LIFE

INSIDE STORY OF THE COUP
BY EGYPT'S NEW 'STRONG MAN'



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A KING IS DEPOSED: SIX FATEFUL HOURS

Egypt's new boss tells inside story of coup that overthrew Farouk

by MAJOR GENERAL MOHAMED NAGUIB

as told to DAVID DOUGLAS DUNCAN

On July 26 Major General Mohamed Naguib, commander in chief of Egypt's armed forces, startled the world by announcing that Farouk no longer was king. Now General Naguib has revealed to LIFE the hitherto untold story of how a little band of army officers overthrew a powerful tyranny. LIFE presents the account as a historical document. It is, of course, the military junta's version of the story, reflecting in places its members' patriotic zeal—as, for example, in the general's reference to Israel as "an enemy threatening our eastern frontiers."

In the short time since the coup, Naguib's new government already has started to deliver on some of its promises. Programs for land reform, for reducing the tax load on the poor and for cleaning up the corrupt old regime have got under way, and general elections have been promised for next February. But last week there were signs that the new leaders were having their troubles —a strike at some cotton mills near Alexandria erupted into violent riots, and General Naguib announced that the censorship he had so proudly banned after the coup would now have to be partially reimposed.

In our Koran it is written:
"Then the word went forth: O Earth! swallow up
Thy water, and O Sky! withhold thy rain.
. . . away with those who do wrong."

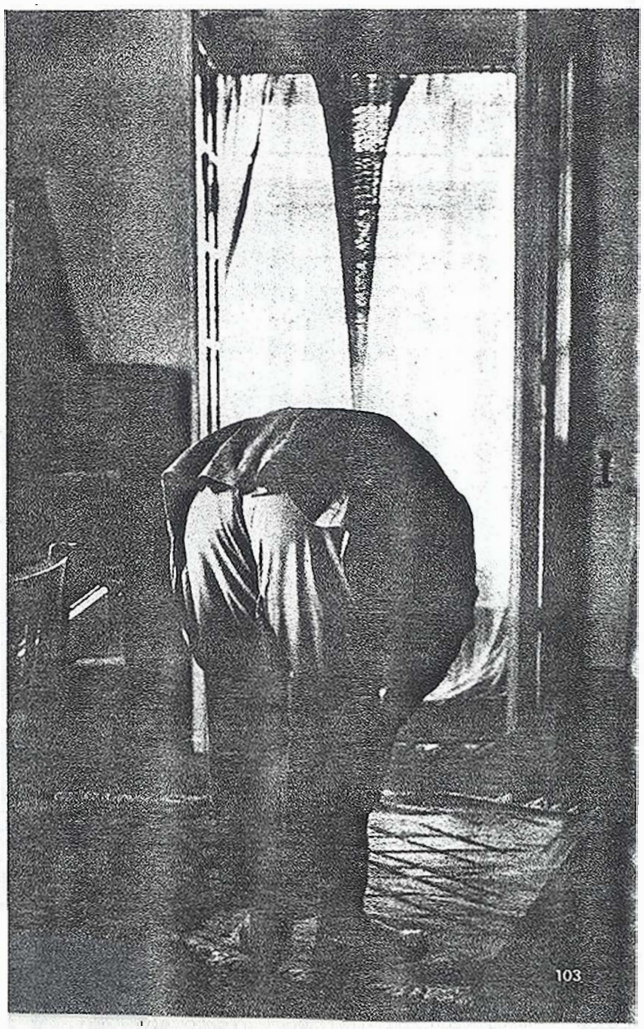
THE seeds of our fight for freedom were sown many, many years ago. Now, only now, after so much waiting have they burst into blossom.

