Chapter IV

EGYPT'S BID TO SETTLE ITS DISPUTES WITH BRITAIN THROUGH PEACEFUL NEGOTIATIONS JUNE 1950 THROUGH OCTOBER 1951

A. THE WAFD RETURNS TO POWER

Under such circumstances of uncertainty and uneasiness prevailing throughout the country, Faruk, like Ismail Pasha, shrewdly made a virtue of the necessity by favouring the demand of a constitutional and representative Government. He knew very well that at the polls the Wafd's victory was a certainty 'because of its countrywide organization' and mass popularity. Why not, therefore, make an ally of the Wafd well in advance? An alliance with the Wafd would not only help him rebuild his reputation as an adherent of the Constitution and a supporter of the nationalist claims, but would also put an end to internal political strife. He feared that continuation of the existing chaotic conditions and ministerial instability might lead to a coup d'etat as the one that occurred in Syria under Colonel Zaim or like the one recently attempted in Lebanon. (1)

At this moment there was secret contact between the Palace clique and the Wafd by which the idea was elaborated that if the party abandoned its enmity for the King, the two could come together and govern the country, the King with his prerogatives supporting the popular force of the Wafd. (2)


The Wafd, already sick of violence and terrorism in the country and also anxious to come back into the limelight, did not fail to respond to the King's offer of reconciliation. (3) It agreed to join a coalition Government provided Ibrahim Abdul Hadi Pasha was replaced by a neutral Prime Minister. Accordingly, on 26 July, the King obtained resignation from Ibrahim Pasha and appointed in his place Hussain Sirry (4) to form a new government including members from all major political parties. (5)

Sirry Pasha's main task was to restore normalcy and prepare for General Elections. He released most of the political prisoners and promised to abolish Martial Law. He also announced that the national elections would be held early next year.

Polling took place on 3 January and resulted in the return of 228 Wafdists, 28 Saadists, 26 Liberal Constitutionalists, 30 Independents, 6 Watani or old Nationalists, and one Socialist.

3. It is interesting to note that the Wafd, smelling an imminent return to power, publicised the party's abhorrence of violence, and its opposition to Communism, its undying loyalty to the Crown, and its firm attachment to Islam. See Vatikiotis, op.cit., p. 484, footnote 14.

4. Hussain Sirry Pasha, the new Prime Minister, was a non-party man who had held the post from Fall 1941 to February 1942, when the Germans were threatening Egypt from Al-Alamain. Known for friendly feelings towards foreigners in general, he also had the respect of the political parties because of his independent position. See Al-Ahram, 26 July 1949.

Several Independents later aligned themselves with the Wafd. (6) Thus assured of overwhelming support of the House and also the King's blessings, Nahas Pasha formed his Government on 12 January. (7)


7. The Wafd success in the election was not wholly due to its well-knit electoral organization in the provinces and its vast financial resources, but also because of the support of the Brotherhood and the Communists who wanted to avenge the Saadists for their severe treatment of them from 1946 to 1949. Political neutrality of the Government under which the elections were held also contributed to the spectacular victory of the Wafd.

Rasheed al-Barawy, who wrote a very authentic account of Egypt's July Revolution, gave the following reasons for the Wafd's sweeping the polls:

1. The Sirry Government gave some support to the Wafd.

2. The Moslem Brotherhood members mostly gave their votes to the Wafd.

3. Vested interests also helped the Wafd because they resented certain laws issued by the Saadist Government.

4. The enquiries made by Mohamed Aly Rateb, Minister of Supply in the Sirry Cabinet, into certain irregularities alleged to have been perpetrated by some Saadist Ministers.

5. The belief that Britain welcomed the advent of a Wafdist Government.

6. The state of insecurity and concern which prevailed in foreign economic circles as a result of unrest in the country.

7. The fact that the police and provincial administration officials favoured the Wafdist candidates in most constituencies as a retaliatory measure against the Saadists.

(contd. on next page)
B. NEGOTIATIONS WITH BRITAIN RESUMED

The return of the Wafd Party with a clear majority in the Parliament was welcomed by the British Government, its Embassy and the British community in Cairo. They recalled that between 1936 and 1942-4, the Wafd, of all the parties, had been most cooperatively inclined towards Britain. Now, with its enhanced power and prestige, it would be able to act independently and confidently to resume treaty negotiations. They hoped that Nahas Pasha would 'realistically' appreciate the new complex of the post-war international politics and Great Britain's predicament. They felt optimistic about the Wafd's response to their proposal regarding the defence of the Middle East. In their optimism and expectations, they underestimated, rather ignored that the Wafd leaders during the pre-election period had repeatedly avowed their intent of insisting on the complete evacuation of Egyptian soil by British forces and of uniting Egypt and the Sudan. They presumed that such assertions might have been made to counter opposition charges of their (Wafdists) being ready to sell out to Britain. Later events, however, proved that the British leaders had not taken account of the consistency and the seriousness of Egypt's nationalist demands. During the past fifteen years the

7. (contd. from back page)

It must, however, be noted that less than two-third of the qualified voters exercised the right of franchise; out of 4,105,182 only 2,969,741 went to the polls. Moreover, the Wafd did not receive a majority of the total votes cast; 1,135,642 as against 1,724,098 polled by the opposition.
Egyptians had acquired more education, more political awareness of their national rights, and had become more disgusted with the limitations upon their freedom. In 1950, they were more than ever, insistent to settle their disputes with the British on the question of the Suez and the Sudan. They would not have allowed any leader or government to compromise on Egypt's national honour and aspirations.

Nahas Pasha, contrary to British expectations, was not blind to the facts of his own country's political history, and also the existing conditions in which his party was put in office. He was sincere and determined to free his country from the obligations and limitations of the 1936 Treaty, which he had himself negotiated and signed under the pressure of the then existing circumstances. He was anxious to do away with the stigma of being a pro-British in the 1940s.

In the 'Speech from the Throne' at the opening of Parliament his Government promised to do everything possible to hasten the evacuation of both parts of 'Our Valley, Egypt and the Sudan'. The King said:

... the nation had unanimously proclaimed the necessity for the liberation of our Valley, Egypt and the Sudan, from all fetters on its liberty and independence, and that the Government would make resolute and effective efforts to speed up the evacuation of both parts of the Nile Valley and protect its unity under the Egyptian Crown. (8)

---

Conversations with Britain on these issues were in fact informally initiated at the end of January, when Bevin broke journey at Cairo on his way back from the Colombo Conference. (9) Formal negotiations, however, could not begin before June when Field Marshal Slim arrived in Cairo with his advisors. (10) In his very first meeting with the Egyptian Prime Minister and other members of the Government, Marshal Slim emphasised that the relations, political and military, between Egypt and Great Britain should be viewed as part of the larger question of the regional security of the Middle East in which Egypt, because of vital strategic location, and the Suez Canal, occupied key position.

This was obviously a bad start. It became clear from the very start of the negotiations that there would be little room for a compromise. There was in fact no meeting ground between the political approach of Egypt and the sole military consideration of its counterpart. The latter asked Egypt to appreciate the danger of aggression from the Russian side and, therefore, became a partner in their effort to defend themselves against such an eventuality.

In fact this was exactly the same line of argument against which *Al-Ahram* had already warned:

The British strategists have come out again with their old theories of the importance of the Middle East in any armed conflict with Russia, and they demand Britain should hold tight to its position in

the Middle East. They also plead with the new rulers of Egypt to think likewise and take a more realistic view of the whole situation.

