without a licence, followed by a second periodical called *al-Khazuq* (The Stake) when *al-Misalla* was shuttered by the censors. Al-Tunisi’s jabbed the British occupation and the royal family with his rhymes and folk humour. British intelligence closely followed al-Tunisi’s press writings ‘hinting at awful atrocities’ of the occupation and described him as ‘a person of doubtful antecedents.’³² It did not take long before the poet, facing the wrath of the authorities, was punished. Aged 26, married with three children and another on the

way, al-Tunisi was banished from Egypt on 21 October 1919, a year when the masses erupted in protest, demanding independence from British rule. A fourth-class passenger aboard a steamboat bound for Marseilles, he began a period of harsh exile that stretched over a decade. Backbreaking manual labour and menial day work were his means of earning a living as an immigrant in France without working papers.

Nationalist leader Sa'd Zaghlul headed a delegation urging the High Commissioner Reginald Wingate to end Britain's protectorate over Egypt and the Sudan. Zaghlul intended to plead Egypt's case to world powers at the Paris Peace Conference following the conclusion of the First World War, a request the British authorities denied. In an attempt to silence the dissent, Zaghlul and leaders of his party, the Wafd (Delegation), were exiled to the island of Malta in March 1919. Yet the British completely misjudged the effects of their action. Student demonstrations took place, sparking the 1919 revolution, a popular uprising organised at the grass roots that used strikes, demonstrations, and acts of civil disobedience in a struggle for independence from British occupation. On 22 February 1922, Britain recognised Egypt's independence, paving the way for a new constitution in 1923 and the establishment of a constitutional monarchy. Yet British occupation forces remained on Egyptian soil, mainly to guard the Suez Canal Zone, and retained the right to protect their interests in Egypt and defend the country against foreign aggression.

A prolific writer of poetry, short stories, and sketches, al-Tunisi contributed to periodicals in Egypt from exile yet received scant remuneration. He eventually made it back to Egypt in 1938,

where he was denied a royal pardon but his presence was tolerated. In addition to writing for the Egyptian press, he penned song lyrics, plays, revues, and radio dramas. The life of Bayram al-Tunisi served as an inspiration to colloquial poet and songwriter Gamal Bekheet, who saw in him the example of the model poet. 'He worked in the worst physical occupations, such as lifting barrels in a chemicals factory in France. He suffered from the cold, hunger, and vagrancy,' says Bekheet. 'The poet is a person with an idea, a position, a principle, who is ready to pay any tax so that he can say his word and to say it truthfully; he does not turn this word into a commodity sold to the highest bidder. The word should be in the service of goals, values, and humanity.'³³

The Resilience of the Press

The 1923 constitution guaranteed freedom of expression, prohibiting censorship and the banning of newspapers unless essential to maintaining social order, a clause that was open to interpretation by the rulers.³⁴ It was not until 1924, under the brief prime ministership of Sa'd Zaghlul, a strong believer in education, that compulsory education free of charge was established. Education expenditure rose from 4% of the national budget in 1920 to 13% in 1951 and Fu'ad I University (now Cairo University) was established.³⁵ In parallel, the news media expanded; cultural and literary life grew. Cairo emerged as a publishing centre and Egyptian cinema and radio became the most influential across the Arab world.

Prime ministers Muhammad Mahmud (1928–9) and Isma'il Sidqi (1930–3), both from the landed gentry, were unforgiving when it came to criticisms from the press, especially in cartoons

and illustrations. Mahmud suspended the 1923 constitution in 1928, which empowered him to cancel 60 press licences that year, and to deal severely with his critics, as did his successor, who promulgated a new charter in 1930 curtailing press freedoms.³⁶

A popular weekly magazine was founded by the actress Rose al-Yusuf in October 1925 and bore her name. At first featuring articles on culture and the arts, it moved to address political issues, evoking the ire of the premier, who was attacked for his autocratic style in press articles and cartoons. In 1928, Rose al-Yusuf rushed to the magazine's offices to witness the political police destroying copies of the just-published issue of *Rose al-Yusuf*, an act the magazine's owner found infuriating, but this would be the strategy used by Mahmud and Sidqi for dealing with a critical press in the name of protecting social order. In that year, 62 of 104 issues of the magazine were confiscated, which led the publisher to issue her periodical under borrowed names in the following years.³⁷ With its political analysis and cartoons, *Rose al-Yusuf* emerged as a best-selling weekly, even as courts handed down fines and jailed the editor in 1933. Sidqi issued a new press law in June 1931, which imposed severe government controls and punishments on newspapers, journalists, and publishers.³⁸

The press, ever resilient, found ways around the restrictions, using methods that had worked well in the past. A suspended paper was published under a different name, for which a publication licence was formally obtained. When the direct criticism was not tolerated, a vibrant press found creative ways around the impasse. Editorials would censure 'China's rulers' for their failings, leaving it up to the readers to decipher which government was actually intended.³⁹

Religion and the Press

Al-Azhar, the highest seat of Sunni Islamic learning since the tenth century, founded the periodical *Nur al-Islam* (The Light of Islam) in 1931, although its scholars have long been dubious of the values and virtues of the press. Journalism, they believed, had a corrupting influence on Islam and faith because it could reach a mass audience with false and misleading assertions designed to lead down the path of disbelief. *Nur al-Islam* was their inevitable concession that publications could serve righteous causes and that perhaps the press was not as malicious as previously imagined.⁴⁰

Al-Azhar has also been a source of power and authority in the censorship debate. It has issued *fatwas*, or religious edicts, censoring books. Traditionalist scholars at al-Azhar fiercely objected to a work published in 1925 by Islamic thinker Ali Abd al-Raziq titled *al-Islam wa usul al-hukm* (Islam and the Foundations of Governance), which advanced the concept of a separation of religion and state, dismissed the necessity of rule by a caliphate, and advanced the notion that the role of government was to serve the needs of society. A year later, Egyptian writer and intellectual Taha Hussein published *Fi-l-shi'r al-jahili* (On Pre-Islamic Poetry), which critiqued the origins of pre-Islamic poetry, casting doubts on its authenticity as the basis of determining Arabic philology – and by extension the accuracy of another body of oral tradition, the *hadith*, or sayings of the Prophet Muhammad. At the urging of al-Azhar's scholars, the university's board confiscated the book. A trial found the author not guilty of heresy, yet the ban on the book was not lifted. The book was republished a year later with some revisions as *Fi-l-adab al-jahili* (On Pre-Islamic Literature).

‘But in comparison to political censorship, the number of books banned or attacked as a result of religious protests might even seem insignificant,’ writes Marina Stagh in *The Limits of Freedom of Speech*. ‘The impact is, however, stronger than the number of cases seems to indicate, as each case set a precedent and provided the censors with excuses to expunge whatever they found harmful to social values and the Islamic faith.’⁴¹

It was around that time that a new religious revival movement was taking shape, one that would evolve into a dominant political force. When Hassan al-Banna formed the Muslim Brotherhood as a youth group in March 1928 he was just 22 years old, a young and electrifying Arabic schoolteacher in the Suez Canal city of Ismailia. His agenda was anti-colonial and strongly rooted in his faith – end the British occupation, implement the principles of *shari‘a*, and resurrect the caliphate. By the start of the Second World War, the Brotherhood had emerged as one of the most visible players on the local scene, mobilising a broad membership of students, civil servants, peasants, professionals, and women, who were an essential part of his Islamic reformation. Al-Banna, a master at organising, and the Muslim Brotherhood knew how to get their message across. ‘This was thanks to the close attention it paid to the apparatus of communications,’ writes Richard Mitchell in *The Society of the Muslim Brothers*, ‘both with the outside world and for the indoctrination of its own members.’⁴²

The Silver Screen, Radio, and the End of a Royal Era

Official film censorship came a year after the production of the first Egyptian silent film in 1927 and applied to cinematic portrayals of religion, society, and public morality.⁴³ King Faruq

instituted new film censorship requirements in February 1947 that instructed filmmakers to make films that enhanced Egypt's image and did not depict squalid and impoverished living conditions. This was aimed at the realist film genre that sought to explore social and class struggles – like workers' strikes and the exploitation of peasants – in a wealth-polarised Egypt. Criticism of the monarchy, government officials, the military and police, and religious authorities was expressly prohibited – even in foreign imports like the French film *Marie Antoinette* since its portrayals of a distant and decaying monarchy struck too close to home.⁴⁴ 'Egyptian films in the 1930s and 1940s did not even depict foreigners,' says cultural anthropologist Walter Armbrust. 'This was basically a colonial era and yet the films themselves barely alluded to the presence of foreigners on Egyptian soil.'⁴⁵

The new medium of radio generated an interest in news and information that fed into the sale of newspapers. Radio Cairo, Egypt's state broadcaster, was founded in 1932. Like television sets three decades later and satellite dishes in the 1990s, it was fashionable among the elite to own a 'talking box'. That medium came under government control in 1931 and, with the exception of a couple of privately run music stations, remains largely so to this day.

The Publication Law (Law 20 of 1938) was used to ban newspapers viewed by the regime as a threat to public order, morality, or an attack on religion. The monarch and the royal family were beyond reproach, and those violating the rules were summarily punished.⁴⁶ Even after the demise of the monarchy, this ironclad prohibition remained in place for the person of the president, who was off-limits to direct press criticism.

The Muslim Brotherhood was quickly spreading throughout North Africa and Trans-Jordan, gaining popular support with its active involvement in the 1948 War in Palestine, where it opposed the creation of a Jewish state. In December 1948, the Brotherhood's paramilitary wing, dubbed the Secret Apparatus (*al-tanzim al-sirri / al-nizam al-khas*), was fingered in the assassination of Prime Minister Mahmud al-Nuqrashi, who had banned the Muslim Brotherhood, confiscating its assets and arresting members. Publicly, al-Banna condemned the act; privately, he conceded that he had lost control over the armed group, particularly since the dissolution of the society broke down the systems of communication. On 12 February 1949, the Brotherhood's founder was gunned down at close range by government operatives as he got into a taxi in downtown Cairo. He died at the age of 42, leaving behind a mass movement he hoped would unleash the power of organised Islam to transform society.

