

The Governor-Generalship of Sir Lee Stack in the Sudan,

1917-1924

by

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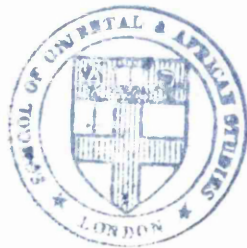
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ABSTRACT

The subject of this thesis is the history of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan during the governor-generalship of Sir Lee Stack, 1917-1924. The study is based primarily on the unpublished records of the Sudan Government and various collected private papers.

The first chapter deals with the appointment of Stack to succeed Sir Reginald Wingate; the economic and political effects on the Sudan of the first world war; the structure of the central government and the officials who directed it; and provincial administration. Stack's relations with Wingate and Viscount Allenby as high commissioners in Cairo are discussed.

Among the most important developments of Stack's tenure were the emergence, on the one hand, of Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Mahdī as leader of the revived Mahdist sect, and, on the other, of secular opposition to the Sudan Government. The second chapter traces the rise of Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān, the nature of his support, and the government's attempts both to utilize and to limit his influence. The second part of the chapter charts the tentative beginnings, after the war, of secular opposition, and in focussing on the disturbances of 1924 attempts to analyse the motives of this opposition and the response of the government to it.

The surge of Egyptian nationalism following the war led to a fundamental change in the relationship of Egypt and Britain, the *co-domini* in the Sudan. The Sudan's prominent place in the complicated series of negotiations before and especially after the British declaration to Egypt in February 1922, is considered in chapter three. An attempt is made to analyse the reasons for the breakdown in negotiations that culminated in the British ultimatum to Egypt in November 1924 following the assassination of Sir Lee Stack. The ultimatum itself



and its consequences in the Sudan are considered in detail.

Revived Mahdism, secular opposition, and Egyptian hostility, combined with a latent mistrust of educated Sudanese led the administration under Stack away from the direct, "bureaucratic" methods of the Wingate era toward Indirect Rule. This development is traced in the final chapter, in which conclusions are reached regarding the nature of Indirect Rule in the Sudan and its consequences for the political future of the country.

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### Transliteration

The system of transliteration is that employed by the Cambridge history of Islam. This has been followed throughout, except in the cases of some place-names and authors.

### Abbreviations

F.O.: Foreign office archives, Public Record Office, London.

MECOX: Middle East Centre, Oxford.

SAD: Sudan archive, Durham.

SGA: Sudan Government archives, Central Record Office, Khartoum.

DNB: Dictionary of national biography.

Hill, BD: Richard Hill, A biographical dictionary of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, Oxford, 1951.

MacMichael, SPS: H.A. MacMichael, Sudan Political Service, 1899-1956, Oxford, n.d.

PD, HC: Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons.

PD, HL: Parliamentary Debates, House of Lords.

SIR: Sudan Intelligence Reports.

SNR: Sudan Notes and Records.

WWW: Who Was Who.

### Explanatory Note

The usage of lower and upper case letters follows the recommendations of The English Historical Review.

## INTRODUCTION

The governor-generalship of Sir Lee Stack in the Sudan (1917-1924) was a period of crucial importance in the political and economic history of the modern Sudan. It was a period both of transition and of rapid change. By 1917 the work of pacification and consolidation after the upheavals of the Mahdist era had been largely completed, at least in the north, by the Anglo-Egyptian condominium; by 1925 the Sudan had witnessed profound changes in its internal political environment, its relationships with Britain and Egypt, its economic base and administrative attitudes and machinery. Presiding over this troubled and uncertain situation was Sir Lee Stack, the hand-picked successor of Sir Reginald Wingate. It was upon the foundations laid during Wingate's seventeen years as governor-general that Stack's, and all subsequent administrations, were based.

When Stack assumed the governor-generalship in 1917, the revenues of the Sudan stood at £E2, 195,355; by 1924 they had almost doubled, amounting to £E4,298,856. The Gezira Scheme, at the time of its inception the most ambitious venture of its type ever undertaken in Africa, progressed in those eight years to near completion, and was to be the cornerstone of the future economic development of the country.

At the beginning of Stack's tenure the Anṣār, the followers of the Mahdī, were only beginning to reemerge under the government-sponsored leadership of Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān, the Mahdī's son. But by 1925 he had become arguably the most powerful man in the Sudan outside of the government, and in 1926 was made a K.B.E., culminating a spectacular rise from the status of an obscure outcast to that of a religious and political force the government could not ignore. This evolution was of great significance to the subsequent politics of the Sudan.



When Stack took office the government still viewed as the greatest threat to internal security renewed outbreaks of Mahdist-style opposition, a revolt of irreconcilable, religiously motivated tribesmen. At the end of his governor-generalship, however, while this danger remained a cause for concern, domestic tranquility seemed most seriously threatened by the emergence of a "Sudanese nationalism", traceable, in the government's view, to the influence of Egyptian nationalism and its agents in the Sudan, the Egyptian civil and military personnel. The rise of a secular opposition with real (if poorly articulated and misunderstood) grievances was another landmark in political development.

That the Sudan Government saw (or chose to see) this new political challenge as the result of Egyptian intrigue led inexorably to a crisis of Anglo-Egyptian relations in 1924, a crisis culminating in the British ultimatum to Egypt following the assassination in Cairo of Sir Lee Stack. In 1917 relations between the co-dominion had been quiescent, for Egypt was a British protectorate, ruled in theory by the sultan and his ministers but in fact by a British high commissioner and advisers to the ministers. When at the close of the world war Egyptian nationalism burst ferociously to the surface it became clear that the independence of Egypt, however flawed its exercise, could be delayed but not prevented. The British declaration to Egypt in 1922, however, reserved certain points to future negotiation. In the ensuing series of abortive negotiations the Sudan figured prominently.

The relatively still waters of Wingate's Sudan had therefore been troubled under Stack by new and potentially dangerous forces: the personal authority of Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān, the unpredictable progenitors of nationalism, and the hostility of independent Egypt. This rapid change in circumstances produced a reaction in the attitudes prevailing in the Sudan Government. Wingate's regime had seen a slow and

steady extension of direct administration, a system buttressed by the certainty of its authors that they had brought peace and were now bringing the administrative, political and economic fruits of peace upon which the future of the modern Sudan would be solidly established. But opposition, whether irrational, externally-inspired or genuinely subscribed, produced in the minds of many officials, and in the spirit of the administration itself, profound doubt about this policy and a bitterness and resentment against those who appeared to reject what the British considered a selfless and heroic achievement. The result of these feelings was recourse to Indirect Rule, or rather, to invoking an amorphous concept of Indirect Rule to suppress the educated class the government had itself called into being and to rely instead on the dis-integrating tribal structure for collaboration in building the institutions of government. This change in policy, intrinsically attractive to leading figures in the government, was only encouraged by events. The dual policy of recruiting educated Sudanese for government service and co-opting traditional authority was the mainstay of Stack's administrative policy, but was finally abandoned at his death as the government fell into the hands of men committed to what was, in effect, a policy of tribalisation.

