Chapter VIII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Egypt's struggle for freedom from foreign domination and interference can be traced back to the rise of Mohammad Ali - 'the founder of modern Egypt' - whose last descendant, King Faruk was sent into exile by a handful of nationalist military officers in July 1952. The manner and the circumstances in which Mohammad Ali was acclaimed by the people of Egypt as their political leader and guide (1) could be regarded the first expression of their national consciousness.

Among his successors who exploited the country's wealth and resources for their personal benefit and who staked Egypt's independence and national integrity by inviting British and French advisors and investors, Tawfik Pasha was politically the most infirm and incompetent. It was during his reign that the first organized nationalist agitation, led by Colonel Orabi, was forcibly suppressed and the country was occupied by the British in 1882. From that time to the day of signing the Suez Canal evacuation Agreement in 1954, the relations between Egypt and Great Britain were governed by the fact of Britain's superior military force and Egypt's constant, at times violent, struggle to get rid of the alien domination and the concomitant foreign interference in Egypt's life and politics.

On the eve of the First World War, Egypt's status was altered from 'occupation' to a 'Protectorate'. This change in

Egypt's status *vis-a-vis* Britain's predominant position was merely a matter of formality. It did not bring any relaxation in the latter's policy of interference in Egypt's domestic affairs and suppression of emerging nationalist political forces.

After the conclusion of 'Peace' between the Axis and the Allies, the Egyptians demanded their total emancipation. But all that their nationalist struggle and sacrifices during the war, achieved was a declaration of partial independence in February 1922. Britain unilaterally decided to give Egypt a national government with a parliamentary set up, but, in fact, shorn of full sovereignty. Matters of foreign policy, defence, the problems and privileges of alien minorities and the management of the Sudan affairs remained the exclusive concern of the British Government. These in fact were the very limitations which demonstrated the incompleteness and the mockery of the Egyptian independence. Being thus incapacitated to express her personality in external matters, Egypt's status in the comity of nations remained indeterminable. Nevertheless, the Egyptians accepted it as the first step towards the attainment of complete independence.

In 1936, the world was again at the threshold of a serious crisis. With Hitler's rise to Power in Germany, the Axis challenged afresh the political hegemony of the victors of the First World War beyond their own geo-cultural limits. With a rapid rise in the tempers on both sides, the danger of a major
conflagration was becoming more certain and in any such large-scale battling, the possession of Egypt was to be seriously contested. Her geographic position as a bridge-head linking Europe with Asia and Africa was to be an invaluable strategic advantage in determining the outcome of the clash. Britain would have been unwise to forego this advantage by letting Egypt slip out of her control. Egypt, on the other hand, couldn't have been able to overthrow this control as long as the large contingents of British armed forces were physically stationed inside Egypt. It would have been, therefore, impossible for her to officially look or ask for the Axis' assistance without making Egypt itself a battlefield and thus causing incalculable destruction and misery to scores of her own people. Moreover if the Axis had intervened, and had succeeded against the British, Egypt would have only passed from one occupation to another without gaining her objective. If, on the hand, such an intervention was denied or defeated, the Egyptians would have been subjected to serious British revenge. The safer alternative was, therefore, to agree for the time being to a closer alignment with Great Britain.

The conclusion of the 1936 Treaty between Egypt and Great Britain was thus accepted by the former under the pressure of circumstances.

After the end of the war in 1945, Egypt proposed to the British Government that the 1936 Treaty be revised as the circumstances under which it was concluded had been substantially changed.
True, that the Treaty was well received by the Egyptians in 1936, and Prime Minister Nahas Pasha was widely credited for being its chief architect, nevertheless, it was clear from the beginning that the arrangement was not to be regarded as a final and satisfactory settlement of accounts with His Majesty's Government of the four points reserved in the Unilateral Declaration of 1922, only one - the protection of foreigners and minorities - had been conceded by the British, but the other three - imperial communications, the Sudan and the defence of Egypt were still left to be their sole concern.

Egypt's acceptance of the Treaty, in fact, reflected the relative pressure - strength of Great Britain which she then effectively exercised in her treatment of Egypt. Once this pressure-capacity was modified in favour of Egypt, the effectiveness of the Treaty was to be determined by the willingness of the Egyptians to abide by it rather than by the narrow-legalistic concept of 'Paeta Sunt Servanda'.

In 1946-47 the pre-war balance of power was fundamentally changed. Militarily and financially exhausted Britain was no longer capable of wielding unquestioned authority over the dependent territories. India had been freed and bifurcated into two independent nation-states - India and Pakistan. The US and the USSR had emerged from the war as the strongest Powers both striving to outbid the other in wisdom and influence. The United Nations Organization had been established to try to prevent all future wars by encouraging settlement of issues between nations by pacific means. (2) Its Charter had explicitly 2. See Charter of the United Nations (Articles 2/3 and 33)
recognized the principle of 'freedom for all', (3) and the equality of their sovereign status. (4) Political domination or interference in any form against the wishes of the people concerned was prohibited. (5)

Such post-war developments naturally encouraged the nationalists of Egypt to demand for a revision of the 1936 Anglo-Egyptian Treaty to redefine their mutual relations as equal nations. The people of Egypt considered nothing as urgent and important as the question of realizing their complete political freedom. The fate of Governments and political leaders was determined by their ability to deal with the British successfully. Every other matter, including reforms in administration and economic system was treated secondary. (6) From the Egyptian point of view, no achievement in any field could be compared to their national right of full independence. The stipulations of the 1936 Treaty were a serious limitation on the full and free expression of her sovereign will and actions. The presence of hostile foreign troops on her soil was wounding to her national dignity.