Great Britain retained a strong presence in Egypt. On 25 January 1952, British commanders ordered policemen from the city of Ismailia to surrender their weapons and vacate the Suez Canal Zone. Egyptian officials rejected the request and thousands of British troops, armed with automatic weapons and artillery, surrounded the municipal building and barracks where roughly 700 policemen were stationed, adamantly refusing to hand over their rifles. The British occupation force opened fire, killing 50 men and capturing the rest in a tense standoff that lasted two hours. When the news reached Cairo the following day, protests and rioting broke out against the king and the British. Known as the Cairo Fire, looting and

arson engulfed hundreds of landmark buildings, including the Opera House, hotels, cinemas, theatres, and shops.

Prior to the 1952 revolution, Egypt was ruled by a monarch and under British occupation, yet this was an era of vibrant political participation, debate, and an open press. By September 1951 the residents of Cairo had an offering of 21 dailies, 121 weeklies, and scores of other periodicals to choose from.⁴⁷ The seeds of social change were planted. A huge polarisation of wealth existed, many Egyptians lived in poverty as wealthy landlords controlled huge plots of arable land, economic industrialisation progressed at a painfully slow pace, and dissatisfaction with an inept monarchy was growing.

A conspiratorial group of young military officers called the Free Officers, led by Gamal Abd al-Nasser, a young army officer and the son of a postman, coalesced in the aftermath of the 1948 War that witnessed the creation and expansion of the state of Israel. The network of Free Officers cells extended throughout the military services and excelled in planning, organisation, and timing. In the evening of 22 July 1952, they effortlessly occupied key posts in Cairo and Alexandria. By the next morning, the Free Officers were in charge. King Faruq was exiled, leaving Egypt on 26 July aboard a royal yacht.

Notes

- 1 Bibliotheca Alexandrina, 'Phases of Establishing the Bulaq Press', www.bibalex.org/bulaqpress/en/PhasesOfEstablishing.htm (accessed May 2010).
- 2 Caesar Farah, 'Censorship and Freedom of Expression in Ottoman Syria and Egypt', in W. W. Haddad and W. Ochsenwald (eds), *Nationalism in a Non-National State* (1977), 165.

- 3 Ibid. 166.
- 4 Ami Ayalon, *The Press in the Arab Middle East* (1995), 19.
- 5 Ibid. 41.
- 6 Farah, 'Censorship and Freedom of Expression', 168.
- 7 Ayalon, *The Press in the Arab Middle East*, 42.
- 8 Ibid. 42–3.
- 9 Ibid. 116.
- 10 Farah, 'Censorship and Freedom of Expression', 163; Ayalon, *The Press in the Arab Middle East*, 44–5, 48–9.
- 11 Farah, 'Censorship and Freedom of Expression', 163.
- 12 Earl of Cromer, *Modern Egypt*, ii (1908), 180.
- 13 Ibid. 567.
- 14 Ayalon, *The Press in the Arab Middle East*, 141.
- 15 Jason Thompson, *A History of Egypt* (2008), 259.
- 16 Ayalon, *The Press in the Arab Middle East*, 140.
- 17 Launched by Lebanese publishers Faris Nimr and Ya'qub Sarruf, *al-Muqattam* started off as a weekly and became a daily after six weeks.
- 18 Farah, 'Censorship and Freedom of Expression', 163–4.
- 19 Marquess of Zetland, *Lord Cromer* (1932), 296.
- 20 Ayalon, *The Press in the Arab Middle East*, 164, 170–1.
- 21 Beth Baron, *Egypt as a Woman* (2005), 35.
- 22 Abdallah al-Nadim was the spiritual mentor of Mustafa Kamil, an outspoken nationalist who founded the newspaper *al-Liwa'* (The Banner) in Jan. 1900 and the foreign-language *The Egyptian Standard* and *L'Etendard Egyptien* in Mar. 1907, all of which advanced a nationalist political agenda.
- 23 Farah, 'Censorship and Freedom of Expression', 174.
- 24 Ayalon, *The Press in the Arab Middle East*, 59.
- 25 Baron, *Egypt as a Woman*, 43–5.
- 26 Sir Eldon Gorst, memorandum on 'The Press in Egypt', 16 Sept. 1908, FO371/451/31779. Quoted in Ayalon, *The Press in the Arab Middle East*, 59.
- 27 Ayalon, *The Press in the Arab Middle East*, 60–1; Thompson, *History of Egypt*, 262.

- 28 Farah, 'Censorship and Freedom of Expression', 164–5.
- 29 Article 19, *The Egyptian Predicament* (1997), 65; citing *Bulletin du CEDEJ*, 16/1 (1987), 21.
- 30 Ayalon, *The Press in the Arab Middle East*, 69–70.
- 31 Marilyn Booth, *Bayram al-Tunisi's Egypt* (1990), 37.
- 32 N. Irwin-Brown, Intelligence Report, 2 Aug. 1919, PRO FO 141/781/8915. Quoted in Booth, *Bayram al-Tunisi's Egypt*, 55. Bayram al-Tunisi is of Tunisian immigrant roots.
- 33 Interview with Gamal Bekheet (Arabic), 25 Oct. 2012, Giza.
- 34 Ayalon, *The Press in the Arab Middle East*, 79.
- 35 Thompson, *History of Egypt*, 177.
- 36 Ayalon, *The Press in the Arab Middle East*, 79, 116–17, 120. The liberal 1923 constitution was withdrawn on 22 Oct. 1930 and replaced with the unpopular and autocratic charter of Isma'īl Sidqi. Following mass protests begun by university students in Nov. 1935, King Fu'ād reinstated the 1923 constitution a month later and it remained in force until being abolished after the 1952 revolution.
- 37 Baron, *Egypt as a Woman*, 181.
- 38 Ayalon, *The Press in the Arab Middle East*, 78, 119–20.
- 39 Ibid. 80.
- 40 Ibid. 171. *Sawt al-Azhar* (Voice of al-Azhar) is the current publication of the centuries-old institution of Sunni Islamic studies.
- 41 Marina Stagh, *The Limits of Freedom of Speech* (1993), 133–4.
- 42 Richard P. Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers* (1969), 185.
- 43 Article 19, *The Egyptian Predicament*, 65.
- 44 Ibid. 65–6.
- 45 Interview with Walter Armbrust, 13 June 2010, Oxford.
- 46 Cartoonist Abd al-Mun'im Rakha, for example, was handed a four-year prison sentence in the 1930s for drawing a political cartoon lampooning the king. Ayalon, *The Press in the Arab Middle East*, 121.
- 47 Stagh, *Limits of Freedom of Speech*, 10–11; citing Ibrahim 'Abduh, *Tatawwur al-shahafa al-misriya* (The Development of the Egyptian Press) (Cairo, 1982).

2

Nasser and the Era of Pan-Arabism

I have been a conspirator for so long that I mistrust all around me. (Gamal Abd al-Nasser)

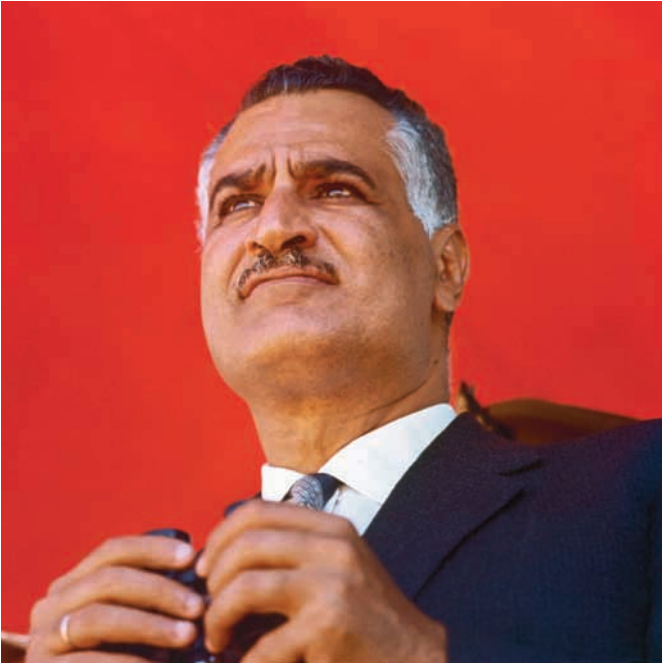
A cascade of events followed the Free Officers' seizure of power in 23 July 1952. The military junta chose not to share power with former allies and had negligible regard for democratic principles, constitutional rule, freedom of association, and freedom of expression.¹ In October 1952, strict censorship was imposed. In December, the constitution was abolished. In January 1953, all existing political parties were banned and their publications ceased to exist. A year later, in January 1954, the Muslim Brotherhood was outlawed. 'In response to the determination of organized labor, the left, political parties and students to resist the Free Officers, the commanders used a combination of coercive measures – outright force and military tribunals – to subdue the opposition,' writes political scientist Steven A. Cook, 'followed by a variety of rules, decrees and regulations to prevent further challenges to the Free Officers' authority. These institutions were authoritarian and constituted the foundation of Egypt's nondemocratic politics for the ensuing 60 years.'²

With Gamal Abd al-Nasser's rise to power, Cairo became the fulcrum of pan-Arab nationalism. Nasser's rhetoric promoted

national independence and sovereignty for all Arab states. Immensely confident and charismatic, he spoke to the masses in other countries via the medium of radio, often over the heads of their leaders, seizing on a nostalgic longing among Arabs for a mythic hero, a modern-day Saladin. Looking beyond Egypt's national borders, Nasser emerged on the world stage leading a nationalist struggle and embodying the dream of Arab unity. Egypt's cinema, publishing, and broadcasting were outlets to spread Nasser's message. Sawt al-'Arab (Voice of the Arabs) carried his speeches of pan-Arab nationalism to all corners of the Arab world. He captured hearts and minds, across generations, through hopes for greatness. Algerian novelist Ahlam Mosteghanemi writes in her novel *Fawdat al-hawas (Chaos of the Senses)*,

At the time, we could listen some evenings to Voice of the Arabs from Cairo, broadcasting Abd al-Nasser's speeches and inflamed anthem. I still remembered some of them, the way that children at that age memorized nursery rhymes – they were forever inscribed in my brain. Then we would go to sleep happily, with no need for a television, which we have never seen in our lives.³

Claiming to represent the people, the revolutionary vanguard set up its own publishing house, Dar al-Tahrir, that issued a daily, *al-Gumhuriya* (The Republic), and Anwar Sadat, one of the Free Officers, was the paper's first editor-in-chief. Authoritarian rule by military officers drastically undermined the influence of journalists, as an era of vibrant parliamentary



Gamal Abd al-Nasser

participation and a dynamic multi-party political system under a monarch and foreign occupation were swept away. The ruling Revolutionary Command Council in April 1954 revoked the licence of *al-Masry* (The Egyptian), halting the publication of the largest circulation daily in the Arab world at the time, because of editorials that charged the military junta with infringing freedoms and called on them to return to their barracks. *Al-Masry's* publishing operations were

seized and the paper's owners and editors were tried before a tribunal and jailed on charges of attempting to bring down the government, disseminating propaganda, and undermining the national interest.⁴ The number of daily newspapers dropped to four.