We were a handful of men whose hearts were full of faith. We were also men filled with the shame and humiliation forced upon us by the campaign in Palestine. We, as the soldiers of our nation, had responded to that call to duty across the Sinai Desert. As patriotic Egyptians we had marched to repulse an enemy threatening our eastern frontiers beyond Suez. Then, while fighting upon the burning sands of the desert, we learned that the enemy was lurking not only in the night before us, but also was entrenched in our cities behind us—traitors of our own blood. Weapons were delivered to our troops, but minus vital parts. Ammunition finally reached our supply dumps, but it would not fire. Medical supplies for our wounded, and there were many, came through to us in pitiful quantities. Many items of field equipment, desperately needed by fighting men, never arrived at all. In truth we were surrounded. Fears, which we had sensed only vaguely in our peacetime barracks before the campaign, became real. Now, for sure, we knew that those who directed our affairs in the campaign were men who had sold themselves, their countrymen and even their own sons, to the devil.

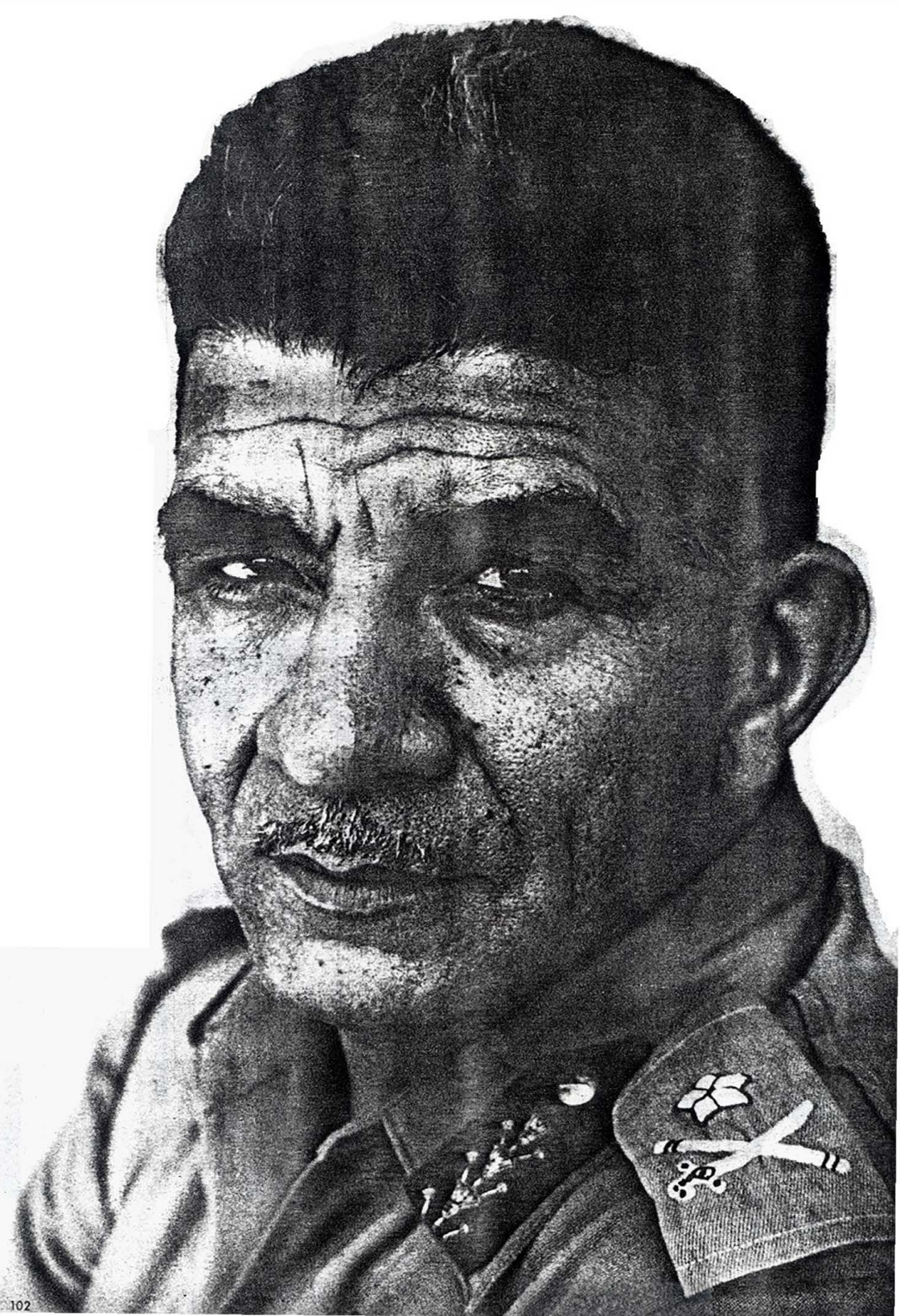
The infamy upon which they had been nourished and their own evil souls encouraged them even more to betray their country. Yet it also, for the first time, brought into being small groups of officers united to challenge the traitors—men of Egypt determined to avenge their lost comrades and to deliver their homeland from the grip of those who so cruelly trafficked with their own honor and the lives of their countrymen.

