



EGYPT X. RELATIONS WITH AFGHANISTAN

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x. Relations with Afghanistan

Both Egypt and Afghanistan came under British hegemony in the latter part of the 19th century; therefore no official relations existed between them. In Egypt little was known about Afghanistan, except that it was the purported homeland of Jamāl-al-Dīn Afġānī (q.v.), whose pan-Islamist, reformist teachings found ready acceptance among Egyptian intellectuals (see vi, above). There are no published sources on relations between the two countries. The limited archival material on Afghanistan that is accessible has been supplemented by foreign press reports, reports of the Foreign Broadcast Information Service (F.B.I.S.), and secondary sources.

The first official contact between monarchs of the two countries occurred in late December 1927, when Amān-Allāh (q.v.; 1919-29) Shah visited Egypt en route to Europe. Hailed as the “democratic king,” he was a great success with the Egyptian people. In a public statement he reminded his audience that Afghan independence had been won as a result of several wars and commended parliament as “the only sacred place where the nation manifests its will.” He met the Egyptian nationalist leader Moṣṭafā Naḥḥās and paid tribute to the spirit of the late Sa’d Zaġlūl, leader of the anti-British movement



after World War I, and to Afġānī. Both the British high commissioner, Lord (George Ambrose) Lloyd, and King Fo'ād (1922-36) were glad when he left after his ten-day sojourn (National Archives of India, Foreign and Political Department [N.A.I.], Secret File no. 46-F, letter from Lloyd to Sir Austen Chamberlain, 5 January 1928).

A treaty of recognition and friendship was signed between the two countries in 1928, and Moġammad Œeddīq Mojaddedī was appointed resident minister in Cairo in 1930. The Egyptian government opened a legation in Kabul in 1937, appointing 'Abd-al-Raġmān 'Azzām, a leading Wafd-party politician, as nonresident minister. A British diplomat in Kabul commented that the establishment of "an Egyptian Mission at Kabul is presumably a matter of Islamic sentiment, since Egyptian interests in this country are at present non-existent" (N.A.I., *Afghanistan. Annual Report 1937*, no. 109, Lt.-Col. W. K. Fraser-Tytler to Secretary of State Anthony Eden, Confidential [15389], Kabul, 21 January 1938), and, indeed, there was virtually no trade: Afghan imports from Egypt in 1937 amounted to a mere 246 rupees (N.A.I., *Confidential Annual Report, Indian Trade Agent*, no. R-7/9, Kabul, 20 July 1938).

Political cooperation between the two countries began in April 1955, when both were represented at the Bandung Conference of Non-Aligned States of Asia and Africa, under the joint leadership of Jamāl (Gamāl) 'Abd-al-NāŒer, Jawaharlal Nehru, Tito (Josip Broz), and Sukarno, organized in opposition to the Baghdad Pact (q.v.) of January 1955. The same motives also brought both countries into closer cooperation with the Soviet bloc. Afghanistan considered the arming of Pakistan, with which it had irredentist disputes, as a danger to its security, while NāŒer saw Iraq's participation in the Baghdad Pact as a threat to Arab unity and to his own leadership. Diplomatic activity between the Egypt and Afghanistan increased. In April NāŒer visited Kabul. Egyptian-Afghan cultural treaties were signed in 1956 and 1958; an Afghan military mission visited the United Arab Republic, then comprising Egypt and Syria, in August 1959; and in October 1960 Moġammad Zāher Shah (1933-73) visited Egypt. Afghanistan supported Cairo in international forums, joined in demanding the right to self-determination for the Palestinian people, and refused to recognize the state of Israel. Both Afghanistan and Egypt became major recipients of Soviet economic and military aid. The expansion of the educational system in Afghanistan (see EDUCATION xxvii) brought Egyptian teachers and experts to Kabul, and Afghan students went to Cairo. Some who obtained advanced degrees from al-Azhar later became teachers in a growing



Islamist movement.

In early 1978 President Moḥammad Dā'ūd (1973-78) visited Egypt, where he praised President Anwar Sādāt's courage in going to Jerusalem for peace talks but cautioned against any move that could jeopardize Arab solidarity (Ghaus, pp. 151-52). Cordial relations between Egypt and Afghanistan ended abruptly, however, with the Communist coup in the latter country in April 1978 (see COMMUNISM iv). The new Afghan government severed relations with Egypt in May 1979 in response to the Egyptian treaty with Israel. When the Soviet Union intervened in Afghanistan at the end of that year the Egyptian government actively supported the rebels. It voted with the majority in the United Nations to demand "withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan." In September 1981 Sādāt reported that the United States "told me, 'Please open your stores for us so that we can give the Afghanis the armaments they need to fight,' and I gave them the armaments" (Bradsher, p. 223). Egyptian newspapers began to urge Muslims to assist in the Afghan struggle (F.B.I.S., Middle East and Africa, no. 84-251, 28 December 1984). The call was heard, and young Arabs volunteered for the *jehād* ("holy war").

Afghan President Najīb-Allāh's offer in 1990 to reestablish relations was rejected by Egypt (F.B.I.S., Near East and South Asia, no. 92-155, 10 August 1990, p. 19). When the *mojāhedīn* ("freedom fighters") captured Kabul in April 1992 Cairo recognized the interim government and dispatched the Egyptian assistant foreign minister, Mokles Jobba, to Kabul with congratulations on the victory and promises of aid (F.B.I.S., Near East and South Asia, no. 92-105, 9 June 1992, p. 9; Middle East News Agency, 9 June 1992). Moṣṭafā Ma'sūr of the Muslim Brotherhood (Eḵwān al-Moslemīn) visited Afghanistan in April 1993 but denied any secret objective ("Chronologie"). The Arab *mojāhedīn*, including "Egyptian Afghanis," began to leave Afghanistan to continue the *jehād* for political power in their own homelands. According to the Egyptian press, fifty such fighters who had returned to Egypt by way of Libya were arrested (F.B.I.S., Near East and South Asia, 12 March 1993, p. 12; Middle East News Agency, 9 June 1992; *al-Aḥrām al-masā'ī*, 12 March 1993).



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