The Press Syndicate was disbanded and action was taken against prominent journalists. Ihsan Abd al-Quddus, the editor of *Rose al-Yusuf* and the son of the founder, was detained for three months, accused of plotting to overthrow the regime.⁵ This was in apparent response to an article he wrote in the 22 March 1954 issue titled 'al-Jam'īya al-sirriya allati tahkum Masr' (The Secret Society that Rules Egypt), which called for a return to parliamentary democracy.⁶ Disillusioned by the Free Officers' revolution and Nasser's rise to power, playwright and novelist Yusuf Idris was arrested in August 1954, a few weeks after the publication of his first short story collection, *Arkhas layali* (The Cheapest Nights), and spent 13 months in confinement.⁷ These limits curtailed the journalistic sense of purpose that defined the prerevolutionary period as the press was brought into line.

The Muslim Brotherhood's confrontation with the Free Officers' regime culminated in an assassination attempt by a Brotherhood member on 26 October 1954 against then-Prime Minister Gamal Abd al-Nasser as he delivered a speech in Alexandria. The eight shots fired – all of which missed their target – were heard via radio across the Arab world, an incident that Nasser seized on to rally the Arab people. In an intense crackdown on the movement that followed, thousands of Brotherhood members were summarily rounded up and

detained – critically shaping the development of Islamist groups for decades to come. ‘On one level, it crushed the Muslim Brotherhood movement in a manner unprecedented to date,’ writes political scientist Maye Kassem. ‘On another level, the brutality involved in the regime’s approach to the Brotherhood produced a reactionary Islamist ideology that not only was extremist in its interpretation, but also was the foundation of the more radical Islamist group that emerged in the late 1960s.’⁸

The medium of film was used to turn public opinion against the Muslim Brotherhood. A 1954 propaganda film, *‘Uyun sahira* (Bewitching Eyes), attacked the association, which was never mentioned by name, for using the veil of religion to propagate ‘the principles of extremism, terrorism, murder, and destruction.’ ‘These are their victims – Egyptians, men and children,’ says the narrator as two men and a boy are shown in hospital beds. ‘What have they done to deserve this shocking destiny?’ Images of disassembled weapons, confiscated firearms, and crates of bullets are shown to illustrate the extent of a nefarious plot to sow chaos. ‘They seek for Cairo to be as it was during its great setback, when betrayal conspired to bring it to ruin on 26 January 1952,’ a reference to the Cairo Fire. ‘The eyes of the General Intelligence were never shut on these terrorists and it discovered their efforts, which will never be forgotten: piles and piles of weapons of destruction and devastation.’ The short film closes with the accused tried in courts and the commanding words of the narrator, ‘May God protect Egypt, the Egypt that has long awaited the dawn of light and freedom.’⁹



Umm Kalthoum

Swept up by a vibrant sense of nationalism and enamoured of the native son to rule Egypt in two millennia, singers and writers embraced the Arab nationalist cause. Umm Kalthoum, the superstar of Arabic song hailed as the ‘pearl of the Orient’, was closely tied to Nasser’s pan-Arabism as was the singer, actor, and heartthrob Abd al-Halim Hafez, who crooned in praise of the Aswan High Dam, the mega-infrastructure project of the time that promised to modernise Egypt by harnessing the waters of the Nile to generate hydroelectric power. Acclaimed poet and lyricist Salah Jaheen was a devotee of Nasser’s vision and penned the words to the national anthem.

Once firmly in power, Nasser’s personality cult grew, with the state apparatus serving to underscore the leader’s destiny,

wisdom, and vision as a national icon. In 1955 Nasser decreed a censorship law, which set the legal parameters for the arts. Filmmakers were co-opted to support Nasser's brand of socialism. Censorship was extended to cover broader areas of artistic expression and aimed at 'the protection of public morality, the protection of security, public order and the State's higher interests'.¹⁰ The government body responsible for implementation of the new law was the Orwellian-sounding Ministry of National Guidance, established in 1953. Filmmakers needed to submit their work for prior approval. A licence, valid for one year, was required before filming and an additional licence, valid for ten years but could be withdrawn at any time, was required to screen the film.¹¹ Such films as *Cleopatra* starring Elizabeth Taylor were banned because the actress lobbied for the cause of Israel and *Dr Zhivago*, featuring the Egyptian actor Omar Sharif, could not be screened because it was critical of the Soviet Union.¹²

A new constitution came into effect in June 1956, which allowed press freedoms 'within the limits of the law'. A new press law issued that same year defined those limits, namely matters that concerned national defence, private life, and the judiciary. The licensing system remained in place, and on 22 July 1956, the Ministry of National Guidance rejected the licensing of 60 different periodicals.¹³ In waging a hunger strike in 1957, pioneer feminist and women's rights advocate Doria Shafiq was among the first to protest against Nasser's authoritarianism, including his dissolution of civic associations. *Bint al-Nil* (Daughters of the Nile) magazine, founded by Shafiq in 1945, was shut down in June 1957. Accused of conspiring with

the forces of imperialism, she was placed under house arrest and her name barred from appearing in the press. Banished from public life, she committed suicide in 1975.

British troops finally left Egyptian soil in June 1956, and on 26 July 1956, the fourth-year anniversary of the last king's exodus from Egypt, Nasser challenged the French and British by nationalising the Suez Canal in a speech he delivered in Alexandria and broadcast on live radio. A code word in his speech was the signal for the Egyptian takeover of the canal. Colluding with Israel and France, the British invaded Egypt in November with the aim of seizing the Suez Canal and toppling Nasser. Traffic of oil tankers through the canal came to a standstill. The United Nations, the United States, and international public opinion were overwhelmingly against the invasion.

In the United Kingdom, Prime Minister Anthony Eden was at loggerheads with the British Broadcasting Company, incensed that the network had given airtime to opposition Labour leader Hugh Gaitskell to criticise the Suez invasion. 'The government knew it was a mistake to go into Suez. The opposition knew that they had lost public support by publicly opposing the war,' says David Butler, a social scientist specialising in UK elections. 'It was almost a conspiracy of silence to suppress the Suez War in the weeks immediately afterwards.'¹⁴ British and French property in Egypt was sequestered following the Tripartite Aggression and Nasser emerged from the conflict with a stronger appeal at home and abroad. Nasser's defiant resistance made him a hero in the developing world where anti-imperialism was on the march and reinforced his image as the pan-Arab leader.

A Monopoly of the Arts

In the aftermath of the Suez Crisis, Nasser, emboldened by the affair and now firmly in power, established institutions that co-opted intellectuals and usurped the cultural realm within a state monopoly. The man responsible for mobilising writers within the Nasserist structure was army officer and novelist Yusuf al-Siba'i, who was appointed the secretary-general of the newly created Higher Council for Arts and Letters and dominated state and quasi-state institutions in the field of literature.¹⁵ The forced conformity demanded by autocratic regimes for the sake of 'internal unity' had the effect of breeding societies that do not encourage creativity, growth, or innovation. Academics, intellectuals, writers, and artists were all expected to openly toe the party line.

The political limits imposed under Nasser inspired the use of symbolism and allegory in literary works, theatre, and films, which included works like *Awlad haratina* (*Children of the Alley*) by Nobel laureate Naguib Mahfouz. 'Going beyond the traditional concerns of the Egyptian novel, which usually aims to represent social reality from a reformist perspective,' writes Richard Jacquemond in *Conscience of the Nation*, '*Children of the Alley* is an allegorical novel that can be read either as a criticism of the Nasser regime or as a reflection on the history of humanity. Its ambition is to rival, if only in the form of imitation, the grand narrative *par excellence* – that of religion.'¹⁶ Mahfouz's most critical works were published under Nasser, and it was the narrative of criticising the direction of the revolution and the existing social order that was ultimately lost.

The banning in book form of *Children of the Alley* by the state's director of censorship occurred when Nasser's regime was about to impose sweeping changes that would absorb al-Azhar within the state. The censorship of *Children of the Alley* marked the framework of cooperation between the state and the religious establishment. 'At the same time, the writer himself was being asked by the authorities to explain what the book was about and who the various characters inhabiting the alley in fact represented,' writes the acclaimed literary translator Denys Johnson-Davies in his memoirs. 'I happened to be on one of my periodic visits to Cairo at the time and was told by



Naguib Mahfouz, Nobel laureate

Naguib Mahfouz of the predicament in which he found himself. I said that he should stick to his guns, state that it is not up to the author to start explaining his work, and refuse to answer any question that might jeopardize him with the religious authorities at al-Azhar.¹⁷ An edition of the *Children of the Alley* was published in Beirut in 1967 with some passages censored and copies of the novel were available under the counter in some of Cairo's bookstores. That same year, the novel was adapted as a radio drama with some modifications.

A few months after the monarchy was overthrown in the coup that ushered in the rule of Gamal Abd al-Nasser, Sonallah Ibrahim began law school at Cairo University. Drawn to journalism and politics, he got involved in Egypt's clandestine Communist Party, a move that soon landed him in jail. Between 1959 and 1964 he served five years of a seven-year sentence handed down by a military tribunal. When he got out, he had a burning desire to convey what he had witnessed there – in particular, how imprisonment drives inmates to create private fantasy worlds to combat isolation and sexual longing. Those experiences formed the basis of his first novel, *Tilk al-ra'iha* (*The Smell of It*).