In December 1945 the Egyptian Government made its first formal demand for a revision of the 1936 Treaty, frankly stating that the military situation which the Treaty had been

3. Ibid. Art. 1/3.
4. Ibid. Art. 2/1.
5. Ibid. Art. 1/4.
designed to meet had ended with the war and, therefore, continuing their relations with Britain on the basis of a treaty which had become obsolete was unrealistic and insulting for the Egyptians. It reminded them of their uneven status vis-a-vis the other signatory, i.e. Great Britain.

The Labour Government in London was not averse to the necessity of revising the pre-war bilateral arrangements in view of the post-war developments in the world political climate and her own inability to effectively suppress the growing strength of the Egyptian nationalism. Prime Minister Attlee was quite inclined to look for a new basis of his country's relations with Egypt. He was convinced that Britain's vital interests in Egypt could be better preserved in a congenial and cooperative atmosphere rather than in a state of continuing animosity.

He seemed quite serious about reaching a settlement with Egypt as he immediately started to translate his words into bold actions. On 7 May he made a formal announcement that his Government had accepted the principle of complete withdrawal of British forces from Egypt in peace-time provided a satisfactory agreement was reached on the question of treaty revision as a whole. (7)

As a practical gesture of his really desiring a peaceful settlement, he ordered the withdrawal of British troops from

7. The Times, 8 May 1946. Al-Ahram and The Egyptian Gazette, 8 and 9 May 1946.
Cairo and Alexandria and to hand over the Cairo Citadel to Egyptian troops early in July 1946. (8) Such determined efforts indicated that Britain's Labour Government was prepared to reconcile the aspirations of Egyptian nationalism with Britain's vital strategic and economic requirements. Consequently, the political atmosphere in Egypt became more propitious than at any time before, for an agreement. The Egyptians who were already quite anxious for reaching an accord with London, willingly and without delay started negotiations with the leaders of His Majesty's Government. And for a time, it seemed rather certain that the two countries would successfully arrive at a new agreement to safeguard their mutual interests, but for a sudden change in the attitude of the British Government.

On returning home from London where he had initialed a draft-treaty with the British Foreign Secretary, the Egyptian Prime Minister and leader of his delegation, Ismail Sidki Pasha informed his people that Britain had agreed on the settlement of the Sudan question "within the framework of unity of Egypt and the Sudan under the Crown of Egypt." It was merely on the basis of this understanding that Sidki Pasha had agreed to the British suggestion, rather insistence, to split the problem of evacuation of British troops from the question of the Sudan. By the terms of the draft-treaty the British Government had agreed to complete evacuation of Egypt by the end of 1949; while

the question of the Sudan was to be settled in separate negotiations on the basis of unity of the Nile Valley.

The chances of a peaceful and mutually satisfactory settlement of the whole of the Anglo-Egyptian controversy were better under Ismail Sidki Pasha than at any time before or after he retired from public life, until Egypt underwent a revolutionary change in the middle of 1952. He was firm in his views and was quite willing to enter into an alliance in place of the outdated 1936 Treaty. He also enjoyed the confidence and support of the King, and thus, he was strong enough to sail through the storm of opposition criticism successfully and obtain the ratification of the draft-instrument. The King too would have had no hesitation in approving it.

But his position was seriously embarrassed and weakened by the public statement of the after-thoughts in Britain's policy. Attlee categorically refuted the Egyptian Prime Minister's interpretation and assertion of his understanding of the meanings of Sidki-Bevin draft-agreement. He claimed that 'no change in the existing status and administration of the Sudan is contemplated and no impairment of the right of the Sudanese ultimately to decide their own future'. (9)

The change in the minds of the Labour leaders seemed to have been due to the fact of stringent criticism of their policy from the Conservative Opposition in the House of Commons. (10)

Attlee's statements and actions were hotly criticised as a tactical error to begin negotiations with a concession. Some who belonged to the group of die-hard colonialists thought it principally unwise to evacuate Egypt and quit the Sudan at all. A weak Labour Government, already over-strained by and preoccupied with the post-war domestic problems and a serious financial crisis, must have found it difficult to by-pass or ignore the compulsions and pressures of Britain's domestic politics.

If Great Britain had been able to abide by its own earlier declarations of intentions, the Sidki-Bevin 'draft-agreement' would have provided a reasonable guide-line for concluding a broad-based arrangement of mutual interest and advantage. The Egyptians would not have objected to the final agreement as it would have nearly fulfilled their primary nationalist objectives. Surely, they wouldn't have been unwise to let this opportunity slip and to suffer the anguish irritants of an unsettled and unenviable state of relations with Great Britain.

