POLITICS

The Advance of the British against the British “Middle East”.

By J. B. (Jerusalem).

The quest for oil wells and cheaper cotton is, apart from the striving for favourable fields for capital investment, the main driving force of imperialism in that extensive area which, in the terminology of British colonial politicians, is described as “the Middle East”, and the territories stretching from the Western frontier of India, over Afghanistan, Persia, Iraq, Syria, Palestine, Arabia, Egypt and the Sudan down to Abyssinia. Since the end of the war, British imperialism has taken the undisputed lead in the great race of the rivals in the “Middle East”. Great Britain has not only secured the political rule, or at least the decisive influence in all these countries (if we disregard the very shaky French domination in Syria and the insignificant influence of Italy in Yemen) and in this way built the famous “land bridge” to India, but at least set up its scaffolding — but also British capital is far in advance economically of that of its rivals.

The attempts of the other European competitors, so far as they related immediately to oil wells or securing areas for cotton planting, were everywhere comparatively easily defeated. The British policy of subvention of Mosul oil; the Italian appetite in Abyssinia was sated for the time being by the agreement of 1920, which aroused great excitement at the time, as well as by small slices of territory at the cost of Egypt and in Southern Arabia.

During the past year, however, a new competitor has made its appearance, which is equipped with incomparably greater means than any of the European States, has a correspondingly greater appetite and is therefore by far the greatest danger for British economic imperialism: the capitalists of the United States are stretching out their hands after the Middle East.

It should be pointed out at the same time that this new rival has been impossible to frighten or to put off, and, to use the phrase of one of the diplomats, is proceeding very cautiously, slowly and tentatively. The foreign policy of the United States at present reflects only to a quite unnoticeable extent the activity of the economic combines, hence the greater the activity of these combines themselves.

When a British company obtained the concession for the exploitation of the oil wells on the Farsan islands (in the Red Sea, west of the coast of Asir) participators from the United States came in, and in the same year the development of Mosul was undertaken by a British and an American company jointly.

United States capital is participating in the oil wells recently discovered on the West coast of the Red Sea, on Egyptian territory, and which are said to be fairly rich.

In the year 1926 a number of engineers from the United States were very busy in Transjordania making borings after oil. In November 1926 capital from the United States was likewise taking part in the borings for oil commenced by the French in the Alaukit district.

A specially fierce struggle was waged in the course of the last few years between the Turkish Petroleum Company, representing British capital (Shell concern with Deterring at the head), and the Standard Oil Company (American oil capital) for the exploitation of the oil fields in Iraq, particularly in Mosul. It was only in the last few weeks, after all the attempts of the British to keep out the Standard Oil had failed (the declaration of the British Under Secretary of State in Parliament that Mosul oil is only a legend, that there exist no supplies of oil in Iraq worth speaking of, which declaration made the rounds of the European press in the summer of this year, seems according to this declaration to have been, only an episode in the fight of Deterring against Standard Oil!), that an agreement was arrived at, which means in fact a victory for the American claims (the Americans obtained 25%).

In Persia, too, the American companies are constantly pushing their way against the Anglo-Persian Oil Company.

When one considers all these facts one obtains a picture of the situation between the Anglo-British Middle East in the sphere of exploitation of mineral oil. This picture is now supplemented by the American advance in Abyssinia, which in
the last few days has occupied the centre point of interest and
throws a bright light on the second sector of the American
economic front — the cotton interests.

Only recently there appeared from authoritative sources a
report that the American White Corporation had concluded a
contract with the Abyssinian government to build a dam on the
Blue Nile at the place where this leaves Lake Tsana. This
useful engineering undertaking is said to render possible the
irrigation of vast areas of land in Abyssinia which are to be
given over to the cultivation of cotton.

The excitement which spread in Egyptian political and
business circles with the news that America would undertake
to construct a dam on the Blue Nile is quite understandable
when it is pointed out that the quantity of Nile water necessary
for irrigating the cotton areas in Egypt would experience a
considerable reduction by the building of a dam on an arm of
the Blue Nile. The fact that the English laid claim to 300,000
feddans of land in the so-called Djesirah (island between the
Nile tributaries in the Sudan) for cotton planting, already
serious threats to the water supply of Egypt, and the
appearance of a new factor makes this claim even more
serious. Both Great Britain and the United States are
concerned with the further course of politics in the Middle
East, and they have to take up a decided attitude in this
question, for the so-called Russian question was the most
important question for the international proletarian
revolution.

The European powers, Great Britain, and the United
States, are to have the preference in the construction of a dam.
It was officially (by Chamberlain) and semi-officially asserted
that Abyssinia would not grant a concession over the head of
Great Britain, that the question still remains open and that
Britain must at least be assured a share in the carrying out
of this project.

