Chapter V

PRELUDE TO THE JULY 1952 REVOLUTION

A. EGYPT'S ABROGATION OF THE 1936 TREATY

Hopelessly waiting for the British proposals, under such pressing circumstances, would not have helped Egypt in her struggle to eliminate Britain's political influence from its territory. Moreover, the prospects of the Conservatives coming again into power had made the question of treaty revision all the more urgent. They could not hope the Tories to agree to wind up their military bases in Egypt and to redefine their mutual relations on the basis of sovereign-equality, trust and cooperation. The Colonial Office under the Conservatives would never agree to relinquish Britain's dominance over Egypt and the Sudan. The Egyptians remembered that it was only a couple of weeks ago that Churchill, who was certain to become the new Prime Minister after the general elections, had criticized Labour Government's dealings with the Egyptian blockade of the Suez Canal as "unprecedented British submissiveness". Further, asserting that the British power and influence had declined throughout the Middle East, he had suggested that the situation could only be retrieved by the joint cooperative action of the United States and the United Kingdom and, in the Mediterranean, by France and Turkey. In other words, he proposed the use of 'big stick' against Egypt and other countries of the area. (1)

1. H.C. Deb., 30 July 1951, vol. 491, col. 9726
For Egypt it was the question of 'now or never'. Postponing the issue of the Treaty revision any further would have caused a serious setback to her national aspirations. As late as 6th of October, Morrison was still "hoping to be able to make a communication to the Egyptian Government after a few days". On this vague message the Wafdist al-Balagh rightly remarked:

No one waits for far-reaching proposals from a weak Cabinet on the eve of an election campaign in which it is doomed to defeat. Such a Cabinet cannot be expected to resolve the Egyptian question in so short and critical a time. ... There is no chance of the British proposals being made before the elections, unless this new proposal is worse than its predecessors. (2)

Thus compelled by circumstances and their own strong nationalist fervour to get rid of the 'most uncherished and abnoxious' Treaty, the Prime Minister of Egypt made the epoch-making statement before the Chamber of Deputies on 8 October 1951. He declared that 'the due time for the arrival of the new proposals, referred to in my reply to Mr. Morrison's personal message, is over. The conversations between the two Governments must cease because it is clear that they are futile':

Since the continued efforts for the realization of the country's demands by negotiation has proved a failure, it is time for the Government to fulfil its promise pronounced in the last speech from the Throne, and take the necessary step for the abrogation of the 1936 Treaty and the two Conventions of 19th January and 10th July, 1899, concerning the administration of The Sudan.

For this purpose he pleaded four draft decrees before the Chamber for its approval.

2. Quoted by Bourse Egyptienne, 5 October 1951.
The first decree that abrogated the 1936 Treaty and the 1899 Condominium Agreement, was worded as follows:

Law No. 80, 1936, ratifying the Treaty of Friendship and Alliance between Egypt and Great Britain and which was signed in London on August 26, 1936, shall be rescinded. Thus, the provision of this Treaty and the agreement attached thereto concerning exemptions and privileges enjoyed by the British Forces stationed in the Kingdom of Egypt, as well as the provisions of the Condominium Agreements of January 10 and July 10, 1899, regarding the administration of The Sudan cease to be operative. (3)

The second and third decrees abolished Articles 159 and 160 of the Egyptian Constitution and substituted for Article 159 the following:

The provisions of this constitution shall apply to all the Egyptian kingdom. Although Egypt and The Sudan are one nation, the regime of rule in The Sudan shall be defined by a Special Law.

Article 160 was amended to read: "The King shall be titled King of Egypt and the Sudan." (4)

The fourth decree provided that:

"The Sudan shall have a special constitution to be drawn up by a Constituent Assembly representing the inhabitants of the Sudan, and to be enforced as soon as sanctioned and promulgated by the King." It was also laid down that the proposed new constitution would provide for "democratic parliamentary Government" through an elected Chamber or Chambers; that separate legislative, executive and judicial authorities would be established; that a Sudanese Cabinet would be directly responsible to the Sudanese Parliament; that Ministers would be appointed and dismissed by the King of Egypt; that all legislation would be approved by Parliament and sanctioned by the King; and that "foreign affairs and matters connected with defence, the army, and currency" would be a responsibility of the Egyptian Crown. (5)

3. Text of the decree in Appendix No.
4. Full Text in Appendix No.
5. Ibid.
Defending the Government's decision to denounce the Treaty and the Condominium, Nahas Pasha cited as many as 18 instances where unequal partners have resorted to unilateral denunciation of international agreements. Among these mentioned in this connection quite a few were related to more recent history. For example, on 16 March 1935, Germany abrogated that part of the Versailles Treaty affecting her. Again, in March 1936, Germany abrogated the Locarno Treaty. Similarly in December 1938, the Japanese Government abrogated the Nine-Power Agreement signed in Washington in 1922. Likewise in June 1939, Germany abrogated the German-Polish Declaration of 1934. In the same month Germany abrogated the 1935 naval agreement with Great Britain.

In all these and other such numerous cases, the other party always contested the validity of the unilateral action but the abrogation nevertheless was effected and in all instances was legally fruitful. The only difference in the present case was that Egypt did not have necessary force to back her action. Therefore, Egypt based her defence on her 'natural rights, outstanding justice and lofty principles embodied in the United Nations Charter. (6)

He argued that the circumstances under which the Treaty was signed by Egypt had completely altered and hence there was no justification for continuing it. In fact, with the victory

of the Allied nations in the last war, not only the menace of the Axis Powers had disappeared but a new international organization was created to suppress every other menace to universal peace and security.

Nahas Pasha argued that faithful observance of the Charter of the United Nations on the part of the member-nations, would make all such defence arrangements superfluous and unnecessary. He said:

The UN Charter, signed in San Francisco in June 1945 ... established a new basis for international relations, totally different from the basis of the 1936 Treaty. It forbids war as means of settling international disputes and demands their settlement by peaceful means. It also prohibits aggression on the independence of member states and the integrity of their territory. It stipulates that all countries are entitled to decide their own destiny and provides for equal sovereignty between member states. It also provides that should there be any contradiction between the obligations of member states under the Charter and those of any other instrument, then the Charter must supersede. (7)

As the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of August 1936 was concluded during the British occupation, Egypt did not have then complete freedom of choice. Therefore a treaty had been extracted from the Government of Egypt by compulsion and intimidation of the situation, (8) could no longer be considered valid after those

7. Ibid., p. 168. See also UN Charter, Article 2, para 3.
8. Explaining the meaning of pressure due to the occupation of their country, Nahas Pasha said: "We do not mean by that Egypt had been compelled materially to conclude a treaty. What we want to point out is that we felt the moral pressure caused by occupation and its interference in the country's affairs, which was prejudicial to its interests and the fact that the capitulations increased the stranglehold.

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circumstances had so drastically changed.