Ismail Sidki's resignation from his country's Prime Ministership was more an expression of protest against London's backing out of its pledges to regard the Sudan an integral part of Egypt. He had accepted the principle of an alliance with Great Britain which would provide for the use of his country as a war-time military base, but he wished the return of the British forces to Egypt to be made conditional on the actual declaration of war in the Mediterranean or Middle East area. Britain, on the other hand, now insisted to have Egypt available as a base
as soon as war appeared imminent anywhere in the world. Thus, obviously meant the continuation of the British Forces in Egypt as there was no definite and agreeable criterion to determine whether or not war was imminent. Moreover, with the growing uneasiness in the East-West relations, there always existed a potential danger in every corner of the world as the contest for power and influence between the two rival blocs was not confined to any given area.

Similarly, on the question of the Sudan, the Egyptians were awfully disappointed to note that the British were trying to make the Sudan a separate political entity. They were convinced that the British were using the modern sophisticated expressions like 'self-determination' for the Sudanese, as a cloak for Egyptians exclusion from, and for the continued imperialist occupation of, the Sudan. To say that as long as the Sudanese were able to decide their future political status, simply meant postponing the issue indefinitely. The British were to determine when and whether the Sudanese have acquired sufficient political wisdom and experience to decide their destiny. If during the past several decades of her almost exclusive control of the Sudan, the rate of literacy could not be higher than three per cent, (11) it was not difficult to imagine how long the Sudanese would take to come of age.

11. British Ambassador Sir Ralph Stevenson's statement during his conversations with the Egyptian Foreign Minister. See Record of Conversations, op.cit., p. 73.
Whatever might have been the compulsions and considerations of national and international political intrigues and complexities, the responsibility for the failure to arrive at a peaceful settlement of the Anglo-Egyptian controversy would rest more on Great Britain. The negotiations in 1946-47 failed mainly on account of the latter's unhelpful insistence on her own conditions.

In the autumn of 1947, the new coalition Government of Egypt, headed by Fahmy En Nokrashi Pasha, appealed to the United Nations Security Council against the 1936 Treaty. But "his own and to his country's dismay, he discovered that the interests of smaller nations could not be successfully defended, if a combination of the Great Powers thought of their contentions somewhat differently. The Egyptian Premier most strongly pleaded its case and used every argument that could appeal to the sense of justice of his 'distinguished audience', but as the British and the American Governments were more anxious to preserve and safeguard British position and presence in the area apparently to contain communism, the consideration of the Egyptian complaint and claims was put off indefinitely.

Further negotiations between Egypt and England remained suspended until the Wafd Party returned to power in 1950. In the intervening period, the Egyptian scene was dominated mainly by problems of internal politics and rivalries between the Palace and the political parties, most prominent of them, the Wafd. For a while the major target of Egypt's nationalist resentment seemed to be not Britain but Faruk and his henchmen in the army and
among the civilians. A short sentence in Nasser's *Philosophy of the Revolution*, recalling what a dying soldier-friend told to Kemal El Din Hussain at the time of their campaign against Israel: "Listen Kemal, Egypt is the field of our supreme war effort", was the motivating force of the July 1952 Revolution. It is, therefore, understandable that while the Arab-Israel conflict did not directly cause the collapse of the so-called 'Constitutional machinery' in Egypt, it contributed substantially to the chain of events which led to the dramatic take-over of authority by the nationalist military leaders.

In January 1950, the Wafdists returned to power with overwhelming majority in the Parliament. Their victory at the polls was however a clear manifestation of the people's desire to curtail the authority of the King and their determination to alter Egypt's relations with Great Britain on the basis of complete evacuation and unity of the Nile Valley. The Wafdists had identified themselves with this approach since 1941 when Nahas Pasha first addressed a note to the British Government asking for revision of the 1936 Treaty. They were chiefly responsible for the growth and expansion of nationalist opinion, and so they knew well that a resolute effort to resolve the 'great controversy' with Britain was the most important issue that would determine their popularity and tenure of office.

In June 1950 Nahas Pasha resumed negotiations with the British representatives. But the talks faltered and Egypt threatened to unilaterally abrogate the 1936 Treaty which, from the Egyptian point of view, had ceased to be a suitable basis
for Anglo-Egyptian relations. Throughout their lengthy discussions, dispersed over a year, they maintained their position on the demand of complete and unconditional evacuation both from Egypt and the Sudan. Britain, on the other hand, followed a policy of postponing the entire issue of their relations with Egypt. They took the plea of being too much preoccupied with other important international issues, presumably the Korean War and the crisis in Iran on the question of nationalization of oil. She insisted on the acceptance by Egypt of certain pre-conditions for revising their existing mode of relations.

