BRITAIN'S EFFORT TO CONTINUE ITS TUTELAGE OF EGYPT AFTER THE WW II, 1945 – 1947[1]

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In May 1945, when WW II ended, in Egypt a long-pent-up flood of nationalist sentiment became apparent. Not only the Egyptian politicians, but the public as well felt that Britain should at last leave Egypt entirely and accept the unity of the Nile Valley (Egypt and Sudan). Instead Britain was trying to bring pressure on Egypt to join a Western defence pact, while British troops remained on Egyptian soil as a constant provocation to the wishes of the Egyptians. Against a background of anti-British upheaval, the labour foreign secretary Ernest Bevin accepted the principle of total British withdrawal from Egypt, despite bitter attacks from the conservative opposition led by Winston Churchill. However, the opportunity for a settlement collapsed over Sudan. The British government had not accepted the notion of Egyptian-Sudanese unity because the British military held that, in the event of a withdrawal from Egypt, it was even more essential to retain control of Sudan.

Key words: Situation in Egypt after the War; continuing British occupation; rioting and strikes in the towns; new political forces on the scene; failure to come to an agreement

The outcome of the Second World War – the defeat of German Nazism, Italian Fascism and Japanese militarism – has been of great importance for the further political, economic and social development of the Arab world as well as elsewhere. The substantial weakening of the traditional colonial powers – Great Britain and France – and contrastingly the growth of power and influence of the USSR, whose armies played a decisive role in the defeat of the Axis powers, created favourable conditions for the growth of the national liberation movement in former colonies and dependent territories. It is undisputable that the emergence of two antagonistic and mutually opposing power groupings on the international arena was, to a significant and decisive extent, reflected in the

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creation of the feasible possibility of the elimination of direct colonial rule in the Arab world. It should also be noted that the Middle East was not accorded a prominent place in Soviet political thinking in the first decade following World War II.[2]

People in all the Arab countries demanded independence and the abolition of the unequal treaties imposed on them by colonial powers from the past. This fact made it clear that the Arab world would shortly become tense and heated for the colonizers. To achieve political independence was a fundamental question for the Arabs, whose solution had been postponed since the end of the First World War (and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire), and which was now emerging with increasing urgency. After the First World War the demand had been for national liberation and state sovereignty as an end in itself. Now the demand was for independence as a basic prerequisite to domestic internal reform.[3]

France, immediately after the Second World War, restored its authority in the Arab West (al-Maghrib), that is, in Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia, while Great Britain was in a position of paramount power in the Arab East (al-Mashriq). In Egypt and Iraq, Britain had taken the initiative in installing regimes sympathetic to the Allies. In Egypt Britain retained a huge military base in the Suez Canal area near Ismāᶜīlia and since 1942, had operated the important Middle East Supply Centre, to carry on advisory services in the field of economic development.[4] In addition, Britain was the initiator and foster father of a newly-formed regional organization called the League of Arab States.

Although after the war the United States withdrew its troops from North Africa, it did not cease to be interested in the area, and their interest in Arab oil was expanding. But despite the United States' growing relationship with Saudi Arabia, the State Department was traditionally ready to leave the handling of the West's political interests in the Arab world to Britain.[5] The only exception to this US policy in the Middle East was Palestine, but it was rather the result of domestic political calculations (the influential Jewish lobby), as a result of a coherent concept in foreign policy.

Britain's position in the Middle East after the war seemed steadfast. British troops were everywhere, and to all appearances could limit any local restlessness that had been increasing in the region. Britain appeared to be unchallenged, and to enjoy the advantages that enable a great power to behave

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[2] LAQUEUR, W. *The Soviet Union and the Middle East*, p. 138.

[3] MARLOWE, J. *Arab Nationalism and British Imperialism. A Study in Power Politics*, p. 40.

[4] KIRK, G. *The Middle East 1945 – 1950*, p. 3.

[5] MANSFIELD, P. *The Arabs*, p. 233.

generously. Moreover, in July 1945 the Labour victory in the election over the Conservatives seemed to increase the chances that the Middle East would achieve satisfaction of its main ambitions. The new Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin remarked, that Britain "must leave behind for ever the idea of one country dominating another".[6] However, the grave domestic economic problems, including the abrupt American cancellation of the Lend-Lease Act in August 1945,[7] pushed aside all good intentions and forced the British cabinet to maintain all that is possible.

Taking into consideration that the Labour Party leadership did not have any expert on Middle Eastern problems, the Foreign Office under Ernest Bevin took on the views of a Study Group of the Cairo Section of "Chatham House" summarized in a document submitted in February 1945 under the title "The Interests of the Commonwealth in the Middle East".[8] In the paper the specialists pointed out that during the years between the wars and during the war British policy in the Middle East had committed a series of cardinal mistakes and the main one was to underrate the coming strength of the Arab national movement. The obstacles for establishing fair and friendly relations with the Arabs were: 1. British strategic interests in Egypt, the Persian Gulf and Iraq; 2. British support for the French in Syria and Lebanon; and 3. British support for the Zionists in Palestine. The experts concluded the analysis stating that the growing distrust of the Arabs for Britain is proof enough that her policy had failed. Subsequently, the experts summarized British interests in the Middle East as follows: 1. to ensure the right to use seaports and aerodromes of the Arab countries; 2. to control the main lines of communication, particularly the Suez Canal and Red Sea and the air and land routes across the Syrian dessert; 3. to control the oil wells of Iraq and the pipelines which bring oil to the Mediterranean.[9] Control of Iraq would also protect the oil fields of Southern Iran.