The White Corporation contented itself with simply re-
peting that the concession is a matter which has already been
concluded. The representative of Abyssinia (in Adis Abeba, the
capital of this country, a General Consulate of the United States
is to be established shortly), on his part, calls attention to the
fact that Abyssinia, after Great Britain a year ago concluded an
agreement with Italy behind the back of the Abyssinian govern-
ment (which is still a member of the League of Nations) aiming
at the dividing up of Abyssinia, was compelled to look round
for better and more reliable "friends" than Great Britain.

For the United States at the same time the penetration of Abyssinia
has great importance: it frustrates the British plan of making
the textile industry of Manchester independent of United States
cotton (as well as that of Egypt) by means of extensive
plantations in the Sudan. It renders possible vast prospects for capital
investments in Central Africa, which still remains to be opened
up. At the same time it enables the United States to exert de-
cisive influence on the further course of politics in the Middle
East, for the Lake Tsana concession provides the key not only
for Abyssinian but for Egyptian politics.

The White Corporation, to a great part of the Egyptian nationa-
list movement in the United States are now receiving definite
encouragement. Just at the moment when the negotiations be-
 tween Sarvat Pasha and Chamberlain were approaching their
culmination, a new factor makes its appearance — the United
States. The agitation which the Wall conducted in the United
States was one of the most important factors which expedited
the formal recognition of the independence of Egypt by Great
Britain in the year 1922.

Since then the United States has not let slip any opportu-
nity to express its special position towards the Egyptian na-
tionalist movement and its rejection of the privileged position of
Great Britain in Egypt. The ambassador of the United States,
Dr. Martin Howell, emphasised his hostility to "British impe-
rialism" and his sympathy for Zagul Pasha, his conviction that
Egypt is ripe for real self-administration and for independant
choice of its advisers (who ever now must still be drawn from
the circle of British officials) so strongly that he had to be
called a "Bolshevik." But that did not in the least alter the fundamental attitude of the United States to the Egyptian problems. The American impe-
rialists insist that an alliance with the United States is not
dangerous for Egypt, because the United States is not
aiming at territorial expansion: it is more concerned with
regulating the cotton market.

The advance of the United States now gives Egyptian poli-

cy to a point at which it might be possible to create an alliance with Great Britain against the
American danger, as is proposed by the organ of the Lethe
party and the Liberal Constitutional Party (Sarvat), or to
incline towards the United States, to out the English from the
Sudan and thereby achieve independence, as is advocated by a
portion of the Zagulist and nationalist press.

In any event the affair of the Lake Tsana dam, like the
question of Mosul oil, reveals the rivalry between Great Britain and the United States in the Near East which appears to be gradually becoming the centre-point of the political situation in
two countries.

IN THE INTERNATIONAL

Session of the Presidium of the
E. C. C. I.

Moscow, 24th November 1927.

Yesterday a session of the Presidium of the E. C. of the
C. I. was held. The following questions were on the agenda:
1. the situation in the C. P. of the U. S. S. R.; 2. the
convening of the VI. World Congress of the C. I.; 3. the coming
Congress of the R. P. U.; 4. the preparations for the next
Enlarged Executive session; 5. Indian questions; and 6. report
upon the 9th congress of the C. P. G. B.

In his opening speech comrade Bucharin declared that
ideo logically the Opposition had sunk to menshevism and that
it had expressed differences of a programmatic character, the
Opposition's fractional tactic had therefore turned into that
of a second Party and its tactic had developed from an anti-
Party to an anti-soviet tactic.

Referring to the work of the Opposition in the Comintern,
Bucharin quoted a number of examples to show that the Oppo-
sition was preparing a new organisation embracing both ultra-
left renegades and ultra-right opportunists. The Opposition
wanted to go from the weapon of criticism to criticism with
weapons, but it received a crushing rebuff both from the masses
inside the Party and the whole working class. The C. I. would
have to take up a decided attitude in this question, for the so-
called Russian question was the most important question for
the international proletarian revolution.

In the discussion following upon the speech of comrade
Bucharin, it was emphasised that he could see no possibility
of retaining the Opposition in the Party and considered it
necessary to draw organisational conclusions from the attitude
of the Opposition and lead an ideological struggle against
it with all possible sharpness.

Comrade Smeral pointed out that the Czechoslovakian Party
had insisted upon the necessity of organisational action against
the Opposition even before its latest action on the 7th November.
If the Opposition believed that it could obtain any successes
abroad after its defeat in the Soviet Union, it was deceiving
itself.

Comrade Losovsky declared that the activity of the Oppo-
sition had acted upon the attitude of the Comintern and
all its sections in the direction of the political enlightenment
of the masses concerning the anti-bolshevik theory and practice
of the Opposition, and the taking of organisational measures
against the malicious fractionalists and disruptors.