Despite urgency, the Egyptians, however, showed patience and maintained peace in the streets despite occasional provocative statements by the British side. A number of explanatory 'Notes' and 'Aide-Memoires' were exchanged between the two Governments, but in effect leading to nothing practically realizable. Great Britain's insistence on viewing the whole problem of relations between Cairo and London not within its 'narrow confines' but as a part of the larger question of regional security. Britain, in fact, left no room for a compromise by pressing Egypt to agree in advance to join a Western-sponsored defence arrangement. For them (Britain and her allies) the danger of aggression from the Communist countries was not too far and unreal and, therefore, adequate military preparedness was an immediate necessity in order to deter such aggression. The British also declined to commit on the future of the Sudan without the Sudanese having the right to decide it by themselves.
There was obviously a wide gap between the political approach of Egypt and the military considerations of the British negotiators. Egypt was aspiring and struggling to restore her national dignity by removing all external restrictions on her sovereignty, while Britain was insistent on preserving her pre-war status and interests on the plea of new military necessity. It was, therefore, not a coincidence that the leader of the British delegation in the first formal talks opened in Cairo in June 1950, was a high-ranking military officer, Field Marshal William Slim.

The Egyptians understood that the British were seeking to perpetuate their military occupation under a new name and in a new form. They were, therefore, fully justified in rejecting the new British proposal for a joint-armed forces of UK, USA, France and Turkey to be maintained in Egypt in peace-time. In fact, the presence of foreign army in peace-time, could not mean anything else but a sort of occupation and a restriction on Egypt’s freedom of actions at home and at the international level.

If, on the other hand, Britain had agreed to the unconditional withdrawal of her forces from Egypt, it would have given the Egyptians a great psychological relief and consequently, a tactical advantage to the British to later ask for a closer cooperation both in peace and in war. With the British soldiers stationed within the country, the Egyptians could never believe that the proposed new alliance was, in any way, different from the one they had denounced recently. Nahas Pasha himself
emphasised this psychological point when he told the British negotiator that once the British had withdrawn from Egypt, his Government would be most willing "to work together hand-in-hand and with our hearts and souls." (12) The British, however, missed the point. They failed to realize the invaluable advantage of support and sympathy of a willing people as against the limited technical advantage which they hoped to obtain from the presence of 'limited foreign troops' in strategic areas, despite the natives' disapproval and active opposition.

Great Britain's unresponsive and unhelpful attitude towards the needs and aspirations of the Egyptians was bound to harden their attitude on their basic national demands. They insisted that the question of evacuation and the unity of the Nile Valley were absolutely linked together and could not be dealt with separately. Moreover, the prospects of a Conservative victory in the forthcoming General elections in the UK, (13) were seriously apprehended to make things more difficult. They could not expect from a Conservative Government to concede to their demands.

Thus, in view of a greater likelihood of the impasse in the existing situation becoming more difficult with the change of Government in London, Cairo could not have continued the talks


13. The General Elections in the United Kingdom were held on 25 October 1951 which returned the Conservatives to power under Churchill's Prime Ministership.
indefinitely. Besides, public opinion throughout Egypt was getting more and more impatient. The Muslim Brotherhood and the Communists, despite being ideologically poles apart, had made a common cause against the corrupt monarchy and the continuing menace of British occupation. Both were in the forefront representing the inchoate fury of the masses, with the existing state of things. The various students' organizations and workers' committees, consisting mainly of young enthusiasts, could not be persuaded any more to accept the policy of wait and watch.

Thus the Wafd had been emboldened by the firmness of national unity and support of the Government for the realization of the national objectives. Early in October 1951, when it became apparent that the negotiations with the British were not likely to achieve results or appease popular excitement, Nahas Pasha felt himself strong enough and justified, to free Egypt from the bondage of the obnoxious 1936 Treaty by unilaterally abrogating it. The Egyptian Parliament approved the motion by a unanimous and enthusiastic vote. The parliament also contemptuously turned down the latest British invitation to join the proposed Middle-East Defence Organization. The fact that the newest British proposals, being essentially the repetition of earlier ones, were handed to the Egyptian Government five days after the latter had publicly denounced the 1936 Treaty and the 1899 Condominium Agreement, and refused to have any dealing with the British until their forces were withdrawn from both parts of the Nile Valley, were exhausperating, as they betrayed Britain's want of understanding and appreciation of Egypt's
After the passage of the Government motion of abrogation of the Treaty, there followed several weeks of sporadic violence and sabotage in the Canal Zone, accompanied by mass withdrawal of Egyptian labour from the huge British military bases. Britain's so-called precautionary measures - imposing curfews and blockading of important strategic points connecting the Canal Zone with the city of Ismailia and the supply routes to the Egyptian army in the Sinai desert, and, above all, the landing of several battalions of British Paratroopers from Cyprus and the closing-in of the British war-vessels to the shores of Egypt merely added fuel to the fire. Furthermore, the British Commander's orders to disarm the civilians and auxiliary police, and searching of private houses and mosques, was the gravest provocation.

General Erskine's ultimatum demanding the surrender of auxiliary force, confined to their barracks in Ismailia, was without any impelling cause or reason. These handful and ill-armed Egyptian policemen had done nothing to justify the British action. The British had no legal authority to take such measures. After 1936, Egypt was not, legally speaking, an occupied territory and, therefore, there was no basis on which Britain's resort to force could be justified. Moreover, the Egyptian policemen were the sons of the soil and were not devoid of nationalist sentiments. Why then would they have complied with the orders of an alien and incompetent authority to lay down their arms of self-defence. Surrender in this manner would have been a shame.
for them. Surely, they didn't have sufficient armed strength to take up the challenge, but they did have sufficient moral courage and spirit of sacrifice to face the situation boldly. So, they turned down the ultimatum and fought the onslaught of the British armoured-cars until 50 of them were dead and 100 wounded.