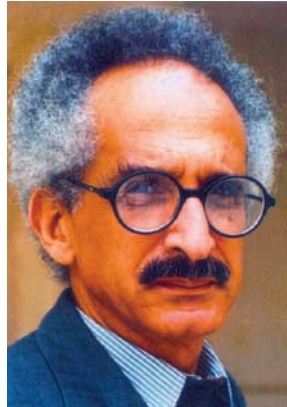
Such openness about prison conditions did not go unnoticed, and in 1966 *The Smell of It* was banned before it could be distributed. The year before, Nasser had temporarily lifted the country's state of emergency, leaving publishers and authors free to publish without approval from the censor's office. But a state security officer would still tour local publishing houses, stopping the publication of anything that looked provocative. *The Smell of It* was an easy target. The story of a man's release from prison and

the alienation he faces, *The Smell of It* featured some shocking descriptions of homosexuality, prostitution, rape, and masturbation. But that was not the reason that a novel by a then-unknown writer was banned, Ibrahim contends. ‘They believed they could use the pretext of the sexual references in the novel as a cover to forbid anyone from talking about imprisonment and torture.’

Before the 1,000–2,000 printed copies were confiscated, Ibrahim managed to secure around a hundred, which he delivered to literary critics at various publications. ‘Favourable reviews appeared in the press for a book that did not exist,’ he recalls with a grin. Still, it took two decades before the book was reprinted, uncensored, in Cairo. Before that, it circulated as part of an underground literary market. Samia Mehrez, professor of modern Arabic literature at the American University in Cairo, read *The Smell of It* in the early 1970s as part of the reading list for her master’s degree. ‘That was the mark of the 1960s and ’70s,’ she says. ‘Sonallah himself has talked about how books have a life of their own, that they circulate despite the censors. We all had copies of a handful of banned books because people had made photocopies or they had been printed elsewhere in the Arab world and were brought back by friends.’

Readers were astonished by the way Ibrahim’s writing defied the Arabic literary focus on poetic language and rhythms. ‘[Ibrahim’s style] had a lot to do with a disillusionment with how language, and discourse in general, were being manipulated by power,’ Mehrez says. ‘His major enterprise was how to create or invent a language that would depict a horrid, sordid reality that was not being reflected or expressed through the dominant modes of discourse.’

Tradition in Egypt has long linked literature with politics, and well-known writers also had a role in public life. ‘Even before the 1940s, literary authors wrote about politics,’ says Ibrahim. Newspaper articles by such prominent writers as Abd al-Rahman Sharqawi and Yusuf Idris illuminated social issues and gave greater influence to their writing. ‘At the same time as they were writing about politics, they were authoring novels,’ Ibrahim recalls.



COURTESY OF SONALLAH IBRAHIM

Sonallah Ibrahim

‘The paperboy would shout, “Read al-Akkad! Read al-Akkad!” – meaning not the literary works of Mahmud al-Akkad but a political article by him, or Taha Hussein, or whomever.’

Still, true independence of thought was unusual. ‘The profile of the creative writer is inescapably entrenched in the state apparatus. He or she is a civil servant,’ explains Mehrez. ‘We cannot begin to speak about an autonomous literary field because most, if not all of our writers – and Sonallah Ibrahim is an exception to the rule – work within the state cultural apparatus.’¹⁸

Abdel-rahman Elabnoudy’s battle for expression was first waged with his father, who denounced his son’s colloquial poetry, going as far as to tear apart his first collection, published in 1964, called *al-Ard wa-l-‘iyal* (The Land and the Children). ‘He saw it as a state resembling infidelity,’ Elabnoudy says. ‘He

considered the Arabic language to be holy because it is the basis of the Islamic faith. The holiness granted to the religion is granted to classical Arabic.’ Colloquial poets were censured for dismantling the foundations of classical poetry and accused of linguistically detaching Egypt from the rest of the Arab world by emphasizing the vernacular. But, Elabnoudy points out, it was colloquial poetry that spoke to the masses, serving a call for Arab unity in the struggle against imperialism.

Elabnoudy earned his living as a songwriter, writing lyrics for leading Arab singers of the day and reciting his poetry on the airwaves to listeners in Egypt and across the Arab world. As Elabnoudy was gaining notice for his poetry, his austere Upper Egyptian father decided to make amends with his son. His mother prepared the visit to Cairo in October 1966, and for the first time father and son sat down for a candid heart-to-heart conversation. What followed was like a scene from a movie, Elabnoudy recalls. ‘It was on that night, before we got up to go to sleep, that state security officers came and arrested me.’

He was detained along with other poets, novelists, and journalists for belonging to the clandestine group Communist Unity. ‘We were in a semi-cell organisation. We were against the rule of Gamal Abd al-Nasser and its might and cruelty,’ Elabnoudy says. ‘My political chief was an informant for the intelligence.’ Elabnoudy was first sent to an interrogation prison within the walls of Saladin’s 12th-century citadel. Later he was dispatched to the Tora prison compound. What secured Elabnoudy’s release was an invitation by Nasser to Jean-Paul Sartre to visit Egypt. When the French philosopher received word that writers were detained by the regime,



ABDALLA F. HASSAN

Abdel-rahman Elabnoudy

he turned down the welcome. Through an intermediary, the Egyptian leader promised that the writers would be freed by the time Sartre departed.¹⁹

Extending the state's bureaucratic tentacles, a police state was established under Nasser's rule. Security and intelligence services were dramatically expanded. Their main function was to keep track of any subversive plotting against the regime within the army but was pervasively used to keep tabs on and silence dissent among factions of society. 'The security agencies of the Nasserist regime were sickened with the disease of suspicion,' says prominent leftist journalist and author Salah Essa, who was arrested and jailed twice under Nasser for his activism. 'Any opposition organisation had to be struck and liquidated

whatever its political leanings.²⁰ Arbitrary arrest and imprisonment were common. Nasser was obsessed with preserving control. 'Having risen to power through secrecy, conspiracy, and dissimulation, he maintained those characteristics, indeed strengthened them, even after there was no serious threat to his position,' writes historian Jason Thompson. 'Portraits, busts, and statues of Nasser became ubiquitous, reinforcing a sense of constant observation.'²¹

State Ownership of the Media

Nasser nationalised the private press in 1960, bringing it under the control of the Arab Socialist Union, the sole political organisation, and branding it the 'media of mobilisation.'²² The move was not considered a matter of free expression versus censorship, but was justified within the socialist vein of being anti-capitalist. The press has lost touch, Nasser said then. It was not serving the public function the press should play by being much too concerned with tantalising society gossip and Cairo nightlife instead of 'Kafr al-Battikh' – the watermelon hamlet, a representation of the ordinary struggles of rural Egypt – and testimonials such as those to women who toil with honour to provide for their families. Nasser had his own ideas of what the press should be. Criticism, he seemed to indicate at the time, was one of its primary functions. 'Criticism is not some kind of threat or revenge,' he told the new boards and chief editors of the newly nationalised press. 'If there is anything that's in ruins, say that this is in ruins.'²³

The state media wholeheartedly embraced socialism and pan-Arabism, becoming a filter of information and propaganda,

instead of the promised transformation of the institution into one that supposedly guides the public and builds society. Critical voices were muted, the military junta was sacrosanct, and Nasser was fortified as a national hero. The failings of the regime were not attributed to the president, but to the reactionary and destructive forces of capitalism and feudalism. Nasser's personal confidant Muhammad Hassanein Heikal was appointed chairman of the board of al-Ahram, then later of Dar al-Hilal and Akhbar al-Youm.

Pioneers in Arab journalism, Akhbar al-Youm founders and twin brothers Mustafa and Ali Amin published five best-selling newspapers and magazines before the state's takeover of the press. The Amin brothers continued to manage the publishing enterprise they started in 1944 and were reappointed editors and board chairmen in 1962. Long committed to a free media, Mustafa Amin was imprisoned for six months in 1939 for an article in *Akhir sa'á* (Last Hour) magazine deemed critical of King Faruq. An advocate of democracy and Western liberalism, he was arrested in 1965, tried secretly in 1966, and convicted of being a spy for America and smuggling funds. Sentenced to a life sentence, he spent nine years in prison before being pardoned by Nasser's successor, President Anwar Sadat. Ali Amin, accused by Heikal of working for British and Saudi intelligence, went into exile in 1965.²⁴

The connection Heikal had with Nasser allowed him to favour a more open editorial line, and in a series of articles titled 'Zuwwar al-fajr' (The Visitors of Dawn) he rebuked the fearsome practice by the intelligence services and secret police of making arbitrary and warrantless arrests and detentions

in the middle of the night, a practice that was a hallmark of Nasser's security state.²⁵ Room for expression existed mainly in the literary pages of *al-Ahram*, where writers under Heikal's wings, like Naguib Mahfouz, could publish works of fiction that could be read as challenges to the status quo.²⁶ As far as the press was concerned, censorship was directed at politically oriented news and commentary rather than the literary sections.

The nationalisation of the film industry followed in 1961, as well as publishing houses from 1961 to 1965, even when books already required the approval of security agents before printing. Army officers were placed in charge of these nationalised businesses, which were also increasingly imbued with propaganda about Arab socialism. The monopoly the state held on print media, books, television, and film served a more direct form of control than state rules of censorship. As in the times of the pharaohs millennia ago, the function of art was to exalt the king's power, idealise his perfect administration, and serve the state. Self-censorship was already becoming engrained. A network of security and intelligence agencies made the domination of the media airtight and a climate of fear was fortified. 'Many top positions in media were also filled with Intelligence officers. The secret police watched over editorial and printing offices, bookshops and coffee houses where writers gathered,' writes Marina Stagh.²⁷

The revered religious institution of al-Azhar was made an appendage of the state by Gamal Abd al-Nasser in June 1961,²⁸ and so its authority cannot be entirely unlocked from executive control. The head of al-Azhar was then appointed by the president, not internally, as had been the practice for centuries.

The *'ulama* (religious scholars) were expected to give their unconditional support to the regime, with the understanding that they are given dominance in questions pertaining to religion and jurisprudence. The 1961 law established the Islamic Research Academy at al-Azhar, comprised of scholars who held sway on censorship matters when it came to Islamic texts but that role was broadened at times to compete with other official censorship bodies. A civil court decided on matters of confiscation. The censorship authority and the secret police in Nasser's Egypt remained the major force behind the censorship of works of fiction and science they found blasphemous or politically objectionable.

