

R. Stephen Humphreys

FROM THE EDITOR

With this issue, I have to announce an important change in the *IJMES* staff. Our long-time editorial assistant, Gunilla Rohdin-Bibby, resigned in June to move with her family to Portland, Oregon. Gunilla has been in many ways the heart and soul of the enterprise; for almost four years, we have all benefited from her complete professionalism, good counsel, and (not least) boundless patience with the editor. Colleagues of that caliber cannot easily be replaced. Under these circumstances, we are very fortunate that Liz Montana has agreed to serve as editorial assistant for the final year of my term as editor. Liz brings to the job a wealth of experience in arts and non-profit management, and she has already demonstrated her skill and good humor in dealing with the manifold demands of this job. *IJMES* continues to be in very good hands as we move into 1999. I naturally want to extend my thanks as well to continuing members of the staff—Prof. James Lindsay, Anna Bigelow, and Gerald Carpenter—for their help in seeing us through the transition to a new editorial assistant.

The present issue of *IJMES* is another serendipitously special issue, this one focusing on Egyptian politics in the late 19th and 20th centuries. Professor Bolbol's contribution is more general in scope, of course, but it provides us with an interesting analysis of the broad economic environment in which Egypt and other Arab states have operated in recent decades. Apart from its presentation of how the political economy of international trade in the Arab world has evolved during this period, it suggests some of the strategies which might be pursued in the future.

We then move to five papers which focus very particularly on Egypt, from the Khedive Isma'il down to Gamal Abdel Nasser (or more precisely, contemporary memories of Nasser). Doctor Moore-Harell focuses on the failure of efforts by General Gordon to reform the Egyptian army in Sudan during the last years before the Mahdist Revolt. In so doing, she throws a bright light on the whole arena of military reform—almost always abortive—in the 19th-century Middle East, and shows us in quite precise terms just what went wrong. Doctor Ginat examines the beginning of the Soviet–Egyptian relationship during World War II—another micro-study with broad implications. A study of this kind moves us away from vague clichés about Palace–Wafdist conflict or heavy-handed British interference in Egypt's internal affairs and shows how complex and nuanced the relations between King Faruq, the Wafd, and the British Embassy really were. It also shows how Mustafa Nahhas and his party were able to exploit the narrow space provided by the Anglo–Egyptian Treaty of 1936 in order to begin carving out an independent foreign policy. The

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cultural politics of the Nasser and post-Nasser decades is explored in Prof. Gordon's fascinating paper on "biopics." He naturally highlights the recent stunning success of *Nasser '56*, but shows that this film has a considerable ancestry in Egypt's movie industry. He also suggests some of the general issues embodied in the production of such films, in the United States no less than Egypt. The issue concludes with the final installment of a debate among Profs. Gershoni, Jankowski, and Smith on the nature of Egyptian nationalism in the 1930s and the adequacy of modern political theory to capture what was going on in Egypt during that crucial decade.

IJMES does not solicit articles with the aim of exploring general themes defined by the editor. On the contrary, we work with what comes in over the transom. In such circumstances, it is rarely possible to compile an issue which focuses on a single topic. But this time, that is what we have. We have found it rewarding to put such an issue together, and we hope that lightning might strike at least once more before the current editor stands aside.