Thus having affirmed that Egypt's action was justified the Prime Minister emphasised that the abrogation of the 1936 Treaty and the 1899 agreements meant the automatic reversion of the Sudan to its pre-1899 status, removal of all British rights in that territory, and the re-establishment of the "Complete Unity of the Nile Valley". The proposed new constitutional arrangements for the Sudan were designed to replace the then existing system. They were in accordance with 'the natural unity which has joined Egypt and the Sudan from the earliest times.'

The Egyptian Prime Minister concluded his historic speech with the remark that "it was for Egypt that I signed the 1936 Treaty, and it is for Egypt that I ask you to denounce it." (9)

The draft-decrees and the Prime Minister's statement were received by the members of the Chamber with wild and prolonged cheers and were approved unanimously. Leaders of the opposition praised Nahas Pasha for his bold and timely step to free the Egyptian people from the limitations on their political freedom and national status. They pledged their full support for the Wafdist Government's action. (10)

8. (contd. from back page)

We wanted to get rid of all this. We wished to find an opening which at the same time was the first step towards unity and independence'. See Nahas's Speech of 8 October, Record of Conversations, op.cit., p. 177.

9. Ibid., p. 179.

10. Al-Ahram, 9 October 1951; The Egyptian Gazette, 9, 10 October 1951. See also, The Times, 9 October 1951.
B. BRITAIN'S NEW PROPOSALS PROMPTLY REJECTED BY EGYPT

Five days after the draft-decrees to unilaterally denounce the Treaty of Alliance and the Condominium Agreements had been introduced in the Egyptian Parliaments - the long-awaited British Proposals were delivered to the Government of Egypt. They were promptly rejected on the ground that they underlined the same antiquated, imperialistic approach. They expressed not even the slightest intention of complying with Egypt's requirements. On the question of the Sudan, Britain still insisted on the principle of self-determination for the Sudanese, while the Four-Power Proposal appeared to the Egyptians a plan to perpetuate rather intensify the presence of foreign troops in their country. The USA, Britain, France and Turkey had invited Egypt to join the proposed Middle East Command (11) as a founder member. Britain had also indicated that they would waive the 1936 Treaty if Egypt accepted the offer. It was further clearly stated that the details of the organization of the Command and its relationship to the NATO would be worked out in consultation with all the Powers concerned. Egypt's contribution in the proposed Command was to be:

1. to furnish to the command such strategic defence and other facilities on her soil as are indispensable for the organization in peace time;

II. undertake to grant the forces of the Middle East Command all the necessary facilities and assistance in the event of war, the imminent menace of war or apprehended international emergency including the use of Egyptian ports, airfields and means of communications;

III. permit the establishment of the Allied Supreme Command’s Headquarters in her territory.

The Four-Powers also suggested that:

(a) the present British Base in Egypt would be formally handed over to Egypt on the understanding that it would simultaneously become an Allied Base within the Middle East Command with full Egyptian participation in the running of the base in peace and war;

(b) that the strength of the Allied Forces would be determined between the participating nations, including Egypt;

(c) an Air Defence Organization including both Egyptian and Allied Forces would be set up under the command of an officer with joint responsibility to the Egyptian Government and the Allied Command.

A careful study of these proposals, however, shows that they were completely divorced from the existing political environment, generally characterised as 'nationalist revolt against the West'. The whole of new approach as it was manifest in the latest move of the British and her allies seemed extremely one-sided. One gets the idea that these proposals were made in a state of perfect tranquillity and friendship, that Egypt simply had no demands of her own to be taken account of and to be satisfied in any offer made to her. To the Government and the people of Egypt who were clamouring for full national independence and were determined to free their country from the presence of the unwanted alien forces, this 'new approach' was 'ridiculous' and a mockery of their national objectives. They
felt that they were being bossed in their own country. To them Great Britain and her 'friends and partners' seemed to have assumed that they had the right to impose on them a defensive system favourable to themselves because of the apprehension of the area falling under the influence of the Communist Powers.

The attitude of the British Government remained unchanged after the Conservative party came to power as a result of general elections held on 26 October 1951. Anthony Eden, the new Foreign Secretary, had earlier made it absolutely plain: "We could not meet the Egyptian demand and that it was no good the Egyptian Minister (Salah Eddin Pasha) expecting it." (13)

Similarly, Winston Churchill had referred to the draft-decrees of 8 October in his pre-election broadcast in a language which expressed his disapproval of them. He did not fail to throw a hint as to what he would do if returned to power:

... A great country like ours cannot escape from dangers of war and violence merely by running away from them. I warned you what happened would bring its consequences elsewhere - and I mentioned Egypt. Curiously enough, as I was preparing to address you here, the news came through that the Egyptian Prime Minister had denounced the 1936 Treaty, which affects the Suez Canal, and the Sudan Agreement. Another blow has fallen upon us even more grave and injurious than that which affected us at Abadan. It is a grievous misfortune for the whole of the western Allies in Europe, or in Atlantic Pact, when Britain falls flat on her face as if she were a booby. But this is not the real Britain, it is only the

12. The Times, 26 October 1951; Manchester Guardian, 26 October 1951.

grimace of an exhausted and divided Administration upon whose conduct the nation will soon be able to pronounce. (14)

There was thus no scope or alternative left for a negotiated settlement. The Egyptian Parliament then finally endorsed the bills with overwhelming majority denouncing the 1936 Anglo-Egyptian Treaty and the Sudan Condominium Agreements of 1899. At the same time the Government announced that the Four-Power Proposals were also being rejected. The Egyptian reply to the Western offer was worded as follows:

The Egyptian Government cannot consider these proposals, or any other proposals concerning the differences outstanding between the United Kingdom and Egypt while there are British forces of occupation in Egypt and the Sudan. These proposals hardly differ from the proposals already delivered on April 11 and June 8, and rejected by the Egyptian Government in their entirety and in detail. (15)

The Egyptian Parliament promptly approved the Government decision and also unanimously agreed to amend their constitution in respect of Articles 159 and 160 so as to define the constitutional status of the Sudan and to change King Faruk's title to that of King of Egypt and the Sudan.