Sir Lee Oliver Fitzmaurice Stack was born in India in 1868 and was educated at Clifton and Sandhurst. He joined the Egyptian Army in 1899 and made his mark commanding the Shambe field force in the occupation of the Bahṛ al-Ghazāl in 1902. He was private secretary to Wingate from 1904 to 1907, when he was appointed Sudan agent in Cairo, a post then encompassing the duties of director of intelligence. In 1914 he was named civil secretary, a position he held until his appointment as acting sirdar and governor-general in 1917 when Wingate became high commissioner in Egypt. Stack laboured under the "acting" status dicta-

ted by Wingate until May 1919. He was created K.B.E. in 1918, and G.B.E. in 1923.<sup>1</sup>

Stack's citation in the Dictionary of National Biography notes that "no conspicuous achievement stands to his credit",<sup>2</sup> an undeniable fact which, however, pays insufficient attention to his role in these important years. The position of governor-general was such that the exercise of its powers was dictated more by the personality and attitudes of its incumbent than by statutory constraints. Stack saw himself not merely as "a ceremonial figurehead", as one subordinate has described him,<sup>3</sup> but as constitutional head of state whose most important task was the day to day functioning of the administration. He was "very diffident, not one to throw his weight around".<sup>4</sup>

Few men who served so long in responsible positions in Egypt and the Sudan can have been so popular as Sir Lee Stack. His influence in Cairo and London as well as in Khartoum was due not to intellectual power or military repute, but to his absolute ingenuousness that impressed alike the junior inspector in the Sudan and the senior minister in Whitehall. As Sudan agent in the days when the intractable Kitchener was British agent and consul-general, Stack proved his mettle through persuasiveness and tact, a self-deprecating humour in dealings with the great man and an unquestionable loyalty to Wingate, to whom he was

<sup>1</sup> P.G. Elgood, DNB, 1922-1930, pp. 802-803.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 803.

<sup>3</sup> Interview with Sir George Schuster, 19/5/76.

<sup>4</sup> Interview with Mr. George Bredin, 10/6/76.

both lieutenant and friend.<sup>1</sup> These same qualities, together with a high purpose, Stack brought to the civil secretary's office and the governor-generalship. He was unaffected by a lust for personal aggrandisement, so his advice to Wingate was unprejudiced and usually accepted. It was his combination of forthrightness and a military acceptance of place that made him Wingate's natural choice as his successor.

With remarkable consistency Stack's contemporaries have written and spoken of his "great charm" as his most notable characteristic. He was a "great gentleman", quiet, unassuming, indeed embarrassed by the trappings of his office, which never impressed him. The major criticisms of Stack are that "he hated the idea of violent action", and shied away from "taking the initiative to do unpleasant things".<sup>2</sup> He was also, as was said during the Anglo-Egyptian negotiations of 1924, "entirely ineffective in conversations",<sup>3</sup> although his few surviving letters were written in a clear and refreshing style. Stack was, in fact, a soldier-administrator of the Wingate school, but without either the force of character or the self-importance and penchant for advertisement of his predecessor. One suspects that his relative anonymity owes as much to his view of history (he wrote few letters and saved none of his papers) as to history's view of him. Thus, in addition to all the political repercussions of his death, there was a genuine and

<sup>1</sup> In describing for Wingate a disagreement with Kitchener over armaments, Stack wrote that he "felt on the whole [that his point of view] would be rather too strong a criticism for a major to make to a Field-Marshal.... I might as well have been talking to the Sphinx." (Stack to Wingate, 6/4/12, SAD 181/1/3.) Stack signed his letters to Wingate simply, "Ever yours, Lee Stack".

<sup>2</sup> Interview with Sir George Schuster, 19/5/76.

<sup>3</sup> R.E.H. Baily, journal entry for 7/10/24, SAD 422/13/1.

universal outrage at the fact that he, of all people, should fall victim to the political currents of the time.

The record of Stack's governor-generalship is therefore not dominated by his or any other personality. As he accepted his own limitations, so he recognised the need for forceful and intelligent subordinates. But the informality of Sudan Government procedures was such that a lack of leadership in one area was likely to be filled by someone charged with responsibility in another. Thus individuals could and did come to enjoy influence out of proportion with their places in the administration without apparent attempts by the governor-general to put them in their place.

In the eight years of Stack's governor-generalship he and they were tested as they had not been in the more controlled and predictable atmosphere of the Wingate years, though the problems they faced were rooted in events preceding even the Condominium. How they were tested and how and why they responded as they did form the subject of this study.

Chapter I: The Sudan Government Under StackStack as governor-general

When Kitchener agreed to accept the post of secretary of state for war in 1914, he did so on the understanding that at the war's conclusion he would return to the Residency in Cairo. With his death on the "Hampshire" on 5 June 1916, the foreign office began the search for a successor to Sir Henry McMahon<sup>1</sup>, whose appointment had always been considered as temporary and who had, in any case, not made a success of his term in Cairo. Several names came under consideration. In mid-July Lord Hardinge<sup>2</sup>, the permanent under-secretary of state at the foreign office, wrote to Sir Ronald Graham<sup>3</sup> that both Graham and Sir Reginald Wingate were in the running.<sup>4</sup> Graham had long wanted the post, and had, in fact, been considered for Cairo as early as 1911, but was unsuccessful then because "everybody, with any knowledge of Egypt [agreed] that it would be a mistake to turn him on the spot from being a servant of

- <sup>1</sup> Col. Sir Arthur Henry McMahon (1862-1949) had spent most of his career in India where he was foreign secretary to the government from 1911 to 1914. (DNB, 1941-1950, pp. 563-64.)
- <sup>2</sup> Charles Hardinge, first Baron Hardinge of Penhurst (1858-1944) was permanent under-secretary of state for foreign affairs from 1906 to 1910 and from 1916 to 1920, and was viceroy of India from 1910 to 1916. (DNB, 1941-1950, pp. 356-58.)
- <sup>3</sup> Sir Ronald Graham (1870-1949) was adviser to the Egyptian ministry of the interior from 1910 to 1916, and minister plenipotentiary in 1916. He served as assistant under-secretary at the foreign office from 1916 to 1919 and was H.B.M. ambassador in Rome from 1921 to 1933. (DNB, 1941-1950, pp. 313-14.)
- <sup>4</sup> Hardinge to Graham, n.d., quoted in Janice J. Terry, Sir Reginald Wingate as high commissioner in Egypt, 1917-1919, London, Ph.D., 1968, p. 35.

the Khedive into his master".<sup>1</sup> On 12 October 1916 Grey<sup>2</sup>, the secretary of state for foreign affairs, cabled Wingate that he considered

there is no one so well fitted as yourself, by your special knowledge and personal qualities, to fill the post, and I should like to submit your name for the appointment. Before doing so, however, I should like you to consider who could replace you in the Sudan and whether you can leave that country at the present time.<sup>3</sup>

Wingate did not hesitate in accepting the offer. In his letter to Grey he took the opportunity, however, to assert a novel claim to personal influence if he should be named high commissioner:

When the people and tribes [of the Sudan] understand that, from Egypt, I should continue to exercise supervision over their welfare, I venture to think any disquietude my departure might cause would be allayed, and it is largely on this account that I would suggest that the officer appointed to carry out the dual duties of Governor-General and Sirdar should be, until the war is over, considered as holding these appointments temporarily, after which the question of his confirmation or otherwise could be gone into.