Comrade Braun read a declaration of the German C. P.
condemning the Opposition and approving of the expulsion of
Trotsky and Zinoviev from the Party. The declaration also
points to the necessity of expelling the other leaders of the Oppo-
the last few days has occupied the centre point of interest and throws a bright light on the second sector of the American economic front — the cotton interests.

Only recently there appeared from authoritative sources a report that the American White Corporations had concluded a contract with the Abyssinian government for the building of a dam on the Blue Nile at the place where this leaves Lake Tsana. This useful engineering undertaking is said to render possible the irrigation of vast areas of land in Abyssinia which are to be given over to the cultivation of cotton.

The excitement which spread in Egyptian political and business circles on account of this news is quite understandable when it is pointed out that the quantity of Nile water necessary for irrigating the cotton areas in Egypt would experience a considerable reduction by the building of a dam on an arm of the Blue Nile. The fact that the English laid claim to 300,000 feedans of land in the so-called Djesirah (island between the Nile tributaries in the Sudan) for cotton planting, already seriously threatened the water supply of Egypt. The danger of lack of water for the Egyptian cotton plantation and the competition of the cheaper Sudanese cotton (the low prices in Sudan are attained by a terrible exploitation of the plantation workers who have to toil like slaves) is the chief reason why the Egyptians always place the Sudan question in the forefront of all negotiations with Great Britain. The building of a dam at Lake Tsana will increase this danger for Egypt still further.

But this will be a danger not only, and not in the first place for Egypt. More exact investigations of the quantities of water supplied by Lake Tsana show that the chief danger of a dam at Lake Tsana is directed not so much against the Egyptian cotton plantations, which receive only a tenth of their requirements of water from the arm of the Nile in question, but much more against the plantations of the British Cotton Growing Association in Sudan.

This circumstance immediately gave the American dam project an anti-British tendency. It was then remembered that Great Britain possesses a treaty concluded with the Abyssinian government as early as 1902, according to which British firms are to have the preference in the construction of the dam. It was officially (by Chamberlain) and semi-officially asserted that Abyssinia would not grant a concession over the head of Great Britain, that the question still remains open and that Britain must at least be assured a share in the carrying out of this project.

The White Corporations contented itself with simply repeating that the concession is a matter which has already been concluded. The representative of Abyssinia (in Adis Abeba, the capital of this country, a General Consulate of the United States is to be established shortly), on his part, calls attention to the fact that Abyssinia, after Great Britain a year ago concluded an agreement with Italy behind the back of the Abyssinian government (which is still a member of the League of Nations) aiming at the dividing up of Abyssinia, was compelled to look round for better and more reliable "friends" than Great Britain.

For the United States again the penetration of Abyssinia has great importance: it frustrates the British plan of making the textile industry of Manchester independent of United States cotton (a goal shared by the United States) by means of extensive plantation in Abyssinia, the West African investments of the United States in Central Africa, which still remains to be opened up. At the same time it enables the United States to exert decisive influence on the further course of politics in the Middle East, for the Lake Tsana concession provides the key not only to Abyssinian but also to Egyptian politics.

Thus the hopes cherished by a great part of the Egyptian nationalist movement in the United States are now receiving definite encouragement. Just at the moment when the negotiations between Sarvat Pasha and Chamberlain were approaching their culmination, a new factor makes its appearance — the United States. The agitation which the Wafi conducted in the United States deftly exploits the most important factors, which expedite the formal recognition of the independence of Egypt by Great Britain in the year 1922.

Since then the United States has not let slip any opportunity to express its special position towards the Egyptian nationalist movement and its rejection of the privileged position of Great Britain in Egypt. The Ambassador of the United States, Dr. Martin Howell, emphasised his hostility to "British imperialism" and his sympathy for Zaglut Pasha, his conviction that Egypt is ripe for real self-administration and for independent choice of its advisers (who even now must still be drawn from the circle of British officials) so strongly that he had to be recalled.

But that did not in the least alter the fundamental attitude of the United States to the Egyptian problems. The American imperialists insist that an alliance with the United States is not at all dangerous for Egypt, because the United States is not aiming at territorial expansion: it is more concerned with regulating the cotton market.

The advance of the United States now gives Egyptian policy two possibilities: either to uphold the joint Anglo-Egyptian interests, to create an alliance with Great Britain against American danger, as is proposed by the organ of the Ittehad party and the Liberal Constitutional Party (Sarvat), or to incline towards the United States, to outdo the English from the Sudan and thereby achieve independence, as is advocated by a portion of the Zaglutist and nationalist press.

In any event the affair of the Lake Tsana dam, like the question of Moscow, reveals the rivalry between Great Britain and the United States in the Near East which appears to be gradually becoming the centre-point of the political situation in these two countries.

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