In the opinion of the experts, for any British policy in the Middle East to be successful, was cooperation with the Arabs unavoidable and inevitable. Britain faced the task to gain the confidence of the moderate Arab nationalist leaders and help them to establish their ascendancy over the nationalist movement as a whole. British economic and military interests could only be secured on the

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[6] Quoted in MONROE, E. *Britain's Moment in the Middle East, 1914 – 1956*, p. 151.
[7] LOUIS, Wm. R. *The British Empire in the Middle East, 1945 – 1951. Arab Nationalism, the United States, and Postwar Imperialism*, p. 12. (Lend-Lease Act, was passed by the US Congress on 11 March 1941).
[8] A Study Group of the Cairo Section of "Chatham House" – The Royal Institute of International Affairs had prepared three papers for the British Commonwealth Relations Conference in 1945.
[9] KIMCHE, J. *Seven Fallen Pillars. The Middle East, 1945 – 1952*, p. 46.

condition that the Arab countries, at least those of the greatest interest, would have stable governments either directly under British influence, or friendly governments willing to harmonize their policy with the British on important issues.

Egypt was the centre of Britain's power in the Middle East, but following the installation of the Wafd government in February 1942,[10] the country's internal politics were not a major British concern. The Wafd, although still confident that it was an expression of the popular will, was sensitive to charges that it had been placed in power by the British. It claimed to champion the cause of the egyptianization of the state. However, the Wafd's chairman Muṣṭafā an-Naḥḥās, as Prime Minister, was still dependent on the support of the British ambassador, Sir Miles Lampson, to prevent King Fārūq from dismissing him.[11] In fact the Wafd, riddled with corruption and public scandal, was losing its influence. Extra-parliamentary forces, of which the Muslim Brotherhood was the most significant and threatening, were growing in strength.[12] Rampant inflation, exacerbated by the presence of Allied forces, caused increasing public discontent with the government. The land-owning class was growing richer and, as in the First World War, a new wealthy class of merchants and industrialists had grown by supplying the foreign forces with goods and services.[13] Yet the vast majority of Egyptians were sinking further into poverty.

In October 1944 the ambassador's absence from Egypt enabled the king to dismiss Muṣṭafā an-Naḥḥās and his government from office. He replaced him with Aḥmad Māhir who created a coalition government of members of the traditional parties except the Wafd.[14] This government in January 1945 consolidated its position by winning a parliamentary election which was boycotted by the Wafd. The new cabinet was eager to align itself with the side of the victorious Allied powers. On 24 February the Prime Minister Aḥmad Māhir, who had argued unsuccessfully for an Egyptian declaration of war on the Axis in 1940, now announced Egypt's declaration of war on Germany and

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[10] Ar-RĀFIᶜĪ, ᶜAbdarraḥmān. *Fī aᶜqāb ath-thawra al-miṣrīya* [After the Egyptian Revolution /1919/], Vol. III, pp. 104−105.

[11] TERRY, J. J. *The Wafd, 1919 – 1952*, p. 253.

[12] HILĀL, ᶜAlīaddīn. *As-siyāsa wa al-ḥukm fī Miṣr. Al-ᶜahd al-barlamānī, 1923 – 1952* [The Politics and Rule in Egypt. The Parliamentary Period], p. 238.

[13] ABDEL-MALEK, A. *Egypt: Military society. The Army Regime, the Left, and Social Change under Nasser*, p. 14.

[14] The cabinet consisted of Saᶜdists, Liberals (al-Aḥrār ad-dustūrīyīn), members of the Patriotic Party (al-Ḥizb al-waṭanī) and of the Independent Wafdist Bloc (al-Kutla al-wafdīya al-mustaqilla). In RIZQ, Yūnān Labīb. *Tārīkh al-wizārāt al-miṣrīya, 1878 – 1953* [History of the Egyptian Cabinets], p. 463.

Japan to parliament and so he could obtain for Egypt a seat at the Peace Conference.[15] This act cost him his life as he was shortly afterwards murdered on the steps of parliament, by a fanatic, apparently from the terrorist wing of the Muslim Brotherhood. He was succeeded, as Prime Minister and as leader of the Saᶜdist Party, by Maḥmūd Fahmī an-Nuqrāshī.[16]

Egyptians felt that as a reward for Egypt's contribution to the Allied war effort, Britain should withdraw from the country entirely, and accept the unity of Egypt and the Sudan. However, although they hoped that the victorious Labour Party, which had just come to power in Britain and with really strong backing in the country, would be more sympathetic to the aspirations of the Egyptian people, they felt betrayed.[17] The new Labour government was chiefly concerned with maintaining Britain's dominant military position in the Middle East and was not prepared for a revision of the 1936 Anglo-Egyptian Treaty,[18] which it felt had stood the test of time. Furthermore, the great numbers of British soldiers within the county reminded the Egyptians of the continuing occupation. In May 1945 after the end of war, martial law was partially lifted (it was completely abolished on 4 October), and on 9 June the press censorship, arbitrary arrest and imprisonment were abolished, so was the ban on political associations and meetings.[19]