The power to censor is a top-down privilege that seeks to restrain divergent viewpoints. Censorship emanates from government agencies, state-owned media blacklisting writers, the armed forces, religious bodies, 'cultural norms', publishers who choose not to publish, and even individually through self-censorship. Some writers have opted to publish outside Egypt, but this inevitably meant that they would reach a smaller audience of Egyptian readers. Ami Ayalon writes in *The Press in the Arab Middle East*,

In many ways the press regressed to its starting point, becoming little more than official bulletins extolling state leaders, fighting the state's domestic and foreign verbal propaganda battles, and 'educating' the public according to dictates from above. The press became an echo rather than a voice, and journalists, little more than bureaucratic functionaries, were forced back into docility.²⁹

The Media Betrayal

The credibility of the state-owned media establishment, particularly in times of crisis, would soon be shown to be hollow. Egypt was taken by surprise when Israel struck in June 1967, and in six days the Jewish state seized all of Sinai, Gaza, East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Syria's Golan Heights. The brief and humiliating war for Arab armies claimed the lives of some 20,000 Egyptian troops, with another 5,000 captured or missing. As Egypt was teetering on the brink of war, Abdel-rahman Elabnoudy got a call from the singer Abd al-Halim Hafez, who wanted the lyricist to come to Cairo and write nationalist songs for him to sing. After being incarcerated for six months, Elabnoudy declined. 'I said, "I have not inhaled a breath of fresh air outside of prison. What do you want from me? A country jails Abdel-rahman Elabnoudy and wants to win in a war? No, I won't come!"'³⁰ Hafez persuaded him to change his mind, and Elabnoudy wrote the lyrics to all the songs sung by Hafez during the war. The singer's inspiring voice was the highlight of wartime radio broadcasts.

During the conflict, as the Egyptian army was wildly retreating from Sinai, broadcast outlets aired invented reports of fabulous victories against the Zionist foe, the grandstanding of Nasser's Egypt taken to supreme heights. 'Our planes are above Israel today and have been striking the airports of Israel since the morning,' Nasser informed Jordan's King Hussein in a phone call intercepted by Israel, which had already decimated Egypt's fleet of fighter planes on airbases in the first hours of the war.³¹ At no other moment did the state media prove so woefully deficient,

contributing to a deep sense of public betrayal. In *Six Days of War*, Israeli historian Michael Oren describes the scene on 5 June 1967, the first day of the conflict, through the eyes of a Jewish Egyptian journalist:

‘The streets were overflowing with demonstrators,’ remembered Eric Rouleau, Middle East correspondent for *Le Monde*. ‘Anti-aircraft guns were firing. Hundreds of thousands of people were chanting, “Down with Israel! We will win the war!”’ . . . All international phone lines were cut. The sole source of information was the government’s communiqué: ‘With an aerial strike against Cairo and across the UAR [United Arab Republic], Israel began its attack today at 9:00. Our planes scrambled and held off the attack.’³²

The 5 June banner headline above the masthead of the evening paper *al-Missa* (The Evening) declared: ‘43 Enemy Airplanes Downed.’ A headline read, ‘We Are All One Man Behind the Commander in Battle.’ The following day, the banner headline of *al-Missa* announced, ‘Arab Armies Edge towards Tel Aviv’ with another headline warning, ‘America and Britain Participate in the Aggression.’ On 8 June, the main headline of *al-Missa* enthused, ‘Our Planes Destroy an Enemy Battleship,’ with another banner headline reporting, ‘9 Enemy Planes Are Downed in Cairo and the Canal Zone This Morning.’ Defeat sinks in on 9 June, day five of the war, as all of Sinai is conquered. *Le Monde*’s Eric Rouleau recalled how “an air of mourning seized Cairo,” writes Oren, ‘and how secretly its citizens were calling Nasser *al-wahsh* – “The



In a televised address, Nasser admits the truth about Egypt's defeat in war.

Beast.”³³ The Six Day War showed that the function of Egypt's media was not information, truth, or even spin, it was propaganda, pure and simple.

The defeat was an unforgivable embarrassment for Nasser. ‘My brothers, we are accustomed, in times of victory and in times of adversity, in sweet hours and in bitter hours, to sitting together and talking with open hearts, honestly stating the facts, believing that we are on the same path, always succeeding to find the true way, no matter how difficult the circumstances and no matter how faint the light,’ began a remorseful Nasser in a live 6:30pm radio and television broadcast, a day before the war came to an official end. ‘We

cannot hide from ourselves that we've faced a devastating setback during the past few days,' he continued, taking full responsibility for the war's outcome and telling the Egyptian people that he was resigning the presidency. 'I have decided to step down completely and forever from any official position and any political role, and to return to the ranks of the masses to fulfill my duties as any other citizen.'³⁴

It was a moment that brilliantly and tactfully served to shore up his support. Egyptians took to the streets demanding that their leader stay in power. 'The People Say "No,"' declared *Akhbar al-youm* (News of the Day) in large red writing. In smaller black lettering the headline read, 'The Leader Discloses the Whole Truth to the People.' It is difficult to say how populist and genuine the appeal was and how much of the public display of support for Nasser was behind-the-scenes political machinations of the regime and its media. While Nasser did stay in power, it was only later that Egyptians could comprehend the true extent of the defeat – especially in light of official propaganda – and the institutional failures that placed the whole of Sinai under Israeli control.

Iconoclastic Egyptian poet Ahmed Fouad Negm had believed the state media's fabrications of a victorious Egyptian army those fateful days in June. 'We are going to Tel Aviv. Isn't that what they told us?' he says, remembering as warplanes flew overhead. 'All of a sudden, we're told it's all over and the leader is stepping down.'³⁵ A poem he penned, titled 'Kabatna taht batatna' (Slapping Ourselves in Grief),³⁶ when the shock of defeat became painfully apparent would earn him jail time. Negm spent 18 years of his life locked up because his

poetry ridiculed Egypt's rulers. The poem laments '*The people of Egypt / protected by thieves*' and describes a ruler and his clique with paunches who live a life of '*precious metals*'. Why be reminded of the loss of Sinai, '*the darkest night of shame*', he asks. '*We don't need the bother.*'

*Everywhere a military officer
is made a manager
And God willing
an ass
So what, if in Aqaba we ran
Or in Sinai?
Can this defeat make us forget
that we are 'free'?*

'Egypt', the duo of Negm and his oud-playing companion Sheikh Imam Eissa croon, '*is a nation drowning in lies*' with its masters imbibing '*Poems that glorify made-up victories / until treacherous betrayal.*'

Waves of student protests erupted on college campuses in the war's aftermath, with slogans shouted and scrawled on building walls that demanded: 'Stop the Rule of the Intelligence', 'Down with the Police State', and 'Down with Heikal's Lying Press'. Student periodicals posted on the walls of the campuses emerged as the freest press in Egypt. Nasser for the first time became the object of direct criticism in the public space. A campaign against student unrest was waged in the state-owned media, which labelled the activists as provocateurs and counter-revolutionaries goaded by foreign elements.³⁷

Expression through the Arts

Faced with the limited means of expression in the printed press, literature and film evolved into an abstract channel for social and political commentary. Cinema has a powerful ability to convey emotion and express a message. Accustomed to political censorship, film audiences have become attuned to uncovering subtle and hidden messages. The arts seek to convey the reality of how many Egyptians live, but after one leaves the cinema, closes a book, or switches off the television set, life goes on in the way it always has. What was depicted on screen or in the lines of a novel was not a call to action, merely an expression of what exists.

The wider the audiences, the more severe the censorship becomes, with television, film, and theatre being the more carefully monitored. Stagh describes:

It can be noted that novels, licensed for publishing as books or even serialised in the press, are often mutilated past recognition by the censorship when turned into films, and plays circulated in book form without any problem have often been prevented from being staged by the censorship and the secret police. Even if synopsis, script, and the final version have successively been cleared by the censor, the secret police have sometimes closed down the cinema or the theatre at the very last moment, on grounds that the performance 'endangers public order'.³⁸

A restricted space was left open. 'While the Nasser regime would not tolerate any kind of political opposition, it did allow

for the expression of a degree of pluralism within the ideological institutions it had established and which it controlled,' writes Richard Jacquemond. "The journalist Salah 'Isa has called this "a game of window-dressing," consisting of "giving a place in the press to a political or ideological group, in order that that group might express itself, if not freely, then in a controlled way under the gaze of the authorities."'"³⁹

The bitter defeat in the Six Day War was a defining moment for film and the arts. It was through this vehicle that a sense of loss and betrayal was more adequately expressed. 'Some have called the post-1967 cinema the "green light cinema," when the state took its hands off and said we can't claim that we haven't screwed things up so we will allow you a measure of freedom to blow off steam,' remarks Walter Armbrust.⁴⁰ A notable illustration is the 1969 film *Shay' min al-khauf* (A Touch of Fear), adapted from a novel by Tharwat Abaza, an outspoken conservative critic of Nasser's regime, directed by Hussein Kamal, and written for the silver screen by dramatist Sabry Ezzat and renowned poet and lyricist Abdel-rahman Elabnoudy. The film tells the story of a vindictive and tyrannical village chief and his eventual demise.

Childhood friends with the sweet and brave Fouada, Atris was not always the cruel overlord. An innocent child who adored Fouada and cherished his white dove, he dreaded the terror wreaked on the village by his father's armed gang, who extorted peasants, pursued vendettas, and struck fear in the hearts of villagers. Atris's father sought to toughen his sensitive, young son by slaughtering his beloved dove before his eyes and forcing him to take part in sprees of robbery and pillage.

When his father is shot, the now older Atris searches for revenge, becoming a mirror image of the man he had once shunned: the despised headman. To collectively punish the village for the murder of one of his men by an unknown assailant, Atris orders the locks closed, stopping the river's water from reaching the village. Crops perish, the earth is parched, the village faces starvation. Fearing the wrath of Atris and his henchmen, none of the villagers dare to open the locks – save Fouada, who courageously restores the flow of water through the canals. Peasants happily celebrate as the water quenches the arid soil. 'As long as no one says "no," they will always be afraid,' believes Fouada.