This ghastly incident at Ismailia was bound to agitate the minds of the Egyptians. In a country that had been long struggling for her emancipation from the yoke of British imperialism, such impertinent manifestations of force were inevitably to arouse the nationalist temper to revengeful subversive activities. Morally, resort to violence could be, generally speaking, wrong and unappreciable. But under the circumstances of the present case, resort to violence was the natural weapon of the weaker of the two sides. In a frustrating situation existing in Egypt's relations with Great Britain, it was difficult to control the annoyance and anger of the youthful element charged with nationalist zeal. Therefore, what happened in Cairo on the 26th of January 1952, was a direct reaction of the most provocative and atrocious killing of their fellow-countrymen in Ismailia by the British army.

The agitation that started out to protest against the British was later joined by some irresponsible elements who turned the mob-frenzy into mob-violence against the British and other foreign establishments, and also of those wealthy Egyptians who were known to be the friends and followers of the British and their ways of life. Many shops of fashion-material,
restaurants, cinemas, clubs and hotels, including the world-famous 'Shepherds' were set on fire.

The Wafd Government, which had not been dilatory in inflaming anti-British sentiments, however, was no longer capable of bringing the situation under control. The civil administration and the police, being equally resentful of the previous day's incidents at Ismailia, could not be expected to forcibly suppress the popular agitation. In the beginning they deliberately restrained but later on when the processionists became sufficiently worked-up and violent, they were not able to control the worsening of the situation. Finally, the army was called in to take charge of the situation, but by then considerable damage had been done to life and property of foreigners and some wealthy Egyptians too. This state of chaos and lawlessness, gave the King the chance he had been looking for for some time, to dismiss the Wafd Government. The very next day of the 'Black-Saturday', Nahas Pasha's Ministry was relieved of office.

It would not be relevant in the context of this study, to analyse and determine the responsibility of the events of the 26th of January. What is, however, important is that it was the culmination of the pent-up nationalist emotions, disappointments and resentments against Great Britain's prolong obstinacy and totally unhelpful insistence on seeing Egypt's problems from the view-point of cold-war requirements and exigencies. In fact, the British never impressed the Egyptians of appreciating their national sentiments. They never seriously wished to make a
compromise with Egypt, instead, they only wished to further consolidate their existing position without regard to Egypt's disapproval and objection to the same.

After the dismissal of Nahas Pasha's Government, the King, whose shameful private life and utterly dishonest management of public affairs had been exposed to the people, now started behaving in the most autocratic and whimsical manner. In five months that preceded the spectacular take-over of the Egyptian affairs by the Free Officers in July 1952, five Governments were installed into power under Egypt's most distinguished personalities, but they all failed to put up with the sorry state of things.

In such circumstances of government instability and widespread unrest due to severe shortage of essential consumer goods and rising of price-level of every article of domestic use, the question of Egypt's relations with Great Britain was temporarily pushed into abeyance. Meanwhile, however, a secret organization of young army officers, most of whom had suffered the agony of mismanagement of the Palestine campaign, were preparing to eliminate Faruk and his corrupt favourites considered responsible for the decadence and humiliation of Egypt.

In July 1952 their preparations and plans of action were still premature for staging the epoch-making drama of the revolution, but Faruk's own hasty and unwise actions forced them to advance the date of the great event. Faruk knew that there was a certain group of junior-rank officers who were opposing
his authority and influence in the army.

In order to suppress them, he appointed his own relative Colonel Sherin as Minister of War while his Prime Minister favoured General Mohamad Meguib's name to appease the army. But the King seemed to have underrated the intelligence and confidence of the cool-headed shrewed tactician who was leading the Free Officers when he thought of breaking their organization by suddenly pounding over their heads and dispersing them to distant places. But before Faruk and his trusted 'senior officers' had had a chance to implement their plans, the army of the revolution silently captured them and put an end to their influence and authority for ever.

The initial reaction of the people of Egypt was of surprise but not of fear or shock. They were ultimately happy to see that the corrupt and unjust oligarchy of the Pashas was at last long toppled down.

Great Britain's reaction to these developments in Egypt's domestic affairs, was determined primarily by the wise and timely assurances, given by leaders of the revolution, to protect the life and property of all foreign residents in Egypt. In their earliest broadcasts to the nation, they repeated this assurance to disallow the British to make a move on that pretext.

Despite this assurance and strict vigilance to prevent rioting or sabotage against the British, if the British had tried to repeat the history of 1942 and interfere in Egypt's internal matters, the consequences would have been only
disastrous. Not only the people of Egypt and their army would have offered strongest resistance, but the entire world community would have unreservedly condemned them. The Western camp would have been weakened to prevent the expansion of Soviet influence in the whole of Asia and Africa, and very probably, the cold-war wouldn't have remained that cold. Moreover, the confidence of the smaller nations in the ability of the United Nations to prevent the 'Big Powers' from interfering in other's local affairs, would have been completely shattered.