In the person of Colonel Stack, C.M.G.... I have an officer well-qualified to hold such a temporary position. He has considerable ability, is full of common-sense and tact, and has now had a combined military and civil experience extending over fifteen years in this country.... Also he is suitably married and he and his wife are good from the representative point of view. In order to give him the necessary prestige as Acting Sirdar, I consider that he might be made a temporary Major-General which would give him the required seniority.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Tyrrell to Hardinge, 8/6/11, quoted in Terry, Sir Reginald Wingate, p. 30n. William George, first Baron Tyrrell (1866-1947) was senior clerk at the foreign office and private secretary to Grey from 1907 to 1915. He was assistant under-secretary of state from 1919 to 1925 and permanent under-secretary from 1925 to 1928. (DNB, 1941-1950, pp. 893-896.)

<sup>2</sup> Sir Edward Grey, Bt., first Viscount Grey of Fallodon (1862-1933) was under-secretary of state for foreign affairs from 1892 to 1895, and secretary of state from 1905 to 1916. (DNB, 1931-1940, pp. 366-375.)

<sup>3</sup> Grey to Wingate, 12/10/16, quoted in Ronald Wingate, Wingate of the Sudan, 2nd ed., Westport, Conn., 1975, p. 201.

<sup>4</sup> Wingate to Grey, 12/10/16, F.O. 848/2.

The foreign office consequently agreed to the appointment of Stack as acting sirdar and acting governor-general. There seems to have been no question at the time of separating the two posts, both tradition and the exigencies of the war working against such a reform. In November the following communiqué was released in Khartoum:

The appointment of Sir Reginald Wingate to be His Majesty's High Commissioner for Egypt will not involve a severance of His Excellency's connection with the Sudan and its administration. On this account His Excellency deprecates, as unnecessary and out of place, formal demonstrations or ceremonies of farewell on his departure to Cairo.

The dual functions of Governor-General of the Sudan and Sirdar of the Egyptian Army will be performed, under Sir Reginald Wingate's general direction, by Colonel L.O.F. Stack Pasha, C.M.G., the Civil Secretary, Sudan Government, who will be appointed Acting Governor-General and Acting Sirdar for the period of the War.

Some members of the personal staff of His Excellency the Governor-General and Sirdar will accompany His Excellency to Cairo to maintain close and constant inter-communication between Sir Reginald Wingate in Cairo and the Acting Governor-General and Acting Sirdar at Khartoum. <sup>1</sup>

Stack's appointment came as no surprise. If the choice was to be made from the ranks of the Sudan Government, and since the sirdarship and governor-generalship were to continue to be combined, a military man of some experience in the country was required. Stack's long working relationship with Wingate, and his discretion and ability to work well with his chief left little room in Wingate's mind for a rival, and the appointment was clearly Wingate's to make. To the outside world, however, Stack was an unknown quantity. General opinion might well have been summed up by Cromer, who told Wingate, "I thought you would name Stack to act at Khartoum. I believe he is a good man, though I do not remember much about him." <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> F.O. 371/3722. Stack's appointment was announced in the Sudan Gazette on 1 January 1917. (Sudan Gazette, No. 312, 1/1/17.)

<sup>2</sup> Cromer to Wingate, 1/12/16, SAD 202/5.



What remains something of a mystery is Wingate's stipulation that Stack be appointed as "acting" sirdar and governor-general. Both publicly and privately Wingate's only reason for this was his concern with the possibility of some kind of Sudanese reaction to his departure which might have a detrimental effect on the war effort. He felt, he later said, that the "acting" arrangement had "evidently pleased the people of the Sudan, who are peculiarly susceptible to individual government, and having been with them for the last 17 years the idea of a complete severance was repugnant to them".<sup>1</sup> How he gauged this pleasure and potential repugnance is not clear, and, in any event, the apprehended dangers required only one day's consideration before he accepted transfer. Further, if considerations of "individual government" and prestige were of a paramount nature, the "acting" status of a successor implicitly lacking the full confidence of the British government might be thought to have exacerbated any unsettled public mood. The success of the Sudan Government in winning Sudanese opinion to the British side in the war was, at least as viewed and expressed by Khartoum, a not inconsiderable achievement, but it is valid at least to speculate how far this was due to Wingate's personal prestige as distinct from the policies of the government from the outset of war and conditions prevalent in the Sudan that favoured tranquility. Further, that Wingate's supervision, as exercised from Cairo was, despite his expressed intention, in fact minimal, argues against the idea that he planned an active role in Sudan affairs. It is reasonable, therefore, to attribute Wingate's

<sup>1</sup> Wingate to General (later Field Marshal) Sir W. Robertson, 23/11/16, SAD 202/3. To a mass of congratulatory telegrams Wingate replied in a similar vein. To a relation he wrote that "the new arrangement whereby I continue to generally control the affairs of the Sudan from Cairo mitigates the general regret, especially on the part of the natives, at our severance". (Wingate to Capt. G.M. Wingate, 10/12/16, SAD 202/4. )

designation of Stack as his "acting" successor to personal rather than political motives.

Wingate had, at the time of his appointment to Cairo, been governor-general for seventeen years. Under the terms of the 1899 convention, and by virtue of his own instincts he had become a virtual autocrat in the Sudan. That this was politically justifiable and psychologically effective does not detract from the view that Wingate felt a personal stake in the Sudan. Indeed, he went so far as to write that he would "have in Stack an excellent 'wekil'".<sup>1</sup> While there is no direct evidence that Wingate entertained a plan to return to the Sudan (his appointment to Cairo was not, after all, on an "acting" basis) his biographer writes that in a confrontation with the foreign office in March 1917 over the incumbency of Lord Edward Cecil as financial adviser in Egypt, Wingate threatened that he was "'prepared to make room for someone else, and to return to the Sudan'", and, if he did, he would require direct access to London rather than the customary indirect access through Cairo.<sup>2</sup> Two facts therefore emerge from Wingate's attitude toward his successor: that to Wingate the Sudan had assumed the dimension of a personal fief, something, perhaps, to "fall back" upon; secondly, and more important, if things in Egypt went badly, that his long-standing arguments in favour of lessening Cairo's control over Khartoum were not entirely based on bureaucratic and political grounds, but were operative only so long as he himself was governor-general. In any event, it was only with Wingate's departure from the Residency that Stack was con-

<sup>1</sup> Wingate to Lt. Col. S.S. Butler, 10/12/16, SAD 202/4. A "wekil" is a proxy, agent, trustee.

<sup>2</sup> Ronald Wingate, Wingate of the Sudan, p. 208.

firmed in his dual position, in 1919, six months after the armistice. Stack by then had laboured under the "acting" label for two and a half years. More important than the reasons behind Stack's status were the effects it had on his performance as governor-general, and on his relationship with Wingate in Cairo.