C. BRITAIN'S REACTIONS TO THE ABROGATION OF THE 1936 TREATY

Apparently, the Wafd Government had thus 'fulfilled their pledge' and had 'placed on record in the annals of the


15. Al-Ahram, Al-Gamhuria, 16 October 1951; also The Times, 16 October 1951.
Nile Valley glorious deeds that will go down to posterity." (16)

In the words of the Prime Minister of Egypt unanimous approval of these measures had shown that the Egyptian nationalism was 'stronger than events'. Overwhelmed by the sense of joy, over his 'achievement', Nahas Pasha thanked the Parliament and said:

You have taught those who boast of democracy an admirable lesson in respect of rights. You have taught them that people can lose their patience if they wait too long. You have taught them that rights are not granted or given - that they are won by struggle. You have taught them that aggressive material force cannot stand in the way of rights. You have given practical proof that Egypt, newly vested in democracy, knows more about it and venerates it more than those who claim that democracy has developed among them. ... Material force and political intrigue cannot prevent small nations from overthrowing imperialism, and I pray God that the country may be purged of every trace of foreign occupation and that the unity of the Nile Valley may be realized under King Faruk. (17) (Italics mine)

These 'bold actions' on the part of Egypt, however, did not really shake off Britain's position vis-a-vis the Suez and the Sudan. By proclaiming Faruk 'the King of Egypt and the Sudan' (18) did not in fact unite the Nile Valley. Being unilateral in character and obviously against the vested interests of the other party, they remained devoid of any practical value. Great Britain had promptly announced that it


17. Ibid.

18. Article 2 of the Draft Law. See Appendix No.
had no intention of recognizing the Egyptian action. (19)

Replying to the Egyptian note which formally communicated to them on 27 October what their Parliament had passed on the 15th instant, the British Government declared that the 1936 Treaty contained no provision for its unilateral denunciation, hence they regarded *the Treaty and the Condominium Agreements of 1899 as remaining in force and intend fully to maintain their rights under those instruments". The reply also contained a warning that the Egyptian Government would be held responsible for any breach of the peace and any damage done to the life or property that might result from their 'purported' abrogation of those instruments.

The 'King's Speech' delivered on the opening of the new Parliament on 6 November, clearly defined Great Britain's official policy on the question of their relations with Egypt. It said:

My Government regard the abrogation by the Egyptian Government of the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of Alliance of 1936 and the Sudan Condominium Agreements of 1899 as illegal and without validity. They are resolved, in conjunction with the Governments of the United States, France and Turkey, to press forward with their proposals for joint defence armaments in the Middle East. In the meantime they will maintain their position in the Canal Zone under the terms of the 1936 Treaty and will safeguard the international highway. Nothing can be allowed to interfere with the rights of the Sudanese to decide for themselves the future status of their country. (20) (Emphasis mine)

19. See Foreign Minister Herbert Morrison's election speech at Acton on 15 October, in The Times, 16 October 1951.

Similar was the tone and content of the speech of Britain's new Prime Minister Winston Churchill:

In Egypt and the Sudan we are pursuing the policy adopted by the late Government. (21) ... We are resolved to maintain our rightful position in the Canal Zone in spite of the illegal and one-sided Egyptian action over the 1936 Treaty. We shall do our utmost to safeguard the Canal as an international highway using, of course, no force than is necessary. (22)

The United States, France and the European members of the British Commonwealth of Nations supported the stand of Great Britain. Official statements in Washington, for instance, upheld the validity of the Treaty and the Sudan Agreements. "The US Government", Secretary Acheson pointed out, "believes that proper respect for international obligations requires that they be altered by mutual agreement rather than by unilateral action of one of the parties." (23)

21. Herbert Morrison made the following statement of policy in his election broadcast on 17 October 1951:

... We are perfectly ready to negotiate with Egypt. But Britain will not be dictated to. The Suez Canal is vital to us, to our sea-going trade, to the life of the Commonwealth, to the defence of the Middle East, to the safety of the whole free world. The Sudan is important for different reasons. We have given our pledge that the Sudanese people shall move forward to self-government under our guidance. We stand by that pledge. We cannot, and will not, betray the people of the Sudan. (Italics mine)

We have got troops already in the Canal Zone. They will stay there until we can negotiate a new agreement for the defence of the whole Middle East. But we shall not sell the future freedom of the Sudanese for any defence agreement whatsoever.

See The Times, 18 October 1951.


Such expression of firmness on the part of Great Britain and her allies to defend their position in Egypt and in the Sudan and the subsequent reinforcement of the British troops in the Canal Zone by bringing paratroopers from Cyprus, created a highly embarrassing situation for the Egyptian Government. (24) The latter could neither possibly undo their action nor in fact they could substantiate it smoothly and rapidly in the face of British threat of using force to prevent them from going ahead. The British troops as a matter of fact had already occupied the Suez and Ismailia towns and begun to move British women and children to the military zone. They also hastened to take control of the bridges over the Canal. All this they had done on the 16th of October, two days ahead of the Royal assent to the laws passed by the Egyptian Parliament on the 15th.

Though anti-British demonstrations had begun in Cairo and Alexandria as soon as the decrees were announced in the Egyptian Parliament, they were not likely to assume the seriousness they acquired as a result of Britain's provocation. The Egyptian Government would have been able to bring the situation under control under the emergency rules which had been clamped all over Egypt on the 17th, but for Britain's so-called

24. Al-Ahram, 18 and 19 October 1951; The Times, 18 October 1951. According to John Connell, The Most Important Country (London, 1957), p. 31, the number of British troops in the Canal Zone rose from 10,000 permitted under the 1936 Treaty, to 80,000 combat troops of high calibre.
'precautionary steps' - that is, reinforcement of their troops and the latter's capturing certain key points in important towns in the Suez belt. (25)

In reply to the British Note of October 16 and 19, the Egyptian Government claimed that the clashes in Ismailia and Port Said on those dates had been caused by the appearance of British military vehicles in the streets "challenging the sentiments of the people"; that British troops had fired "at random" on the public, killing and wounding innocent persons; and that "assaults and robberies" by British soldiers had been reported. Whilst admitting the possibility that British subjects had been robbed and molested, the Egyptian Note of 27 October pointed out that as no complaint had been made to the competent Egyptian authorities, it had been impossible to investigate and bring guilty persons to justice. Apart from the action taken by the British "on the pretext of restoring order in the Canal Zone", there had been wider operations, such as the occupation of public buildings, railway installations, ports, bridges and strategic points, the seizure of means of transport and the detention of public officials, which could have "no other purpose than the invasion on a prepared plan on the whole Zone, its subjection to military law, and its separation from the rest of Egypt. In persuasion of this plan the British had attacked Egyptian army positions, although Egyptian army had done its utmost to avoid collusions, and were bringing daily reinforcements into Egypt by sea and air. The British action in the Canal Zone, the Note declared, constituted "an act of aggression in violent contradiction of the terms of the UN Charter ... and a clear attack on Egypt's territorial integrity and sovereignty. (26)

25. Al-Ahram, 19 October 1951.

26. Foreign Minister Salah Eddin repeated these same charges before the United Nations General Assembly held in Paris on 16 November 1951. For the text of his speech see Record of Conversations, op.cit., pp. 183-4.

For text of the Egyptian note of 27 October 1951, see Command Papers 8419, pp. 46-7. See also The Times, 19 and 29 October 1951.
Thus with the movements of the British troops, the Extremist-terrorist activities became widespread and more violent. And, once such activities began, there was no end to them. Vociferous students and young men, incited by the extremist organizations found in the subversive activities a way to express their suppressed resentment and pent up frustrations.

The Government of Egypt had first sincerely tried to maintain law and order inside the country. They had had no intention of making a resort to devices of pressure. The Minister of Interior had even called the demonstrators as traitors. (27) The local police had no hesitation to open fire on the mobs of their own kith and kin demonstrating in Cairo and Alexandria. They even assisted British troops at Port Said.

