

THE COLONIES

Egypt, the Key to the British World Empire

By *Ariel*.

The acute crisis through which European capitalism is passing is felt throughout the orient. While in Europe the capitalist system of economics is in a state of complete dissolution, and the separate bourgeoisies are preparing fresh military enterprises which will increase the extent of the collapse, colonial capitalism in the orient sees its foundations threatened by the awakening of the subjugated peoples. The colonial imperial powers are threatened everywhere by two strong revolutionary forces, which, to a great extent, work together—the movement for national independence and the action of the native workers. The vast masses of workers and peasants in the colonial and semi-colonial countries, starved by foreign capitalism and native feudalism alike, are marching forward on the road to emancipation. The path which they have to follow is strewn with the victims of a merciless reaction. The fight which they have to carry on on two battle-fronts—against the foreign intruders and against the brutal native bourgeoisie—is beset with difficulties. But the workers and peasants of the East are entering determinedly into the ranks of the anti-capitalist fighting front, under the leadership of the Communist International, and allied with their brothers, the workers of Europe. The shining example set by the Russian proletariat, the first to shake off the yoke of slavery, is ever before them, and the aid afforded by Soviet Russia to Turkey, and to the oppressed peoples of the East, has caused every sympathy to be given, and all hopes to be set, on Russia.

Since 1919, English imperialism and the Egyptian people have been fighting an obstinate battle in Egypt. This struggle is of great importance, first, on account of the determination with which the whole Egyptian people is fighting for its emancipation, and secondly because the geographical position of Egypt, and the importance of the Suez canal render this the most sensitive spot of the British world empire. Egypt controls the maritime route to India, it is the central point where Africa and Asia meet, it is the strategic stronghold of English imperialism in North Africa and Syria; at the same time it is England's military basis in the Eastern Mediterranean against Turkey,

and the great cotton supplier for the textile industry of Manchester;—Egypt is the key to that empire on which the sun never sets. The emancipation of Egypt would be a stab in the heart of the British empire. The whole system of British imperialism would be shaken, and one pillar of world capitalism would be overthrown. For this reason, the struggle being conducted by the Egyptian people for its emancipation is one of immense significance for the international proletariat. The revolution which is to overthrow London must go by way of India and Egypt.

What can give national independence to the Egyptians? Nothing but the proletarian revolution of the great productive masses of the Egyptian people, a revolution at once political and social, will be able to secure the real independence of the country. Any other independence would be disappointment or delusion.

The *Wafd el Masri* movement, under the leadership of Saad Taglul, does not, in reality, aim at fighting England—despite the people's enthusiasm for this movement, and despite the English persecution of Saad—it only seeks to make a compromise. This party is led by rich bourgeois elements and is the organization of the large land-owners and Egyptian capitalists. These, on the one hand, are the competitors of English banking and commercial capital, but on the other hand, their own class interests prevent them from desiring a complete break with England. What they are striving for is an independence with England's agreement. This is shown by Saad's proposals, and the repeated declarations that England's special rights at the Suez canal and in the Soudan are to be recognized. This moderate movement was first forced to the left by the Egyptian people at its great demonstrations in 1919—1920, which were dispersed by English cannon and machine guns. At the same time England's clumsy policy of persecuting Saad converted him into a popular figure. But in its fight for national independence, the Egyptian people will find itself faced by its class enemies; not only by the court, by King Fuad, and by the higher bureaucracy, but also by the large bourgeoisie, for whom the problem of national independence consists of its desire to possess a monopoly in the exploitation of the Egyptian working masses. What allies has the Egyptian people in its struggle against English oppression, except Soviet Russia, and the international proletariat gathered around the flag of the III. International? The struggle of the Egyptian people for independence is an expressly anti-capitalist struggle. All the banks in Egypt, except the small Masri bank, are foreign banks, in which English capital dominates. The cotton market is ruled by English financiers, behind whom there stand the textile industrial undertakings of Lancashire. The state finances are under the control of the English financial advisor. And a great part of the cultivated land in Egypt and the Soudan is burdened with mortgages held by foreign banks.

The left wing of the nationalists (*Hishb el Watani*), which is composed of petty bourgeois elements, and stands for the complete independence of Egypt, believes that it can carry on the struggle against England on a national basis alone, by exploiting the antagonism of the various imperialisms. But these are childish ideas. The various European states are inclined to let Egyptian nationalism take part in the imperialist game on condition that Egyptian nationalism will not make any serious stir, and does not threaten the status quo. The Egyptian nationalists had proof of this during the revolutionary movement of 1920. Scarcely had the revolt become threatening in character, when the European colonies in Alexandria demanded English intervention. It is to the common interest of all colonial imperialisms, French, Italian or English, to stand by one another against the national claims of oppressed peoples. The antagonisms existing in the international politics of England, Italy, and France, do not prevent these states from forming a united front against the populations of Syria and Egypt, when these demand national independence. In Egypt, the French, Italian, and Greek capitalists gather round the dominant English imperialism, to protect their privileges, and to suppress any Egyptian revolts. The English bayonet protects international capitalism and native feudalism in their exploitation of 40 millions of workers and fellahs, and there is only one way of combatting this effectively: an alliance of the Egyptian workers with the petty bourgeoisie. This alliance would clear the parasites of international capital, and the native exploiters, out of Egypt at one blow. Every other solution exhibiting a national program is merely deception, an attempt on the part of the Egyptian bourgeoisie to blind the proletariat. Under the mask of a false independence, the attempt is being made to sabotage the real efforts of the proletariat toward national freedom, to throw obstacles in the way of the proletarian struggle for economic emancipation, and to lead the working masses more securely than ever to the hands of the native and foreign bourgeoisie.