The proper relationship between His Majesty's representative in Cairo and the governor-general of the Sudan had never been clearly defined, and this had led inevitably to conflicts as to the areas of responsibility of each. Under Cromer, Gorst<sup>1</sup>, and Kitchener, Cairo's right of ultimate control was never openly questioned by Wingate, especially before 1913, until which date Egypt contributed an annual subvention to the Sudan budget. Cromer had constantly sought to check a desire he perceived of the Sudan Government to strike out on its own. As he wrote to Wingate in 1904:

I constantly notice a tendency to consider the Soudan as a separate and independent Government, more or less unconnected with Egypt. It is nothing of the kind.... In politics, as in music, those who pay the piper have a right to call the tune....<sup>2</sup>

Cromer's position and enormous prestige made it impossible for Wingate to counter such an argument. There is no doubt that he resented this

<sup>1</sup> Sir John Eldon Gorst (1861-1911) was financial adviser to the Egyptian government from 1898 to 1904, and assistant under-secretary of state at the foreign office from 1904 to 1907, at which point he succeeded the retiring Cromer in Cairo. (Hill, BD, p. 141.)

<sup>2</sup> Cromer to Wingate, 25/1/04, F.O. 633/8/390. A few months later Cromer wrote in even stronger terms: "the only justification for paying large sums from the Egyptian Treasury to the Soudan Government is that the Soudan is not independent of Egypt.... To suppose that the Soudan Government can be left without some effective control is not merely a dream, but a most pernicious dream". (Cromer to Wingate, 3/5/04, F.O. 633/8/396.)

control, as he wrote to Gilbert Clayton<sup>1</sup> that Cromer had been "considered by our Govt. as the supreme authority - both Civil and Military - in Egypt and the Sudan although - if one hunted up chapter and verse for his Constitutional right to this, one would not find it".<sup>2</sup> Unable to loosen the ties between Residency and Palace, Wingate was restricted to other fields in his quest to exclude Egypt and Egyptian influence from the Sudan. This can be seen in his censorship of Egyptian newspapers coming into the Sudan, and the award of British rather than Egyptian honours to distinguished Sudanese.<sup>3</sup> But Cromer left the scene in 1907. Under his successors, Gorst, Kitchener, and especially McMahon, control from Cairo continued to decrease.

The relations between Wingate as high commissioner and Stack were coloured by the latter's "acting" status. Stack's reports and private letters to Wingate make evident the feeling, which was mutual, that Stack was very much the junior partner. Stack continued to refer to Wingate, in his personal correspondence, as "Master"; the latter was unquestionably the dominant personality. This is not to say that Residency supervision of the Sudan increased during his tenure. Indeed, despite his knowledge of Sudan affairs and his relegation of Stack to the role of "wekil", Wingate did not exercise greater power over Khartoum

<sup>1</sup> Sir Gilbert Falkingham Clayton (1875-1929) became Wingate's private secretary in 1908, and Sudan agent in Cairo in 1914, when he was also director of military intelligence. He became adviser to the Egyptian ministry of interior in 1919, resigning in 1922. He was chief secretary in Palestine from 1922 to 1925. (DNB, 1922-1930, p. 187.)

<sup>2</sup> Wingate to Clayton, 13/9/16, SAD 470/3.

<sup>3</sup> See Wingate to Grey, 8/10/16, SAD 202/1; and Wingate to Graham, 16/3/17, F.O. 371/3711. See also Gabriel Warburg, The Sudan under Wingate, administration in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, 1899-1916, London, 1971, pp. 16-19.

than did his Residency predecessors. The power to do so remained "constitutionally" (that is to say, by tradition and foreign office fiat) intact, but went largely unexercised.

Indeed, Wingate's involvement in the day-to-day affairs of the Sudan during the early war years had been considerably less than it had been previously. Even before Wingate's departure for Cairo in late December of 1916, Stack complained that

For a fortnight at least the Sirdar has done nothing in the way of either commanding the Army or governing the country, and comes across to me with 'This will affect you more than me'. Hedjaz and Hedjaz alone has occupied him.... For some time after Master gets down to Cairo I doubt his having the time to worry much about the Sudan and in fact his only instructions to me are to carry on and keep him informed of anything which I consider he should be told.<sup>1</sup>

And while attempting to grapple with the problems of the Sudan in his first months as governor-general, Stack complained: "Not much do I get from the Residency. It is a case of 'out of sight out of mind' as far as the poor old Sudan is concerned."<sup>2</sup> And again, two months later, he wrote that "Master has been very good up to a point but I notice a distinct waning of interest in any problems that are likely to be troublesome".<sup>3</sup> So far from any direct influence being brought to bear by the Residency, the opposite was the case; Wingate's claim to "general supervision" of Sudan affairs was thus at most a formal restatement of the traditional but ill-defined dependence of the governor-general on the Residency. Wingate's claim was little more, in effect, than to an

<sup>1</sup> Stack to Clayton, 18/12/16, SAD 470/7. Wingate had been made General Officer Commanding the Hedjaz in June 1916.

<sup>2</sup> Stack to Clayton, 22/3/17, SAD 470/6.

<sup>3</sup> Stack to Clayton, 19/5/17, SAD 470/6.

honorific implication of a power which, whether potential or not, was rarely exercised by him.

There is no doubt, however, that Stack's anomalous position was personally and professionally detrimental. He expressed his annoyance to Clayton, a trusted confidant:

You have hit the nail on the head when you say that this acting business hampers me considerably. If the war goes on a good bit longer it will be neither satisfactory to myself nor in the interests of this country. I have never seen the telegrams which passed between the late Governor General and the F.O. on the subject but the former gave me to understand that I was to be acting for the duration of the war and that no promises could be made as to the future. From whom the suggestion emanated that this should be the position I don't know but it is possible that it was put forward as the best policy to adopt in order to persuade the people of the Sudan that the Governor Genl. of the Sudan was only moving his headquarters to Cairo but would still look after them through a 'wakil' - myself, whom they knew. The changed order of things has now been generally accepted and as far as the people here are concerned they never think of my being Acting so there is no reason for it on that score. From a personal point of view it does not seem fair to continue it much longer. I get the responsibility but not the pay nor do I benefit my pension by a farthing and at the end may be shelved with thanks as I have no job to go back to. From the public point of view there is no doubt in my mind that a permanent man should be appointed soon and I would be quite prepared to make way for him by asking to be allowed to retire.... With this insecurity of tenure, it is not much good my sitting down to think out reforms that are needed which I may not be here to put through.<sup>1</sup>

He reiterated the point two months later:

The more experience I get in my acting capacity, the more I realize it would be in the interests of all to appoint some one definitely to the job. It is unsettling for the official class who don't know exactly where they are and this 'stop gap' business is rough on the country. I don't want it permanently for myself and would not take it if offered as I think someone of seniority from home should be appointed and not one like myself who has risen from the 'bunch'.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Stack to Clayton, 19/5/17, SAD 470/6.

<sup>2</sup> Stack to Clayton, 15/7/17, SAD 470/6.