It is paramount to saying that the strategists have been interfering with the Treaty talks ever since 1930 and their views have never changed. They claim they are only concerned with the military side and have nothing to do with politics or the national aspirations of nations. Their thoughts are only centred on how to win a new war, forgetting that a friendly nation is a stronger bastion than a strategic position. ... Britain during the war found out that a friendly and faithful nation which joins the British Camp is more valuable than a strategic position surrounded by a hostile people. (11)

The British delegate tried to dispel, what some people would like to call 'misgivings' about the British intentions. He told the Egyptian Prime Minister that the proposed alliance did not suggest Britain's military occupation. It merely sought cooperation in peace-time with the British garrison in the Suez Canal zone in joint preparation for defence 'on a footing of equality'. (12) He urged the Egyptian leaders to see the merit of the 'offer' in the perspective of the existing tensions in world politics. He stressed that 'the Soviet Union expected war with the West (the Capitalist States) and that in the event of war Egypt would be one of the Russian objectives, since he who holds Egypt holds the Middle East', (13) its routes, waterways, strategic highlands and its fabulous riches. The Marshal warned that Russia seriously intended to get into Africa, and Egypt's neutrality would be violated the moment the war begins. Egypt,

13. Ibid., p. 11.
he added, had 'neither men nor the experience' to defend herself against the avalanche of Soviet air attack.

'The danger (of Russian invasion) is a real one'. 'If war comes, one of the Soviet interests is this country: Egypt. Egypt, in the Middle East, is like France and Belgium in Europe. If there is war in Europe, Belgium and France would be in it. Anyway, Egypt will be in war right from the beginning'.

'You say that by having British troops in Egypt, you attract the Russians to come and drive them out. What they want is Egypt. You are the country with wealth and resources. Anybody who wants to hold the Middle East, must hold Egypt. You have ports and everything, and will be the centre of target for Russia. Egypt cannot hold that by being neutral.

Field Marshal Slim further pointed out:

'Only two countries can remain neutral; either one so great and powerful, and Egypt is not; or one that is small but possesses something useful for both sides, like Sweden, and Egypt is not.

You cannot remain neutral. If you want to defend yourself, you must be ready for defence. The only way is to have an Ally. Obviously, that Ally is Britain. (14)

C. THE PROPOSED ALLIANCE SUGGESTS CONTINUATION OF OCCUPATION OF EGYPT

The Egyptian leaders, however, did not accept the British point of view and the arguments based on it. Replying to Marshal Slim, Prime Minister Nahas Pasha said that the Egyptian people were angry and resentful and would be absolutely unwilling to accept new conditions, which aimed at maintaining foreign troops in Egypt under any name or in any form. "I can never be convinced, nor convince the people that the maintenance of a foreign army
in peace time means anything else but a sort of occupation and incomplete sovereignty*. The Prime Minister also reminded the Field Marshal how his Government and the people had cooperated with the Allied cause in the two World Wars:

The people were behind me, serving you and putting all their services at your disposal; they will help you with their hearts and souls as they did in the first World War. They gave you their crops and put their railways, means of communications and other services at your disposal, hoping for the fulfilment of the promises of evacuation and complete independence. But none was fulfilled. (15)

Nahas Pasha then said rather bluntly:

... why should we stand on your side, get ourselves killed, destroy our lands and lose our resources, if we do not know for sure that this third time our demands are satisfied. (16)

Commenting upon Marshal Slim's remark that Egypt would be the object of the Soviet attack, he said:

I like you to know that no power on earth can convince Egyptian people that Egypt will be meant for itself for attacks or aggression. What will cause this attack is the presence in our land of foreign troops which will be the target for Russian aggression. The presence of these troops will be the excuse which the Russians will make to attack Egypt. (17)

16. Ibid. Makram Ebied's organ, al-Kutla also disapproved the British offer of an alliance for joint defence in the same manner. It wrote: "If we are courted as allies, we must first be shown wherein Egypt's interest in such an alliance lies - unless it is a question of involving her in a war in which Britain would be a combatant and Egypt would have no concern. We have already experienced that sort of alliance in the last war. We were ruined and starved to feed the Allied armies. We are still suffering many setbacks on account of that ally. Lord preserve us from such alliances". See, Information Paper No.19, op.cit., p. 121.
The Egyptian Government's attitude on the question of continued presence of the British troops was based, as the Prime Minister argued, on their previous experience. If the existence of a threat of war justified the maintenance of British troops in the Canal Zone, the occupation would last for ever, because the danger could never disappear.

This danger came in the past from Germany, then from Germany, Italy and Japan in the last war; it is said to come from Russia. In fact, it is a vicious circle. It will be always possible to say there exists a danger of war from one of the big powers. Therefore, Egyptians cannot accept the occupation of their country because of such an argument. (18)

Moreover, the people of Egypt regarded British occupation as a standing fact while the danger of Russian invasion was merely a matter of threat, and that too only from the Western point of view. It was not really easy or even desirable for any government in Egypt to convince the people that the continuation of the British occupation was necessary to repel that supposed danger. Nonetheless, the Government was prepared to discuss any plan of military cooperation provided evacuation of Egypt was preceded. With the British soldiers stationed within the country, the Egyptians could never believe that the proposed new alliance was different from the existing one. Many times in the past Britain had promised to evacuate Egypt. (Foreign Secretary Bevin had agreed with Sidki Pasha on complete withdrawal of British forces by September 1949.) But they continued to be stationed there on some excuse or other. This had weakened the Egyptians'

18. Ibid., p. 18.
faith and confidence in their promises, that the British troops would leave their country. (19)

The Egyptian leader summed up his viewpoint by adding that once the British withdrew from Egypt his Government and the people would be most willing to "work together hand in hand and with all our hearts and souls." Further, in his effort to persuade the British negotiators to understand Egypt's mind, Nahas Pasha pointed out to them that "the support and loyalty of the Egyptian people" would be "much more useful to Britain in war time than to maintain this limited number of her troops in the Canal Zone". "With the advance in military strategy and weapons, the stationing of this limited number of troops in the Canal Zone has become futile from the military point of view". (20) (Italics mine)

Furthermore, answering the analogy which the British military expert had drawn between Egypt and his country regarding the presence of foreign troops in England, (21) the Egyptian

19. Ibid., pp. 19, 21.
21. During his conversations with Prime Minister Nahas Pasha in their first meeting held on Monday, 6th June 1950, Field Marshal Slim had suggested that the presence of the forces of one nation in the territory of another ally was demanded by the vastness of any major war in the future. In his view no nation, big or small, could stand alone against the Soviet 'monster'. "We have to be united and march together politically, militarily and economically. This is not easy because we all have to give up some of our cherished rights and traditions. Each one of us has to accept the other one's troops and installations in his own territory, and to put his troops under another command. We, the British, accepted the presence of the American troops in England, and American bases in London. We accepted that our troops in Germany be under French Command...." See, Conversations, op.cit., p. 11.
spokesman said:

(1) There can be no question that the presence of these forces does not, in any way, prejudice British sovereignty, in view of the fact that the two States are equal.

(2) The situation in Britain is temporary and occasioned by an emergency, but in Egypt it is considered a continuation of 60 years of occupation.

(3) Should Britain ask the American forces to leave, they will, no doubt, leave immediately. This is not the case with regard to the British forces in Egypt.

(4) There is also difference in the way the British and the Egyptians view the presence of foreign troops in their country.