Atris finds out that Fouada has opened the locks and is about to shoot her, but changes his mind. Instead, he goes to see her father, Hafiz, a simple and humble farmer. Atris demands Fouada's hand in marriage and sets the wedding date five days later. Fouada rejects the marriage proposal. Fearing for the life of his daughter and terrified of Atris, Hafiz and the two witnesses lie to the marriage registrar by claiming that Fouada has approved her suitor. A marriage contract is drawn up and Fouada, dressed in black, the colour of mourning, is forced to go with Atris to his estate. 'You did not marry me,' Fouada informs Atris. He threatens to kill her if she does not accept him as her husband. 'It does not matter that I disappear from the face of the earth, you cannot kill me from your heart,' she responds.

Enraged, Atris goes to the marriage registrar, who confirms that under Islamic law the marriage is invalid without Fouada's consent. Atris commands his men to destroy everything in his



Using elements of symbolism, the motion picture *Shay' min al-khauf* (A Touch of Fear) was read as an indictment of Nasser.

home and to burn the fields of Hafiz and the two supposed witnesses. Atris threatens to silence anyone who refuses to acknowledge the legitimacy of his marriage to Fouada. When Sheikh Ibrahim, the imam, affirms that the union is null and void, Atris has his gang drown his crops.

‘If you are a coward, then you are one of them,’ Sheikh Ibrahim tells worshippers in the mosque. ‘And those who remain silent are also one of them.’ Atris arranges to have Sheikh Ibrahim’s son, Mahmoud, killed on the day he weds his sweetheart, Aziza. The funeral procession becomes an angry cry for justice. Villagers finally rise up against their oppressor, Atris, shouting, ‘The marriage of Atris to Fouada is null and

void', a slogan that would become infamous in Egyptian film lore, and which was read to mean that Nasser's honeymoon with the people had come to an end.⁴¹

The film narrowly passed the censorship authorities and was allowed to be screened after Nasser had seen the film twice and given his approval, apparently failing to see the comparison audiences would instinctively draw between the holder of the office of the presidency and Atris. 'Abd al-Nasser was told that there is a film that conspires an overthrow,' recounts Elabnoudy. 'He said, "Show me the film." Abd al-Nasser, of course, is not a man of little intelligence. He saw the film and said, "If we are truly like that, then we deserve the same destiny as Atris." I was released from imprisonment a short while earlier so it reflected what I felt about oppression, the search for justice, and the retaliation of the oppressed.'

The film lasted only ten days in cinemas and was not broadcast on television during Nasser's rule. 'People rediscovered the film later. After the *naksa* ['setback,' used to refer to the 1967 War], people did not have the energy to tolerate defeat another time,' explains Elabnoudy. 'Later on, the film won acclaim. "The marriage of Fouada to Atris is null and void" became a political and social motto.'⁴²

The setback of 1967 reinforced a general distrust of reports on state-owned media. Egyptians tuned to the shortwave transmission of the BBC World Service and French Monte-Carlo to find out what was *not* being reported in the state press. Decades later, Al Jazeera would serve a similar role, becoming the station the Arab public tuned to first during periods of crises.



The front page of *al-Ahram* on 29 September 1970, the day after Gamal Abd al-Nasser's death.

The 1967 War became a watershed as Nasser's pan-Arabism quickly began losing currency, seen as an illusion of the Egyptian leader's power or a ploy to seduce the masses. Nasser's control of the media buttressed this imagined dream state. Defeat brought with it new realities – a wake-up call of sorts. A new force – Islamism – began its evolution. A growing number of

Muslims across the Arab world began holding the opinion that a humiliating defeat was possible because Muslims had turned away from their faith, embracing Nasser's secular nationalism over pan-Islamism. And defeat was God's lesson that the Arabs had made the wrong choice. Islamism in its various forms would become a dominant force against occupation and authoritarianism in the Middle East in the decades to come.

Nasser had an uncanny ability to communicate with the Arab public yet his influence was in large measure due to complete state domination of the press and airwaves, leaving little room for dissent. If Nasser's reign has proved anything, it is that press freedoms can be taken away and the media can be realigned to reflect state interests.

Notes

- 1 The junta's stated goal was to retain power for three years during which time a constitutional government would be established.
- 2 Steven A. Cook, 'Egypt's Never-Ending Revolution', *New York Times*, 10 Feb. 2012, www.nytimes.com/2012/02/12/opinion/sunday/egypts-never-ending-revolution.html (accessed Feb. 2012).
- 3 Ahlam Mosteghanemi, *Chaos of the Senses*, tr. Baria Ahmar (2004), 132.
- 4 William A. Rugh, *The Arab Press* (1979), 62.
- 5 Stagh, *Limits of Freedom of Speech*, 324.
- 6 Ibid. 67.
- 7 Ibid. 11.
- 8 Maye Kassem, *Egyptian Politics* (2004), 137–8.
- 9 'A rare film produced in 1954 warns against the Muslim Brotherhood', 3 Sept. 2011, www.youtube.com/watch?v=bLwdz4uEMWY (accessed June 2012).
- 10 Law 430 of 1955 on Censorship of Cinema, Songs, Theatre, and Monologues. Article 19, *The Egyptian Predicament*, 66.

- 11 Article 1 of the law. Ibid. 66.
- 12 Ibid. 67.
- 13 Stagh, *Limits of Freedom of Speech*, 20.
- 14 Interview with David Butler, 30 Apr. 2010, Oxford.
- 15 Richard Jacquemond, *Conscience of the Nation*, tr. David Tresilian (2008), 18. Yusuf al-Siba'ī served as minister of culture under Anwar Sadat from 1973–6 and was assassinated by terrorists in Cyprus in February 1978 for supporting Sadat's peace initiative with Israel.
- 16 Ibid. 2.
- 17 Denys Johnson-Davies, *Memories in Translation* (2006), 42.
- 18 Abdalla F. Hassan, 'Black Humor in Dark Times: Egyptian Novelist Sonallah Ibrahim', *World Press Review*, 19 June 2003, www.worldpress.org/Mideast/1205.cfm.
- 19 Interview with Abdel-rahman Elabnoudy (Arabic), 18 July 2012, Ismailia.
- 20 Interview with Salah Essa (Arabic), 24 Sept. 2012, Giza.
- 21 Thompson, *History of Egypt*, 308.
- 22 Law 156 of 24 May 1960 transferred the ownership of the four main privately owned publishing houses – Dar al-Ahram, Dar Akhbar al-Youm, Dar al-Hilal, and Dar Rose al-Yusuf – to the National Union, later the Arab Socialist Union, the sole political entity, which was in charge of appointing the board of directors.
- 23 A speech by Nasser printed in *al-Ahram*, 30 May 1960. Quoted in Stagh, *Limits of Freedom of Speech*, 23.
- 24 The Free Officers' regime briefly jailed Mustafa Amin twice prior to his arrest for spying. Arthur Goldschmidt Jr., *Biographical Dictionary of Modern Egypt* (2000), 21–22; Douglas Jehl, 'Mustafa Amin, Liberal Editor Jailed by Nasser, Dies at 83', *New York Times*, 16 Apr. 1997, www.nytimes.com/1997/04/16/world/mustafa-amin-liberal-editor-jailed-by-nasser-dies-at-83.html (accessed Oct. 2012).
- 25 The security state's dawn arrests bring to mind a quote from George Orwell's dystopia *1984* (book 1, chapter 1): 'People simply disappeared, always during the night. Your name was removed from the registers, every record of everything you had ever done was

- wiped out, your one-time existence was denied and then forgotten. You were abolished, annihilated: vaporized was the usual word.'
- 26 Stagh, *Limits of Freedom of Speech*, 24.
- 27 Ibid. 28.
- 28 Law 103 of 1961. The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces passed a law in January 2012 reconstituting al-Azhar's Supreme Council for Scholars, assigned the role of selecting the institution's grand sheikh and the mufti of the republic.
- 29 Ayalon, *The Press in the Arab Middle East*, 245.
- 30 Interview with Abdel-rahman Elabnoudy (Arabic), 18 July 2012, Ismailia.
- 31 A documentary on the Six Day War broadcast on Al Jazeera played the 6 June telephone conversation, which can be heard at www.youtube.com/watch?v=F10r3-C8LK4 (accessed Nov. 2011).
- 32 Michael B. Oren, *Six Days of War* (2002), 177.
- 33 Ibid. 286.
- 34 Clips of Gamal Abd al-Nasser's 9 June 1967 speech can be seen at 'Gamal Abdel Nasser – [English subtitles] – part 1', 11 May 2011, www.youtube.com/watch?v=R_fZG6_SDus; 'Gamal Abdel Nasser – [English subtitles] – part 2', 11 May 2011, www.youtube.com/watch?v=aHXY60DtG0A (accessed Nov. 2011).
- 35 Ahmed Fouad Negm in an interview with Ahmad Shubayr on *al-Wagh al-akhar* (The Other Side), 2008, www.youtube.com/watch?v=lgUEZrHGbbe (accessed May 2010).
- 36 An audio version of the poem sung with Ahmed Fouad Negm and Sheikh Imam Eissa can be found at www.youtube.com/watch?v=kynIDEVns4E (accessed May 2010).
- 37 Ahmed Abdalla, *The Student Movement and National Politics in Egypt 1923–1973* (2008), 152, 158–9.
- 38 Stagh, *Limits of Freedom of Speech*, 120.
- 39 Jacquemond, *Conscience of the Nation*, 17; quoting Salah 'Isa, *Muthaqqafun wa 'asakar* (Intellectuals and Soldiers) (Cairo: Madbuli, 1986), 412. Elsewhere in the text, the name of journalist and author Salah 'Isa is spelled using his preferred spelling, Salah Essa.

- 40 Interview with Walter Armbrust, 13 June 2010, Oxford.
- 41 'The film *Shay' min al-khauf* with Mahmoud Morsi and Shadia', 12 Mar. 2012, www.youtube.com/watch?v=2n_C6poO2Hk (accessed Aug. 2012).
- 42 Interview with Abdel-rahman Elabnoudy (Arabic), 18 July 2012, Ismailia.