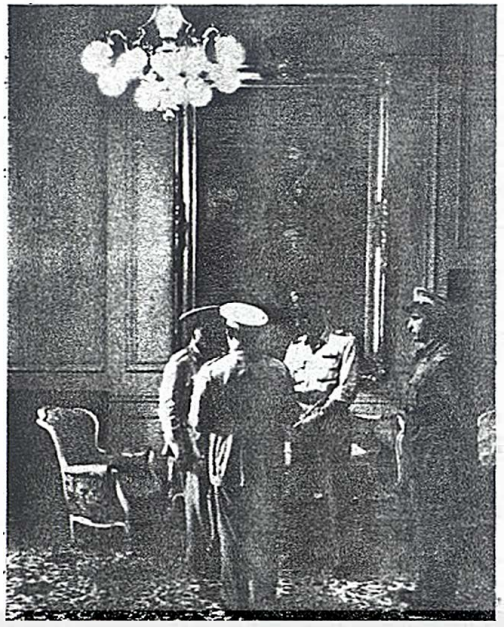
We were bitter that our country should be kicked into the dust of the road. We decided to dedicate ourselves to the rebirth of its dignity. But even then we tried to change things before we started to move. We circulated pamphlets telling the people how black our history had become. We tried to warn the king to regain his

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THE MAN WHO LED THE COUP sat for portrait (*opposite*) by LIFE Photographer David Douglas Duncan, who also made the pictures on the following five pages. After Duncan photographed Naguib at his daily prayer (*right*), the general spoke his thoughts on religion. "No man can be good who does not keep to his religion," he said. "We have no quarrel with any religious group or sect. Jew, Christian and Moslem can all live together here in Egypt in peace."





WAITING FOR PREMIER, Naguib *(left)* and aides stand under portrait of Fuad I, Farouk's father. Naguib explains that while pictures of Farouk have been taken down, Egypt has rid itself of him as a person—not the monarchy.

STORY OF THE COUP CONTINUED

reason. But with all of his power, with all of the evil behind him—evil which pushed him, then stood beside him—the tyrant tried to crush the flame and to put it out. His foul forces still continued their injustice. They fought virtue, protected vices, and the reign became a symbol of graft, corruption and lust. They crushed the reputation of Egypt and they made this country known as a part of the world not fit for independence or a proud clean life.

Yet our small voice still spoke out to defend the country—full of faith that in our hearts remained the strength to meet and defeat the powers of evil. But the tyrant's ears were as of stone, his eyes as of ice. He scorned these warnings and called their authors "children."

Then a simple event took place. Elections for the general committee of our officers' club were held. The king tried to dominate even this part of our lives. His candidate, Major General Hussein Sirry Amer, was a man considered by many to be totally unfit to wear our uniform. He had been mentioned, time and again, in connection with the traffic of drugs and the illicit sale of state lands. Many officers wondered about his connection with the arms scandal of the Palestine campaign. We rejected him . . . and the king.

The king was livid, and his pride was hurt that there should exist in Egypt a group of men who would defy him. He reacted by intriguing to trap these soldiers and to eliminate them. He ordered a general assembly of the members of the officers' club to change its constitution, permitting his will to prevail. Another defeat had been suffered and it shattered his sense of proportion. He plotted disaster for all who opposed him. Driven by hatred, he dissolved the fairly elected General Committee of the club. This, too, was a simple issue. But it was now the beginning of the end.