The Prime Minister then firmly reiterated that his Government 'would not accept the stationing of British troops on her soil either in time of peace or imminent threat of war or an apprehended international emergency'. He also suggested that the problem of the Middle East defence could be satisfactorily dealt with only by strengthening the military potential and preparedness of the Egyptian forces by supplying them necessary weapons and equipment. Thus strengthened, Egypt would not only be able to defend herself against armed aggression from any quarter, but would also be willing to cooperate with Britain in her overall plan to defend the Middle East. In such an eventuality British troops would be welcomed and be granted all facilities that would be necessary for the conduct of war. (22) (Italics mine)

22. Ibid., p. 19.
The British representative, on the contrary, insisted that Egypt should view the problem from the 'defence angle, instead of that of occupation'. With a tone of finality, Sir William Slim repeated that Egypt could not be defended without British troops. "The danger", in his view, "against Egypt is twofold: by way of air and by way of land." For the proper defence of Egypt the (two) forces should be integrated in peacetime. We have to be integrated before the attack starts. The first air-attack should be met with cooperation between us." If we suddenly bring British help, it would be too late, it should be there and ready before the start. (23)

It is clear from the above citations of references from the conversations between the representatives of the two countries that there was a fundamental difference in their way of approaching the problem of revising their mutual relations. There was logic and consistency in the arguments advanced by the Egyptian side. They rightly insisted that in order to be able to negotiate freely on matters of their mutual interest, including defence of Egypt, they should first get rid of limitations on her sovereignty. Equality of national status was to be a pre-condition to become equal partner in the proposed alliance with Great Britain.

They were insistent on complete and immediate evacuation of British forces, but at the same time they were not denying or refusing to cooperate with them in a defence arrangement with them. Evacuation, if then agreed by the British, would

23. Ibid., p. 20.
undoubtedly have given the Wafd government "an excellent argument" to bring the people round the idea of favourably considering proposals for joint defence with Britain or any member of the Western camp. A free Egypt would not have had the obsession of accepting an 'arrangement' against its will. With evacuation, the psychological effect of the new alliance would have been generally detrimental to the position and prestige of the Government. (24) They were naturally and justifiably more concerned about the realisation of their national aspirations, while their counterpart seemed only interested in preserving the Western military position in this part of the world.

Marshal Slim was unable to appreciate the political advantages of evacuation that Egypt was assuring him, after its completion. Being essentially a military expert, he could not value the wholehearted support and sympathy of a willing people as compared to a limited advantage of technical nature which he expected to drive from the presence of 'limited foreign troops' in a land where they are hated by the natives. In his arguments he showed no concern for the feelings of the Egyptian people. He told Nahas Pasha:

If the British troops withdraw from Egypt, it will have a disastrous effect on the cold-war against Russia. Arab countries, Turkey, Iran and the dominions will be horrified. Our Allies in America will think we have deserted them. (25)

24. Egypt's Foreign Minister Mohammed Salah Eddin Bey told the British Ambassador on 10 August 1950: "I would like it to be understood that the Wafd derives its influence over the people from their faith in that it safeguards the country's rights as planned in 1919, the first and foremost of which being the question of immediate evacuation."
See, ibid., p. 49.

25. Ibid., p. 15.
At a later stage of these conversations between the Governments of Egypt and the United Kingdom, the British Ambassador His Excellency Sir Ralph Stevenson made two controversial points in his opening statement on 14 August 1950. Answering an earlier question of Egypt's Foreign Minister as to why the presence of foreign troops in Egypt in peace time was necessary while alliances with other countries were concluded without that requirement, he said that the reason was "the geographic position of Egypt and her possession of the Suez Canal which is a vital communications' link, in which all maritime nations are interested." "It is impossible for us to risk that link being cut." He then drew an analogy with Panama Canal and said that the United States was solely responsible by treaty rights, for the defence of the Canal, and on that basis justified Britain's insistence on assuming the defence of the Suez Canal.

For the Egyptians there was nothing new in these arguments. They had heard it many a times before. The British had used the same argument to justify their occupation of Egypt in 1882, and since then in all negotiations about its termination. The presence of British forces on Egypt's soil nevertheless had always prejudiced her sovereignty, and, therefore, she had every right to resent this violation and protect against it. To an Egyptian the independence of his country was much dearer than the importance the British attached to the Suez Canal. Moreover, the experience of the last war had shown that the Suez Canal was not militarily and even commercially inevitable. This was evidenced by the fact that the most of the shipping to the Far
East via the Cape of Good Hope. And, in any future war, there was the possibility of the Canal being completely put out of order for a long time. It was obvious, therefore, that Egypt herself was the real object and the Suez Canal only.

Moreover, the British Ambassador's argument suggested that the domination of some states over the others, whether they like it or not could be justified merely because the interests of one country happened to affect the other. This meant that every big state could insist to have defensive bases on the territory of smaller states that happen to be on her communication route. Egypt, a member of the United Nations, could never agree to such a position. This was violating the principle of sovereign equality enunciated in the Charter. If such a standpoint is allowed to prevail, there would be chaos in international relations.

Salah Eddin Bey rejected Sir Stevenson's plea of defence against Communist aggression on the ground that the presence of foreign troops in Egypt would defeat its own purpose by creating a psychological environment that is more favourable to Communist propaganda. In his own words:

... the greatest weapons exploited by Communist propaganda in Egypt and in all countries occupied by foreign forces is this some occupation and the economic and social effects resulting from it. This propaganda finds a fertile soil in the minds of nationalists so much so that it is feared that they might generally confuse nationalism with Communist propaganda. Experience in Egypt has shown that all pamphlets of Communist propaganda which were seized mostly make use of this weapon. In fact it almost makes use of it to the exclusion of other ideological weapons. (26)

26. Ibid., p. 60.
D. THE SUDAN - A CRUCIAL POINT

EGYPT'S CONTENTION

To this state of confusion, misunderstanding and insistence that characterised the present negotiations between the Governments of Egypt and Great Britain was added the question of the Sudan. The Egyptian Foreign Minister, in his statement of 26 August, demanded that Britain should immediately recognize the rights of Egypt in the Sudan. He argued that the unity of Egypt and the Sudan under the Egyptian Crown was just another legitimate aspiration of the people of the whole of the Nile Valley.

In a more elaborate treatment of the Sudan problem as an important item of relations between Egypt and the UK, the Egyptian Foreign Minister asserted that together with the Sudan, Egypt formed one single country under one single Crown, the Egyptian Crown. This unity, he said, was natural and was supported by history since remote and ancient times. The Nile linked them together. They were not separated by any physical boundaries. In addition, the people of Egypt with their 'compatriots', the Sudanese, were bound together by ties of common origin, language, religion and customs, etc. 'Britain had nothing to do with the Sudan before the occupation of Egypt'. After the occupation, she 'forced the Egyptian Government to withdraw from the Sudan, then she forced her to reconquer it jointly with British, and then she forced her to conclude the 1899 Agreement which provided for a joint administration of the Sudan, without British occupation of Egypt, none of this would have taken place and Britain would
not have been in the Sudan today'. It implied therefore that Britain neither had any valid claims nor any responsibility in regard to the Sudan. Moreover, she herself admitted, more than once, that she was acting there in the name and on behalf of Egypt, and not for herself or on behalf of the Sudanese. (27) Egypt thus based her contention not only on her natural rights but also on her legal position.