The attempt to resolve Anglo-Egyptian relations began after the allied victory in Europe with a memorandum from the Wafd. In July 1945 the leader of the Wafd, Muṣṭafā an-Naḥḥās, though in opposition, wanted to establish himself and the Wafd as the champions of Egyptian independence. He therefore sent a note to the British Ambassador, which restated the demands set out in the note addressed by him to the British Embassy in April 1941.[20] These demands were essentially complete withdrawal of British troops from Egypt and a union of the Sudan with Egypt. However, the British were sceptical on the content of the note, and the head of the Egyptian Department in the Foreign Office, Patrick Scrivener remarked: "We should not fall into the over-simplification of thinking

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[15] MURSĪ, Kāmil. *Asrār majlis al-wuzarā'* [Secrets of the Council of Ministers], p. 326.
[16] RIZQ, Yūnān Labīb. *Tārīkh al-wizārāt al-miṣrīya, 1878 – 1953* [History of the Egyptian Cabinets], p. 469.
[17] LITTLE, T. *Modern Egypt*, p. 97.
[18] Treaty of Preferential Alliance: Britain and Egypt, 26 August 1936. In HUREWITZ, J. C. *Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East. A Documentary Record*, Vol. II, 1914 – 1956, pp. 203−211.
[19] Ar-RĀFIᶜĪ, ᶜAbdarraḥmān. *Fī aᶜqāb ath-thawra al-miṣrīya* [After the Egyptian Revolution /1919/], Vol. III, pp. 177−178; VATIKIOTIS, P. J. *The Modern History of Egypt*, p. 359.
[20] MARLOWE, J. *Anglo-Egyptian Relations 1800 – 1953*, p. 334.

that the King is a reactionary autocrat and the Wafd the torch bearers of a liberal democracy. The King has autocratic tendencies, admittedly, but the Wafd's autocratic tendencies have been shown to be equally destructive of decent government."[21]

The Saᶜdist-led government assumed that it could easily take over the leadership of the country's essential question from the Wafd. At the same time, by taking the initiative in requesting new talks with Britain, the Saᶜdists assumed that they would then go on to dilute the appeal of the different political organizations.[22] One of those, the Muslim Brotherhood, by 1945 had developed into a considerable organization, part of which operated overtly and devoted itself to religious, cultural, educational and social activities, and part of which constituted the nucleus of a political terrorist body, the Special order (an-Niẓām /al-Jihāz/ al-khāṣṣ).[23] So in the following month the Prime Minister Maḥmūd Fahmī an-Nuqrāshī speaking in the Senate, made it clear that his government wished to negotiate a new treaty which would provide for the departure of foreign forces from Egypt, and for the unity of the Nile Valley. In November 1945 these two demands were reiterated in the King's throne address at the opening of a new session of Parliament.[24]

The British agreed, but the Saᶜdist-led government was already breaking up and it was left to the veteran politician Ismāᶜīl Ṣidqī pasha to undertake the negotiations. These were given a fair wind when Clement Attlee announced that the British government would accept the principle of withdrawal of British forces in a time of peace, provided that satisfactory arrangements could be reached on treaty revision as a whole. The war had proved once again the importance of Egypt's strategic position, and the right to use Egyptian territory in a time of war remained a basic need for the British position. Even this concession of peace-time withdrawal was fiercely attacked by the Conservative party. Both Labour and the Conservatives were convinced that any revision must provide for the return of British troops to Egypt in a time of war.[25] The ever-dominant Labour Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin, who was just as much a

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[21] FO 371/45923, 13 August 1945. Minute by Scrivener.

[22] Al-BISHRĪ, Ṭāriq. *Al-ḥaraka as-siyāsīya fī Miṣr, 1945 – 1952* [The Political Movement in Egypt], pp. 72−73; HILĀL, ᶜAlīaddīn. *As-siyāsa wa al-ḥukm fī Miṣr. Al-ᶜahd al-barlamānī, 1923 – 1952* [The Politics and Rule in Egypt. The Parliamentary Period], p. 239.

[23] Ar-RĀFIᶜĪ, ᶜAbdarraḥmān. *Fī aᶜqāb ath-thawra al-miṣrīya* [After the Egyptian Revolution /1919/]*,* Vol. III, pp. 147−148; Al-BISHRĪ, Ṭāriq. *Al-ḥaraka as-siyāsīya fī Miṣr, 1945 – 1952* [The Political Movement in Egypt], pp. 19−20.

[24] MARLOWE, J. *Anglo-Egyptian Relations 1800 – 1953*, p. 334.

[25] RICHMOND, J. C. B. *Egypt 1798 – 1952, Her Advance to a Modern Identity*, p. 211.

"cold warrior" as Winston Churchill, supported the British military in their belief that Egypt should be included in a regional defence pact to combat the Soviet threat.[26] From the point of view of Egypt, to concede this meant that its foreign policy would remain tied to that of Britain, and would clearly cause difficulties for Ismāʿīl Ṣidqī with the Egyptian public opinion. However he was of an Egyptian generation that did not believe in the reality of public opinion in his country, and was confident he could override it.[27]

In the period between the world wars the Egyptian working class had grown not only quantitatively but also qualitatively. Its quantitative growth was a natural consequence of the development of industry and trade in Egypt.[28] The growth of the labour movement was an indisputable reality, and the working class came out of the war with much deeper consciousness of its rights and its role in the camp of the national-democratic revolution.[29] The main shortcoming was that the working class did not have its own party that would rigorously fight for workers' rights. It is understandable that the national bourgeoisie, as a leader of the national liberation movement, did not want to allow the working class to become politically more active.