The Government of Egypt could not have allowed the people to take the law in their own hands and freely roam about in the streets and outskirts of the cities killing, looting and burning human beings and destroying their property. Such a state of lawless would have led to their ouster from authority. The King would have blamed them for failing to maintain law and order and removed them on that account from office, as he really did later on. The successor Government, probably a coalition or a non-party government headed by one of King's

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27. Al-Misr, 5 December 1951; The Times, 5 and 6 December 1951.
favourites would have yielded to the British pressure. The Wafd, therefore, had reasons to decide not to give in to the pressure of the extremists and radical nationalists for trying to forcibly push out the British occupation.

After the incidents of 16 October, the British officers and men behaved most irrationally and indulged into all sorts of brutality and violence in order to terrorise the people and thus to demoralize them to further insist on their evacuation. (28) Lt. General Sir George Erskine, GOC, British troops in Egypt, sent the following message to the forces under his command:

... if the Egyptians tried to force the British from the Canal Zone "we shall resist most strongly; we are not going to be forced out or knocked out.... I have planned to meet the situation. You must be ready to protect yourself and to go to the help of your comrades if they are attacked. I have sent a message to the Governors of Buez, Port-Said, and Shakia telling them that I do not regard abrogation of the Treaty as relieving them in any way of their duty to maintain law and order ... but I must tell you that they have already started attacking us in Ismailia, and with public excitement at its present level, I must further warn you that hostile and criminal elements of the population may try to attack individuals and parties. I want you to do all you can. ... We are not looking for trouble, but we shall deal with it firmly if we meet it.

You must trust me and Air Vice-Marshal Brown to watch over the security of the British forces and to take such measures as are required. We shall trust you to do your duty with courage and common sense. I am confident that together we can handle the situation effectively. ... Our job is quite clear. We stand on our rights under the treaty. (29)

28. See Al-Ahram, 17 and 18 October 1951.
29. The Times, 31 October 1951.
Following this statement, the British forces captured 'all public utilities and key communication ports in the Canal Zone in public interest'. They also 'banned all Egyptian troops from entering the Canal Zone except those in transit to and from the Gaza area in southern Palestine, who would be allowed to pass through if 24 hours' notice was given. British troops were also posted on all roads leading into the Canal Zone.

The same day, British troops occupied El Ferdan bridge after mercilessly killing its Egyptian guards and taking many prisoners. According to the War Office announcement in London, there was no casualty on their side. (30)

This was too much of alien interference with matters essentially within Egypt's domestic jurisdiction. A part of their territory was practically severed from the jurisdiction of the local authority. The movement of citizens was seriously restricted in their own country. Their army was disallowed to enter the Canal Zone, and the Egyptian Government itself had to ask for permission '24 hours in advance' for sending supplies via the Zone to its soldiers on the armistice-frontiers with Israel. Thus for the first time after the last war, the people of Egypt saw how the presence of British troops constituted a limitation on their national sovereignty and rightful legal authority. The British troops during those days were really behaving like the army of occupation. It was indeed for this day that the British had not provided the Egyptian army with

military means and training. (31) After their reinforcements from Cyprus, the British troops in Egypt were masters of the situation. British armoured cars and military vehicles moving about in the streets in battle formation were too grave a provocation to the people and their Government to bear without strongly reacting to it. (32)

D. ADMINISTRATIVE MEASURES TAKEN AGAINST THE BRITISH

Thus it was under 'grave provocation' that the Government of Egypt decided to face facts and adopt 'administrative measures' for the enforcement of its plans'. (33)

Soon after the incident of 16 October, about one thousand auxiliary police were despatched to Ismailia to help maintain a state of peace in that province. The Government further encouraged a move for non-cooperation with the British forces in the Suez Canal Zone. The Minister of Social Affairs Abdul Fattah praised the nationalist sentiments of the Egyptian workers in the service of the British and assured them to provide new

31. Minister of Interior Fuad Sirajud Din's Press Statement reported in The Times, 27 October 1951.

32. Al-Misri, Al-Ahram, 20 October 1951. Al Mokattam described the British as 'Pirates' who had 'lost their heads'. Al-Misri demanded that Egypt should join the Soviet bloc to help to realize her national demands, and Al-Ahram declared that a list of "British Crimes" in the Canal Zone was being compiled "for broadcasting to the world". Nahas Pasha said to a big crowd that "the enemy had lost their heads in a wave of madness and fear which had led them to commit aggressive acts."

33. Al-Ahram, 24 October 1951.
jobs and grant maintenance during the period of their struggle against foreign domination of their country. (34)

Responding to the call of the nation and inspired by their own national feelings nearly all of the 80,000 native civilian workers serving the British in the Canal Zone withdrew from their jobs. (35) This massive withdrawal of the civilian employees immediately caused the British great inconvenience and virtually paralyzed the working of the Suez Canal. Labourers brought in as substitute from Cyprus, Malta and East Africa (36) could not cope with the huge work load of the Company and the British garrison.

British G.H.Q. at Fayid announced on 23 October that all transportation of oil from Suez by road, rail and water had been suspended with immediate effect, and that all rail traffic to and from the Canal Zone had likewise been stopped until further notice. A military spokesman explained that measures had been taken because of the refusal of the Egyptian Port workers at Adobeya and Suez to return to work. (37)

The Ministry of Communications also issued orders to all Egyptian railway staff lent to the British military authorities in the Zone to withdraw their services immediately. (38)

34. Al-Misri, 21 and 31 October 1951; The Times, 31 October 1951.


37. The Times, 24 October 1951.

38. Al-Ahram, 19 October 1951.
The next move in this regard was the boycott of British goods and dismissal of all British officials and teachers in the service of the Egyptian Government. (39) A bonfire of British books was blazed in Cairo's main square.

The Egyptian State Council approved a general mobilization Bill providing, in case of war or threat of war, for the conscription of all Egyptians between 18 and 50; setting up a High Council of War (comprising the Ministers of War, the Interior, Commerce, Communications and National Economy, and the Chief of Staff) under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister.

The Government asked the citizens to learn to use firearms and appealed to the rich to provide arms to the poor. Previously they had allowed the people to carry arms on their person 'for self-defence'. (40)

The Egyptian Government also encouraged the formation of "Liberation battalions" by providing them training facilities. On 20 December 1951 a parade was held at Fuad I University in Cairo of 50 undergraduates armed with sten guns, to mark their "passing out" as guerrillas for the Canal. (41)

39. Al-Misri, 29 October 1951. Among the dismissed British subjects there were nearly 200 teachers, 33 doctors, 24 specialists in Public works and Communications and some military and air advisors. See, Survey of International Affairs 1951, p. 285.