No doubt concerned that his motives might be questioned, Stack was reluctant to broach this matter with Wingate until he felt certain that political considerations demanded it. Thus, during the Egyptian crisis of 1918-19, when the status of the Sudan was openly questioned in Egypt, Stack wrote to Wingate suggesting that one way to "dispel any doubt there may be in the native mind as to the intentions of His Majesty's Govt. in regard to the future of the Sudan" would be "the definite appointment of a Governor General and Sirdar". Stack hastened to add that he was "willing to retire at any time" in favour of a successor.<sup>1</sup> Wingate agreed with Stack's argument, and urged the foreign office to act on Stack's "confirmation or otherwise" with a view toward "keeping the Egyptian and Sudan questions totally apart".<sup>2</sup> The explosion of the 1919 Egyptian revolt intervened, however, and the official announcement of Stack's appointment was not made until 12 May 1919.<sup>3</sup>

Wingate as high commissioner was preoccupied with much greater issues than the administration of the Sudan: among them difficult problems of personnel; matters relating to the prosecution of the war; and the nationalist threat. Indeed, as has been touched upon, his last months in Khartoum had been devoted largely to affairs outside the Sudan. Because of this, Stack's first problems as governor-general had to do with transition, staffing, and matters neglected by Wingate. For such work he felt himself well prepared: "My time as C.S. [civil secre-

<sup>1</sup> Stack to Wingate (personal), 22/12/18, F.O. 371/3711.

<sup>2</sup> Wingate to Hardinge (private), 27/12/18, F.O. 371/3711.

<sup>3</sup> Journal Officiel du Gouvernement Egyptien, no. 45, 12/5/19, F.O. 371/3711.

tary] ", he wrote, "was most useful as owing to Master's absorption in propaganda, private letters and Hedjaz a lot fell into my hands".<sup>1</sup>

Staffing was a serious and persistent problem. When Wingate left for Cairo he took with him a number of his most important and knowledgeable lieutenants, apparently without regard to how they would be used in Cairo, or of how they could be replaced in Khartoum. Stack wrote that

Symes<sup>2</sup> as I told you I expected him [Wingate] always to take as he has become so dependent on him for all drafting purposes but K-B<sup>3</sup> he might have left. Patterson has been for so many years his stenographer and has typed his most private letters that he would never let him go.... I really think that what decided him to take all these with him is the Hedjaz business. He hates being parted from any of those who have been helping him in that connection....<sup>4</sup>

The problems of staff - the consequence of Wingate's requisition, the limitations on recruitment caused by the war, and personal conflicts - severely limited Stack's ability to get on with the job. He complained that he was

<sup>1</sup> Stack to Clayton, 14/1/17, SAD 470/6.

<sup>2</sup> Lt. Col. Sir George Stewart Symes (1882-1962) had served as A.D.C. to Wingate and as assistant director of intelligence. At the time of Wingate's departure for Cairo, Symes was his private secretary. He later became governor of Tanganyika and was governor-general of the Sudan from 1934 to 1940. (WWW, 1961-1970, p. 1098.)

<sup>3</sup> Sir Alexander William Keown-Boyd (1884-1954) was a member of the Sudan civil service from 1907 to 1916, and was private secretary to Wingate in Cairo from 1917 to 1919. He was Oriental secretary to Lord Allenby, Wingate's successor, from 1919 to 1922, and held several posts in the Egyptian interior ministry. (WWW, 1951-1960, p. 614.) Keown-Boyd was sent to Khartoum in 1920 by the Milner mission to report on several areas of Sudan affairs, and the Milner report's recommendations regarding the Sudan were largely his.

<sup>4</sup> Stack to Clayton, 18/12/16, SAD 470/7.



working here in the Palace with practically one of everything in place of two or three as the case may be under the old regime. One Private Sec., one native A.D.C., one stenographer, no Arabic clerk. This shortage with an Acting A.G., acting C.S. and Acting M.S. throws a good deal more on me personally than should be the case. <sup>1</sup>

In addition to his army and government work, Stack also decided to sit on the Promotion Board, in consequence of which he wondered "what would be thought if it was known that 2 hours a day is all ... I have been able to devote to what I am being paid for". <sup>2</sup> When the work of the Promotion Board was completed he had still to deal with the other personnel problems - "legacies", as he called them - left by Wingate.

While it seems that most members of the Khartoum establishment cooperated with Stack in this transition period, differences only with difficulty submerged during the Wingate years could not be prevented from surfacing. Stack was fortunately well aware of the problems of temperament he would have to face after his years as civil secretary, and was confident that while "one or two may possibly try to bounce me to begin with", he would soon be able to control the situation: <sup>3</sup>

The endeavour to reconcile clashing personalities such as the intractable Kennedy, <sup>4</sup> the dilatory Bernard, <sup>5</sup> although

<sup>1</sup> Stack to Clayton, 22/3/17, SAD 470/6. The initials refer respectively to adjutant-general, civil secretary, and military secretary.

<sup>2</sup> Stack to Clayton, 4/1/17, SAD 470/6.

<sup>3</sup> Stack to Clayton, 14/1/17, SAD 470/6.

<sup>4</sup> Macdougall Ralston Kennedy Pasha (1873-1924) was director of the public works department from 1906 to 1916, and was largely responsible for the construction of Port Sudan. (Hill, BD, p. 198.) He resigned on 4 April 1917. (Sudan Gazette, no. 319, 14/7/17.)

<sup>5</sup> Sir Edgar Bernard Pasha (1866-1931) served in the Nile campaign of 1898 and was assistant adjutant-general of the Egyptian Army in 1899. He became financial secretary to the Sudan Government in 1902 and retired in 1922. (Hill, BD, p. 79.)

the latter as far as in his nature lies, is playing up, Hewison <sup>1</sup> and Sawyer <sup>2</sup>, Crispin and Christopherson <sup>3</sup> all requires an amount of patience. Yet I do not despair of getting them all to work eventually as far as they can for the good of the whole and sink their individualities. <sup>4</sup>

But the problem continued:

Kennedy is a bit trying these times. He has taken the opportunity of the change I am afraid to bring things to a head with Bernard. I am being deluged with correspondence objecting to most minutes he gets from the latter and questioning his right to give certain financial decisions without previous reference to me. It makes it very difficult for me as I have been gradually getting Bernard to see the desirability of altering certain methods of his and given time I feel I shall be able to effect a certain improvement, but I want the time. We are being desperately handicapped for want of staff and now the War Office say we can only have 2 out of 5 Agricultural Officers and 1 out of 4 Veterinary Officers we asked for. <sup>5</sup>

The most serious shortage was caused by the curtailment during the war years of recruitment into the Sudan Civil Service. In the years 1910-1914, twenty-one new officers had been taken on. But for the period 1915-1918, the total was a mere six. That this was much fewer than needed may be seen by the number of new officers recruited immediately

- <sup>1</sup> R. Hewison (1876-1975), then assistant director of agriculture, entered the Sudan Government service in 1904, and later became director of agriculture and a member of the governor-general's council.
- <sup>2</sup> E.R. Sawyer was appointed to the government in 1912 and was principal of the agricultural school and the experimental station at Khartoum North.
- <sup>3</sup> Dr. E.S. Crispin (1874-1958) was appointed in 1901. Dr. J.B. Christopherson (1887-?) was mistakenly offered the same post, and was eventually appointed in 1902. In 1904 Christopherson was appointed director of the civil medical service, whereupon Crispin resigned and took up an independent post at the building site of Port Sudan. In 1908 Christopherson was appointed director of hospitals and Crispin became assistant director of the medical service. In 1915 he was made director, and in 1919 was appointed to the governor-general's council, a seat he held until his retirement in 1922. For details see H.C. Squires, The Sudan medical service, London, 1958, pp. 4-5, et passim.
- <sup>4</sup> Stack to Clayton, 22/2/17, SAD 470/6.
- <sup>5</sup> Stack to Clayton, 22/3/17, SAD 470/6.

after the war: in 1919-20 they totalled no fewer than thirty-four.<sup>1</sup> It should be remembered also that Darfur was annexed in 1916, adding a huge new territory that must be staffed, however inadequately, at least to keep the peace.