The Foreign Minister of Egypt then complained that the British administrative personnel had been trying to antagonise the Sudanese by various subterfuges and manoeuvres against their Egyptian compatriots preparatory to separating the Sudan from Egypt and to isolate the Southern from the Northern areas of the Sudan as a prelude to separating the South from the North with the ultimate intention of colonising the whole of the Sudan, South and North alike. Salah Edden Pasha also referred to the incident of 1924 when Great Britain took advantage of the assassination of the Sirdar and put Egypt bag and baggage out of the Sudan and went further with their aggression as to threaten interference with Egypt's Nile Waters. Commenting upon the question of self-determination for the Sudan, he said:

Now that national consciousness has awakened in Egypt and the Sudan, the British adopted a new tactics to meet the new circumstances. They repeatedly declare their concern for the welfare of the Sudanese and demand that they should be consulted and be given self-government leading eventually to self-determination.

It can be seen, therefore, that when Egypt in the early days of occupation could not question their

27. Ibid., p. 142.
actions, they made use of Egypt's name and acting on her behalf to dominate the Sudan. When we demanded the independence of Egypt and the Sudan, the pretext of acting in the name of Egypt became of no use to them. They had to turn to another pretext which was this time that they speak in the name of the Sudanese and defend their interests. It is obvious that the two pretexts are contradictory for indeed there is a great difference between administering the Sudan in the name of the Egyptians and demanding from the Egyptians in the name of the Sudanese that the Sudan should ultimately have the right of self-determination. (28)

Thus from the Egypt's point of view, the problem of the Sudan was a matter between the two Arab brothers of the Nile Valley and the British had no historical, legal or moral right to interfere between them. They believed that Britain never had Egypt's interest at heart when they acknowledged that they administered the Sudan in Egypt's name and on her behalf, nor did they have the interest of the Sudan at heart when they claimed that they were endeavouring to give it self-government and self-determination. But it was a pretext to continue their single-handed administration of the Sudan for as long as possible under cover of the will of the Sudanese. (Italics mine)

The Foreign Minister clearly warned that the question of evacuation and the unity of the Nile Valley were absolutely linked together. They cannot be dealt with separately. Evacuation of Egypt would not be complete without evacuation of the Sudan at the same time.

If Britain dislike Egypt linking the question of evacuation with that of the Sudan, Egypt on her part cannot deviate from linking these two questions together. In fact she has always done so and both questions were dealt with in all the negotiations

28. Ibid., p. 142.
which took place between Egypt and Britain. Indeed, certain negotiations, such as those of Zaghlul-MacDonald and Nahas-Henderson, failed on account of the Sudan. In the negotiations which paved the way for the 1939 Treaty, the two questions were dealt with together and provisions concerning both were included in that Treaty. It is no innovation, therefore, that we should insist today on linking together the two questions.

THE BRITISH STAND

Though the British spokesmen did not dispute that they should withdraw from the Sudan as they were already contemplating to withdraw from Egypt. There were, however, two major points on which they differed with Egypt. Firstly, whom should the authority be handed over - the Sudanese or the Egyptian Crown. They did not accept Egypt's claim that Egypt and the Sudan were one and the same people and that they had the same destiny. They believed and insisted that the Sudanese, like the Egyptians, or any people for that matter, have the right to be first free and then to choose on their own free will their future status. The British Ambassador said that 'the legitimate owners of the Sudan' were the people who lived there - the people of the Sudan. But they were not yet politically mature enough to look after their country's business successfully. (29) It might take a decade or more to prepare them for self-government and to decide about their relations with Egypt.

29. Ibid., pp. 71-2. In August 1950, there were only 120 political officers in the administration of the Sudan. As to standard of education there were only 3% of the Sudanese literate. See British Ambassador's statement of 26 August, Ibid., p. 73.
Sir Ralph Stevenson refuted the charge of the Foreign Minister that Britain had her own vested interests in the Sudan, namely, holding it indefinitely. He said:

Britain has no economic or strategic interests in the Sudan and she does not care either way whether Egypt and the Sudan be one country or not. (30)

Nonetheless, Sir Stevenson felt that Great Britain could not absolve herself of her responsibility towards the peoples of the Sudan. We cannot leave them in a state of chaos and unpreparedness; "We cannot divest ourselves of our responsibility in this case whatever the legal, historical or even moral considerations may be".

Bevin further made it clear that His Majesty's Government did not accept the Egyptian premise that Egypt's defence and the Sudan question were inseparable. He suggested that of the two questions immediately facing both Egypt and Britain, the Sudan was less pressing than the question of defence. (31)

E. BRITAIN'S NEW PROPOSALS FOR THE SOLUTION

After prolonged exchange of ideas, Great Britain, taking note of the Egyptian position in regard to the two basic issues of their mutual relations, presented certain proposals for the consideration of the Egyptian Government. (32) The British

30. Ibid., pp. 72-73.
31. See 'Record of Conversation between the Secretary of State and the Minister of Foreign Affairs at Foreign Office, London, on 4th, 7th, 9th and 15th December 1950, in Conversations, op.cit., pp. 77-83, 84-104.
32. For text of the British Proposals, see Ibid., pp. 108-110. Also Cmd. 8419, pp. 24-5.
proposals were as follows:

His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom are prepared to resume negotiations for the revision of 1936 Treaty of Alliance in accordance with the provisions of Article 16 of that Treaty.

His Majesty's Government in the U.K. are aware of the Egyptian Government's great difficulties in the matter. They cannot however in view of their commitments to their allies in the North Atlantic and in the Middle East, accept the responsibility of making any arrangements which prejudice their ability to contribute to a successful defence of this region against an aggressor. Such a defence will only be possible if in the future the Egypt base continues to function in such a manner as to be immediately available in war and if the air defence of Egypt is assured.

In these circumstances His Majesty's Government in the U.K. proposes that the 1936 Treaty of Alliance be revised so as to provide for the following:

a) The phased withdrawal of British troops from Egypt beginning within one year of the conclusion of an agreement on Revision of the Treaty and ending in 1956. (It should be noted that rate of withdrawal of the combatant troops and of General Headquarters depends largely on the rate at which accommodation can be provided for them elsewhere).

b) The processive civilization of the base which it is suggested should be completed by 1956, essential British civilian personnel being introduced as military personnel are withdrawn. The base thereafter to be entrusted to the Egyptian Armed Forces for security purposes but to be operated in accordance with British military policy under the overall administrative control of an Anglo-Egyptian Control Board. (HM Government in the U.K. would be prepared to pay rent for base installations and sites).

c) The creation of a long-term Anglo-Egyptian coordinated air defence system in which these should be both Egyptian and British components.

d) The Provision at an early date of arms and equipment on training scale for the Egyptian forces and thereafter the provision of whatever further arms and equipment may be necessary in equal priority with other nations with whom Great Britain has working defence agreements (HM Government in U.K. would also be
prepared to render any assistance required by the Egyptian Government in the training of Egyptian forces."

e) In the event of war, imminent menace of war or apprehended international emergency, Egypt would agree to the return of British forces for the period of emergency and would grant to them and to the forces of Britain's allies all necessary facilities and assistance including the use of Egyptian ports, aerodromes and means of communications.

His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom cannot accept the validity of the view that the question of The Sudan is inseparable from that of the defence. Nevertheless HM Government would be prepared to discuss the question of The Sudan if the Egyptian Government that this would be useful.