40. The Times, 31 October and 14 December 1951.

41. Al Misri, 21 December 1951.
At the same time the Ministry of Interior restored the property and funds of the extremist Muslim Brotherhood Organization and allowed them to hold their meetings and resume their publications. (42)

Lifting the ban from the Brotherhood was a clear indication that the Government was now determined to solicit the support of all factions of the society to resist the British "aggression". This is how Nahas Pasha described the British military actions since 16 October. (43) In an Official Note to Britain, the Egyptian Government placed full responsibility for the clashes on 17-18 November on the 'irresponsible' and 'arrogant' British soldiers. The Note described the clashes as:

Criminal acts of aggression which surpass in horror and savagery all those previous committed by the British occupation forces against the peaceful population and police officials in the Canal Zone. (44)

It was in this atmosphere of suspicion, fear and hatred that the ghastly incident of 25 January 1952 took place in Ismailia. Though it is undeniable that certain subversive and

42. Al-Misri, 16 December 1961. The Brotherhood had been banned in December 1948 by the Government of Ibrahim Abdul Hadi Pasha for its subversive activities which included the murder of Premier Nokrashi Pasha. The ban had been lifted on this organization in April 1951 but stringent restrictions on its activities had been in force. Now the Government removed all restrictions to gain their support in their struggle against the British. See Annual Register 1948, p. 299; 1951, p. 228.

43. Al-Ahram, 14 December 1951.

seditious elements had infiltrated into the 'Liberation Squads' and they were trying to exploit the Anglo-Egyptian crisis for their own ends, Egypt's attitude, actions and reactions against British provocations, was motived and predominantly guided by nationalistic objectives and enthusiasm. It was in their country that a foreign army was staying against their wishes; was interfering in their national affairs and was flouting the local authority. It was within Egypt that the British armed forces had established their own 'Kingdom' inside the Canal Zone to which even the Egyptian officials and army personnel had no free excess.

If Egypt in those days was in revolt, it was for their national freedom. They had tolerated their subjugation under the British for so long, they were now trying to get rid of it. They had tried to achieve it by passivity, having failed they were now determined to assert their legitimate national claims by force. There was nothing wrong or bad or unprecedented about it. The UN Charter guaranteed every nation full freedom and equality of sovereign status. And, this was precisely what the Egyptians were striving to achieve while the British condemned them for demanding freedom from their colonialism.

Speaking in Cairo Nahas Pasha publicly denounced the Four-Power Middle East defence plan as "worse than colonialism", accused the UN of furthering the ambitions of "greedy great Powers at the expense of smaller nations"; he declared:

We thought Britain would return to her senses, especially when Labour came to power, but we had only promises. The Wafd did its best to negotiate with the British, who always put forward some pretext for 'common defence' which is colonization
in disguise. ... The British troops had attacked and robbed people, surrounded towns, chased men, killed women and children, and captured policemen. (45)

It was a struggle between the forces of nationalism and imperialism in its unconventional cloak. Egypt's struggle should therefore be seen from a nationalistic point of view. Their blowing up the rail tracks, bridges and British military depots; throwing acid and hand grenades from roof-tops and balconies on the British armed patrols, their occasional rioting and killing of British soldiers in encounters and of some isolated individuals and cutting wires of communications and channels of supplies were natural psychological reactions of a long suppressed and humiliated people. In many parts of Asia and Africa the nationalist forces had found that the imperialists understood only the language of force.

The Egyptians had hoped that Britain would "eventually realize the consequences of her attitude ... and would submit to the logic of rights and justice. (46) Instead the British preferred to use force and suppressive measures. They bulldozed and raised to the ground the village of 'Kafr Abduh' which was a strong-point of the 'freedom fighters' arguing that it was a 'military necessity'. (47)

45. Al-Misri, 14 November 1951.
46. Speech from the Throne, dated 15 November 1951. See Al-Misri, 16 November 1951; also The Egyptian Gazette of the same date.
47. Al-Ahram, The Egyptian Gazette, 8, 9 and 10 December 1951. See also The Manchester Guardian, 10 December 1951.
This act of 'atrocity' sparked off the Egyptian resentment to the highest pitch. Ibrahim Faraq Pasha, acting Foreign Minister, described the incident as 'symbolizing the unspeakable atrocities acts of brutal force perpetrated by British occupation forces in the fatherland. (48) Salah Eddin Pasha wrote to the Secretary-General of United Nations Trygve Lie, protesting against the demolition of 75 houses at Kafr Abduh which, he declared, had been carried out "heedless of political, legal or human rights of inhabitants", and which he described as "an extremely serious and flagrant violation of the purposes and principles of the U.N." (49)

The Egyptian Cabinet held an emergency meeting and unanimously resolved to recall their Ambassador from London "as a protest against aggression by the British forces in the Canal Zone." (50)

Nahas Pasha declared in a broadcast to the nation that Egypt would not stand idle in the face of British aggression and that British "tyranny" would have "far-reaching consequences". (51)


51. Al-Misri, 12 December 1951.
The 'Supreme Guide' of the Moslem Brotherhood, Hodeiby Bey issued a statement calling on his followers to intensify the campaign against the British. (52)

By the close of the year hatred of Great Britain was apparent everywhere in Egypt. The National Liberation Army mainly consisting of enthusiastic students and other young men, organised resistance movements and fought pitched battles with the British regulars. Demonstrations and strikes became daily scenes in all major towns of the country. The situation seemed to her practically getting out of control. Nevertheless, Great Britain still seemed adamant on maintaining its position despite 20,000,000 people of Egypt determined to put them out. (53)

On returning from London on 31 December 1952 after consultation with the Government, General Robertson made a statement which further embittered the already existing tension and made the Egyptians more steadfast in their basic demand of evacuation of their country and the Sudan under the Egyptian Crown. The statement, given below, was not merely a restatement of British policy but also threatened to silence the Egyptians by force if they continued their present struggle:

As the Foreign Secretary has made plain on many occasions HM Government are determined to press forward with the Four-Power proposals. ... Until such an arrangement is made HM Government will uphold our position in the Canal Zone and maintain the freedom of International waterways of the Canal, not for any reason of selfish interest but as our contribution to the defence of the free world.

