

Cairo Bars Arab Journal,

By Patrick Seale
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BEIRUT, June 11—A chill wind blows this week over the Arab intellectual scene: Hiwar, perhaps the most independent and fearless periodical in the Arab world, has been banned from entry into Egypt on the charge that it is financed by the CIA.

If other Arab countries follow the Egyptian line—as they are being urged to do—the magazine will be in real trouble and may have to close down.

The bureaucratic thought controllers—the all-powerful “ministries of guidance”—which in so many Arab countries have contributed to the degradation of intellectual life—will have claimed another victim.

Hiwar (dialogue) is an Arab sister of the British magazine Encounter. Published by the

Congress for Cultural Freedom, it is edited in Beirut by Tewfiq Sayigh, a young Palestinian poet who in four years of uphill work has created a forum for some of the most vigorous and wide-ranging writing to come out of the Middle East. But hardly an issue appeared without him being exposed to savage attack.

The Arab left accused Hiwar—and its sponsor the Congress—of imperialism and Zionism, while the right charged it with “Bolshevism.” In Saudi Arabia it was thought dangerously radical; in Egypt, suspiciously bourgeois.

It also suffered from the ancient rivalry between Cairo—the self-styled “cultural capital of the world”—and Beirut.

The roots of Hiwar's present, more serious trouble may

be traced to the detailed exposure of the CIA. In the New York Times this spring in which it was alleged, among many other charges, that the Congress for Cultural Freedom was financed by American foundations which in turn sometimes acted as fronts for the CIA.

This was enough for the Egyptian press. “Hiwar belongs to the CIA,” screamed a headline in Rose al-Youssef, a prominent state-controlled weekly.

No regard was paid to the many letters to the New York Times denying any connection between the Congress and the CIA. The Egyptian censor seized the May issue of Hiwar before it was put on sale.

The window-dressing was then provided by Egyptian pundit Louis Awad—critic, poet and Shakespearian scholar—who, as literary editor of

the Cairo daily, Al-Ahram, acts as a semi-official arbiter of the cultural scene.

In a statement late last month he invited all Arab writers and readers to boycott Hiwar. He called on Tewfiq Sayigh to quit his post as editor and he demanded the “liquidation” of all centers of the Congress in the Arab world.

Last week Muhammed Hatem, Egypt's Vice Premier for Information and Guidance, issued an order banning Hiwar from entry into Egypt on the grounds that it was subsidized by the CIA.

Very much disturbed, Tewfiq Sayigh flew to Europe to put the question bluntly to the directors of the Congress: Was there a CIA connection? He was given a categorical denial.

What is distressing about

Charging CIA Link

the Egyptian scene is that it should be liberal thinkers like Awad, himself a contributor to Hiwar, who now call for its boycott.

Victim of Slanders

Awad himself has suffered greatly from rumors and slanders in the Egyptian press. He has been accused of being Western-educated—in quarters a crime in itself—and of working to undermine the cultural values

of Arab countries to which he stands against the great state. To dis-

please the authorities is to go hungry when, as in Egypt, newspapers, publishing houses, magazines, theaters, the radio and television are in the hands of the state.

But in compensation of exercising self-censorship, top Egyptian writers are pampered and well-paid. They earn more than doctors, lawyers or engineers.

At 300 or 400 Egyptian pounds a month, they are paid four or five times the salary of a university professor.

Just why the Egyptian authorities should have chosen this moment to move against

Hiwar is uncertain. The Congress for Cultural Freedom is well known to be financed by the Ford and other foundations, but so are many Egyptian development projects.

The ban is probably due to the random convergence of a number of forces: the current anti-American temper in the Egyptian capital, the ascendancy of leftists in the press, the cultural chauvinism of some Egyptian intellectuals, the rivalries of Beirut and Cairo and possibly, too, the greater nervousness which overtakes the Arab world in the heat of summer.