3

Sadat, the Infitah, and Peace with Israel

To be gripped by fear is, I believe, the most degrading of all emotions for a human being. In fear personality disintegrates, the human will is paralyzed, and man acts as an automaton. (Anwar Sadat¹)

Anwar Sadat, Nasser's hand-picked successor, realising the folly of Nasser's policies, took it upon himself to open up Egypt's economy to Western investment and to politically align Egypt with the United States. While Sadat's presidency signified a dramatic about-face compared to the policies of his predecessor, one-man authoritarianism remained. Criticism of Nasser was encouraged, just as Nasser had encouraged criticism of the monarchy. Sadat's greatest political foes were leftists and Nasserists who believed in the former leader's transformative pan-Arab vision. Political Islam experienced a revival in the 1970s as Sadat, soon after coming to power, subtly encouraged Islamists to organise, using them as a counterweight against Nasserists and socialists.² While Sadat overtly maintained Nasser's ban on the Muslim Brotherhood, he turned a blind eye as it opened an office in Cairo and was allowed to publish a monthly magazine, *al-Da'wa* (The Call). 'The Islamic student movement in the '70s was characterized



Anwar Sadat

by Salafi extremism,² asserts Abd al-Moneim Aboul Futouh, a Brotherhood member active in the student movement then and one of hundreds detained in Sadat's widespread detention of political opponents in 1981. 'The Brotherhood, generally, and one of its methods was *al-Da'wa*, had a role in pushing the movement in the direction of moderation.'³ As president of the student union at Cairo University, Aboul Fotouh famously challenged President Anwar Sadat on 2 February 1977, telling the head of state that he alone bears responsibility before God for his deeds, and that he surrounds himself with sycophants while proclaiming Egypt to be a 'nation of knowledge and faith.'⁴

A vibrant student opposition movement arose in the aftermath of the 1967 setback, gaining momentum in the early 1970s. Mimeographs and photocopiers made possible a political and literary press that circumvented the authorities' systems of control. Wall magazines on university campuses demanded

the liberation of territory occupied by Israel and promoted greater political involvement among the student body.⁵ ‘The luck of our generation was a new invention called the cassette tape, which made it possible to escape the censorship and media blockade placed on us,’ says Gamal Bekheet, a colloquial poet. ‘We realised that the methods of resistance do not have to include belonging to a party or political current.’⁶

Sadat’s speech in January 1972 signalled that the time was not right for a military offensive to liberate the Sinai Peninsula. An impatient and angry student body demanded immediate action, staging sit-ins and protests that were broken up with brute force. Still, Anwar Sadat seemed more committed to the rule of law than his predecessor, allowing for a more independent judiciary and multi-party politics for the first time since 1952. The new president made a dramatic show of personally overseeing the destruction of the Interior Ministry’s archives of wiretap recordings and coerced confessions, suggesting a move away from the reliance on domestic spying agencies. Warrantless arrests and extended political detentions without trial ended, but not political arrests.

Film and the Arts

Sadat initiated a policy of easing up restrictions on the arts. The government’s ownership of the film industry came to an end in 1972 and film censorship was relaxed. Sadat modified by presidential decree the censorship law of 1955 requiring respect for law and public order, and the protection of youth. Among its articles, the decree prohibits ‘the propagation of atheism’ (article 1), ‘showing nudity in a way which contradicts the customs

and traditions of society' (article 7), 'filming killings, beatings, torture' (article 15), 'portraying alcoholism or drug addiction' (article 16), 'portraying in an unacceptable manner any foreign country or people which has good relations with Egypt' (article 19), and 'portraying social problems in a manner which creates despair or in a way which creates class divisions and ethnic conflicts, and which undermines national unity' (article 20).⁷

Film censorship is a particularly involved and cumbersome affair for the film industry. The censorship authorities need to know the production schedule and can stop the filming if it differs from the script. Filming in public places must have the approval of the Ministry of Interior. Before being screened, the film requires the censor's approval and the filmmaker may be asked to make further cuts or the entire film may be deemed too controversial. Films for export require an export license.⁸

Films critiquing Nasser's tenure were allowed to be produced and screened. A notable example is the 1979 film *Ihna bitu' al-utubis* (We're the Ones from the Bus), which tells the story of Gaber and Marzouk, two men who enter into an altercation with the fare collector on a bus and take the matter to the police station. In a display of black humour, the fare collector is let go, yet Gaber and Marzouk are locked up in macabre Kafkaesque fashion on charges of passing out political leaflets and colluding to overthrow the regime. They are beaten, degraded, and tortured to sign confessions of their crimes.

Mahmoud, a romantic and idealistic actor, poet, and university student, is among those rounded up in the dissident witch-hunt. 'We should always say no to every wrong. We

should say it a million times a day. Every minute, every second, we should say it. Love, love without despair, without hate, until we find the one who will listen to us,' says Mahmoud, who remains true to the belief that change cannot happen through bloodshed or destruction. When Marzouk tries to wash his hands of anything to do with politics, Mahmoud tells him, 'But this is your country and you need to participate in its existence even if only with your opinion. Anyone without an intellectual belonging is like a child without meaning.' Marzouk is confident that he will get out once the officials realise that he is wrongly imprisoned. Mahmoud explains to him the reality of a police state intent on self-preservation: 'This is the policy of the people who have power. Every once in a while they make the ruler believe that there is a conspiracy against him and his regime, and that they're the ones who discovered it and saved him from it.' Holding true to principle, Mahmoud refuses to sign a false confession and is again savagely beaten 'to make him forget his own name,' according to his interrogator. It is June 1967, and the jailed political prisoners are elated when they hear on loudspeakers of the army's war victories and the rising number of downed enemy planes. 'We are not important. What is important is the country,' Marzouk cries out.

The euphoria of an imagined triumph quickly fades as the prisoners hear Nasser's resignation speech and news of the defeat sinks in. Mahmoud, brutally tortured yet ever prepared to sacrifice for the sake of his country, dies in Marzouk's arms. The prison boss gathers the inmates and informs them that Mahmoud took advantage of the dire circumstances the country is in to attempt an escape. When ordered to sign testimonials

that Mahmoud died fleeing, Marzouk, Gaber, and the other prisoners rebel, no longer fearful or cowed. 'It is you who brought the country to ruin,' Gaber shouts at the prison boss, who took pleasure in the humiliation and abuse of prisoners. While the film was directed at Nasser-era abuses, the message of the film remained powerfully pertinent decades later in picturing the state's oppressive security labyrinth.⁹

The classic 1975 film *al-Karnak* (Karnak), adapted from a novella authored by Naguib Mahfouz a year earlier, begins on 6 October 1973 as patrons of the Karnak Café listen to a military communiqué on the radio informing the public that the armed forces have succeeded in crossing the Suez Canal, beginning a war to liberate the Sinai from Israeli occupation. The storyline jumps back years earlier to three students in medical school, Zeinab, Ismail, and Helmy, who frequent the Karnak Café and join the gatherings of the writer Taha al-Gharib. Zeinab sees that all al-Gharib's salons do is attack the 1952 revolution by lamenting the lost freedoms of the press and the robust political parties during the monarchy. 'Could parties create a strong army or the High Dam? Or free education, industry, and agrarian reform?' Zeinab challenges al-Gharib.¹⁰

Zeinab and Ismail, two young students in love, agree to work in the countryside for the benefit of citizens once they graduate. Their friend Helmy is romantically involved with the café's proprietor, Qurunfula, who used to be a salacious belly dancer, beauty queen, and paramour to some of the country's most powerful men. The 'visitors of the dawn' come for Ismail, Helmy, and Zeinab, accused of belonging to the Muslim Brotherhood.

'We care about the poisonous ideas that you say among each other in university and at the Karnak. Who was arranging the meetings you attended?' a security officer demands of Ismail.

'Ismail and I are ones who benefited from the revolution and we believe in it,' Zeinab tells her interrogator, the loathsome Khaled Safwan.

'That is the excuse of 99% of the opponents of the revolution,' he shoots back.

The medical school colleagues are eventually released, with security officials telling them that their arrest and detention was a routine procedure required in order to protect the revolution. Ismail has a difficult time forgetting the insult and abuse he suffered and he and his fiancée Zeinab go to see a sympathetic parliamentarian in the National Assembly. When Safwan finds out that a complaint has been submitted against him, he has Helmy, Ismail, and Zeinab rearrested, this time for being communists and inciting textile workers in the industrial Nile Delta town of al-Mahalla to strike. Books are confiscated from Helmy's home to implicate him as having loyalties to the communists. Zeinab is raped to pressure her to confess. In prison, Ismail and Helmy are tied and whipped, tortured with electric prods, and attacked by dogs. Safwan threatens to have a prison guard rape Zeinab before Ismail, who then submits and is ready to confess to anything.

Zeinab is released. Safwan again gives her the excuse that her detention was required to protect the revolution – and that if a few people are unknowingly harmed, it is for the greater good of the whole. She is persuaded to write intelligence reports on university students and the clientele of the Karnak

Café, promised that this would help get Ismail and Helmy out of prison. They are eventually released and Safwan promises Ismail that he will graduate from medical school with honours and have the job he desires if he cooperates with the security agencies as an informer. He refuses. Ismail and Helmy soon find themselves back in custody and in military prison when the Six Day War breaks out. Helmy is beaten to death by prison guards as Israel rains bombs on Egypt.

Outside the Karnak Café throngs of people march, shouting ‘Nasser! Nasser! We will fight!’ and ‘O Gamal, the people are behind you!’

‘We were living the biggest lie of our lives,’ utters a patron at the café, while others blame the defeat on Russia for not helping enough, America, and the country’s political and military leadership.

‘Start shifting the blame until we find that it’s Goma’a the busboy who is responsible for the setback,’ quips the writer Taha al-Gharib. When told to be quiet because ‘the walls have ears,’ he replies, ‘Thank God this has happened so that all the hidden violations can be revealed’ and storms out of the café.

Newspaper headlines flash across the screen. ‘These Are the Truths and I Leave It to the People to Judge,’ blares *al-Ahram* of Nasser’s confession of defeat. Others headlines read: ‘President Anwar Sadat to the People’s Delegations: Never Will the People Be Humiliated’ and ‘Command from President Sadat: No Censorship on Freedoms’.

Khaled Safwan is jailed and Ismail is released from prison through a presidential decree. ‘What happened in the past was something against my will. I was following orders,’ Safwan tries

explaining to inmates he tortured and imprisoned. ‘We are all criminals. We are all victims.’