Britain's attitude of restraint and in fact the acceptance of the new revolutionary order helped a lot in resolving her disputes with Egypt in a peaceful manner. Thus far, the King's interests and honour had limited the scope and chances of reaching a settlement with Great Britain. After Faruk's removal from the scene and finally after the institution of Monarchy was replaced by a Republican form of Government in June 1953, the prospects of reaching an agreement on all outstanding issues between Egypt and England became more definite than ever before.

The new leaders were not committed on any particular form or conditions of such an agreement. They could afford to start with a clean slate. They could be realistic and precise in their approach and dealing with the British as they were not aspiring to make politics their new career. They were essentially military men, not a political party and had no political manifesto of their own. Their objective was confined to freeing the country from corruption and to get the British out of Egypt
and the Sudan. But they did not wish to do all that by themselves. Their original plan was to leave the power in the hands of civilian authorities as soon as the administration was cleaned of corrupt persons and practices and the existing political parties were able to reform themselves. The parties, however, did not agree to do so as it reflected upon their integrity, capability and performance.

The leaders of the revolution, thereupon decided that the traditional political pattern was not capable of realizing the 'social objectives' of their revolution. They believed that Egypt desperately needed to reform its political institutions and reorganize the fabric of socio-economic activity; that the pace of the desired change had to be faster if Egypt was intended to catch up with the other rapidly developing nations of the world.

In fact, in a country like Egypt where the rate of literacy was not higher than 10 per cent, and where the average wage of the worker was as meagre as thirty cents a day; (14) where opportunities for instruction in modern subjects of science and technology were still negligible, where a relatively small number of wealthy landowners controlled immense quantities of land and formed an economic oligarchy with enormous political influence; (15) where the masses had been living for long under


15. Out of a total number of 2.75 million proprietors, 70 per cent had less than half an acre each, while 2,115 had over 200 acres each. At the top of the pyramid of ownership

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alien political subjugation in which their political education and training in public affairs was carefully avoided lest they became conscious and demanding of their political rights, it would have been quite futile to create a facade of Parliamentary democracy. If the elections were held under the existing circumstances, the same intriguing class of self-centred rich Pashas would have returned to power and utilized their position and authority for their personal glorification and the prosperity of their own class. And, no Government of the old type would have given Egypt, what she now badly needed - reforms in every walk of life.

The return of old parties to power would have only meant the continuation of all the old ills of the Egyptian society, while as a matter of fact, it was the high-time for Egypt to undertake a complete overhauling of her entire set up. She needed to conserve every bit of her energy for her rapid regeneration and revitalization. Only a government under the Free Officers could be expected to make a break-through in her domestic reformation, and also boldly remove the stalemate in her relations with Great Britain without which Egypt could never really feel herself to be free from the age-old yoke of British imperialism.

15. (contd. from back page)

some 200 proprietors owned an average of 2,600 acres each, but some of them owned as many as 20,000 acres. The King and members of his family owned about 1/3 of the area that was expropriated under the Land Reforms plan of the military Government. See Nauris Harard, Government and Politics of the Middle East (N.J., 1962), p. 71.
For dealing with the British, as past experience suggested, Egypt needed a strong, stable Government which enjoyed popularity and commanded unchallenged authority. The Council of the Revolution, therefore, had good reasons to decide that it could not work through existing political parties and personalities, and to assume all power directly for a transitional period of three years.

During this period, the revolutionary Government, mainly because of its realism, foresight and straightforwardness, scored two spectacular and long-awaited diplomatic victories in its relations with the Government of the United Kingdom. These spirited youngmen seemed to have fully realized that no Egyptian Government, however authoritarian, could ultimately survive, if it was not able to meet the country's desire to be free and unoccupied. No plans of socio-economic reforms and no scheme of political development could evoke popular enthusiasm and cooperation unless Egypt truly became master of its ownself.

The abdication of the 'bad King', the abolition of the titles of 'Beys' and 'Pashas', the expropriation of landed estates exceeding a limit of two hundred feddans, and finally, the termination of the institution of monarchy in June 1953, were undoubtedly impressive measures for the purpose of Egypt's sociological transformation, but her political liberation was still to be achieved.

It was obvious that so long as the question of the Suez Canal base and the Sudan remained unsolved, the people of Egypt could not regard the change of order anything better than the
pregious ones. Popular feeling against the presence of the British troops was so strongly resentful and frustrating that Egypt's new leaders decided to open negotiations with the British Government without further delay. But they did so with a marked difference. Having successfully eliminated the King and the parties from the scene of Egyptian politics; they had virtually no fear of violence of mobs or the machinations of political rivals, they were able to tackle the question of relations with Great Britain with some boldness. They showed some realism by agreeing to split the two outstanding issues and to consider them separately, each independent of the other. The result was that within a few weeks an agreement had been reached over the Sudan in February 1953.