A further difficulty resulted from the poor organisation of the central government. Wingate's methods, uninfluenced from the start by personal administrative experience, evolved therefore along military and highly personal lines. The regime of Wingate and Slatin Pasha, his inspector-general and closest associate, was characterized by an insufficient delegation of authority, and this resulted, in Stack's words, in a "mass of trivial detail that is daily poured into the Palace in the shape of unimportant correspondence and returns - but when a whole administration has been trained to report the most minor matters it is difficult for it to switch off and draw a line."<sup>2</sup> Stack tried to correct this, but the habits of long years of at least theoretical authoritarian control by the Palace and the poorly delimited areas of responsibility within the bureaucracy made this a difficult if not impossible problem. Its solution was to await gradual and important changes of personnel.

In his role as sirdar, too, there were immediately matters to clear up. Stack complained of yet another "legacy" in this regard, in the form of Egyptian officers "being placed on disponsibility, interned, etc. without adequate record being left of the reasons for disposing

<sup>1</sup> MacMichael, SPS.

<sup>2</sup> Stack to Clayton, 28/6/17, SAD 470/6.

of them thus...." <sup>1</sup> Stack took his military duties seriously, probably the more so because he considered that the army was suffering from a long period of neglect. In March 1917 he reported that he was "having a series of inspections, not hunts looking about whom to shake hands with and acknowledge the salutes of". <sup>2</sup> In June he wrote that he was

looking into Army matters and find a good deal of reorganizing wants doing there. Some of the various matters are Pensions for old Sudanese soldiers, adoption of double company system, new military law, regulations as to putting officers on disponibility, the block in promotion ... the rearmament with the magazine rifle, the reequipment with webbing.... I have not too much time to devote to it myself so have Committees at work ... tackling details. <sup>3</sup>

Wingate, by virtue both of position and inclination, had built up a strong personal influence in the Sudan, based on a correct but paternal relationship with leading Sudanese personalities. Stack, because of his "acting" status, his rise from the ranks of Wingate's subordinates, and his own disinclination to the type of pomp beloved of Wingate, was never to achieve a similar relationship. In the early part of his regime he was wary of the native reaction to him personally, and, as it was bound to be influenced by this, to his government generally. He suffered no illusions about his own position, as evidenced by a letter written in his first month as acting governor-general, in which he noted that "a steady stream of notables paying their visits of ceremony [are] to be interviewed, a case of ... 'le roi est mort vive le roi' ". <sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Stack to Clayton, 28/6/17, SAD 470/6.

<sup>2</sup> Stack to Clayton, 22/3/17, SAD 470/6.

<sup>3</sup> Stack to Clayton, 28/6/17, SAD 470/6.

<sup>4</sup> Stack to Clayton, 7/1/17, SAD 470/6.

Stack did not evade the ceremonial aspects of his offices. He looked upon them not as a source of entertainment or test of popularity, and certainly not as rituals to be disdained, but as an integral part of his work. Indeed, in this sense he viewed the post of governor-general rather as that of head of State than head of government. While, of course, there was no constitutional or legal basis for this view, it is nonetheless indicative of the way the governor-generalship evolved under him in respect to the other offices of government in the Sudan. His early embarrassment with the ceremonial side of office can be seen in his uncertain reaction to his first official tour as governor-general. He told Wingate that the apparent enthusiasm of his reception was "due", in at least one instance, "to merissa" and to the nostalgia evoked by a telegram of greeting from Wingate which Stack read to the assembled shaykhs "in all the places I visited".<sup>1</sup> But a 1921 tour to the south of Khartoum, for example, was conducted with an unabashed enthusiasm and appreciation of the value to the government's currency of conducting his office with a high degree of dignity.<sup>2</sup>

But by virtue of character and personality and his experience as Sudan agent and civil secretary, Stack was much more of a "team player" than his predecessor. Whereas Wingate was inherently suspicious of any limits imposed upon his authority either from within the Sudan or from Cairo, Stack envisaged his role as a constitutional one - the 1899 convention and subsequent ordinances and informal arrangements forming his statutory limits. Whereas Wingate relegated some matters,

<sup>1</sup> Stack to Wingate, 22/4/17, SAD 470/6.

<sup>2</sup> Luther Martin, "H.E. the sirdar and governor general's inspection tour south of Khartoum, March 1921", n.d., SAD G// s 421.

in which he was uninterested or for which he had not the time, to subordinates, Stack was to rely increasingly on subordinates, individually and collectively. This can be seen clearly in the greatly increased responsibility, throughout the Stack years, of the governor-general's council. Established in 1910, it was intended as a purely advisory body whose advice could be accepted or rejected without obligation to the governor-general. Its general effect, in one view, was to "introduce a greater element of constitutionalism into the administration".<sup>1</sup> Since the Condominium Agreement had vested sole responsibility in the governor-general, it was a sound policy that some statutory delegation of that responsibility should be devised. But under Wingate the council was little more than a grouping together in one place at one time of officials whom he continued as before to consult privately as subordinates. In a letter to the war office in 1919, Major Kennedy complained of Wingate's dealings with the council, of which he had been a member:

When anything really important had to be discussed and definitely dealt with, it was never, if such a course could be avoided, brought before the Council in accordance with the rules of the Council, but it was discussed informally and, if a smooth and easy path did not become evident at the informal discussion, the matter was conveniently shelved.<sup>2</sup>

The council was, therefore, not an independent authority but, in fact, could be used by Wingate to add weight to his own position in dealings with Cairo. His council consisted of the inspector-general (Slatin), the civil, legal and financial secretaries, and between two and four additional members appointed by the governor-general. In 1919, the Governor-General's Council Ordinance was amended so that the council

<sup>1</sup> Sir Harold MacMichael, The Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, London, 1934, p. 113. For details see Warburg, The Sudan under Wingate, pp. 74-77.