It is the main aim of HM Government to enable the Sudanese to attain self-government at the earliest practicable opportunity and it would be impossible for them to accept any understanding with Egypt which interferes with this objective.

In any event HM Government suggest that discussion of The Sudan should be deferred until at least a preliminary exchange of views of defence has been completed.

F. EGYPT'S COUNTER-PROPOSALS

The Egyptian Government found the British proposals utterly disappointing as they were not consistent with its claims and contentions. They regretted that what they had been trying to explain to the Government of the United Kingdom over the past 10 months was not fully appreciated by those who prepared the British proposals. And so the Egyptian Government felt compelled to reject them "in toto". (33)

The British proposals, from Egypt's point of view, were particularly disappointing in regard to the following points:

---

1. The date at which evacuation of British troops was to begin and the time set down for completing that evacuation.

2. The rate of withdrawal of the combatant troops and General Headquarters being made dependent on the rate at which accommodation can be provided for them elsewhere.

3. The time taken in handing over the base to the Egyptian Armed Forces and the stipulation that the base be operated in accordance with British military policy under the overall administrative control of an Anglo-Egyptian Control Board.

4. The creation of a long-term Anglo-Egyptian coordinated defence system.

5. The exceedingly slow rate suggested for providing the Egyptian forces with necessary arms and equipment.

6. The return of British Forces to Egypt in the event of imminent menace of war or apprehended international emergency.

7. Separating the question of evacuation from that of the unity of Egypt and The Sudan under the Egyptian Crown.

8. Offering "the earliest practicable opportunity" as a pretext for putting off the time at which the Sudanese may enjoy self-government.

9. Finally the suggestion that HM Government would not consider any suggestion or position which is not agreeable to Britain's other allies, was particularly offending to Egypt's national honour and dignity.

In its counter-proposals the Egyptian Government firmly reiterated once again its position as a basis of resuming negotiations for settlement of outstanding problems between them. Egypt's counter-proposals (34) were as follows:

---

34. For Text of Egyptian Government's Proposals, see Conversations, op. cit., pp. 112-3; also Cmd. 8419, pp. 25-6.
1. The evacuation of British troops. Egypt to begin immediately upon concluding the agreement and the necessity of completing this evacuation by land, sea and air within a period not exceeding one year.

2. The base to be handed over to the Egyptian Armed Forces immediately upon the completion of evacuation in accordance with the preceding paragraph.

3. Special priority for the provision of necessary arms and equipment to be given to the Egyptian Army at the earliest opportunity considering that Egypt is situated in a sensitive strategic area.

4. The Unity of Egypt and The Sudan under the Egyptian Crown and self-government for the Sudanese within two years in the framework of this unity.

5. British Forces and British Officials to be withdrawn from The Sudan and the present regime in The Sudan to be terminated immediately upon the expiry of those two years.

6. The conclusion of an agreement between the two parties whereby British forces may return to those places to which in the agreed opinion of the two Governments, it is necessary that they should return for the purpose of assisting in the defence of Egypt in the event of an armed aggression upon her or in the event of UK's being involved as the result of an armed aggression on the Arab countries adjacent to Egypt. (Emphasis mine)

7. In the event of their returning in Egypt in accordance with the preceding paragraph, British troops will begin to withdraw from Egyptian territory immediately upon the cessation of hostilities. This withdrawal to be completed by land, sea and air within a period not exceeding three months.

8. The Treaty of Alliance signed in London on 26th August, 1936, together with the Agreed Minutes, notes and Conventions, also the two Agreements of 1899 regarding The Sudan to be abrogated immediately upon the entry into force of the new agreement.

G. BRITAIN'S OBJECTION AND AIDE-MEMOIRES

These proposals, in turn, were found unsatisfactory and incompatible with Britain's interests, strategy and
international commitments. The British Ambassador objected that one year for completing evacuation was physically impossible. Similarly, the evacuation of all British officials from The Sudan in two years was, in his opinion, utterly impracticable. "The Sudan cannot get on without the British officials." (35)

Similarly, referring to paragraph 6 of the Egyptian proposals, the British spokesman objected that it severely delimited the scope of their defensive strategy, as the last part of this paragraph referred to Arab countries adjacent to Egypt which only meant Transjordan and thus obviously excluded an attack on Turkey or an attack on the Middle East through Turkey or Iraq.

The last paragraph of the proposals clearly warned the British Government that in case of unreasonable delay on her part to answer these proposals, the Government of Egypt would be at liberty to abrogate the 1936 Treaty and to put an end to the 1899 Agreement. (36) The British Ambassador in Cairo protested

35. For British Ambassador's objections to the Egyptian Proposals of April 24th, 1951, see, Conversations, op.cit., pp.113-14.

36. The Speech from the Throne dated 16 November 1950 had referred to the denunciation of the Treaty with Britain in following words: "The Government considers that the 1936 Treaty has lost its validity as a basis for Anglo-Egyptian relations, and it deems it inevitable that it should be abrogated. It is also necessary that future relations should be founded upon new principles ... immediate and complete evacuation and the unification of the Nile Valley under the Egyptian Crown. My Government further proclaims that it will not deviate from its insistence on these principles ... My Government is therefore proceeding without hesitation or undue delay with the task of realizing these national objectives, sparing no effort to achieve". See, Annual Register 1950, p. 296.
against what he termed as an ultimatum by the Egyptian Delegation. Later on 8 June he handed to the Egyptian Foreign Minister an Official Communication in which HM Government had noted 'with disappointment that whereas their own proposals represented a very considerable modification of the position laid down by the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1936, the Egyptian proposals do not appear to differ in essence from the claims put forward by the Egyptian Government some eighteen months ago'. (37)

On the question of The Sudan, the British Aide-Memoire made it once again explicit that it was distinct from the urgent issue of the Middle East Defence. In the Annex to this statement of Principle, they however stated that they were prepared to discuss The Sudan issue on the basis that the Sudanese has a right to 'full self-government and thereafter choose freely for themselves their form of government and the relationship with Egypt'. (38) The British Ambassador further added that during the past five or six years had largely developed a national consciousness and a national movement, represented by the Umma (Nationalist) party. Therefore, he asserted, the Sudanese must be treated as a national community. "No alteration can take place without having consultation with them and they must have the right of self-determination.

38. Ibid.
The British stand was obviously not likely to bring the two Governments any nearer. Seen from Egypt's angle Britain's insistence on the Sudan's right of self-determination was aimed at creating a wedge between the children of the Nile Valley. "The question is a question of unity of Egypt with the Sudan. When you have a united country, the question of self-determination does not at all arise." (39)

The Egyptian Government objected as 'unwarrantable' the comparison which the British note had drawn between the British and the Egyptian attitude: 'for, whereas the Royal Egyptian Government claim inviolable national rights which cannot be bartered away', the British Government were pursuing 'exaggerated interests, and when rights and interests are at variance, rights should be made to prevail'. (40)

In its Aide-Memoire of 6 July, the Government of Egypt declared that they could not continue merely talking and repeating their position indefinitely. 'Hitherto these talks have lasted over a year without a glimpse of hope towards reaching the desired agreement. ... It is obvious that HM Government in the UK lose nothing by this procrastination but it has become extremely difficult for the Royal Egyptian Government and Egyptian public opinion to contemplate any further prolongation of this (unsettled) state of affairs'.