The terms of the agreement over the future of the Sudan clearly showed that the new Egyptian elite was convinced that despite many cultural affinities with the people of the Sudan, there were, nevertheless, vital disparities between them and that the latter had a claim to be recognized as a separate national entity. They held that to deny the Sudanese the right of 'self-government' and 'self-determination', while insisting upon the same in their own case, betrayed contradiction and inconsistency in Egypt's political approach. They were intelligent enough to visualise the consequences of deliberately ignoring the rising tide of nationalist upsurge in the Sudan. They knew that even the pro-Egypt Unionists were not really thinking in terms of a perpetual and total amalgamation of their country with Egypt.
They were mainly interested in ousting the British, and, to achieve that end, they needed closer cooperation and guidance of their Egyptian brothers. Once the British were out, the Sudanese were to break with Egypt as well and emerge as a fully sovereign state - master of its own self. The Ashigga, which represented the unionist trend was, in fact, more seriously interested in denying the Mehdis the possibility of making the Sadan their kingdom under the British patronage.

With this understanding of the Sudan situation, the military Junta of Egypt did not think it advisable to insist that the Sudan was a part of Egypt and must be treated as such. In their view, the hitherto followed policy of inextricably associating the question of evacuation of the Suez Canal Zone with the status of the Sudan only meant indirectly extending the lease of Britain's continued occupation of their own country. Therefore, by recognizing the right of the Sudanese to determine their own future, the members of the military regime exhibited more immediate concern to their own country's liberation.

The famous 'Khartum Agreement' between Egypt and the two main political groups, the 'Ashigga' and the 'Umma', which provided for immediate elections, a transition period of three years, speedy Sudanization of all services, and a referendum to be held at the end of the transitional period to decide whether the Sudanese should be independent or united with Egypt, was a remarkable diplomatic victory of Egypt over the British. By agreeing to the principle of self-determination for the Sudan, the Egyptians, virtually left no room for the British to postpone
the issue any further. The Egyptians had cleverly trumped the British ace, and thus made it inevitable for the latter to accept the new accelerated programme of self-determination for the Sudan.

The events in the Sudan politics that followed the signing of the Anglo-Egyptian Agreement, proved that the young leaders of the Egyptian revolution had rightly understood the nature and the dimensions of the nationalistic fervour of the Sudanese. The first national Government of the Sudan headed by Ismail Azhari, leader of the Ashigga, openly resented Egypt's attempt to influence the Sudanese choice in favour of closer alignment with Egypt.

Gamal Abdel Nasser, who was the real leader, guide and mentor of the Revolutionary Command Council, wisely reconciled with the situation in the Sudan without bitterness or resentment. Endowed with qualities of admirable statesmanship and political foresight, he immediately realized that the prospect of an independent and friendly Sudan was far better than the prospect of a subservient and hostile one. In December 1955, when the Sudanese Parliament unanimously declared that the Sudan was 'to become fully independent sovereign state', he was the first to accord full recognition to her new status. (16)

The signing of the agreement on the Sudan question was almost immediately followed by undertaking negotiations on the question of the Suez Canal Zone evacuation. But these negotiations

16. Al-Ahram, 2 January 1956; The Times, 2 January 1956.
took comparatively longer time and involved some serious
debate on the terms and conditions of the agreement between
the two Governments.

On the Egyptian side, a contest for power between General
Mohammed Neguib and Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser, both representing
divergent views on domestic matters, preoccupied the
energies and the attention of the Government and the people so
much that the negotiations with Britain over the Canal Zone
had to be put off until the controversy ended with complete
victory for Nasser.

Neguib's defeat was, in fact, the victory of the revolu-
tionary forces with which Nasser was identified. Neguib had
played no part in liberating Egypt from the tentacles of corrupt
monarchy and selfish politicians. He was merely a titular head
whom the young engineers of the coup had chosen to be their
nominal leader in order to convince the Egyptians and the world
at large that their action was not a youthful adventure. In this
assigned role, Neguib earned stockpiles of mass-popularity and
prestige. He was widely acclaimed as the deliverer, but only
few knew that the real authority behind him was the Revolutionary
Council. After the Sudan Agreement, however, Neguib unwisely
decided to make himself the master of the situation. He
developed secret contacts with the opponents of the revolution,
particularly the Moslem Brotherhood which promised him to support
him in his bid for power. He, therefore, insisted on rapid
reversion to constitutional life and civilian control of the
Government.
Nasser and his more radical and more perceptive colleagues in the ROC, on the other hand, felt that if the military junta prematurely relinquished the reins of Government, Egypt would sink back again into corruption and chaos. The old pattern of intrigues and rivalries between individual leaders and parties around them, would not only have adversely affected Egypt's socio-economic transformation, but also disabled her to get rid of Britain's domination. The Council of the Revolution obviously, could not have allowed that to happen, and so it decided to push the real leader of the revolution, Nasser, in the forefront by appointing him the Prime Minister of the country with full authority both to look into domestic issues and to deal with the British.

Thus armed with added strength and enlarged authority, Nasser, immediately resumed negotiations with the British representatives in Cairo, over the question of the Canal Zone, and after several weeks of hard bargaining, initialed an agreement which happily provided for immediate British evacuation from Egypt.