The new leadership of the working class was to be looked for in the supporters of the Wafd, as the political activity grew mainly among workers and students.[30] By the end of 1945, the World Federation of Trade Unions announced the holding of its founding congress and called on trade and workers unions to send their delegates to the congress. In Egypt there were two such established organizations: the Preparatory Committee of Egyptian Workers (Al-lajna at-taḥḍīrīya li-ʿummāl al-quṭr al-miṣrī) and the Trade Union Conference of Egyptian Workers (Mu'tamar niqābāt ʿummāl al-quṭr al-miṣrī) and both sent delegations to the founding congress in Paris.[31] In Paris the two delegations joined together, and the united Egyptian workers' representation raised the demand of withdrawing the foreign troops from the Nile Valley and of removing British power, which was hindering the development of Egyptian

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[26] MANSFIELD, P. *The Arabs*, p. 233.

[27] RICHMOND, J. C. B. *Egypt 1798 – 1952, Her Advance to a Modern Identity*, p. 211.

[28] ḤĀMID, Ra'ūf ʿAbbās. *Al-ḥaraka al-ʿummālīya fī Miṣr, 1899 – 1952* [The Workers Movement in Egypt], p. 85. The author states that in 1917 the number of workers was roughly 640 thousand.

[29] ANĪS, Muḥammad, ḤARRĀZ, as-Sayyid Rajab. *Thawrat 23 yūliyū 1952 wa uṣūluhā at-tārīkhīya* [Revolution of 23 July 1952 and its Historical Roots], pp. 154−155.

[30] ḤĀMID, Ra'ūf ʿAbbās. *Al-ḥaraka al-ʿummālīya fī Miṣr, 1899 – 1952* [The Workers Movement in Egypt], p. 268.

[31] The World Federation of Trade Unions was founded early in 1945 in Paris. In LAQUEUR, W. Z. *Communism and Nationalism in the Middle East*, p. 52.

agriculture and industry, suppressing the trade union movement, and preventing the democratization of society.[32] Among the resolutions of the World Trade Union Federation was also a resolution criticizing British imperialism and its acolytes in Egypt.

In Egypt the theme of the day was the British-Egyptian relations, which were based on the 1936 treaty. According to the treaty, the presence of British troops during the war was legal, but after its end the situation changed. On 20 December 1945 the Egyptian government formally requested a revision of treaty relations.[33] Even though the British government was ready to make minor concessions, such as reducing the number of soldiers and moving them into the Suez Canal base, the conservative opposition headed by W. Churchill refused it.

After the war, the British were not interested in opening negotiations: they knew that the Egyptians would demand complete independence, which they were not willing to give. Although the Ambassador spoke for the negotiations, the Foreign Office did not meet the idea, and many officials were disillusioned with Killearn's high-handed approach because they did not want to make hasty decisions. He in the field wanted an immediate solution to avoid open popular unrest, while ministry officials preferred a slow and thought-out process. Patrick Scrivener, the head of the Egyptian department, criticized the Ambassador from the Conservatives' camp,[34] but did not realize that there were only a few suitable negotiating partners on the Egyptian side.

The British government was only willing to do preliminary talks. The exchange of notes was published in the Egyptian press on 30 January. The reaction of the Egyptian public was stormy and all parties and groups began to agitate for the abrogation of the 1936 Treaty.[35] The Egyptian press published reports on Britain's unwillingness to negotiate the end of their military bases in the country. The British government responded to the Egyptian demand only on 26January 1946 in a non-binding note and its position was published in the Egyptian press.[36] However, at the beginning of February the government decided to end the diplomatic mission of Miles Lampson – Lord Killearn, a

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[32] RAMAḌĀN, ᶜAbdalᶜaẓīm Muḥammad. *Taṭawwur al-ḥaraka al-waṭanīya fī Miṣr min sanat 1937 ilā sanat 1948* [Development of the Patriotic Movement in Egypt from 1937 to 1948], Vol. II, pp. 287−291.

[33] RIZQ, Yūnān Labīb. *Tārīkh al-wizārāt al-miṣrīya, 1878 – 1953* [History of the Egyptian Cabinets], p. 473.

[34] FO 371/45921 – Scrivener Memorandum, 24 June 1945.

[35] ḤĀMID, Ra'ūf ᶜAbbās, ᶜATĪQ, Wajīh ᶜAbdaṣṣādiq. *Tārīkh Miṣr al-muᶜāṣir* [The Contemporary History of Egypt], 179.

[36] Ar-RĀFIᶜĪ, ᶜAbdarraḥmān. *Fī aᶜqāb ath-thawra al-miṣrīya* [After the Egyptian Revolution /1919/], Vol. III, p. 179.

staunch British imperialist hated by the Egyptians, and to replace him by a career diplomat.[37] His successor, Sir Ronald Campbell replaced him in March. Lord Killearn left Egypt in mid-February. Shortly after, on 19 February 1946 Aḥmad Muḥammad Ḥasanayn pasha, head of king's office (ad-dīwān al-malakī) and his mentor died in a car accident.[38] He was killed by a speeding British army lorry on the eve of its withdrawal from Cairo.[39] After his death, the king found himself in the midst of incompetent stooges and without his judicious political advice he became the victim of his own weaknesses.[40]