52. Al-Misri, 17 December 1951.
53. The Egyptian Gazette, 3 January 1952.
He warned:

It would be a great mistake for any one to imagine that pressure and terrorism with their inevitable consequences, will in any way affect our resolve. If necessary we shall go on month after month, for many months, if need be shall meet force with force. ... We have sufficient force at our disposal and we have the support of other countries. No one should be misled into thinking that we shall be turned from our policy by the passage of time or murderous episode. (54)

Prime Minister Nahas Pasha replied in matching tone of determination and finality. He in fact expressed the feelings of the entire Egyptian people when he replied General Robertson's statement by saying:

We are not worried by such threats and we are ready to use force in reply to force. We are determined to attain our aims and to realize our national claims. (55)

Thus encouraged by the firm backing of Churchill's Government, General Erskine became bolder and ordered complete evacuation of all civilian population of the village Kafr Abduh and also the entire locality overlooking the Sweet Water Canal from which British convoys had been reportedly ambushed. This caused great hardship and misery to 'hundreds of Egyptian families' - all this "to arouse security to his forces." (56)

The Egyptian Government strongly protested against the British operations which Sirajuddin Pasha later described to a Press Conference as "out of all proportion to the alleged

54. The Egyptian Gazette, 1 January 1952; The Times, 1 January 1952.
55. Al-Ahram, 1 January 1952.
provocation: the British had thrown women and children "destitute and half clothed" into the streets and taken them to prison camps, had desecrated a mosque and a cemetery, had "loosed savage dogs on unarmed people" and had killed wounded, or flogged large numbers of the Egyptians. He added that as events had passed beyond the stage where mere protests were adequate, forcible resistance would be the only alternative. (57)

Against this official threat, the British Commander in Ismailia wished to clear the city of all armed Egyptian personnel including the police and gendarmerie posted there. In fact he planned a straight-forward occupation of the city. He, therefore, first moved his troops into the town and trained guns on police headquarters and then handed in an ultimatum to the Egyptian sub-Governor demanding that the police should surrender without arms, evacuate the government buildings and compound and depart from the city. But surrender in this manner would have been a shame. The men surrounded by British tanks and troops were policemen by profession but they were Egyptians too.

There was hardly any chance of their resisting the British show of tremendous force with bare rifles for any length of time but they did possess sufficient courage and spirit of sacrifice to face the situation boldly. The Minister of Interior encouraged them by telephonic message 'to resist to the bullet'. So they turned down the ultimatum and fought the onslaught of the British armoured cars until 50 of them were dead and 100

wounded and the building shattered to pieces by bombardment from heavy guns of the British tanks. (58)

E. CAIRO PUT ON FLAMES

The news of the tragedy caused an spontaneous and unprecedented outbreak of violence in Cairo. (59) The entire population was insensed at the British action. The young enthusiasts of Al Azhar and the Cairo University, the infuriated Buluq en Nizam and the extremists organised mass-demonstrations and demanded 'arms to fight for the Canal', and 'reparisals for the fate of their comrades at Ismailiya. (60) The orthodox 'Ikhwans' and the Communists, though diametrically opposed to each other in their ideological context, joined hands for a common purpose. (61)

The nationalist campaign against the British took serious turn in the afternoon of the 'Black Saturday' - the 26th of January 1952 when a section of the excited demonstrators resorted to violence and started destructive activities. The British owned or patronised clubs, shops, Casinos, bars and cinemas were


60. Al-Misri, Al-Ahram, 27 January 1952.

61. S.A. Morrison, Middle East Tensions (New York, 1954), Chapter 7; also Walter Z. Lacquer, Nationalism and Communism.
ablazed and gutted, including the world-famous Shepheard's Hotel. It was almost a state of anarchy wherein looting, rioting, killing and chaos became the order of the remaining hours of the 'terrible day'. By the time the Egyptian troops entered the city to bring the situation under control, over 750 establishments had been burnt or destroyed, at least thirty people lost their lives in which 11 were British and other foreign nationals, and several hundred others were injured. (62)

These acts of violence and sabotage by individuals and small groups were not merely an outburst of 'emotional nationalism' but the culmination of nearly seventy years of unequal and uncherished relationship between Great Britain and Egypt. A number of Western scholars, historians and journalists (63) have, however, tried to define this expression of Egypt's hate and anger over the entire British conduct - past and present, as only an indication of the common man's dissatisfaction with the working of the local administration and its inability to successfully deal with the problems of high prices and shortage.

62. For a fuller account the events of 26 January which is now nicknamed as 'Black Saturday' and for an analysis of the factors causing delay in bringing in the army to control situation, see Lacouture, op.cit., Chapter XII; also St. John, op.cit., Chapter VII; Survey 1951, pp. 288-90. Also, "Crisis in Egypt and Persia", World Today, September 1952, The Times, 26 January 1952.

of essential articles of domestic needs such as oil, sugar and bread; that the Wafd leaders had deliberately and purposely fanned up the trouble to divert the attention of the masses from the corruption and unsatisfactory handling of administration; that the King was again looking for an opportunity to break his alliance with the Wafdists and dismiss their government which the latter could avoid or at least get postponed for some time by fomenting a crisis against the British; that the King, in his turn, was intending to use the breakdown of order as a pretext to oust the Government and, for this purpose, he delayed sending troops into the streets of Cairo to restore order.

While these were the facts of Egypt’s domestic politics, they were not the dominant factors responsible for the crisis in her relations with Britain towards the end of January. To the Egyptians, settlement of outstanding questions of their relations with Great Britain was more important than such petty issues of local marketing process and control of prices. Egypt was afire with the desire for full freedom and restoration of national dignity. During the past several years, the success and survival of Governments had depended more on its ability or failure to fulfil the promise of realising national objectives. The Wafd in 1951-52 was so strong and popular that its survival could not have been affected by temporary shortage of some consumer goods or allegations of unfair practices in the administration.
Such charges had been brought earlier also against the Wafd Government by its dissident member, Markra Ebied, but despite that the Wafd had been returned to power by overwhelming majority in the last elections. Its success at the polls was not because of its promise of social reforms and economic improvements, but mainly because of its pledge to secure complete withdrawal of alien army and influence from their country.

To suggest that the 1951-52 revolt of the people against Britain and the West was merely the result of their disappointment with the King and the Government to give a clean administration, is to belittle or underestimate their nationalist fervour. Certain irresponsible and unpardonable acts on the part of certain irresponsible characters who always join in such a campaign, nevertheless, do not change its nationalist character of motivation.

What happened in Cairo on 26 January, though morally bad, was not a pre-planned revenge. The targets were not earmarked in advance. The whole thing was an spontaneous expression of accumulated resentment of the people. The sufferings and victimisation of their fellow-countrymen in the Suez Canal area at the hands of the British troops were the immediate and grave provocation that led to violent manifestation of their disapproval and protest. The Wafd's responsibility was that it had not fully anticipated the nature and extent of British reactions to its decision of abrogation of the 1936 Treaty and, therefore, made no provision for the protection and care of the
inhabitants of the Suez Canal Zone. Many who fled from their homes after the British forces had turned the whole area into a virtual theatre of war, described how they were subjected to innumerable atrocities committed by desperate British troops, many innocent people killed, their homes pillaged, their places of worship desecrated which aroused the listeners of Cairo to cries of revenge. (64)

F. DISMISSAL OF NAHAS PASHA AND THE END OF MONARCHY IN EGYPT

The burning of Cairo and the alleged failure of the Government to prevent 'acts of genuine nationalist sentiments' being turned into acts of terrorism, gave King Faruk the desired chance to dismiss Nahas Pasha's Government on 27 January and call on Ali Maher, reputed 'strong man' of Egyptian politics, to form a new Government. (65)

Ali Maher's first important task was to restore order in public life and arrange for security for all and thus to prevent British troops from moving into Cairo to protect the life and property of British and other foreign nationals in the

64. See, Bourse Egyptienne, 24 January 1952, quoted in Survey 1951, p. 289. Also The Times, 24 January 1952. See also Mustafa Ala, Egypt Between Revolutions (Cairo), Chapter IV; also Al-Misri, 10 February 1952.