We soldiers of Egypt looked to the heavens. We asked that the light of Allah show us the proper path to take. We prepared for something great. Then we looked again to Allah, and asked, "When will it be—our day of struggle—our day of liberation—our day when You will shelter us?"

Each day we worked with our units going through normal routines and exercises. But each evening it was different. Small groups of officers met to decide the part each would take when The Sign appeared. The plan was simple and easy, yet strong and decisive. All measures were taken to anticipate the steps the tyrant might take. The next time he tried to impose his foolish, selfish will

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THE GENERAL'S SONS perch with him on the balcony of his home. They are, left to right: Farouk, 14, who is named after the departed monarch like many another Egyptian and who, like most of them, is considering changing his name; Youssef, 10, who likes Western hats and whom Naguib calls "cowboy"; and Ali, 12, who is a sharp shot with an air rifle. Naguib's wife, by Moslem custom, does not make public appearances. His daughter died last year.

STORY OF THE COUP CONTINUED

against the best interests of the country we would be ready. We took an oath that we would liberate the nation from tyranny, humiliation and disgrace—or die.

We called ourselves the *Dobbat el Ahrar*, which means "The Free Officers." Except for myself there was no man involved who held rank higher than lieutenant colonel; most were junior officers. None had any connection with any political party or religious group, like the Moslem Brotherhood. Plans for the coup were discussed with me, then left in the hands of nine officers called the Central Committee. Even I did not know who they all were, although later, after I had been called to take over as commander in chief, I learned that my liaison contact man had been one of the Committee. Thus, in times when the tentacles of the tyrant were everywhere, maximum security was achieved. Yet at that time we swore no oath of secrecy to protect us and our plan. We depended upon the honor and moral dignity of each officer involved.

As the movement grew we did check most carefully upon each man before taking him into our fullest confidence. As in all nations and all armies, there were some who could not be depended upon until we had assured them of victory. Even of your own Revolution in 1776 it has been written that only one third of the population of the Colonies was willing to risk rebellion with rifles.

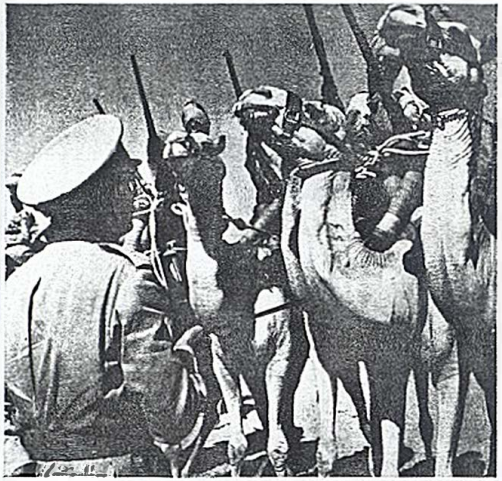
At lower levels contact was made only indirectly with the man. No mention was made of any actual plan, nor of the officers of the Central Committee who were at that moment mapping every move to be made when the opportunity offered. Instead, our efforts were directed at inspiring each man, preparing him morally for the day when he might help break the grip of the tyrant who was strangling our profession—and nation.

The actual plan of liberation drawn up by the Central Committee involved very few men, for there was no real enemy as there is in battle. It was only a matter of seizure of key points within the military, then of replacing highly placed officers of questionable sympathies with carefully selected personnel. Other points within

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THE GENERAL'S FOLLOWERS have a great affection for him. In the picture at left, a Sudanese captain suggests a new insignia for the coast guard caps. Two grieving women *(center)* bring him a sad reminder of the Palestine war; they are aunt and mother of a man who was killed while serving beside Naguib. At right, an amputee rushes up and embraces him. Egypt's "strong man" smiled shyly, said to Duncan, "This is one of my boys from Palestine."