<sup>2</sup> Kennedy to war office, 10/1/19, F.O. 371/3712.

would be composed of the three secretaries, "together with not less than two or more than five additional members to be appointed by the Governor-General".<sup>1</sup> This amendment removed the anomaly of the inspector-general's seat on the council, as with his departure in 1914, Slatin's post became defunct. The number of council meetings diminished steadily under Wingate from twenty-five in its first year to a mere four in 1916.<sup>2</sup>

This trend was reversed under Stack. In 1917 the council met nine times; in 1918, eleven times; in 1919, seventeen times; in 1920, sixteen times; in 1921, fifteen times; in 1922, seventeen times; in 1923, nine times; and in 1924, seventeen times.<sup>3</sup> From the time of Stack's appointment the council gradually gained more authority. The principle of consultation having been established, it would have been difficult for Stack, who in any case considered himself *primus inter pares*, to ignore the council's advice or diminish its role. In 1919 it felt sufficiently sure of its position to note that "its duties cannot be properly discharged by merely registering decisions reached elsewhere".<sup>4</sup> At its next meeting, the council referred to this complaint (which had dealt with a decision to raise the price of sugar, a government monopoly) and retracted somewhat, yet noted that

<sup>1</sup> Sudan Gazette, no. 342, 16/2/19. The appointed members were usually heads of the more important departments such as the general manager of the Sudan Railways, the director of education, and the director of medical services. Other officials were, as occasion required, invited to participate, and during leave season acting directors sat on the council.

<sup>2</sup> Warburg, The Sudan under Wingate, p. 76.

<sup>3</sup> Minute-books of governor-general's council meetings, 1917-24.

<sup>4</sup> Governor-general's council minute-book: record of meeting of 11/11/19.

The Council recognises that His Excellency in everything that was done in London and Cairo considered he was carrying out the wishes of the Council, and regrets that their understanding of the situation was not made clearer to His Excellency. <sup>1</sup>

This reference to "carrying out the wishes of the Council" is important. It certainly marks the first time a council implied that its wishes should be carried out. Such a claim would have been highly unlikely in Wingate's day. Stack's relations with the council, insofar as they may be gauged from the formal record of the minute-books and sketchy personal recollections, were consistently harmonious and reflected both his respect for its implicit function as a cabinet and his own lack of jealousy for maintaining the governor-generalship in the form in which he succeeded to it. In 1926 the council was instrumental in forcing the resignation of Sir Geoffrey Archer, Stack's successor. After many disagreements, culminating in Archer's ostentatious visit to Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Mahdī at Abā Island in February 1926, which the council felt to have been in contravention of its advice, the council passed what amounted to a vote of "no-confidence" in Archer. This left no alternative for the governor-general but to resign. <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Governor-general's council minute-book: record of meeting of 15/11/19.

<sup>2</sup> See Lloyd to Chamberlain, 10/4/26, F.O. 371/11612. Cf. Archer's memoirs, Personal and historical memoirs of an East African administrator. London, 1963, pp. 241-254.



The Sudan during the later war years (1917-1918)

The outbreak of the European War had been a source of great concern to the Sudan Government. Occuring as it did just fifteen years after the Anglo-Egyptian occupation, it was feared that the opening of hostilities between Britain and the Ottoman Empire would elicit a sympathetic reaction for the latter based on common religion and in disregard of the historic Sudanese antipathy toward the Turk.

The attitude of the Sudanese toward the Ottoman Empire was not left to chance. An intelligence report for October, 1914 had suggested that, in the event of Turkey's entering the war, "native opinion and sentiments ... will require to be carefully studied and discreetly guided."<sup>1</sup> This was to be done by informing "the more intelligent sections of native opinion, through their leaders and the efficient medium of the local press", of the "facts".<sup>2</sup> It is impossible to judge how great was the actual danger, still harder to assess the validity of the Sudan Government's concern based on the information at its disposal. But clearly the apprehended threat of a Sudanese reaction, based on religious appeal, was strong enough to evoke memories, only dormant, of the early days of the Mahdia. Indeed, Wingate is reported to have been "obsessed with the idea that if Turkey joined Germany against us the Sudanese would feel bound to co-operate with the Turks".<sup>3</sup> If he were to respond

<sup>1</sup> SIR, October 1914, F.O. 371/3711.

<sup>2</sup> Report by the governor-general on the general situation in the Sudan during the first two years of the war, enclosed in Wingate to secretary of state for war, 8/8/16, F.O. 371/3713.

<sup>3</sup> C.A. Willis, "Sidelights on the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan", unpublished memoir, n.d., p. 72. Gorst once wrote that Wingate was "by nature an alarmist". (Gorst to Grey, 22/6/08, quoted in Warburg, The Sudan under Wingate, p. 38.)

inappropriately, it would be on the side of too great rather than too little vigilance. It was, he wrote, "essential ... to disabuse the native mind of the notion, which was being insidiously introduced from external sources, that the British power was on the wane; most of the preliminary measures taken were directed toward this end." <sup>1</sup> These included a "rigid censorship of the press and telegrams" <sup>2</sup>, which, as evidences of enemy propaganda multiplied, was subsequently extended to all correspondence"; searches of baggage and persons at the frontiers; and "an active counter-propaganda, directed against Germany and her allies". <sup>3</sup> Conveniently, martial law had never been lifted, thus obviating its imposition in 1914, <sup>4</sup> and deportations occurred under its provisions. <sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Report by the governor-general on the general situation.

<sup>2</sup> Internal censorship was instituted "in consequence of a very serious campaign of seditious literature being started in Egypt". But "the censorship was very considerably modified after Dec. 18th, 1916 as it was found that the greater part of the inhabitants were entirely out of sympathy with the movement and nothing was discovered to cause uneasiness in internal communications". ("Report on the censorship in the Sudan from the outbreak of hostilities in August 1914" by A.E. Robinson, chief censor, Sudan Government, 10/3/20, SGA, INTEL 1/20/106.) It will be noted that this "modification" coincided with Wingate's departure for Cairo, which suggests a difference of opinion between Wingate and Stack over the necessity for internal censorship.

<sup>3</sup> Report by the governor-general on the general situation.

<sup>4</sup> "Report on the censorship".

<sup>5</sup> M.V. Morris, "Political intelligence report", 12/7/18, SGA, INTEL 1/8/40. For details of the precautions taken by the government at the beginning of the war, see Warburg, The Sudan under Wingate, pp. 106-108.

Such measures as censorship and deportations aside, however, it was considered of paramount importance to associate the Sudan Government with the religious and secular notables in the minds of the people. This was to be done primarily through religious appeals. In his famous address to the 'ulamā' on 8 November 1914 (which was released outside the Sudan only in edited form) Wingate portrayed Britain as the historic defender of Islam, and the Turks as the real enemies of the Sudanese:

Not content with the overthrow of the Sultan Abdul Hamid ... unrestrained by the loss, through their mismanagement and maladministration, of the European and other former provinces of their Empire, these men - this syndicate of Jews, financiers and low-born intriguers - like broken gamblers ... have gone to war with the one Power who has ever been a true and sympathetic friend to the Moslems and to Islam. <sup>1</sup>

While deportations, censorship, and assurances to the 'ulamā' were designed to allay the townspeople, the real cause for concern was the revived spectre of fanatic hordes of tribesmen rising up in pseudo-Mahdist revolution. Wingate viewed the Sudanese as possibly biding their time until just such a moment as this to eject the British and revert to their old ways. Such incidents of "revivalist activity" as did occur were promptly dealt with, "with or without the despatch of regular troops to the scene". <sup>2</sup> The high commissioner's Report for 1914-19 <sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "His Excellency the governor-general's speech to the ulema", enclosed in private secretary to Symes, 20/3/19, SGA, INTEL 1/8/41. The phrase "this syndicate of Jews ... intriguers" was omitted by Stack when the speech was passed on for use in The empire at war, a history of the period.