65. Al-Ahram, 28 January 1952; The Times, 28 January 1952. Ali Maher had been Prime Minister of Egypt in 1936 and 1939-40. He had had Faruk's confidence through many vicissitudes since the beginning of his reign in 1936. For details see, The Middle East in the War, op.cit., pp. 33-40, 199-212.
town. He tried to win the support and sympathy of the nation by assuring that he would strive "to achieve the evacuation of British troops and the unity of the Nile Valley - the two national objectives which all previous governments had at heart." (66) At the same time he expressed his readiness to reopen discussion with the four powers on the question of Middle East defence. (67) Answering Press reporters on 30 January and again on 4 February, he said:

We are ready to consider any understanding Mr. Eden might propose. ... It is my wish that a healthy atmosphere for a better understanding should prevail between Egypt and Britain and Powers of the Free World. The Middle East Command and the inter-Arab Security Pact will be matters for discussion with the Egyptian National Front (which consisted of the Saadists, the Liberal constitutionalists and the Wafdists). Both these questions will, naturally, be in the framework of the UN Charter. (68)

He also agreed to try and punish all those found guilty of neglecting their duty to prevent violence or participated in it, and promised compensation to those who suffered during the recent 'rioting'. He also ordered the withdrawal of all 'National Liberation Squads' and other volunteers from the


Canal Zone and to resume regular transport services and other facilities to the British troops. It was a good start and there were hopes that the two Governments would renew conversations and would arrive at some acceptable solution of their conflicting issues. Great Britain had not failed to appreciate the gesture of the Egyptian Government. The British Commanding Officer had withdrawn restrictions on civilian movement in the zone and released many Egyptians taken into custody since October last. (69)

The reappointment of Amer Pasha to his former position as Ambassador in London, from where he had been recalled by the Wafdists in December last was quite an indication that he seriously meant business. (70) He received the British Ambassador in a very cordial and friendly manner when the latter called on him. Both discussed the possibility of opening formal negotiations for a settlement of the Anglo-Egyptian dispute. Both agreed to begin with a 'clean slate'. The British diplomat was understood to have been advised by London to assure in advance that every Egyptian suggestion would receive 'most careful consideration' by His Majesty's Government. (71)

69. The Times, 6 February 1952; Al-Misri, 5 and 6 February 1952; Mideast Mirror, 9 February 1952.

70. Middle Eastern Affairs, 1953, p. 97; Mideast Mirror, 23 February 1952, pp. 1-3; Mustafa Ala, op.cit., p. 112; EL-Barawy, op.cit., p. 180; Tom Little, op.cit., p. 110.

71. Mideast Mirror, 1 March 1952, p. 2.
On the Egyptian side, there was a marked change in their basic approach to all the outstanding issues involving relations with Great Britain. Maher's Government showed its readiness to consider the question of evacuation, and the Sudan's unity with Egypt in the context of regional strategy and security. The preceding Egyptian Government had not been prepared to consider regional defence until its demands had been fully accepted.

The statement made by the influential legal adviser to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr. Wahid Raafat Bey was of great importance in this regard. He frankly stated that the Egyptian question no longer concerned Egypt and Britain alone. He was obviously advocating that regional security Pact should replace bilateral arrangement, i.e., the 1936 Treaty. He referred to the proposal of the Iraqi Premier, Nuri Pasha, that the Arab League Security Pact should be opened to permit the association of other Powers.

He believed that a defence pact for the Middle East based on the following principles could be acceptable to the Government and the people of Egypt:

1. The British forces should evacuate the Canal Zone within a period not more than 12 months from the day the pact was signed.

2. The military base which is now occupied by the British should be handed over to the Egyptian forces.

3. The Egyptian authorities would be responsible for maintaining the base in readiness for use immediately there is foreign aggression.

4. The help of foreign experts, regardless of their nationality, could be sought for the maintenance of the base.
5. A regional defence Pact between the Arab States on one side and America, Britain, France and Turkey on the other, should be concluded.

6. These Western Powers should supply the Arab forces with all war material and equipment.

7. A defence council to coordinate military plans should be formed.

8. Troops of a foreign allied country should not occupy the land of another country except in time of war and should evacuate immediately the war is ended.

9. Aid given by the Arab States in war-time should be restricted to the Middle East region alone. (72)

This statement seemed to have narrowed the field of dispute because it confirmed that there existed a certain degree of unity of intentions on both sides.

But Maher's disagreement with the King on the question of dissolution of the Parliament, led to the postponement of negotiations with Great Britain, as he had resigned from Premiershipl on 1 March. (73)

His successor, Ahmed Neguib El Hilali, a former Minister of Education in 1937 and again in 1942, who had broken with the Wafd party after 1950's election, agreed with the King to dissolve the Parliament, exile Sirajuddin and place entire responsibility of the events of 26th January and those preceding that day on the Wafdists. (74) He put many persons on trial.

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72. Al-Ahram, 28 February 1952; also Mideast Mirror, 1 March 1952, pp. 2-3.

73. Al-Ahram, 2 March 1952; Anwar El Sadat, op.cit., p. 106; also Survey 1952, p. 204.

74. Al-Ahram, 2, 3 and 8 March 1952; The Egyptian Gazette, 25 March 1952. See also Report of the Prosecutor-General of investigations of the 'Black Saturday' which held the
and sent many to jail including Ahmed Hussain, founder leader of the Arab Socialist Party.

These measures were bound to alienate all political parties from the Government. Ali Maher had wished to avoid this situation by declining to take such unwelcome measures at a time when 'the prospect of reaching agreement with Great Britain were much nearer than at any time in the past'. It was mainly for this purpose that he had created a 'United National Front' and asked for the unanimous support of both the Houses of the Chamber. He had thus tried to prevent 'disunity' by retaining the Parliament. Though he denounced the negligence of those generally responsible for the situation, he took no action against them, and did not agree to break the Wafd. Hilali lacked Maher's political grasp and created rift in the national unity. This weakened his position in dealing with the British successfully, despite the fact that he shared and pursued the policy of his predecessor.

Thus, the exploratory discussions on Egypt's political relations with Great Britain between Premier Hilali and Ambassador Stevenson began in a confused domestic atmosphere. After the abrogation of the Parliament, new elections were to be held within two months of the dissolution. And, in the elections, the Wafd's victory was a foregone conclusion. The Palace and prominent figures in Egypt's social and political circles were

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74. (cont'd. from back page)

Wafd Government responsible for failing to anticipate and to take precautions against those incidents. See, Mideast Mirror, 15 March 1952, pp. 1-5; El Sadat, op.cit., p. 106.
also not appreciate Hilali's programme of eradication of corruption from public life. (75) Hilali's Government was, therefore, a weak Government of uncertain tenure with no support from the Palace or the parties. The masses too were not particularly impressed by his promises of a clean and stable administration because of his severe punitive actions against popular leaders for their participation in the recent 'national agitation'. (76) The British Ambassador was aware of the weaknesses of Hilali's Government and, therefore, wouldn't go to the extent of making real and conclusive deal with him.