39. Foreign Minister Salah Eddin's comment upon the British Ambassador's statement which he made at the time of presenting the Aide-Memoire. See ibid., p. 118.
40. Ibid., p. 120.
The Egyptian Aide-Mémoire firmly and finally reasserted that they regarded the question of evacuation and the unity of Egypt and The Sudan as one indivisible whole and therefore it was inevitable that both the issues 'be simultaneously settled and covered by any agreement to be concluded between the two Parties'. Egypt could not agree to anything that failed to provide for this natural and historical unity. The dependence of the Egyptians and the Sudanese on the waters of the Nile (which the British 'Note' had acknowledged and emphasized on that basis, the need to have friendliest relations between them) was not the only link that bound them together from 'time immemorial'.

There is the community of race, language, religion, culture, customs and interests as well as the geographical unity, the economic unity, etc., etc. In the presence of all these strong and inseverable ties it is gross injustice for the British Aide-Mémoire and its Annex to speak of two countries and two peoples instead of speaking of one country and one people indivisible, inseparable.

The Egyptian Government finally put forth the undermentioned principles on the basis of which they were prepared to make their last attempt to settle the controversy with Great Britain, after which they were determined to take independent action:

a) The unity of Egypt and The Sudan under the Egyptian Crown.

b) Self-Government for the Sudanese within the framework of this unity in two years.

c) British forces and British officials to be withdrawn from The Sudan and the present regime in The Sudan to be terminated immediately upon the expiry of these two years.
d) In the event of the principles outlined in (a), (b) and (c) being accepted, the Royal Egyptian Government agree to setting up a tripartite Commission in order to help attain the goal in (b).

After receiving the Egyptian Government's Aide-Memoire, Ambassador Ralph Stevenson made an important statement which made it clear that the British Government was not ready to concede Egypt's demand for complete evacuation. The Ambassador said:

The Egyptian Government must realise that they are faced with two alternatives: (1) to cooperate in a valid and effective scheme of defence which might prevent Egypt being invaded at all, (2) having two invasions, one from the North-East to occupy the country and the other from the West by the Western Powers to expel the aggressor. That is an absolute certainty. ... (41)

This showed that the British Government was not at all prepared to change or modify its stand vis-a-vis the Egyptian aspirations. Salah Eddin was justified when he complained that the above remarks of the British Ambassador were 'couched in the language of war, force, invasion while as Members of the UNO we should talk the language of peace, security, recognition of rights and justice and respect of the sovereignty of nations and the integrity of their territories'. (Italics mine)

He also clearly pointed out that his Government were obliged to make a full statement before the Parliament on the talks. As representatives of the nation they had a right to know before the present session was prorogued whether or not the talks had reached a successful conclusion. He, therefore, demanded

that HM Government send a reply to Egypt's counter-proposals concerning evacuation without further postponement. To this the British Ambassador answered that HM Government were trying to find 'some common approach', but they were 'much preoccupied at present with other problems'. (42)

On a closer examination of the British attitude, one finds that they refused to see the urgency for the settlement of the controversy that was being so insistently demanded by the Egyptians. Sir Stevenson's plea of his Government's preoccupation with other issues so obviously suggested that they did not consider Egypt's problems important enough to attend to them despite lapse of several months. To the Egyptians this statement was most humiliating and also challenging to take independent action. Moreover, it was quite evident that the promised 'new approach' would involve Egypt with the NATO powers, (43) which they seriously despised and disapproved, hence they could not see anything hopeful in this information. Foreign Minister Salah

42. Ibid., p. 123.

43. This was quite manifest from the speeches of Britain's prominent leaders during the election campaign. Sir Winston Churchill emphasised the gravity of international situation and stated that it was necessary to rearm in order to parley with Communist Russia, and that there must be no running away from the challenge in Persia or Egypt'.

Similarly, from the Labour Party's platform, Morrison repeated what he had been saying as Britain's Foreign Secretary: "In Egypt we have to protect our life line and keep our promises to the Sudanese; the question of the Suez can be settled by the Middle East Defence Pact". See Newspapers reporting of election-broadcasts of prominent political personalities of Britain. The Times, 5, 7 and 8 February 1950, also of 17, 18 and 19 February 1950.
Eddin replied:

I am aware that the British Government are pre-occupied to a great extent with the problems confronting them in Iran but the troubles of the British Government are endless ... and if we delay the settlement of questions pending between us on account of the troubles confronting Britain in other parts of the world, we shall never finish.

He then asserted:

The Egyptian question is no less important in itself and in so far as it is concerned with the cause of universal peace than any other international problem. Indeed it may be of greater importance than many of these problems. This, at least, is how we view it and indeed to us it is a question of life or death.

The two months which have elapsed since we handed to you our counter-proposals are sufficient, in fact more than sufficient to get a reply from you to these counter-proposals whatever your other preoccupations might be. ... The Egyptian Government cannot possibly go on with these talks for another long period. ... Should the talks fail and are consequently broken off ... the Egyptians would lose every confidence in the possibility of coming to an understanding with you through negotiations. (44)

I. DEADLOCK IN TALKS - BRITAIN'S RESPONSIBILITY

The climax, however, reached when Herbert Morrison, Great Britain's Foreign Secretary, accused Egypt of 'uncompromising insistence on demands which bear no relation to present-day realities'. Speaking in a Middle East debate in the House of Commons on 30 July, Morrison said that the problem of the presence of British troops is not now a purely Anglo-Egyptian problem. We are a Power bearing responsibilities in the Middle East on behalf of the rest of the Commonwealth and the Western allies as a whole. ... The destinies and civilization of our

44. Cmd. 8419, pp. 31-32.
two countries are bound up together and it is unrealistic for Egypt to pretend that she can avoid danger by refusing to allow us to share in the defensive organization of the area. Moreover, she can no more stand alone in the defence of her territory than we can in the defence of our country. ...

'In common with our North Atlantic Commonwealth Allies, our people have assumed a great burden in time of peace in order to make the world safe for those countries with whom we share a common heritage and civilization. ... We want to plan our relationship on an entirely new basis. If Egypt rejects that invitation we cannot allow that to prejudice the fulfilment of our international responsibilities'. (45) (Italics mine)

On the question of the Sudan also, Morrison blamed the Egyptian Government of 'certain prejudices which prevent her from approaching in a realistic frame of mind'. Their insistence on the unity of Egypt and the Sudan under the Egyptian Crown, in his view, was unrealistic. If the Egyptians had agreed to the British viewpoint and thus surrendered their claims regarding the Sudan, the Egyptians, in Morrison's judgement, would have been the most cooperative, sober, reasonable, realistic and what not.

The British Foreign Secretary also chose the occasion to condemn Egypt's embargo on the passage of shipping to Israel (46)


46. Under a decree of the Egyptian Government intended to prevent oil supplies from reaching Israel through the Suez Canal, which was brought into effect on 19 July 1950, masters of north-bound tankers passing through the Canal
as an act of "injustice and unreasonableness, and an act of
defiance of the Security Council resolution on the free passage
of shipping in the Suez Canal. (47)"

Such provocative statements and quite uncalled-for
remarks made by British officials and other public-men helped
Britain in no way but they did consolidate Egypt's suspicion

46. (contd. from back page)

were required to furnish guaranteed declaration regarding
the destination of their cargoes including their final
destination at the port of disembarkation, and on arriving
there to obtain a further declaration from custom officials,
countersigned by the nearest Egyptian Consulate, certifying
that their cargo was being discharged there and was
intended for local consumption.

Britain, France, USA, Norway and the Netherlands
protested against these regulations as unlawful.