The Prime Minister Maḥmūd Fahmī an-Nuqrāshī knew there was only one way to beat his political opponents, and that was to succeed in the negotiations with the British. As far as Wafd was concerned, the party became greatly discredited for its cooperation with the British during the war, and therefore any attempt to improve its reputation with patriotic appeals could be expected. On the other hand, this party had a well-functioning organization and still dominated the masses in the countryside. The Egyptian government promoting the interests of the forces collaborating with the British – the big bourgeoisie and landlords – was unable to achieve any success both in the treaty revision and granting full independence. As a result, the activity in the ranks of students grew: the Highest Executive Council of College Students (al-Lajna at-tanfīdhīya al-ᶜulyā li-ṭ-ṭalaba al-jāmiᶜa wa-l-maᶜāhid al-ᶜulyā) convened a meeting to be held on Saturday 9 February.[41] In the courtyard of the University of Fu'ād I. (Cairo University today) in al-Jīza (Gizeh), several thousand students met, who decided to hold a demonstration in front of the ᶜĀbidīn Royal Palace.[42] They demanded the immediate withdrawal of the British troops from Egypt, and the beginning of the talks afterwards. On the way toward the Palace in the centre of Cairo the students had to cross the Nile River. At the ᶜAbbās Bridge the police

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[37] GOMBÁR, E. Moderní Egypt [Modern Egypt]. In BAREŠ, L., VESELÝ, R., GOMBÁR, E. Dějiny Egypta [The History of Egypt], p. 526.

[38] At-TĀBIᶜĪ, Muḥammad. Miṣr mā qabla aṯ-ṯawra [Egypt before teh Revolution], p. 333.

[39] KIMCHE, J. Seven Fallen Pillars. The Middle East, 1945 – 1952, p. 40.

[40] SĀLIM, Laṭīfa Muḥammad. Fārūq wa suqūṭ al-malakīja fī Miṣr, 1936 – 1952 [Fārūq and the Fall of the Kingdom in Egypt], p. 552.

[41] Ash-SHĀFIᶜĪ, Shuhdī ᶜAṭīya. Taṭawwur al-ḥaraka al-waṭanīya al-miṣrīya, 1882 – 1956 [Development of the Egyptian Patriotic Movement, 1882 – 1956], p. 95; ḤĀMID, Ra'ūf ᶜAbbās. Al-ḥaraka al-ᶜummālīya fī Miṣr, 1899 – 1952 [The Workers Movement in Egypt], p. 268.

[42] ABDEL-MALEK, Anouar. Egypt: Military society. The Army Regime, the Left, and Social Change under Nasser, p. 25.

stopped the students and mercilessly scattered them with truncheons, so that 84 students were badly wounded.[43]

The event prompted a wave of protests and anti-government demonstrations not only in Cairo but also in other towns. In this situation the representatives of students and workers entered into negotiations. The result of which was the creation of the Patriotic Committee of Students and workers (al-Lajna al-waṭanīya li-l-ᶜummāl wa-ṭ-ṭalaba), which assigned 21 February 1946 as "Evacuation Day" and announced the holding of mass demonstrations against the continuous presence of British troops in Egypt and the Sudan.[44] Although this proclamation was primarily about the question of statehood and independence, it also had a social dimension. It showed that a new leadership made up of workers and students was capable of approaching directly the people, and that a revolutionary situation had arisen. The proclamation defined the social strata belonging to the revolutionary camp, but not including the peasantry into that camp was a serious mistake.[45]

It was clear that, unless the government succeeded in gaining some concessions from Britain, the Egyptian public and political opinion would be under considerable pressure from the workers and students movement. The new leadership of the popular movement constituted a potential threat not only for the palace but also for British interests in the country. Therefore, the mass demonstration for the evacuation of foreign troops, which was organized by the Patriotic Committee of Students and Workers on 21 February 1946 in Cairo, was mercilessly dispersed not only by police forces, but also by British troops with armoured vehicles. In the clash with the soldiers 23 demonstrators died and 121 were injured.[46] The Prime Minister Maḥmūd Fahmī an-Nuqrāshī realized that his position and popularity were not strong enough to ensure such a revision of the Treaty that would be acceptable to the Egyptian public opinion. The Wafdists, who boycotted the election, strongly opposed his minority cabinet. He knew that that they were against him as he was a renegade of their party. He had also to worry about the possible terrorist acts of the Muslim Brotherhood and the rioting students and workers. He did not have effective means of suppressing them, as martial law had recently been abolished.

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[43] Ar-RĀFIᶜĪ, ᶜAbdarraḥmān. *Fī aᶜqāb ath-thawra al-miṣrīya* [After the Egyptian Revolution /1919/], Vol. III, pp. 180−181.

[44] Ash-SHĀFIᶜĪ, Shuhdī ᶜAṭīya. *Taṭawwur al-ḥaraka al-waṭanīya al-miṣrīya, 1882 – 1956* [Development of the Egyptian Patriotic Movement, 1882 – 1956], pp. 95−98.

[45] ANĪS, Muḥammad, ḤARRĀZ, as-Sayyid Rajab. *Thawrat 23 yūliyū 1952 wa uṣūluhā at-tārīkhīya* [Revolution of 23 July 1952 and its Historical Roots], p. 155.

[46] Ar-RĀFIᶜĪ, ᶜAbdarraḥmān. *Fī aᶜqāb ath-thawra al-miṣrīja* [After the Egyptian Revolution /1919/], Vol. III, pp. 184−185.

