

POLITICS

British Provocation in Egypt.

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The fact that both the Egyptian Government and the Parliament have over and over again understood how to adapt themselves to the position of constraint created by the British rule of force in Egypt did not satisfy British imperialism. The Zaghlulist majority in the Egyptian Parliament had done everything to avoid a conflict with Great Britain; it renounced discussing points which were in dispute, it removed the question of the Soudan from its agenda and did not discuss the British occupation which is a heavy burden for Egypt. The experiment was to be made of building up Egyptian independence within the scope laid down by the well-known British declaration of February 2nd 1922.

Events proved however that even this seemed too great a danger to British imperialism; for every step towards realising independence — towards removing foreign officials, towards independent action in the sphere of home policy and economic policy, — meant that the national movement was strengthened.

It turned out that Egypt could everywhere govern itself independently and that the restrictions imposed upon the country were therefore measures of compulsion which were in no way justified. In addition to this, the Parliament gave the Left wing of the Zaghlulist party every opportunity of developing its radical programme; on every occasion, the National Revolutionary deputies made the fact clear to the people that true, complete independence had yet to be won. The attempts to come to an agreement with Great Britain by bringing to the fore the Liberal Constitutional Party and making appointments which best met the wishes of the British (such as the recent change of Government which replaced Adly Yeghen Pasha by Abdel Khalek Sarvat Pasha) also failed.

The British then began taking action which aimed directly at destroying even the shadow of independence — especially of the Parliamentary regime — which Egypt still possessed. The British High Commissioner snubbed the Egyptian Government, made pleasure trips during which he spoke as though he — the British High Commissioner — were master in Egypt and not the Constitutional Government, handed in notes which interfered in an extremely humiliating way with the internal affairs of Egyptian justice (it was insinuated that the Egyptian Courts had dealt very leniently with persons who had violated Englishwomen), protested against the right of the Egyptian Government to dismiss superfluous British officials, which was guaranteed to it by treaty, brushed aside the illusion that Great Britain was prepared to agree to the abolition of the capitulations — briefly, he made it distinctly felt that the Egyptian Parliament and the Government could not but react to the repeated interference in its sphere of action which belonged to it by right of solemn promises, unless they wished to become accomplices in the British deeds of violence.

Every protest of the Egyptian Parliament, every attempt at resistance on the part of the Egyptian Government was however a signal for a furious attack on the "Egyptian bands of demagogues" by the whole British Press which appears in Egypt, as well as by the London newspapers which are inspired by the British Ministry for Foreign Affairs. Headed by the "Times" and the "Daily Telegraph", the "patient endurance" of the British authorities in Egypt was stormed at week for week, any anti-British speech in Parliament was inflated into a dangerous conspiracy, the shadow of a Zaghlul Ministry which would threaten the British power over the Suez Canal, was painted on the wall. The demands were: the dissolution of the Parliament, the appointment, of an anti-Zaghlulist Government and the abolition of all the reforms planned or carried through by the Constitutional Government.

One of the most important reforms which the Egyptian Government had been preparing for a long time and which, in the eyes of the majority of the Zaghlulists, justified their agreeing to the Coalition Ministry and tolerating the incessant challenges of the British, was the reform of the army; it was a question of making the small, badly-equipped army, which was all the Egyptians had to oppose to the mighty British army and navy of occupation, at least actually Egyptian, that is free from British influence. With this object in view, it was pro-

posed to remove British officers from the highest commands in the army.

Although this reform was perfectly admissible according to the treaties between Great Britain and Egypt (Great Britain had only ensured for herself the right to maintain her army of occupation in Egypt, but had renounced the right to interfere in the internal affairs of the Egyptian army), Lord Lloyd, following the aggressive line taken by British imperialism in recent times, immediately raised a protest against the Government's resolution which was supported by Parliament. The change of Government postponed the resolution being put into effect, but then the Egyptian Government declared itself in favour of its remaining in force.

This provided sufficient material for measures of force being taken. On May 30th, Lord Lloyd presented a note in which he warmly recommended that the proposals made by Great Britain should be accepted and that all should remain in status quo in the army. At the same time, three British dreadnoughts appeared in the harbours of Alexandria and Port Said in order to make it as easy as possible for the Egyptian Government to alter its resolutions.

The indignation in Egypt at this new provocation is immense. After the repeated measures of force used by Great Britain against Egypt in the course of the last few years: the sanguinary suppression of the revolt in 1919, the deportation of Zaghlul Pasha in 1913, the throwing out of the National Government in 1924, the refusal to permit the formation of a Zaghlulist Government in 1926 — the present expedition against the peaceful Egyptian people can in no way be justified even from the standpoint of imperialist "international law". This only proves once again how little value is to be attached to chartered promises unless they are backed by the power to put them into effect, and that, in the last instance, it will always be the privilege of the best naval guns to interpret treaties concluded between oppressed peoples and their imperialist "friends".