Replying such protests, the Egyptian Under-Secretary
for Foreign Affairs, Abdel Rehma Pakky Pasha, declared on
23 March that Egypt would not stop to exercise her
"absolute right in conformity with International law of
searching vessels passing through "Egyptian territorial
waters" as long as she still considered herself in a state
of war with Israel.

Similarly, Egypt's representative in the Security
Council defended his Government's action as lawful. He
argued that under international law Egypt was fully justi-
ified in imposing the blockade. An armistice, he pointed
out, was not a temporary peace, the condition of war
remained, and belligerents retained "such rights as the
right of blockade, the right of capture of neutral vessels
attempting to break a blockade, and the right to seize
contraband of war. The stoppage and inspection of ships
bound for Israel was, he declared, necessary for Egypt's
self-preservation in face of Israel's hostility. UN Security

47. UN Documents S/2298/Rev.1, 15 August 1951. In his statement
in the House of Commons on 21 March 1951, Morrison had said
that "the continuance of restrictions on the free passage
of shipping through the Suez Canal so long after the
conclusion of the Armistice between Egypt and Israel
contributed to the maintenance of a state of tension and
of her unwillingness to relinquish her control over Egypt and the Sudan. The Egyptian Foreign Minister felt it necessary to severely condemn Britain's policy of justifying their occupation on the ground that there existed some threat to world peace. Speaking before the Wafd dominated Chamber of Deputies, he declared that the ever present possibility that Great-Power rivalries might flare up into a worldwide conflagration was no justification for asking Egypt to tolerate indefinitely an occupation violating our sovereignty and independence. ... British occupation of Egyptian territory is a standing reality, a stark violation of our independence, a wound to our national dignity and a vestige of hateful British imperialism which must be effaced. As to the threat of war against which we are warned from time to time, it is no more than a possibility which, pray God, would never materialise. Indeed it will never materialise if sovereign equality between nations prevailed and if each major power respected the sovereignty and territorial integrity of smaller and weaker nations thus setting a good example of international conduct regardless of actions taken by others. (48) (Emphasis mine)

He finally assured the Deputies and the people that their Government was fully conscious of the pledge it gave in the last 'Speech from the Throne'. In his view, Morrison's recent statement before the Commons, (49) had 'closed the door on current talks' between the two Governments. Egypt now could justify her taking independent action to abrogate the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty before the next 'Speech from the Throne'. (50)

49. H.C. Deb., 5th Series, vol. 491, cols. 973-5. For full text see Appendix No.
The Egyptian Government was indeed justified in concluding from Morrison's aforesaid statement that it was futile to continue the negotiations 'without a glimpse of hope'. The Government also could not have ignored that the spontaneous effect of his statement on the Egyptian Press and public opinion was extremely bad. (51)

The statement as a whole constituted a definite negation to Egypt's national rights and was completely irreconcilable with the Egyptian viewpoint. They had been demanding immediate evacuation by land, sea and air of British forces from Egypt and the Sudan and the unity of both under the Egyptian Crown. Their Foreign Minister had told Bevin in 1950:

Our foreign policy is very limited one, and can almost be resolved in these two questions of evacuation and that of Unity of Egypt and the Sudan under the Egyptian Crown. (52)

The statement of the British Foreign Secretary, on the other hand, irrespective of the style and the manner in which it was formulated, insisted that evacuation was not advisable in view of the mounting tensions in the East-West relations, while Unity of the Sudan with Egypt was completely refused on the ground that it denied the Sudanese the right of self-determination. What, in fact, a politically conscious Egyptian ordinarily understood from the text of the statement in question and, therefore, resented, was as follows:

51. Al-Ahram, 31 July, 1 August 1951.
1. The continuation of the occupation of Egypt by British forces.

2. Joint defence in Peace time.

3. Justification of the above two points by a new British claim, namely, that Britain bears responsibilities in the Middle East on behalf of the rest of the Commonwealth and the Western Allies as a whole.

4. The denial of the Unity of Egypt and the Sudan. ...

5. Separating the Egyptians and the Sudanese by various means and pretexts and using the Sudan - dual in name but British in fact - to achieve this end. (53)

Egypt's expression of determination to rid herself of the limitations on her sovereignty and the agitational mood of its people apparently caused some stir in Government and political circles in Great Britain. Morrison hurriedly sent personal messages to the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister of Egypt telling them that he was 'urgently considering a definite new approach to the solution of the defence question', and asked them to restrain from doing 'anything which might prejudice the possibility of reaching a settlement satisfactory to both sides'. (54)

But the same 'personal messages' to the Egyptian leaders also told them that he was 'leaving for a short holiday' and that he intended to take advantage of that to ponder over 'our common problems'. Obviously, His Majesty's Government in the United

---


54. Text of Morrison's personal messages to the Egyptian leaders in Records of Conversations, op.cit., pp. 155, 156.
Kingdom was treating the question of her relations with Egypt in the normal course of things. Egypt, on the contrary, was growing impatient. The people were counting days. The Government knew that its survival very much depended on securing from Britain favourable terms for the revision of the Treaty, and the sooner it was done the better. It was mainly on this point that Government could hope to balance its inability to control rising prices and to stabilise the nation's economy and foreign trade. Moreover, even these 'personal messages', Ambassador's Press statements, and the Foreign Office's explanation, emphasised only the 'question of defence' and had carefully avoided to mention anything regarding the Sudan. No Egyptian could fail to see that Great Britain was still unprepared to accept that the Sudan question was 'indivisible from the question of the British evacuation. The Egyptian Prime Minister in his reply to Morrison reiterated that his Government and the people of the Nile Valley were not prepared to consider the two issues separately. He also reminded him that the long-awaited British proposals could be considered provided they arrived 'before the ending of the present parliamentary session, and were based on the realization of Egypt's national demands'. (55)

The promised 'new proposals' could not be delivered to the Egyptian Government before 13th October. But by then Egypt had decided to unilaterally denounce the Treaty. The Government

and the people were growing tired of waiting to hear of some new British proposals to supersede the Treaty. They had waited for them for a number of years, and they could have probably waited for some time more, despite their characteristic impatience, if the British had shown some inclination to accommodate their viewpoint and to harness their nationalist objectives. On the contrary, all that the British Government had shown was an unsympathetic, rather hostile and rigid attitude towards the interests of Egypt and the Arab world in general.