Therefore, under pressure from public opinion, he resigned on 15 February 1946.[47]

The British government wanted to negotiate with a strong Egyptian government that was capable of coping with the internal political situation. Britain, as mentioned in the note, could not quickly meet the Egyptian requirements, as playing with the abandonment of the bases before the Egyptian army displayed its ability to defend them let alone the fact that the evacuation itself was not easy, and the lack of means of transport, did not allow for an acceleration of this operation. The British government was obviously well aware of the weakness of the Egyptian government, which faced strong opposition of the Wafd, and therefore had not been hasty with the negotiations. In a statement addressed to the Egyptian people, the Wafd marked the Egyptian note and the British answer as documents disastrous for Egypt. The Muslim Brotherhood in its appeal compared the Egyptian government to a beggar who begs for alms.[48]

After the government's resignation the palace had two options: either to entrust the government to the Wafd, or put in charge someone who could handle the situation under these circumstances. Given that the extreme right felt strong enough, the king appointed Ismāᶜīl Ṣidqī pasha,[49] the president of the Egyptian Federation of Industries (Ittiḥād aṣ-ṣināᶜāt al-miṣrīya) and a member of the Suez Canal Company's board of directors, who had to silence the street.[50] On 7 March, shortly after the inauguration of the new government, a royal decree was issued asking the prime minister to appoint an official delegation, to negotiate with the British delegation the terms of a new treaty. In the Egyptian delegation, there took part representatives of all political parties except the Wafd and the Patriotic Party (al-Ḥizb al-waṭanī), as well as a number of independent politicians.[51]

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[47] MURSĪ, Kāmil. *Asrār majlis al-wuzarā'* [Secrets of the Council of Ministers], p. 332.

[48] ḤĀMID, Ra'ūf ᶜAbbās, ᶜATĪQ, Wajīh ᶜAbdaṣṣādiq. *Tārīkh Miṣr al-muᶜāṣir* [The Contemporary History of Egypt], p. 180.

[49] The government was formed on 16 February 1946. In MURSĪ, Kāmil. *Asrār majlis al-wuzarā'* [Secrets of the Council of Ministers], pp. 335−337.

[50] Al-BISHRĪ, Ṭāriq. *Al-ḥaraka as-siyāsīya fī Miṣr, 1945 – 1952* [The Political Movement in Egypt], p. 92; Ar-RĀFIᶜĪ, ᶜAbdarraḥmān. *Fī aᶜqāb ath-thawra al-miṣrīya* [After the Egyptian Revolution /1919/], Vol III, pp. 182–183.

[51] The delegation was headed by Ismāᶜīl Ṣidqī and included: Muḥammad Sharīf Ṣabrī, Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal, Aḥmad Luṭfī as-Sayyid, ᶜAlī Shamsī, Makram ᶜUbayd, Ḥāfiẓ ᶜAfīfī, Ibrāhīm ᶜAbdalhādī, ᶜAlī Māhir, ᶜAbdalfattāḥ Yaḥyā, Ḥusayn Sirrī and Maḥmūd Fahmī an-Nuqrāshī, four of which were former prime ministers. In Ar-RĀFIᶜĪ, ᶜAbdarraḥmān. *Fī aᶜqāb ath-thawra al-miṣrīya* [After the Egyptian Revolution /1919/], Vol. III, p. 190.

When Ismāᶜīl Ṣidqī became prime minister and a new ambassador came to Cairo, the British government agreed to start the negotiations. The British government did not want the Egyptian question to be resolved in the United Nations, so it expressed willingness to discuss with the Egyptian government the articles of the 1936 Treaty in the light of mutual experience.[52] However, it intended to conclude only such an agreement that would in a veiled form make it possible to retain its current position in Egypt, arguing that anything that would not provide at least a minimal defence system was, for Britain, unacceptable. Everything went on as if the British military authorities intended to remain in Cairo for ever. At the beginning of April the British government named the delegation, which was headed by Ernest Bevin, the Foreign Secretary, and which included Sir Ronal Campbell, the British Ambassador in Cairo and Lord Stansgate, the Secretary of State for Air.[53] On 7 May, two days before the discussions were due to start in Cairo; Clement Attlee announced that the British government had accepted the principle of a complete withdrawal of British forces from Egypt in peacetime "in the event of a satisfactory agreement being arrived at over the question of treaty revision as a whole".[54] This was confirmed in Cairo the next day by Prime Minister Ismāᶜīl Ṣidqī. This development seemed to contemporary observers to offer the hope for a far-reaching change in bilateral relations.

Ismāᶜīl Ṣidqī pasha, with whom Lord Stansgate had to negotiate, was described by the Chargé d'Affaires in Cairo, J. R. Bowker, as "the symbol of political and capitalist reaction and also of financial corruption". He added that most Egyptians also regarded him as "the ablest administrator and financier in Egypt and the strongest man in Egypt".[55] It was to be expected that the Egyptian public would be more and more affected by popular patriotic demands unless the government failed to gain a certain amount of concessions from Britain. However, "the British government showed a surprising insensitiveness to the desirability of making some generous gesture towards a government which was

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[52] ḤĀMID, Ra'ūf ᶜAbbās, ᶜATĪQ, Wajīh ᶜAbdaṣṣādiq. *Tārīkh Miṣr al-muᶜāṣir* [The Contemporary History of Egypt], p. 178.

[53] The real leader of the British delegation was Lord Stansgate (William Wedgwood Benn before being elevated to the Peerage), as Ernest Bevin could not come to Cairo. In LERMAN, E. British Diplomacy and the Crisis of Power in Egypt: the Antecedents of the British Offer to Evacuate, 7 May 1946. In WILSON, K. M. (ed.). *Imperialism and Nationalism in the Middle East. The Anglo-Egyptian Experience 1882 – 1982*, p. 107.