The ordeal has seared Ismail who wallows in depression and alcoholism. A dispirited Ismail sits at the Karnak Café at the opening of the film. When he hears the armed forces communiqué over the radio, he rushes to the hospital where Zeinab is a doctor. Injured soldiers from the war front are being brought in. The film ends with Ismail, believing that hope is not lost, volunteering to aid the wounded. The final scene is of troops storming the fortified eastern bank of the Suez Canal and planting the Egyptian flag.

Al-Karnak is as much a homage to Sadat and his leadership in the October 1973 War as it is a swipe against the vile and ruthless nature of Nasser’s police state and its distortion of idealistic revolutionary principles – ultimately resulting in shocking defeat. The film became a powerful cinematic portrayal of the loss of youthful innocence, disillusionment, oppression, and violence abuses of power – lessons starkly relevant even in present-day Egypt.¹¹

Opposition Voices

Press freedoms were widened under Sadat; official censorship of the press was ended on 4 February 1974. While the censor was no longer a fixture in the newsrooms, being the filter through which political reports had to pass, the press remained in the ownership of the state and press licences were difficult to acquire. The editors-in-chief of the three main dailies – *al-Ahram* (The Pyramids), *al-Akhbar* (The News), and *al-Gumhuriya* (The Republic) – were appointed with presidential approval, which

made them the *de facto* censorship authority. In March 1975, control of the state-owned, semi-official press was transferred from the Arab Socialist Union to the newly created Supreme Press Council, within the Shura (Consultative) Council, the upper house of parliament. The council's members were appointed by the regime and included the minister of information.

Muhammad Hassanein Heikal, the prominent journalist and close friend to Nasser, remained at the helm of al-Ahram publishing house three years into Sadat's presidency. His weekly columns, *Bisaraha* (Frankly Speaking), were widely read in Egypt and around the Arab world, but after his increasing criticism of Sadat's handling of the October 1973 War and appeals to the United States to address the impasse, Heikal was removed from *al-Ahram*. He remained a prolific author. In May 1978, Heikal was one of dozens of writers accused by the state prosecutor of defaming Egypt and weakening social peace and was subject to interrogation.¹²

In 1977, Sadat introduced a multi-party system that allowed political parties to publish by notification and ended advance censorship of books.¹³ Yet the press has been kept in check not just by laws. Opposition newspapers were well aware that they could not go too far, since they were printed by state-owned printers and circulated by state-owned distribution companies. Those levers of control and the rising cost of newsprint, coupled with the challenges of remaining financially viable served to keep the opposition press within limits.

Sadat's policy of economic opening, known as the Infitah, undermined by widespread corruption that turned importers into overnight millionaires, did little to deliver on its promises.

Inflation rose to new highs. The divide between the poor and the affluent widened. With the removal of government subsidies on basic commodities, as mandated by international financiers, bread riots broke out in January 1977. Egypt's ruler derided the revolt as the 'Intifada of thieves' when lawlessness and looting broke out. Sadat's historic visit to Jerusalem in November 1977 culminated in the Camp David Accords, which were intensely criticised within Egypt, particularly among the intelligentsia.

The most pointed criticism of Sadat came from the colourful barbs of Ahmed Fouad Negm, whose poem *Bayan ham* (An Important Announcement) was enough to get him locked up for mocking the president. The poem centres on the sometimes-incomprehensible broadcast station called



The Camp David Accords were criticised by members of the intelligentsia.

‘Halawit Zaman’ (The Sweetness of the Past) whose star attraction is the babbling, light-hearted clown Shehata al-Ma’asil – the name suggesting a beggar high on hashish. In the poem, Negm derides the thievery and corruption of the country, Shehata’s dirty business, under-the-table deals with Israel and America, and his stubborn refusal to leave power in the face of a nation ruined and drowning in poverty. ‘No one is going to memorise the words of a political thinker,’ says the poet Gamal Bekheet. ‘A poet’s words finds an acceptance, its meanings linger in sentiments. Converted to song, they are perpetuated further.’¹⁴

Laws were passed to quell political dissent and stem growing sectarian tension. The Law on Protection of the Domestic Front and Social Peace (Law 33 of 1978) outlawed the dissemination or broadcast of ideas that threatened social peace, inflamed public opinion, and harmed national unity; and the Law on the Protection of Moral Values (Law 95 of 1980, otherwise known as the Law of Shame) penalised the incitement of religious strife and the promotion of ideas antithetical to religion.¹⁵ Violations carried prison sentences from six months to six years.

The colloquial poet Abdel-rahman Elabnoudy condemned the thievery abetted by Anwar Sadat’s economic policies. A believer in the dream of a free Palestine, Elabnoudy vociferously opposed a peace treaty with Israel, expressing his sentiments in a 1979 poetry collection, published in Beirut, called *al-Mashru’ wa-l-mamnu’* (The Permissible and the Forbidden). Shut out from the state-dominated media, watched by the security services, and finding all avenues to

earning a living blocked, the songwriter and man of verse resided for four years between Tunis and London in self-imposed exile. In September 1980, he was called up before the public prosecutor for defaming the regime.

The *Washington Post* ran a story on the first literary figure to be summoned for investigation under the so-called Law of Shame.¹⁶ ‘Sadat used to think American papers were holy,’ says Elabnoudy, who remembers it was the *Washington Post* because the paper’s coverage of the Watergate scandal led to the unseating of US President Richard Nixon, a fact he believes disquieted the Egyptian leader, known for coveting a burnished image in the West. ‘During my interrogation, the prosecutor closed the file in a hurried and confused manner,’ recounts the poet.

Political leaders seek to befriend writers and artists, says Elabnoudy, who has found himself at odds with the nation’s rulers. ‘They did not love me because of the beauty of my face; they loved me because of my influence with the masses. The president always likes to have a poet by his side,’ remarks Elabnoudy, who was initially favoured by Sadat. The Egyptian president had instructed radio broadcasts to feature Elabnoudy’s poetry. ‘Sadat wanted me to play the role of Salah Jaheen to Abd al-Nasser,’ Elabnoudy mentions, a post the independent-minded poet said did not suit him. Elabnoudy refused to scribe paeans honouring heads of state and their deeds. His only poem in homage to a leader was penned to Nasser 40 years after his passing and weeks before the 2011 revolution, praising his incorruptibility as Egypt’s modern-day overseers mired the country in graft and cronyism.¹⁷



'The Day of a Sad Farewell' reads the 10 October 1981 headline of *al-Ahram*.

Opposition to the Camp David Accords was reaching a fever pitch, so were attacks against the government's economic policy, corruption, and the widening disparities in wealth. Sadat attempted to bring the dissident cacophony into line through the mass arrest in September 1981 of more than 1,500 intellectuals, writers, journalists, and opposition elements of every

stripe. Among those arrested were leading members of the Journalists' Syndicate and prominent figures like the political writer Muhammad Hassanein Heikal and novelist Nawal El Saadawi. Sadat's crackdown against his opponents culminated in his assassination by Islamic militants on 6 October 1981 during a military parade to commemorate the start of the 1973 War.

Notes

- 1 Anwar el-Sadat, *In Search of Identity* (1978).
- 2 The constitution was amended in 1980 to make *shari'a* (Islamic law) the official source of legislation.
- 3 Interview with Abd al-Moneim Aboul Futouh (Arabic), 4 Apr. 2010, Cairo. Under Mubarak, Aboul Futouh was arrested in 1995 along with 61 other Brotherhood leaders, broadly charged with attempting to overthrow the regime and belonging to a banned organisation, tried in military court, and served five years in jail. On 28 June 2009, he was arrested by State Security and detained for six months without charge. He believed his detention was linked with the campaign he organised as secretary-general of the Arab Medical Union to aid Palestinians following the Israeli war in Gaza.
- 4 'Abd al-Moneim Aboul Futouh's debate with Anwar Sadat', 13 Oct. 2011, www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZNcmcauDUYI (accessed May 2012).
- 5 Abdalla, *Student Movement*, 176.
- 6 Interview with Gamal Bekheet (Arabic), 25 Oct. 2012, Giza.
- 7 Article 19, *The Egyptian Predicament*, 67–8.
- 8 Ibid. 80.
- 9 The film *Ihna bitu' al-utubis*, directed by Hussein Kamal and starring Adel Imam as Gaber and Abd al-Moniem Madbuli as Marzouk, can be viewed on YouTube: 'We're the Ones from the Bus', 11 Oct. 2012, www.youtube.com/watch?v=_VPDBefDFa0 (accessed Feb. 2013).
- 10 Nasser's policies of socio-economic levelling drew students to the fold of Nasserist–socialist principles. But he also reorganised

universities, banned independent student movements, and purged faculty and administration.

- 11 *Al-Karnak* is directed by Ali Badrakhan and stars Suad Hosni as Zeinab, Nour al-Sherif as Ismail, and Muhammad Sobhi as Helmy. 'Karnak, the Film', 4 Nov. 2012, www.youtube.com/watch?v=gPsFPa1ZwaI (accessed June 2013).
- 12 Stagh, *Limits of Freedom of Speech*, 37.
- 13 The main opposition parties prior to 25 Jan. 2011 have had their own newspapers. The Wafd Party has the daily *al-Wafd* (The Delegation); the liberal al-Ahrar Party has the daily *al-Ahrar* (The Free); the Nasserist Party has the weekly *al-'Arabi* (The Arab); the leftist 'Tagammu' Party has the weekly *al-Ahali* (The Populace); al-Karama Party has the weekly *al-Karama* (Dignity); and al-Ghad Party has *al-Ghad* (Tomorrow).
- 14 Interview with Gamal Bekheet (Arabic), 25 Oct. 2012, Giza.
- 15 Both laws were annulled by Sadat's successor via presidential decree in 1994.
- 16 Edward Cody, 'Egypt's Poet of the Lowly Runs Afoul of Law of Shame', 10 Sept. 1980 *Washington Post*, A21. The Associated Press filed a story following Abdel-rahman Elabnoudy's interrogation on 10 Sept. 2012: Lisette Balouny, 'First Literary Figure Questioned Under Law of Shame', *Associated Press*, 10 Sept. 2012.
- 17 Interview with Abdel-rahman Elabnoudy (Arabic), 18, 30 July 2012, Ismailia.