On the question of Egypt's right to blockade the Suez Canal to ships carrying contraband material (56) to her enemy - Israel, the British representative at the UN had actively supported Israel's contention against Egypt. Condemning Egypt's action, Sir Gladwyn Jebb said that freedom of international shipping and commerce was a matter of utmost interest to Britain and all maritime nations, and they must therefore view with grave concern any restrictions on the passage of vessels through the Suez Canal. For Britain the ban on the passage of oil tankers to the Haifa refinery, he pointed out, had involved

56. Israel and her Western supporters had purposely publicised that Egypt's action amounted to blockading the Suez Canal and putting serious restrictions on the rights of shipping guaranteed under the 1888 multilateral Convention. In fact, as explained by Egypt's representative in the Security Council, Egypt merely intended to invoke her rights under International Law to 'visit and search' only a few merchantmen in connection with only a few war materials. See, Fauzi Bey's statement before the Security Council. SCOR, 553 Meeting, 16 August 1951, p. 19.
great inconvenience and considerable financial loss, apart from the effect of the refinery's virtual inactivity on almost the whole of Western Europe. He could not accept Egypt's claims concerning the Suez Canal convention and belligerent rights, and considered that the Council need not become "entangled in the mesh of these legal issues." "The Armistice in Palestine had not been meant merely to lead to a pause in the fighting, but to put an end to the hostilities and to guard against their renewal, and the Council had understood it to mean the ending of restrictions imposed by both sides." (57)

Mohammad Fawzi Bey of Egypt defended his country's action by declaring that she was still at war with Israel and thus her restrictions on shipping in the Suez Canal were within her legal rights. The draft resolution (58) sponsored by the British delegate which sought to remove those restrictions not only violated the principles of the laws of nations, it 'attempted to impose a political settlement on Egypt, which the Council was not empowered to do'. (59)

57. SCOR, 552nd Meeting, 16 August 1951, pp. 1-4.
58. UN Document S/2313.
59. 'Any arbitrary resolution of the Council denying Egypt its belligerent rights would be an attempt by the Council to impose on Egypt a political settlement. The Council is not empowered to enforce political settlements'. Fawzi then cited the undermentioned from the speech of the US representative, Warren Austin at the 253rd meeting of the Council on 24 February 1945.

"While we are discussing the problem of Palestine, it is of primary importance to the future of the UN that the precedent to be established by the action taken in this case should be in full accord with the (contd. on next page)
Co-sponsoring the draft resolution, the US representative had said that 'by removing the restrictions Egypt would make a positive contribution to the relief of tension in the Middle East.' (60) To this the Egyptian representative replied that it was Great Britain whose policies were solely responsible for the present tension and uneasiness in the Middle East.' (61)

This brief statement contained important and irrefutable facts of history of British policy in the Middle East. Its encouragement of political Zionism and its allowing the Zionists to unlawfully receive great amounts of arms and great numbers of fighting personnel, including those from Cyprus and other parts under British control, (62) represented 'an overflowing contribution to the state of tension and turmoils' in the Middle East. As a result of this policy, the Jewish State of Israel came into being in Arab Palestine and from where thousands of Arab families were forcibly ousted to live in destitution and privation.

59. (contd. from back page)

terms of the Charter under which we operate. The interpretation of the terms of the Charter given in the Palestine issue will seriously affect the future actions of the UN in other cases.

The Charter of the United Nations does not empower the Security Council to enforce political settlement."

See, SCOR, 553rd Meeting, 16 August 1951, p. 23.

60. SCOR, 552nd Meeting, op.cit., p. 9.

61. Ibid., pp. 16-17.

62. Ibid., 553rd Meeting, p. 17.
To the Arabs and the Egyptians in particular, the questions of Holy Places, the Arab refugees and disputes of territorial nature, remaining unsolved "no attempt at pacification will yield enduring results." They considered the present Suez Canal question as 'but a reflection of the whole of Palestine question'. (63)

Thus Britain's unreserved and enthusiastic support of Israel's claims to freedom of passage in the Suez Canal virtually ended all prospects of reaching a settlement with her. It had now become clear to every Egyptian that Britain really did not wish to retain Egypt's friendship. The 'hate imperialists' campaign started by the left-wing press and persons was already becoming widespread. It is worthwhile to mention here that the Government of Nahas Pasha, persisting in its resistance to the British proposals for joint defence, had recently allowed the so-called 'progressive people' and their publications to carry on their campaign vigorously against any association with the Western Powers. Al-Katab was the official organ of the 'Egyptian Committee of the Partisans of Peace', which was most vociferously writing against any alliance with the West.

It is understandable that the Wafd leaders were anxious to secure the diplomatic support of the Soviet Union to counterbalance the pressure of the West. The United States had already indicated to the Egyptian Foreign Minister that if Egypt agreed to take part in the proposed defence organization, his Government was prepared to press Britain to adjust her position

63. Ibid., p. 13.
to the Egyptian requirements. The price demanded by US envoy for his Government's support was too much and totally contradictory to the fundamentals of Egypt's stand on the question.

In the Security Council debates (64) also the American delegate had openly sided with the British delegation on the question of unrestricted shipping to and from Israel. He was a co-sponsor of the draft resolution calling upon Egypt to lift the ban against Israel. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, had timely intervened to secure a postponement of voting on the Western countries' resolution. The Egyptian Government gratefully appreciated the Soviet delegate's hinting at using veto if the said resolution was pressed for a vote. Foreign Minister Salah Eddin greeted the event as a 'turning point towards the path of right and justice and real stability in the Middle East'; the Government organ al-Balagh generously praised the Russian diplomacy and assured them that 'Egypt's gratitude would be multiplied should this support be continued (65) at other Council sessions'. The Egyptian press generally described

64. Ibid., 552nd Meeting, pp. 8-9.

65. The Egyptians were utterly disappointed to find that the USSR was not sincere in its attitude towards Egypt. It did not suit their policy at that stage to completely identify themselves with the Arabs. Therefore, when the above-mentioned draft resolution was put before the Council for vote on 1 September, the Soviet delegate quietly abstained. In a state of shock, the pro-Government Journal d'Egypte immediately wrote that whereas Russia had deceived Roosevelt and Churchill for three years, 'with us the devil's forces lasted only three days' - the paper headed its editorial 'The Devil is always a Devil'. See, Christian Science Monitor, 8 September 1951.
the USSR as 'Egypt's only friend' and 'noble ally in the common struggle against imperialism.' (66)

On the day of the anniversary of the British entry into Cairo (14 September 1882) the 'Partisans of Peace', the Socialist Party of the Fallah and the Muslim Brotherhood (67) organized protest rallies throughout Cairo and Alexandria and demanded immediate action in regard to the 'hated' Treaty with Britain. Their demands undoubtedly voiced the feelings of the nation as a whole. Al-Balagh was urging them to muster their confidence and take bold steps to realize national objectives. It cited the example of the people of Iran who successfully defied the British on the question of sharing benefits of their oil. 'It is only the weak whom they oppress. Their prestige in the East is finished'. It was a call to the people of Egypt to fight for their rights. 'Rights are obtained not granted', was the popular slogan. They drew inspiration from the Persian example. (68)

The Government of Egypt under such circumstances could not wait any longer. With the inclusion of Turkey and Greece


67. Al-Ahram, 15 September 1951; Egyptian Gazette, 15 September 1951.

into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) (69) it had become evident that the pressure on Egypt to join with the West in their plans for common defence of the Middle East would increase. In June a conference of British Commonwealth Defence Ministers had emphasised the importance of the defence of the Middle East as a part of the defence of Western Europe and the United States. (70) In the Western strategic thinking the three northern states of the Middle East were defined as "shield" which had to sustain the main thrust of Soviet Power and protect the weaker areas behind. To the South lay the Arab States and Israel, in a region endowed with rich petroleum deposits and traversed by multiple land, sea and air communications which made it a natural "bridge" between Europe, Asia and Africa. (71) It was therefore obviously vital for them that this aggregation of resources, strategic positions and communications routes was denied to the USSR and made readily available to the West. The control of the Suez Canal was necessary for the successful functioning of the protective barriers that the West was already building around the Soviet bloc.

69. The Council of the NATO, consisting of Foreign Ministers of the 12 Atlantic Pact countries, met in Ottawa from 16-20 September and unanimously agreed to admit Greece and Turkey to the NATO. The Council agreed that 'both Greece and Turkey, despite their official clarification as 'Near Eastern States', were politically associated with the European, and not the Asian section of the non-Communist community.