[54] MARLOWE, J. *Anglo-Egyptian Relations 1800 – 1953*, p. 339.

[55] FO 371/53284 – Bowker to Bevin, 18 February 1946. Quoted in LOUIS, Wm. R. *The British Empire in the Middle East, 1945 – 1951*, p. 234.

doing its best to keep the nationalist fervour in check".[56] It did not take into consideration the legitimate Egyptian demands and did nothing to redeploy its garrisons from the cities to the Suez Canal base.[57]

When Lord Stansgate arrived in Cairo 15 April 1946, Ismāᶜīl Ṣidqī stated that there was a common demand of complete withdrawal of British forces from Egypt. The British delegates wondered how Britain should defend Egypt unless military bases were at their disposal.[58] Worse, the British could not understand that the Egyptians did not care for their protection and wanted to get rid of their presence at any cost. In such a situation Lord Stansgate suggested that the British should withdraw from Egypt as before from Iran and would not wait for being "kicked out".[59] Ernest Bevin responded angrily saying that Egypt is at the heart of the British defence system. "If we are not being 'kicked out' we are none the less evacuating against our better judgment".[60] Finally, the government reached the conclusion that the announcement of 'withdrawal' should be made at the beginning of the negotiations in order to create a more favourable atmosphere.[61]

Thus the British Statement of Preliminary Talks on 7 May 1946 indicated a willingness to leave the bases all over the country if agreement was reached on the use of the Suez Canal base. The British government later regretted this move, because when it endorsed the evacuation, it did not leave, to the leading Egyptian politicians, little room for manoeuvring and consequently none of them could agree to anything other than a complete withdrawal. Official negotiations began on 9 May, but in July they were interrupted.[62] It turned out that the most serious problems emerged with regard to the Sudanese question. In fairness to the Egyptians it cannot be said that they had ever hidden from the British either their views on Sudan, or their intentions to claim it wholly for Egypt.[63] So the Egyptians uncompromisingly insisted on the unity of the Nile Valley, that is, Sudan was to be united with Egypt under the Egyptian crown. The 1936 Treaty left the status of Sudan unchanged and confirmed the validity

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[56] MARLOWE, J. *Anglo-Egyptian Relations 1800 – 1953*, p. 335.

[57] Ar-RĀFIᶜĪ, ᶜAbdarraḥmān. *Fī aᶜqāb ath-thawra al-miṣrīya* [After the Egyptian Revolution /1919/], Vol. III, pp. 189–190.

[58] FO 371/53292 – Minute by Sir Orme Sargent, 24 April 1946.

[59] FO 371/53293 – Stansgate to Bevin, 28 April 1946.

[60] FO 371/53293 – Bevin to Stansgate, 29 April 1946.

[61] FO 371/53294 – minutes, Cabinet conclusions, 6 May 1946.

[62] Ar-RĀFIᶜĪ, ᶜAbdarraḥmān. *Fī aᶜqāb ath-thawra al-miṣrīya* [After the Egyptian Revolution /1919/], Vol. III, pp. 193–194.

[63] KIMCHE, J. *Seven Fallen Pillars.The Middle East, 1945 – 1952*, p. 75.

of the 1899 Condominium Agreement.[64] Since then, political activity has increased in Sudan and two political parties had emerged. One was the National Party (Ḥizb al-umma), continuing to further the intentions of the 1885 uprising, and seeking to gain independence from both Britain and Egypt, which was supported by the British. The other party, al-Ashiqqā' (Full Brothers) promoted unification of Sudan with Egypt.[65] The emergence of these two organized parties provided the British with the opportune excuse to claim that the Sudanese question could not be discussed.

The proposal submitted by the British government on 21 May was also unacceptable for the Egyptians, and Maḥmūd Fahmī an-Nuqrāshī later described it in the UN Security Council session as a document which essentially contained the same burdensome terms as the 1936 Treaty.[66] The wave of wrath and repugnance of the people caused by the massacre in February, made it impossible for the premier to negotiate with the British. Ismāʿīl Ṣidqī pretended to promote the interests of his homeland, but in fact he was ready to sign any text of a new British-Egyptian treaty dictated by Britain, provided that it contained formulations that masked sufficiently its unequal aspects for Egypt.[67] Several members of the Egyptian delegation were intimidated by the public's refusal of the British presence, and feared the consequences if they approved an agreement rejected by the Wafd and the Muslim Brotherhood.

The new leadership of the workers and students managed to mobilize the masses in Cairo, and in the meantime a wave of strikes swept across the country. In the daily "al-Ahrām" a call was published to make the 11 July – the 64th anniversary of the bombardment of Alexandria by the British fleet – a day of resistance, and a general strike was announced. The government responded to it on 9 July: Legislation was introduced in Parliament to strengthen certain provisions of the Penal Code and thus provide stiff sentences against subversives.[68] Therefore high penalties were imposed on participating in strikes, and at night from 10to 11 July, security forces arrested hundreds of worker and

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[64] Agreement Establishing a Condominium in the Sudan: Britain and Egypt, 19 January 1899. In HUREWITZ, J. C. *Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East. A Documentary Record*, Vol. I, 1535 – 1914, pp. 210−218.

[65] FABUNMI, L. A. *The Sudan in Anglo-Egyptian Relations. A Case Study in Power Politics, 1800 – 1956*, pp. 241−243; SORBY, K. R. *Arabský východ (1918 – 1945)* [The Arab East, 1918 – 1945], p. 345.

