

AGAINST COLONIAL OPPRESSION

The Revolt in Egypt and the Treachery of the Wafd.

By J. B. (Jerusalem).

Law and order has again "triumphed" in Egypt. A powerful wave of popular revolt has been beaten back by the intervention of military forces. Many hundreds of killed and wounded form the bloody balance of the July fights which took place in Bilbeis, Klausurah, Alexandria, Cairo, Port Said and Suez. The revolt of the Egyptian people has not, for the time being, achieved any of its aims; British imperialism, with its creatures Fuad and Sidky Pasha, has maintained its positions for the present. Nevertheless, the July revolt of Egypt represents an important episode in the fight for emancipation of the Egyptian masses, an important link in the chain of colonial revolutions which characterise the years 1929/30, an unmistakable prelude to new fights for emancipation.

The Egyptian revolt has shown that British rule on the Nile and on the Suez Canal is anything but firm; it has resulted in a further shaking of the British Empire, already undermined by the Indian revolution, the disturbances in the colonies and mandatory territories and the economic crisis at home. The fact that during the fights in Alexandria and Cairo only Egyptian troops were employed against the excited masses, that the British soldiers and the hastily dispatched warships of MacDonald were too late to intervene, does not alter the fact that in reality it was only the **British** occupation which decided the issue for Sidky and Fuad and against the masses. The first retreat of the Egyptian troops would have led, as Henderson — who talked so much about British "neutrality" and non-intervention in the inner affairs of Egypt — was obliged to confess, to the immediate intervention of the British army. Its presence and readiness, quite apart from the fact that the Egyptian army is under British control, decided the fate of the revolt. This was understood before all by the Egyptian masses; for the cry: "Faljahze istiklat mass" (Long live Egyptian **independence!**), which was the ever recurring central slogan, showed that they instinctively knew and recognised the real enemy behind the figure heads of Fuad and Sidky, and that their anger was directed before all against British imperialism.

What, now, was the role of the Wafd? It made use of the indignation of the masses by placing itself at the head of the movement which broke out **spontaneously** everywhere. After the resignation of Nahas Pasha and his conflict with the king had become in fact, but **against** the will of the Wafd leaders, the **signal** for a rising of the people, it endeavoured to get the latter as quickly as possible into its hands. As long as it could it preached discipline, law and order. When, however, the mass demonstrations assumed a threatening character, when the peasants began to stream into the towns, when the first collisions had taken place and the police stations stormed, when the crowd received the troops sent against them with showers of stones and improvised "bombs" — bottles filled with sand —, the popular revolt was already in full swing — then the Wafd hastened to accept the new situation and to divert the mass movement, which was directed on the much farther aim of complete emancipation, into the channel of constitutional demands. This was done with the clear and definite intention, which was to be plainly seen at every political turn, of putting the brake on the movement as much as possible, of preparing the way for negotiations, and of not losing contact with MacDonald, who on his part was fully aware of the non-revolutionary character of the Wafd leaders, and not letting the revolutionary outbreaks spread to a sphere where, in view of the increased self-confidence of the masses, they would get out of the control of the Wafd leaders, raise social questions and give rise to revolutionary slogans.

The Wafd leadership is no less responsible for the crushing of the popular revolt of July 1930 than the ruthless

terrorism of Ismail Sidky and the imperialism of MacDonald. The masses were in the fight; they were determined to carry it on to the last consequences. The slaughter in Mansurah and Alexandria had led to a general strike, and in spite of the fact that the Egyptian masses are badly armed, and in spite of the sending of warships against them, there was to be expected a fresh storm of tens and hundreds of thousands. Trembling, the imperialist Powers (Italy etc.) who claim to have interests in Egypt, and the "European" papers published in Cairo, issued panicky news on the approaching new outbreak, and even the "dictator" himself considered his troops and their equipment insufficient in the event of serious outbreaks.

Then the Wafd came to the rescue: the Wafd leaders fixed the day for the revolution! The Wafd determined that on 21st of July Parliament should meet "under any circumstances"; the mass storm should be held back until that day. The restoration of the rights of Parliament was the Wafd's slogan to the masses, and the day of the fight therefor was openly fixed. Instead of sporadic demonstrations — concentric attack, instead of spontaneous revolt — purposeful revolution. The bourgeois leadership of the Wafd understood perfectly how it could deceive the masses at the decisive moment.

In the night of 21st of July — Sidky Pasha had already done everything that lay in his power; had concentrated all the military forces at his disposal, fortified all government positions and was ready for the decisive battle — the Wafd held a consultation; its result was abominable betrayal. Against the opposition of the radical petty-bourgeois wing it was decided, "in order to avoid bloodshed", to drop the Parliamentary meeting on 21st of July and instead, to submit a humble petition to his majesty King Fuad, begging him to convene an extraordinary session on the 26th of July. That meant, in the situation then existing in Egypt, complete retreat. It meant that the masses who were to be led into the fight on July 21st, were delivered over without a fight to Sidky's hirelings. The capitulation of the Wafd was all the more shameful as it was perfectly clear **beforehand** that the king would reject the petition; the whole manoeuvre obviously served as a **pretext** for avoiding a collision with the dictatorship.

That the Wafd then, after the rejection of their demand by the king (whose prestige was restored precisely by the treachery of the Wafd) even on the 26th of July did not summon the masses to revolt, but convened its deputies to a meeting held during the night in a private building, in order to make the gesture of protesting against Sidky — that Nahas Pasha, in his reply to MacDonald's "warning", anxiously assured him that law and order and the "property of foreigners" would be protected at all costs — is only the logical continuation of the treachery of 21st of July.

The treachery of the Wafd, however, has in no way succeeded in allaying the revolutionary excitement of the Egyptian masses. On the contrary, the revolutionary pressure of the toilers in the towns and villages still continues. After cases of spontaneous refusal to pay taxes are to be recorded in various villages in lower Egypt, the Wafd is now itself compelled to place on the agenda the question of proclaiming general "civil disobedience". There arises from this, however, a number of fresh conflicts which are bound to lead to further collisions. The discontent with the Wafd leaders must in the course of the revolutionary struggles lead to the formation of a new leadership of the masses capable of coping with the revolutionary tasks and pursuing a correct path to the victory of the Egyptian workers and peasants.

This way is shown by the appeal of the Communist Party of Egypt, which appeared in the middle of July and was distributed among the Egyptian workers. It is directed against the dictatorship of Sidky Pasha, but at the same time stigmatises the treachery of the nationalist leaders and shows that the real emancipation of the Egyptian masses can only be achieved when the national emancipation of Egypt is linked up with the social emancipation of the workers and toiling peasants. The new activity of the C. P. of Egypt affords good prospects for the approaching period of the revolutionary upsurge in a country whose anti-imperialist fight forms a serious danger to the British Empire, which is based on oppression and exploitation.