Nevertheless the two Governments tried to prepare a ground for further talks under more suspicious circumstances in future. During several meetings held in Cairo and London between March and June 1952, both sides adopted an attitude of accommodation and adjustment with each other's objectives and commitments to their respective peoples. (77) For a while it

75. Anwar El Sadat writes in his book Revolt on the Nile that Karim Tabet, Faruk's press officer, and Elias Androos, of the Palace clique, could think of no better plan to ask the United States Ambassador, Jefferson Caffery, to help them overthrow Hilali. This move was characteristic of the political morality of the last days of the old regime, when it was considered quite natural to invite the intervention of a foreign power in Egyptian affairs. This story was told to Galal Hammy, my colleague of the newspaper Al-Gomhourya, by the distinguished diplomat himself at a farewell dinner on his return to the United States." p. 107.


77. See Mideast Mirror, 22 March to 30 June 1952. See also Egyptian Gazette and Al-Misri (Cairo) and The Times (London), of the same period for editorial comments and articles from political reviewers; also see Survey 1952, pp. 205-8.
seemed that London was willing to consider the evacuation of the Canal Zone on the ground that Hilali Pasha was understood to have accepted in principle the idea of:

1. Joint planning of defence measures which would become operative in the event of an international emergency threatening the security of Egypt;

2. Anglo-Egyptian cooperation in air defence; and

3. the employment of British technicians in the Canal Zone. (78)

Similarly on the question of the Sudan it was indicated from the British side that Britain had no objection to the Egyptian Crown having sovereignty over the Sudan and Egypt "as long as the Sudanese agree." Sir Stevenson gave the impression that what HM Government refused to do was to make a unilateral statement committing herself to a recognition of that sovereignty. It, therefore, seemed probable that if the two sides agreed on a practical method of ascertaining the Sudanese opinion, the controversy would be resolved to the satisfaction of all.

The Egyptian Government, however, could not modify its demand of recognition of the King's title to the Sudan now with the proviso that the Sudanese should have the right to determine their relations with Egypt eventually.

Their talks, however, could not continue further because of new political and legal complications having been created by the developments in the Sudan. The Sudan administration

presented to the Legislative Assembly, on 2 April, a draft statute of self-government based on the work of the constitutional commission which had been set up in March 1951. This draft statute had provided for immediate elections of a legislature and the formation of an all-Sudanese Government, but reserved substantial discretionary powers to the British Governor-General during the period of transition until the Sudanese people exercised their right freely to determine their future relationship with Egypt and Great Britain. (79)

The new constitution was subject to the approval of both Egypt and Great Britain, the co-domini, after its acceptance by the Assembly in Khartoum. But from the Egyptian point of view the co-domini status for both Egypt and Britain had been done away with by the abrogation of the 1936 Treaty and the 1899 Condominium Agreements in October last. The Government and the entire people in Egypt were committed to uphold their constitutional position. They could not lawfully assume responsibilities in that capacity and consider the value or otherwise of a constitution which had been formulated under an administration whose de jure rights they considered to have vanished under their own acts of abrogation.

The Government of Egypt was seriously annoyed at the turn of events and straightaway refused to recognize the validity and propriety of the Governor-General's action. (80) The Al-Ahram

80. Al-Misri, 4 April 1952.
warned that "the next few days, nay, the next few hours" would prove decisive in Anglo-Egyptian relations. (81) The Egyptians generally believed that the announcement by the Governor-General of the proposed new constitution at such a time was a direct affront to the Egyptian Government and showed that the Sudan Government's British chief saw no reason to obey the British Government or the latter was itself party to this intransigence. Most columnists in the dailies of Cairo and the pro-Egyptian Khartoum Press felt that the London Foreign Office had its hand in timing the presentation of the draft law before the Khartoum Assembly. (82) They felt that Britain was intent on carrying out its policy of separating the southern region from the north of the Nile Valley. They argued that there was not much point in proceeding with talks on the Sudan when the Sudan administration was proceeding with its own anti-Egyptian policy as was evident from its latest actions.

It would be of some interest to mention here that the American Ambassador in Cairo, Jefferson Caffery, whose main interest was to see that both Egypt and Great Britain reconcile their differences in the overriding interest of the defence of the free world, seriously urged British recognition of Egyptian sovereignty over the Sudan which would be merely nominal until the Sudanese people had exercised their right of self-determination. But the Foreign Office accepted the view of the Sudan's

81. Al-Ahram, 30 April 1952.
82. Mideast Mirror, April, May and June 1952.
Governor-General that the niceties of 'nominal sovereignty' were too subtle for a politically immature people, and that the question of the King of Egypt's title during the interim period should be made the object of 'immediate consultation with the Sudanese'. (83)

Neguib el Hilali had sincerely hoped and tried to consolidate his position by coming to terms with Great Britain, but as the latter was not prepared to modify her stand on the question of the Sudan, he failed in his objective and resigned on 28 June. Domestic pressures, including Palace-intrigues against him, (84) were no less important factors impelling his unceremonious exit from politics. (85)

After Neguib el Hilali's resignation the question of Egypt's relations with Great Britain and other matters of external nature were pushed into abeyance until a new revolutionary Junta of younger army officers came at the helm of affairs in late July 1952. Meanwhile, problems and intrigues of national politics dominated the scene. The King and the political leaders remained preoccupied with asserting their positions against each other. The King was exasperated to learn that his 'true-self' has been exposed to the people and that his


85. Al-Ahram, 29 June 1952; The Egyptian Gazette of the same date.
subjects hate him for his sinful life and irresponsible conduct of public affairs. (86) The new officers made him abdicate from the throne and exiled him from the country to which he really never belonged.

With his sailing away from the shores of Alexandria on board 'Al Mahroussa' on 26 July the past of Egypt, dominated by self-centred monarchs and corrupt politicians, was drowned into the sea. Egypt was reborn that day to begin its new life. (87)

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86. For full description of King Faruk's shameful private life and highly irresponsible, corrupt and dishonest conduct of the affairs of the state in which nobody's life, wealth and honour was safe, see Rasheed el Barawy, op.cit., Chapters 12 and 13; Lacouture, op.cit., Part II, Chapter I; Tom Little, op.cit., p. 111; also Survey 1952, p. 211; Mustafa Ala, op.cit., pp. 116-22.

87. Al-Ahram, The Egyptian Gazette, 27 July 1952. See also The Times, 27 February 1952; also Mohammed Moustafa Ala, Egyptians Between Two Revolutions (Cairo, 1952), p. 122.