[66] UN Security Council Official Records (SCOR), 2nd year, 5 August 1947, no. 70, p. 1747.

[67] Al-BISHRĪ, Ṭāriq. *Al-ḥaraka as-siyāsīya fī Miṣr, 1945 – 1952*, p. 127; Ash-SHĀFIʿĪ, Shuhdī ʿAṭīya. *Taṭawwur al-ḥaraka al-waṭanīya al-miṣrīya, 1882 – 1956* [Development of the Egyptian Patriotic Movement, 1882 – 1956], p. 105.

[68] VATIKIOTIS, P. J. *The Modern History of Egypt*, p. 363.

student activists. By mass arrests and banning left-wing press, Ismāʿīl Ṣidqī had dealt a deadly blow on the opposition.[69]

The summer months of 1946 passed in ongoing bilateral negotiations, interspersed with the exchange of formal notes and consultations with London. The Egyptian delegation firmly followed the original demands, while the British delegation tried to reach an acceptable compromise. Thus, while the Egyptians demanded a total evacuation of the British troops within a year, the British proposed five years "to avert the danger of a 'defensive vacuum' between the departure of the last British forces and the Egyptian assumption of their commitments".[70] A British offer in mid-August proposed to strike the average at three years. Moreover the Egyptians under joint defence duties wanted to limit the reason for reactivation of the military bases in the case of aggression committed against Egypt or one of her immediate neighbours, while the British sought to extend it to those countries on the fringe of the Middle East that were most threatened by the USSR.[71] In London a military conference began to consider the short-lived "Kenya experiment" in Middle East strategy.[72] According to this plan Egypt was to be wholly evacuated by all British forces by 1949. The real strategic garrison centre had to be moved to East Africa, mainly to Kenya.[73] The plan, however, was only to be successful in the case of friendly relations with interested governments.

The Prime Minister Ismāʿīl Ṣidqī was confident of his ability to negotiate a satisfactory treaty, to get it through parliament and to defy the extra-parliamentary opposition of the Wafd and the Muslim Brotherhood. At the end of September he announced that he was in favour of an alliance with Britain based on the complete withdrawal of British forces from Egypt in peacetime, and declared his willingness to leave the question of the Sudan outside the treaty, to be settled in separate negotiations. Then in October 1946 Ismāʿīl Ṣidqī went to London for private talks with Ernest Bevin. A draft project of a treaty was published at the end of these talks. By the term of the draft, the British Government agreed to the complete withdrawal from Egypt by the end of 1949. The Sudan was covered by a protocol. The Egyptian prime minister, who wanted to consolidate his labile home position, retreated from his demands, so that the new version of the Treaty was even more unfavourable for Egypt that

[69] ANĪS, Muḥammad, ḤARRĀZ, as-Sayyid Rajab. *Thawrat 23 yūliyū 1952 wa uṣūluhā at-tārīkhīya* [Revolution of 23 July 1952 and its Historical Roots], p. 174.
[70] KIRK, G. *The Middle East 1945 – 1950*, p. 123.
[71] LOUIS, Wm. R. *The British Empire in the Middle East, 1945 – 1951*, p. 111.
[72] The British Chiefs of Staff were: Field-Marshal Bernard Montgomery (ground forces), Air-Marshall Arthur Tedder (air force) and Admiral Alan Cunningham (navy).
[73] KIMCHE, J. *Seven Fallen Pillars. The Middle East, 1945 – 1952*, p. 51.

the previous one.[74] This result was, however, unacceptable to several members of the official Egyptian delegation set up earlier that year, the delegation was therefore disbanded.

The so-called "Sudan Protocol" was the cause of the collapse of the British attempt to appease Egypt. According to the Israeli publicist Jon Kimche, "the Sudan Protocol was the most wondrous jumble of nonsense and contradictions that ever graced a diplomatic instrument".[75] The Protocol started by declaring that Britain and Egypt would base their policy in the Sudan "within the framework of the unity between the Sudan and Egypt under the common crown of Egypt". That was what the Egyptians wanted. It then went on to say that this policy of the two countries would be so implemented that the Sudanese would themselves have the right to choose the future status of the Sudanese. That is what many Sudanese and the British wanted. A third part followed which ran counter to both union with Egypt and independence for the Sudan. This said that until the British and Egyptians, in full agreement, had brought independence for the Sudan, the sovereignty of the Sudan should not be affected and that the British would continue to select the Governor-General of the Sudan, who was all-powerful, and so in practice maintain British control over the Sudan.

The attempt to conclude the new treaty failed. The only positive outcome of the negotiations was the withdrawal of the occupying troops from Cairo and other towns to the Suez Canal base, a term which was anchored in the 1936 Treaty. The Egyptian people rebelled against this defeatist agreement. A wave of protest demonstrations took place in the country, which undermined the ratification of the treaty. On 9 December 1946 the Prime Minister Ismāʿīl Ṣidqī was forced to resign.[76] Neither the negotiations of 1946 nor the Security Council debate of 1947, could provide a way out of the British-Egyptian deadlock.

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[74] Draft Anglo-Egyptian Treaty and Accompanying Protocols, 25 October 1946. In HUREWITZ, J. C. *Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East*, Vol. II, p. 271−273.
[75] KIMCHE, J. *Seven Fallen Pillars*, p. 75.
[76] FABUNMI, L. A. *The Sudan in Anglo-Egyptian Relations. A Case Study in Power Politics, 1800 – 1956*, p. 243.

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