A CAMEL CORPS VETERAN, Naguib inspects the mounts of the Royal Frontier Corps at their desert base outside Cairo. He once commanded this outfit, and although he inspected everything with a tough, brusque efficiency, he also kept stopping to greet old comrades by name. Most were enlisted men.

STORY OF THE COUP CONTINUED

the city of Cairo had to be isolated at the same moment to protect our flanks. By this time, too, we had local committees of dedicated officers, by necessity few in number, organized within every branch of the armed forces. Each corps (artillery, armor, infantry) was represented, as were the air and naval forces. All were waiting for The Sign. All were ready.

Crises spur the coup

THEN two crises struck the country in rapid succession. Hussein Sirry (ex-Pasha; all such titles have now been abolished), one of the true moderates in Egyptian public life, was asked by the king to assume the office of prime minister and to form a cabinet. That was on the 2nd of July. Perhaps because of his knowledge of the affection some of the men in our army are said to hold for me, especially the veterans from Palestine, he asked the king to appoint me as his minister of war. The throne rejected the appointment. Hussein Sirry refused to assume his high office and his government fell on July 21.

That same day the throne asked Ahmed Naguib el Hilaly (ex-Pasha) to become prime minister and to form his cabinet. Perhaps the signs of the times were reflected in the appointment of his minister of war, Ismail Sherine, brother-in-law of the king and a civilian imposed upon the army with the rank of colonel. The members of the Central Committee felt it was not only a sign of the times, but The Sign from above.

Orders went out from the Central Committee to every group of Free Officers in the Egyptian forces. Zero Hour was set for 1:30 the morning of July 24. Then, because rumors of disturbances within the army had been whispered all over Egypt for three or four days, it was decided to move Z-Hour up one full day, to 1:30 of the 23rd. Allah was guiding us, for sure.

The Master Plan began to unfold. Like their ancestors of the desert, the young men of Egypt began to move quietly and well. They began arriving individually at their camps, with orders to be ready and in position by 2330 Tuesday night, July 22. Then, at 2300, word flashed to the Central Committee that there was good reason to believe that the Plan had been discovered. A young officer, while leaving his home, had been seen by two men whose sympathies he questioned. They had stopped him for a moment when they saw that he was armed. He felt sure that in his nervousness he had not given them sufficiently casual answers to their equally casual queries. He was right. At that very moment the informers were contacting Lieut. General Hussein Farid, chief of staff of the army. But the officers of the Central Committee had faith in their Plan, and in Allah. They waited. Z-Hour was nearly

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PUBLIC RELATIONS claims Naguib's attention at start of busy morning. Here his efficient aide stands by while Naguib autographs picture for Egyptian newspaper. He has just finished his breakfast of tea, yoghurt, bread and water.

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upon them. Small groups of officers of their command were moving all over Cairo. They waited.

In the Master Plan the city of Cairo was divided into four sectors. To each sector the Central Committee assigned one team of four officers and two enlisted men. Each team had one jeep and one heavy-duty closed van. As the first objective of the Plan was to deny command leadership to the troops of the army, especially the armored corps, it was the duty of each team to arrest designated officers in their sectors. The number of these high-ranking officers averaged eight to 10 for each sector. Upon reaching the home of each officer, two of the Free Officers were to enter the house to make the arrest, while the other two and the enlisted men stayed below to cover the street. As each officer was arrested he was to be placed under guard in the closed van until a clean sweep of all designated officers in the sector had been made. After clearing the sector they were to be taken to the barracks section of the Military Academy and there detained until the entire Plan had been carried out. When Z-Hour struck these plans worked perfectly.

Other units were moving all around Cairo when Z-Hour arrived. Phase One was in operation. Cordons of hand-picked troops surrounded all army barracks. They were supported by armored cars which were in radio contact with each other. It was imperative that all officers be prevented from reaching their troops where they might give orders. The troops themselves did not know that the orders they were taking and executing were being given by Free Officers or that they were participating in a coup. The Egyptian state broadcasting station, the central telephone exchange, the Cairo railroad terminal and the general headquarters of the Egyptian army all were occupied by infantry supported by armored cars. Tanks were called in to dominate strategic points within the city, and also to make a show of strength. Resistance was not expected, yet a demonstration of power, and the support of the armored corps, seemed wise in order to prevent any possible trouble.

