

# IN THE COLONIES

## The New Stage in the Political Developments in Egypt.

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Since the last English ultimatum to Egypt and the overthrow of the National government of Zaglul Pasha, English diplomacy has made many experiments.

The most important and decisive of these experiments are the following:

1. The final and permanent seizure of possession of the Sudan and the creation of a special Sudanese army under the exclusive command of English officers.

2. The retention of almost all European officials (the majority of them English) at their posts in the various ministries.

3. The creation of a monarchist Party, "Itachad" (Unity).

4. The organising of the parliamentary elections in such a manner that the majority is assured before-hand for all the opposition (anti-Zaglul) Parties.

5. The liquidation of the European, chiefly the French, influence upon the political life of the country.

These five items, which of course form part of an inseparable whole, are not only an expression of that general line of the English Foreign Office which is called a "firm Continental policy", but are an expression or a reflection of that crisis in the national movement, the issue of which it is at present difficult to predict.

The seizure of possession of the Sudan, that is, the exclusive exploitation of that country by British imperialism, represents nothing new. The so-called "Condominium" (joint rule) of England and Egypt in the Sudan, which consisted in Egypt maintaining an army which enabled the English Cotton syndicate to plunder the country "peacefully", was, of course, always a farce. This farce nevertheless had a certain importance for Egypt. Before all, the Condominium always allowed Egypt the legal (!) right to demand a control over the inner life of the country and also over the budget. At the same time this Condominium, shadowy as it was, nevertheless held England back to some extent with regard to the question of the water supply: as a rule every conflict regarding the division of the water supply of the blue Nile between Egypt and the Sudan (for the latter read the "English cotton planters") was not settled without incidents.

As a matter of fact, the Sudan question is not merely a question of water. For the Egyptian trading bourgeoisie, it is also a question of markets. Hitherto the Sudan, not only politically but also economically, has represented a colony of a colony. As it had no immediate trade connections of its own with the outer world, it constituted an important factor for the middle-men

operations of the Egyptian trading bourgeoisie. The legal separation of the Sudan from Egypt means the setting up of a foreign customs, which, of course, will not please the Egyptian bourgeoisie. The administrative separation of the Sudan from Egypt will mean a blow into the face of this bourgeoisie, and will be no less disastrous for it than for the Egyptian peasantry.

The withdrawal of the Egyptian troops, as well as the approaching removal of the Egyptian officials, means the complete liquidation of the "Condominium" which had already long become impossible.

The conclusion of a new Treaty, lasting for four years, with all European (English) officials, secures the complete carrying out of the ultimatum. Nevertheless, this new contract is important, not only because it delivers the entire interior administration over to England, but that it means a direct and serious blow against the Egyptian intelligenzia, who will not find suitable employment, either in the state apparatus or in industry.

The creation of a monarchist Party is the most striking expression of the crisis which the national movement is undergoing. If one accepts as the alleged reason for the founding of this Party the accusation that Zaglul is disloyal to the throne, an accusation which has frightened some of his not very staunch followers, the underlying reason for this step has long been developing within the Zaglul Party. Right from the first day of its existence the Zaglul movement bore within it the elements of its own destruction. Its first appearance in the political arena was so violent, that it attracted whole groups which, in their very nature, had to be hostile to the Zaglul movement (big landowners and aristocratic intellectuals).

Nevertheless, these elements did not immediately decide to leave the Zaglul Party. They remained in Zaglul's camp until recent events demonstrated to them that there existed a stronger one. Hence there set in, at first gradually but becoming ever more rapid, the desertion of prominent members of the wafd (the national Party of Zaglul Pasha) to a securer place, thereby showing their devotion to the throne. Of course, all this did not take place without the "help" of England. The English press endeavoured to prepare the way for a "conspiracy" against the Egyptian throne, which was alleged to be instigated by Zaglul.

As regards the "Unity" Party, it is most probable that it will amalgamate with the Constitutional Democrats (the right).

The parliamentary "elections" literary beat all records in the way of terror. Space does not permit us to enumerate all the measures which have been adopted by the government (read England) and which aim at securing for it a majority.

We will mention the most interesting of these:

1. Every candidate had to deposit 150 pounds, and in the event of his obtaining less than a tenth of the number of votes received by his opponent, his money flows into the coffers of the government.

2. Only the candidates are permitted to convene meetings. Speeches are not allowed at the meetings convened by the candidates. The candidate brings forward his programme and there the matter ends.

3. It is not allowed to conduct election propaganda in the press.

4. It is not allowed to print appeals, to arrange demonstrations etc.

5. The students are entirely prohibited from taking any part in the election campaign. Only on the day of the election can those who are old enough to exercise the vote, leave the school for an hour in order to fulfil their duty as citizens.

In addition to this, there take place mass arrests and the flogging of all those who are in the least suspected of spreading proclamations. Persecution is specially directed against a manifesto of the **Committee for the Protection of the Workers and Peasants**, because the ruling Party is more fiercely criticised in this than are the other Parties.

English imperialism in Egypt and in the whole Arabian East, in spite of its apparent consolidation, is losing more and more ground under its feet, and is before all losing the support it enjoyed among the working peasantry. If the peasantry has not up to now been able to play an active rôle, this was owing to two factors: first, as a result of the "cultural" rôle which a rising imperialism at first plays in the occupied colonies, and secondly, as a result of the profound political and cultural backwardness of the Egyptian peasant.

The first factor has long ceased to be of any effect (since the beginning of the war, when the English showed their "culture"

to the Egyptian peasant), the second factor is being removed, in spite of its far-reaching roots, by the mere passage of events. The Egyptian peasantry is taking its place in the political life of the country. From an object it is changing into an active subject, and will sooner or later have a word to say.

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