A closer examination of the main provisions of the historic agreement would clearly show that Egypt was not the looser in any sense, in any way. As his country's chief negotiator in this case, Nasser had undertaken certain well-calculated risks when he conceded to the inclusion of Turkey in the list of countries an attack on which would justify Britain's re-entry into the base, he was certainly not unaware that the cold war still far away in Europe and the Far East, and that the
Soviet Union was not yet strong enough to forcibly assert her position and interests in the Arabic-speaking area. Moreover, the people of Egypt, according to his calculations, 'would not care much about Turkey - all that they would be overwhelmed with would be the fact that at last long, the British were clearing out'. The popular acclamation to the agreement, and their 'wild rejoicing' into streets of Cairo and Alexandria, proved that he understood the minds of his countrymen well. Above all since an aggression against Turkey - a partner in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, would have meant a world war, in which event Egypt was to be greatly benefited by having Britain's support.

The most immediate and the most profound effect of the signing of this historic agreement was that the twenty million Egyptians felt, for the first time in many centuries, that they were now a really independent and sovereign nation. It was an end in itself as well as the starting point for the realization of Egypt's other aspirations. The presence of the invisible British troops in their country for the last seventy-two years, was a barrier, the removal of which was sure to enable them fight against social evils.

For Great Britain also the peaceful conclusion of the evacuation treaty was not a bad bargain. Their experience of the past several decades of dealing with the Egyptians was not a happy one. The latter had persistently refused to accept anything at the cost of their independence and national dignity. After the World War II their nationalism had become more vigorous and
assertive. No amount of force used against them would have discouraged them in their endeavour to achieve their full freedom. If not in 1954, the Egyptians would have, any way, completely abandoned the 1936 Treaty when it would have automatically expired in 1966. In that event Britain would have had no rights of reentry and reactivisation of the base for the purpose of the defence of the area. Under the present agreement, Britain, as a matter of fact, preserved nearly all of her 'essential requirements'. (17) In brief, she had more than one reasons to feel satisfied about the said Canal Zone Agreement. She had freed herself from the liability of maintaining a costly base without however, surrendering the right to use it when necessity arose.

By agreeing to evacuate the Suez Canal Zone, Great Britain in fact acknowledged that a military base, however important a link in the British communications, could not be effectively and fruitfully maintained in the face of total dissent and violent protest of the people of the area.

The Suez Canal Evacuation Agreement, ratified by the Parliaments of Egypt and England in October 1954, was one of the most important landmarks that turned the 'ugly page' of the history of Egypt's relations with Great Britain. As it finally ended Britain's military occupation of their country, there was now no grievance or bad feeling in the heart of the Egyptians against the British. Both, Egypt and Great Britain expected that

17. See Department of State Bulletin, 10 November 1954, p. 734.
henceforth their two countries would be able to work constructively together.

The two people could have really become great friends and cooperate with each other in the realization of their common objectives of peace and prosperity, if Great Britain had not unwisely tried to prevent Egypt from influencing and guiding similar movements for freedom and national honour in other Arab countries of the area. Britain's sponsorship of the infamous Baghdad Pact was so obviously motivated to challenge and counter-balance Egypt's expanding prominence and popularity throughout the Arab world.

Britain's denial of arms to Egypt for her self-defence against Israel's mounting war-like overtures and then the launching of the Anglo-French military aggression against her, in collaboration with her enemy, Israel, in 1956, were primarily motivated to snub Egypt and to disable her completely to strive and to participate in the awakening of the Arab world.

Great Britain's unfriendly and uncooperative attitude towards Egypt, however, betrayed their want of proper understanding not only of Egypt's national aspirations but also their inability to realize that only Egypt, by virtue of her greater political experience and better socio-economic and intellectual standards, and her larger and better organized armed forces, was capable of leadership of the Arab world. Also being centrally located between the Arabic-speaking part of Asia and Africa, Egypt was naturally destined to play the role of the 'Big Brother'.
In October 1954 Great Britain recognized the strength of Egyptian nationalism, and their own inability to suppress it any further, when they signed the agreement to quit the Suez Canal Zone, but they ignored that the new republican Government of Egypt represented the modern political trends which were bound to appeal and inspire every other Arab state desiring to come of age by denouncing imperialism and its evils.

In his 'Philosophy of the Revolution', Nasser had articulated the so-called Thesis of the 'Three Circles' - Arab, African and Islamic - in which Egypt had a major role to play. (18) Great Britain's inability or unwillingness to properly assess the value and the implications of the contents of this small book in the context of historical facts of their long but unhappy experience, led to disappoint the glowing hopes of Anglo-Egyptian cooperation to which Anthony Head, Secretary of State for War, had hinted at in October 1954. (19)

By sponsoring the Baghdad Pact in 1955, Great Britain aroused suspicions in Egypt which, aggravated by the perennial Egyptian and Arab dispute with Israel, and the Western role in the Palestine question, forced them to call up the very Soviet "devil", that the Western alliance was seeking to deter. From then on Egypt led the forces of opposition in the Arab world to the Western defence schemes and became one of the major

proponents in Asia and Africa of the policy of neutralism in the cold war. Needless to say such Egyptian action was very pleasing to the Soviet Union who eventually 'leaped over' the MEDO alliance to enter the Arab political scene in the form of economic and military aid from 1955 and on. (20)