Cairo's airfields were surrounded by infantry, also supported by armored cars. They simply closed the entrances to prevent any undesirable persons from getting into the fields. There were no incidents, and the troops were removed at 1000 that morning after having screened the fields only during the rush hour of the early morning.

A great stroke of luck

IN the meantime we had our first great stroke of luck. Chief of Staff Lieut. General Hussein Farid, upon receiving the tip of the informers, ordered Brigadier Hassan Hishmat, commander of the armored corps, to investigate any possible disturbances among his men. Instead of telephoning, or issuing any warning or alert, the chief of staff played right into our hands. Hishmat was captured as soon as he approached his troops' barracks, then was locked in the mess. The Cairo area commander, Major General Ali Naguib, my own brother, was arrested in the same manner. The chief of staff himself was arrested in his general headquarters,

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THE ARMY TAKES OVER as jeeps and tanks roll down a Cairo street. The coup started at midnight, and by the time the people awoke, it was all over.

STORY OF THE COUP CONTINUED

after token resistance had been put up by his sentries. Two men were but slightly wounded. There were no other shots fired in the capture of Cairo.

One incident in Phase One raised a considerable problem for the officers of the Central Committee as soon as they knew that their Plan was working. They wished to notify the foreign missions in Cairo that there was no cause for alarm, that the operation was just a long overdue housecleaning by the Egyptian armed forces. But being relatively junior officers, none had had any direct contact with any of the foreigners. Then one officer remembered an American he had met socially some time earlier. Thus, Assistant Air Attaché Lieut. Colonel David Evans, of the American Embassy, was the first foreigner to be notified by the Central Committee of the coup. It was known that Mr. Jefferson Caffery, the American ambassador, was in Alexandria, the summer capital. Had he been in Cairo, even though none of us knew him, we would have advised him personally, to reassure him, for he has been one of those men who has given his whole heart to his work here in Egypt, and—in my opinion—has become known as the best American ambassador we have ever had.

Call that came too late

AN incident more amusing than serious occurred at 0400, Wednesday morning of July 23. I received a telephone call in my quarters from the officers of the Central Committee. They were requesting that I take over as commander in chief of the Armed Forces of Egypt. I had just accepted when the telephone rang once more. It was a long distance call from Alexandria, from Mortada el Maraghi, minister of interior in the cabinet of Ahmed Naguib el Hilaly. He said that he had heard reports of strange activities in Cairo; would I please go out to see if it might be interpreted as anything serious, then report back to him if it seemed necessary. I assured him *Hader Afendem* (Aye, Aye, Sir), then went out to take command of the coup. It really seemed like a waste of money to call back, for his cabinet fell that afternoon.

At 0720, Wednesday, July 23, it was obvious that the Plan had succeeded. Cairo was under the complete control of the Free Officers. Everything was quiet. Thus a broadcast was made in my name over the Egyptian State Radio Station, telling the population of the coup, warning any possible troublemakers that my troops had orders to shoot on sight anyone seen looting or attempting civil disturbances, and reassuring the foreigners in Cairo that their security and well-being were guaranteed. In order that there be no misunderstanding we requested that the air force supply constant reconnaissance over Cairo, as of daybreak that first morning. All roads leading into the city, from the desert and the delta, were under steady observation. Six heavy bombers circled overhead. Flights of fighter jets shrieked over the minarets of the city. It was a show of strength, just as we had made with the tanks, but, like the tanks, the planes were all armed and combat loaded. Phase One was finished.

Phase Two began immediately. A list of demands was transmitted to the throne, the most important of which was that Aly

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REGENTS FOR THE NEW KING, who is only 7 months old, are, left to right: Prince Mohamed Abdul Moneim, a second cousin to Farouk, who was third in line for the throne; Dr. Baheiddin Barakat, political independent and jurist; Colonel Mohamed Rashad Mehanna, one of Naguib's military group.

