

# For the Independence of Egypt!

We publish below an extract from a Manifesto of the League Against Imperialism.

The anti-imperialist front has now been extended to Egypt which has been under the iron heel of British imperialism for 48 years and where the masses have now risen in revolt against the terrible conditions to which they have been reduced by imperialist and native capitalist exploitation and feudal tyranny. From being a rich and self-supporting country producing its own food, Egypt has now been reduced to a cotton-growing area and the entire population, mostly peasant producers, have now become largely dependent upon their foreign and native exploiters for the sale of their cotton production. The poverty-stricken and underfed fellaheen and the young Egyptian proletariat, living in miserable hovels and working from morning to night, produce the wealth that goes into the pockets of the landlords and moneylenders, of the native and foreign bondholders, capitalists and merchants and for the maintenance of the imperialist-feudal State apparatus and the foreign army of occupation. From the surplus value created by their labour is maintained also the Reserve Fund which the puppet governments, appointed by British imperialism, devote for the most part to placing orders with British heavy industry. Under this system of increasingly intensified exploitation the petty bourgeoisie of the towns has also become steadily impoverished. The country is drained of no less than 30 million Pounds a year for interest alone on the investments of British capital.

But British capitalism maintains its stranglehold on Egypt not merely because of the financial profits squeezed out of the toiling masses, but because it has to safeguard the route to its whole gigantic system of exploitation. For these reasons it has established its sole control over the Suez Canal and over the Sudan and resists by force of arms any attempt to diminish or jeopardise that control.

The history of the British occupation of Egypt is one of the most disgraceful even in the annals of British imperialism. After the defeat of Arabi Pasha who had successfully organised a rebellion against the foreign intruder, British troops occupied Cairo on September 15th, 1882, on the pretext of protecting foreign lives and property. One British government after another gave the most solemn assurances that Egypt would not be annexed or permanently occupied and that the troops would be withdrawn as soon as order had been restored. Those hypocritical pledges were made in order to deceive the Egyptian masses, until Egypt was openly declared a British Protectorate in December 1914. The revolt of the Egyptian masses in 1919 was crushed by British troops and British warships. In 1922 the British Government attempted to conciliate the propertied classes by recognising Egypt as an "independent sovereign State", but with certain important reservations which reduced the so-called independence to a mere farce. And they proposed that these conditions should be embodied in a Treaty accepted by the Egyptian Parliament which was then specially called into being in 1923.

But the Egyptian Parliament, representing mainly the propertied classes, refused to accept the Treaty which seriously curtailed their power to exploit the Egyptian masses. One government after another was set up in order to give the sanction to the Treaty in the name of the people, until in April 1930 Nahas Pasha and his colleagues in the Wafd Cabinet, returned by an overwhelming majority secured under the existing electoral law, went to London to conduct negotiations so as to obtain from the Labour Government the maximum concessions of British imperialism.

The nationalist leaders of the bourgeois Wafd Party, mostly capitalists, landowners and lawyers, have placed themselves at the head of the anti-imperialist struggle of the masses in order to exploit it in their own interests and to prevent it from taking a really revolutionary course. They have attempted to give the movement the form of a constitutional struggle against the absolutism of the feudal monarchy and for the protection of the rights of the Egyptian Parliament, in order to prevent it from becoming a direct and open struggle between the masses and British imperialism, because this would mean also a fight against the native bourgeoisie and landowners. The Wafd Cabinet of Nahas Pasha, which had nearly signed the Treaty, demanded by Great Britain and legalising the British imperialist exploitation of Egypt, declined

to do so at the eleventh hour under the pressure of the rank and file of the Party and in view of the growing revolutionary discontent of the broad masses of the peasants and workers, stimulated and encouraged by the revolt of the Indian masses. The Wafd leaders pretend to have taken up the struggle in the name of the people, while at the same time their agents are negotiating in London and they themselves are diverting the attention of the masses from the real issue, namely, the overthrow of British imperialism, by concentrating on the defence of the Constitution, i. e., on the attainment by the propertied classes of full control over the machinery of the State and of Parliament in order to share more fully with British imperialism the profits of the exploitation of the toiling masses.

In spite of the pacifist manoeuvres of the Wafd leaders, the masses have given expression to their militancy in the mass demonstrations, barricade fighting and bloody conflicts with the armed police and military force of imperialism that have taken place during the last few weeks in the streets of Mansurah and Bilbeis, of Alexandria and Cairo, of Suez and Port Said. During these conflicts, hundreds have been killed or maimed for life, thousands injured, thousands arrested. The country has been placed under a regime of military terror. Every printed expression of anti-imperialist revolt has been suppressed. The freedom of speech, of the press and of assembly have been abolished. The country is under a Fascist dictatorship which receives the praise and the support of the Imperialists and Social Fascists of Great Britain.

In the suppression of the anti-imperialist revolt of the Egyptian people, the Labour Government is playing the same dastardly role as it has been playing in India and in Palestine. It has sent warships to Alexandria while making a hypocritical declaration of neutrality and has given military and moral support to its feudal vassals in Egypt to prevent the further development of the revolutionary movement and to protect the interests of British imperialism. At the same time the Labour Government has been continuing its negotiations with the Wafd Leaders in whom it rightly sees the men that will finally and inevitably make the desired compromise with British imperialism.

The League Against Imperialism, while giving its wholehearted support to the Egyptian masses in their struggle for national independence and social freedom, deems it necessary to warn them against the treacherous tactics of the Wafd leaders, which are similar to those of the Indian National Congress and which must be clearly exposed to the masses of workers and peasants, as well as to the students and urban poor that constitute the rank and file of the Wafd Party and among whom there are sincere anti-imperialist elements. The League wishes to make it clear to them that their condition can only be improved by carrying on an uncompromising struggle for the complete overthrow of imperialism and its feudal and capitalist agents among the Egyptians, and for the establishment of full national independence. This struggle cannot be carried on under the domination of leaders whose interests demand a compromise with imperialism, but only with a clear programme that corresponds to the real economic and political interests of the broad masses.

The League Against Imperialism calls upon all truly anti-imperialist elements in Egypt to unite their forces and bring into being a strong anti-imperialist mass organisation that shall coordinate the struggle for Egyptian independence in Egypt itself with all the anti-imperialist forces of the world and thereby ensure the complete victory of the Egyptian masses.