

EMBASSY CAIRO

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February 29, 1956

Department Circular Telegram 498, January 27, 1956

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Contribution to NIE on Tropical Africa

The 1953 NIE on Tropical Africa is not available at this Embassy. However, we have reviewed with great interest IR 7103 "Africa, A Special Assessment", which we consider to be an excellent and comprehensive analysis of developing trends in this part of the world.

The Embassy is not able to comment specifically on the questions raised in the reference telegram. However, it has referred in several despatches during 1955 and 1956 to Egyptian aspirations in Africa.* The extent to which these aspirations are achieved, particularly if opposition from the Free World leads to the direct or indirect support of Egypt by the Soviet Union, will have an important bearing on the Free World position in Tropical Africa.

Map 4 of "Africa, A Special Assessment" dramatically presents the growing march of Islam across the Sahara and into the northern parts of West Africa, while at the same time serving as a reminder of the long standing Moslem influence in East Africa. This map suggests one method by which Egypt hopes to exert its influence in the African continent. Initially, of course, Egypt is primarily concerned in establishing close relationships with its neighbors, Libya and the Sudan. Through these countries the Egyptians hope to expand their interests in the direction of the Indian Ocean and across the Sahara to the Moslems of Nigeria and adjacent French areas.

We are not competent to judge here the degree of receptiveness which may be found in the Moslem populations of these areas to Egyptian influence. In British East Africa perhaps the majority of Moslems are supporters of the Aga Khan and so long as his influence is maintained, they could be expected to side with pro-Western elements including the British authorities. In Nigeria we have the impression that the Moslem elements represent the more conservative and tribal facets of society which we would think would find little to appeal to them in the secular and centralized Egyptian governmental system.

- * 1899, April 4, 1955
- 2078, May 7, 1955
- 2151, May 18, 1955
- 2250, June 9, 1955

- 73, July 15, 1955
- 86, July 18, 1955
- 95, July 20, 1955
- 97, July 20, 1955
- 136, August 3, 1955

- 223, August 22, 1955
- 588, November 26, 1955
- 646, December 12, 1955
- 722, January 2, 1956
- 748, January 11, 1956
- 824, February 2, 1956

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Review of this document by CIA has determined that

CIA has no objection to declass

It contains information of CIA interest that must remain classified at TS S **(C)**

Authority: MR 78-2

It contains nothing of CIA interest

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Therefore, we should not exclude the possibility that Egypt may well prefer to expand its influence in Africa by seeking to collaborate with non-Moslem groups on the basis of anti-colonialism, supporting extreme nationalism wherever it is found, whether in African, Indian or other communities. For example, such attention as Egypt has paid to Kenya has indicated Egyptian support of Mau-Mau rather than solidarity with East African Moslem elements. Egyptian tactics in the various areas of tropical Africa would, therefore, probably be varied to meet the circumstances. Collaboration with Moslem elements would seem more likely in West Africa where the Moslem population is politically important than in British East Africa where it is less significant.

However, such problems do not arise in solidly Moslem areas like Somalia which, as it comes nearer to independence, can be expected to be the primary center of Egyptian activity in "Tropical Africa" apart from the Sudan.

Egyptian aspirations in Africa are of course much larger than Egyptian capabilities. The latter would seem to depend not only on Egyptian tactics but on local conditions, including the attitude of the colonial powers, and on the kind of support which Egypt receives from the Soviet Union and the United States. Most important is the strength of local Nationalist movements and the extent to which they are opposed by colonial elements. The chances for the extension of Egyptian sponsored anti-Western sentiments would seem least probable in areas where a strong local Nationalist movement is able to stand on its own feet and to develop successfully in collaboration with the colonial powers its own program for national independence. In such a situation there would be relatively little attraction to Egyptian "liberation" slogans, although it may be expected that Egypt would seek to orient such movements towards Cairo as part of a loose "African bloc". On the other hand in areas where the colonial power resists nationalism, the local national movement could be expected to welcome Egyptian support. In such a case it must be presumed that the Soviets will seek to work with Egypt to take advantage of the resulting situation. This is not to say that the Egyptians would openly invite communist support. If, however, Egypt does decide to intervene in an area in support of local nationalism and against the colonial powers, Egypt cannot be expected to object to Soviet assistance unless it be conclusively shown that such support is not necessary to the achievement of national independence for the area in question or that it would in some other way be contrary to the interests of Egypt to accept it.

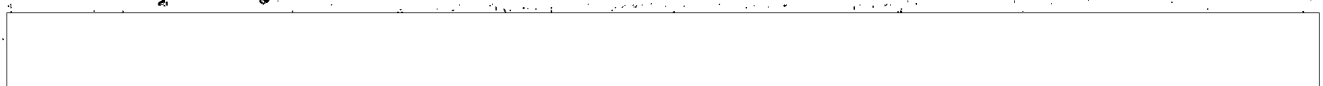
This point has been discussed to some extent in the Embassy Despatch 748 of January 11, 1956, in which it was suggested that it might be useful for the United States and Egypt to "collaborate" in Africa as a means of pointing out the advantages to Egypt of "liberation" by "moderate" means, thus substituting the United States for the USSR as the leading "anti-colonial" big power.

This despatch has not attempted to review the reasons for Egypt's interests in Africa which are already well known, nor has it discussed the question of timing. On the latter point, as was noted in Despatch 748, Egypt is at the moment primarily concerned with developments in the Near East. Its active interest in Africa is primarily concentrated on the achievement of a Nile waters agreement with the Sudan, and secondarily on Arab North Africa. When and if, however, the situation

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in the Near East becomes stabilized, and Egypt can feel that its rear is secure and that it can be assured of solid Arab League support, it can be anticipated that Egypt's interest in tropical Africa will rise sharply. In the meantime, we think that the respective NIE should give particular attention to anticipating a more active Egyptian role in African affairs and to consideration of how this interest can be "captured" by the West. The alternative may well be an increase in anti-Westernism in tropical Africa by means much more difficult to combat than would otherwise be the case. In our judgment, a test of this thesis may be forthcoming before long in Sudan and Somalia, where the West may be forced into a position where its interests in Ethiopia and the British position in East Africa are directly challenged by Egypt and the other Arab States and probably by the Soviet Union as well in the interests of a Greater Somalia and ultimately African political supremacy in British East Africa as a whole.



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FOR THE AMBASSADOR:

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