STORY OF THE COUP CONTINUED

Maher (ex-Pasha) be named prime minister, for he alone was thought capable of cleansing our government. It also ordered that a cleanup be made at the top levels of the army, that the constitution be retained and applied and that the entourage around the court be ejected.

Never before was the throne so prompt when dealing with the army. Ahmed Naguib el Hilsly's cabinet fell that afternoon, less than 24 hours after coming into office. Aly Maher was asked to take over the office of prime minister. We knew then, for the first time, that the power of the tyrant had been beaten. Late that night of July 23 and in the early hours of the 24th, the Central Committee and I decided to make a final effort to rid Egypt of her ills by going right to the source itself. We resolved to march on Alexandria and drive Farouk from the throne.

By 0700 that Friday morning of the 25th, the officer in charge of plans and operations of the Central Committee was in Alexandria scouting the terrain for the siege of the city. It was not then known in which of the two royal palaces, Montazah or Ras el Tin, the king might be found. Even the possibility that he might be living in the royal wing of the respected Fuad Hospital (where he sometimes retired to enjoy himself) was investigated. He was found in Ras el Tin Palace, but to make sure that there be no slip, at the final moment, plans were made to lay siege to both palaces.

Phase Three began. At noon I flew to Alexandria. Aly Maher had been sworn in as prime minister. My troops were constantly arriving, by rail and road, from Cairo. The army garrison of Alexandria was with us. There was neither sabotage nor interference of any kind. Zero Hour was intended for that afternoon, but some of the troops were delayed on the desert road from Cairo, so the time was switched to 0730 Saturday, July 26. During that night of July 25 two officers of the Central Committee drafted the final ultimatum to Farouk. It was to be handed him after my forces had laid siege to his palace next morning.

Z-Hour, Saturday, July 26, found my troops in position against both Montazah and Ras el Tin palaces. Farouk was in Ras el Tin, as our operations officer had reported. The order of battle was that my tanks face the palace walls, supported by infantry, supported by artillery. Such were the plans, and so were they to be carried out . . . except for one small mistake—but a so happy one.

An officer misinterpreted his orders. He led his infantrymen out *in front of* his tanks. Worse, he kept advancing his men in

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BUSY PREMIER, Aly Maher, rushes to work, followed by his cabinet. "If alone," says Naguib, "was thought capable of cleansing our government."

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skirmish positions. A mistake! He had nearly reached the harem quarters of the palace when palace sentries in a machine gun post turned and saw the advancing soldiers. In their excitement they fired a few bursts, probably by accident, at the officer and his men who, it is said, burrowed like asps into the sand. For the following few minutes lead sang as the wind through the palace windows. Finally, only by standing alone, with outspread arms in front of his men did the officer stop the shooting. It must have been a sight indeed. Again it had been only token resistance. Six casualties for them . . . two for us—all minor. But more before important, it left no doubt remaining in tyrant Farouk's mind about the nature of our early morning call.

My command post during this last morning was in the summer general headquarters, at Mustapha Pasha Barracks. We were in constant wireless and telephone contact with the troops. Since Z-Hour at 0730 all plugs at that central telephone exchange had been pulled so that no calls might be made from the palace without our knowledge. Our ultimatum was to be delivered by Prime Minister Aly Maher at 0900. The time lapse of one and one-half hours was quite intentional, for we felt that it might be psychologically beneficial for Farouk to have some time for quiet thought.

Overhead Gloster Meteor and de Havilland Vampire jets, carrying rockets and 20-mm cannon, flew constant cover on the two palaces. Above them were flights of four-engine bombers loaded with demolition bombs. There was radio air-ground control at all times. We felt that he might try to slip away, either by sea or the desert road to Libya. In case he tried to escape by air another flight of Hawker Furies was alerted for interception. He remained in his palace.

