

AGAINST COLONIAL OPPRESSION

The Sidky Government and the Imperialist Robbery of Egypt.

By J. B.

For some months past a part of the British Conservative press has been conducting a campaign for the conclusion of an Anglo-Egyptian Treaty with the present Government of Sidky Pasha. During his visit to Europe Sidky Pasha had a meeting with Sir John Simon, the British Foreign Secretary, and discussed with him the possibilities of such a treaty. The British imperialists have no illusions that Sidky Pasha enjoys any support in Egypt apart from the imperialist bayonets, the parasitic court clique of King Fuad, and a part of the trading bourgeoisie: the broad masses of the people regard Sidky Pasha as an agent of British imperialism, a hateful oppressor, who carries on more ruthlessly than ever the exploitation of the working people for the benefit of the imperialists and their allies.

If the question of an agreement with Sidky Pasha is placed on the agenda, this is done in the first place by those circles which nevertheless desire the imperialist positions in the colonies to be settled without any compromise with the national reformists, which hope to be able the better to make use of the national reformists as soon as a fait accompli has been brought about with the aid of the direct imperialist agents.

Sidky Pasha himself wishes to obtain this Treaty as a reward for the lackey service he has rendered the imperialists for the last two years and more. He has not only completely surrendered the Sudan, he has not only agreed to the Jebel-Auli project, which gives the English the possibility of retaining Egypt in their hands even in the event of a military evacuation, he has not only taken care that the economic interests of the British capitalists in Egypt remain

preserved in the period of crises. He has crushed the anti-imperialist mass movement more brutally than any of his predecessors; he has bloodily throttled the workers' demonstrations (especially the great demonstrations of the Cairo proletariat in May 1931) and done away with the freedom of the press and organisation.

In addition, Sidky Pasha, taking advantage of the serious agrarian crisis, the disastrous drop in the price of cotton and the poverty of the Egyptian peasants, has thought out new cunning methods in order to secure the profits to the imperialists. He has done away with the law according to which a peasant must be left in possession of at least 5 feddans of land. With the founding of an "agrarian bank", he created an instrument for the mass expropriation of the small peasants for the benefit of the mortgage holders; and in addition to all this he has facilitated the direct transference of vast tracts of land in Egypt into the hands of speculators.

The national reformist organ "El Balagh" complains:

"We are about to lose the land of Egypt. We have long since lost many streets in Cairo and Alexandria, and our Arab language is only spoken by servants. It seems that we are now to be deprived of the rural land in the same manner as we formerly lost the towns... In a short time we shall see big foreign colonies in our villages. The Egyptian fellahs will have to work for meagre wages on these foreign plantations, just as the Egyptian servants who are now employed in the houses of foreigners in the towns. We are not exaggerating nor painting too black a picture. It suffices to take a brief glance at the compulsory sales now taking place in Cairo, Alexandria and Mansurah in order to find confirmation for our pessimism. The number of these compulsory sales amounts to not less than 500, and the result is that thousands of peasants are robbed of their land... The expropriation of the land is in full swing, especially as regards small holdings."

Apart from this expropriation of the soil of Egypt, the exploitation of Egypt and the robbery of Egyptian national economy goes on the ordinary way. Interest has to be paid punctually; the high salaries of the British officials are not reduced; the dividends of the banks and joint stock companies in Egypt show no appreciable decline.

In face of the growing resistance of the masses to the plundering of the country by the imperialists and Sidky, in face of the fresh revolt of the masses, expressed in peasant outbreaks, assassinations, a wave of strikes in the towns, unrest among the students, the national reformists (the Wafd) are attempting by oppositional phrases to preserve their influence over the masses who are becoming more and more revolutionary. In reality the Wafd confines itself to paper protests, engages in inner clique struggles, and does not cease to seek new compromises with the English imperialists. What the British imperialists themselves think of the oppositional attitude of the Wafd is shown by the proposals of that part of the imperialist press which advises against the adventure of concluding a treaty with Sidky. This section of the British imperialists believes that the Sidky Government has created the prerequisites for the formation of a new coalition Government in Egypt, in which the Wafd shall take part and sign the Treaty submitted by England.

It is very doubtful, however, whether the one manoeuvre (conclusion of a Treaty with Sidky) or the other (coalition government and treaty with the Wafd) will be able to provide guarantees for the further plundering of the country, as the growing ferment among the working masses of Egypt is seriously threatening to upset all the imperialist combinations.