At 0900 I called upon the prime minister at his official residence in the Bulkley quarter of Alexandria to give him the ultimatum for transmission to the king. Aly Maher went to Ras el Tin Palace and was admitted immediately. It was then 0915, Saturday, July 26. I returned to my command post to await word from the prime minister. His call came at 1100. King Farouk had accepted and signed an ultimatum from the Free Officers of the Egyptian army which demanded 1) that he sign his abdication of the throne of Egypt as of 1200 hours that same day, and 2) that he leave Egypt, forever, as of 1800 hours that same evening. I went immediately

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to the residency of the prime minister to examine the signature of acceptance on the ultimatum. It was valid and correct. Farouk was finished as the tyrant of Egypt.

Just before returning to the residency with the ultimatum, Prime Minister Aly Maher sat with Farouk in the Bab el Malek (Gate of the King) in Ras el Tin Palace. Outside, in the streets, a surprising thing was taking place. A young American, Robert Simpson, the aide to Ambassador Caffery, kept trying to force his way in his car through my cordons around the palace. He was most determined. I gave orders that he be permitted to pass. We know that he went immediately to the Bab el Malek. Farouk was apparently a beaten man. We know that both Farouk and Aly Maher were sitting alone side by side when Farouk motioned to the American and said, "Come. Come. I've never been so glad to see anyone in my life. We haven't much time. I have two things I want you to tell your ambassador." Aly Maher just sat there, with the time running out, and said not a word. He knew that our deadline of 1200 was final. Then Farouk added, "Ask him if he will do everything possible to save my life. If he does, will he come to say goodby." Then the American left, and Prime Minister Aly Maher returned to his residence to draw up the papers of abdication. It seems rather strange, remembering how we felt about you Americans when many of your citizens were sending arms and money to Israel, but now both the throne and the Free Officers turned first to you.

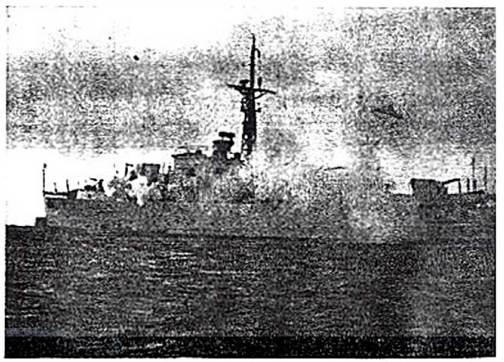
Salute for the throne

BECAUSE Farouk had been king of Egypt until 1200 that day we decided to accord him full honors upon his departure, not because of him as an individual, but because of our respect for the throne. At 1735 Farouk sent Queen Narriman, his three daughters and infant King Fuad II to the waiting royal yacht *Mahroussa*. Farouk remained inside Ras el Tin where he stood waiting out his last few minutes in Egypt. With him were Prime Minister Aly Maher, Princess Faiza and her husband Ali Raouf, Princess Fawzia and her husband Ismail Sherine, the American ambassador, Mr. Jefferson Caffery, representing all foreign missions in Egypt, and his aide, Robert Simpson. We made no effort to place officers in the king's private quarters of the palace at this moment.

Farouk said goodby to his sisters while still in the palace; then he, with Aly Maher, Mr. Caffery, Ismail Sherine and Simpson, walked to the elevator, rode down to the first floor and walked out toward the royal pier where a cutter was waiting to carry Farouk to the *Mahroussa*. The royal standard dipped and the palace band played our national anthem as he stepped out upon the pier. In true Egyptian fashion the faithful servants of the palace set up a wail of lament that must have been deafening to hear. Over it all 21 guns fired their parting, royal salute.

My officers saluted as he passed slowly along the pier. Finally, alone, he stood at the end, dressed in the gleaming white uniform of an admiral of Egypt. He apparently seemed without emotion as he stood there. His eyes were on his wristwatch. Precisely at 1800 hours he raised his eyes, stepped aboard the cutter and was carried to the *Mahroussa*.

At 1804 I arrived at Ras el Tin. A launch was waiting to carry me to the royal yacht. There, I said goodby to Mr. Farouk.



FAREWELL TO FAROUK, a salute of 21 guns, is fired by Egyptian navy ship as the royal yacht carries him out of Alexandria harbor for the last time.