<sup>2</sup> Report by the governor-general on the general situation.

<sup>3</sup> Reports were not issued during the war, but one Report for the years 1914-19 appeared in 1920. From 1921 the Reports, which were published as command papers, were filed separately for the Sudan rather than combined with the Reports for Egypt.

noted that the estimated population of the Sudan in 1914 was four million,<sup>1</sup> who were "governed by about 110 British officers and officials".<sup>2</sup> The total strength of regular forces in the country was elsewhere listed as fourteen thousand of all ranks.<sup>3</sup> This was considered insufficient. Wingate felt it necessary, therefore, to agree to a fundamental change in government policy that was to have profound and long-range effects.

Until the war the government had recognised the 'ulamā' as the sole spokesmen for religious sentiment. Tariqas, although officially ignored, were of course closely watched. The Anṣār were strictly enjoined from all outward displaying of their faith, and Mahdist ex-officials remained imprisoned, or under house arrest, or were carefully restricted in their activities. The family of the Mahdī were especially suspect. But at the outbreak of the war it was reluctantly and tacitly admitted that the only supra-tribal figures with any personal authority were the religious leaders, notably the "three sayyids": Sharīf Yūsuf al-Hindī<sup>4</sup> and, especially, Sayyid 'Alī al-Mīrghanī and Sayyid 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Mahdī, the Mahdī's son. The government considered that there was little alternative to lifting some of the restric-

<sup>1</sup> Annual Report for 1914-19, 1920, Cmd. 957. Population figures given in various Sudan Government publications from the time of the occupation should be taken cum grano salis, if not rejected outright. It is, in fact, possible that the Sudan's population was deliberately underestimated at the time of the Anglo-Egyptian occupation, in order to stress the catastrophe of Mahdism and the beneficence of Condominium rule, under which the growth of the population, if taken at face value, would be quite remarkable. In any case, no reliable statistics exist for this period. Cf. the League of Nations, International statistical year-book, 1926, Geneva, 1927, in which the population of the Sudan was listed as 5,825,000 in 1913 and as unchanged in 1925.

<sup>2</sup> Annual Report for 1914-19.

<sup>3</sup> Report by the governor-general on the general situation.

<sup>4</sup> Sharīf Yūsuf al-Hindī (c.1865-1942), head of the Hindīyya order.

tions on Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān who had, in any case, indicated a willingness to cooperate. Significantly, Slatin, as an Austrian national, had to resign his post at the beginning of the war, thus removing from the scene a formidable enemy of the Mahdī's family, whom Slatin detested.<sup>1</sup>

Thus the Wingate-Slatin line of implacable opposition to the Mahdists was abandoned, and Wingate agreed to a plan which envisaged "a generation or two hence, the assumption by the Mahdi of his place as the founder of a tariga".<sup>2</sup> The relationship of the Sudan Government and Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān, according to the assistant director of intelligence, "altered from one of covert antagonism to tentative alliance".<sup>3</sup> Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān was encouraged, as his side of the bargain, to tour those areas in the Blue Nile, White Nile and Sennar Provinces where Anṣār were numerous, but was warned against taking advantage of these tours to "organise" the Mahdists, for whose loyalty he was to be guarantor.<sup>4</sup> This caveat, its essential hollowness no doubt recognised immediately by the sayyid, was to become familiar in the future of the remarkable career on which, at the outbreak of the European War, he embarked with the unwitting aid of his father's bitterest enemies. In spite of the government's warnings,

<sup>1</sup> J.A. Reid, "Note on Mahdism with special reference to the White Nile Province", 24/11/34, SGA, CIVSEC 56/2/18.

<sup>2</sup> Minute by Wingate, 16/2/15, SGA, CIVSEC 56/2/18.

<sup>3</sup> Willis to private secretary, 29/3/17, SGA, INTEL 1/18/89.

<sup>4</sup> Symes to Stack, 4/3/17, SGA, INTEL 1/18/89.

As a reward for services rendered to the Government, Abdul Rahman, who, in 1914, had been a man of small account, struggling for a status amongst the religious leaders of the country and closely restricted in his means of propaganda, became, by 1919, the head of a powerful organisation openly avowing Mahdist tenets and observances, was sent by the Government as a member of the Sudan Delegation to England, received there the C.V.O. and was permitted to present his father's sword to H.M. King George V, who returned it to him to hold and to use in defence of himself and his Empire. <sup>1</sup>

What had thus come about during the war years was a de facto recognition by the Sudan Government of Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān's status, but this recognition by no means had the unqualified support of high government officials. Provincial governors warned Khartoum of the consequences, in a village or town where Mahdism had been suppressed or at least ignored for fifteen years, of even an hour's visit, with obvious government approval, of the Mahdī's son and spiritual heir. <sup>2</sup> Nor was Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān the only religious leader to take advantage of the government's need for native support. In 1915 the acting governor of the Blue Nile Province wrote that

Apart from recrudescence of enthusiasm among followers of Mahdism, all sects represented in this Province have been making special efforts since the early days of the war to increase the number of their adherents. A concrete example of this is that Sheikh Ahmed El Sunni, Omda of Wad Medani, became a Khalifa of Sayed Ali Morghani some three months ago.... A large number of Medaniin will naturally follow their Omda's example and adhere to Sayed Ali Morghani.... I am inclined to believe that this effort on the part of Heads of Sects to increase their followers applies to the Sudan generally.

<sup>1</sup> R. Davies, "A note on the recent history of Mahdism and the government's policy towards this movement", 6/11/25, SGA, CIVSEC 56/2/18. For details of the delegation to London, see below, pp.128-135.

<sup>2</sup> See for example J.A. Reid, "A note on Mahdism in the White Nile Province", 7/1/28, SGA, CIVSEC 56/2/18: "Until the Great War the Mahdist influence in the White Nile was confined to a number of genuine believers as supporters.... Though they believed in the old cause, they realised that the Sudan had left behind it, the Mahdia and its works. ...After his visit to England, Sayyid Abdel Rahman emerged as a preponderating influence. He was regarded as a direct representative of the Government, and Zakka was paid to him like a Government tax."

This, thought the acting governor, was probably for the good, as competition of the "sects" would "not point to unity of opposition against us".<sup>1</sup>

An important aspect of the government's efforts to keep order during the war was resistance of pressure from London and Cairo that would have involved a sacrificial Sudanese war effort. In 1918 the Sudan agent in Cairo reported to Khartoum that "military authorities are anxious to know the possibilities of the Sudan as a labour recruiting centre". The idea was to form companies of Sudanese, separate from Egyptians, on a contract basis, to be employed in a non-combative role as manual labourers. Khartoum rejected this out of hand, reporting that the "possibilities of Sudan as labour recruiting centre are practically nil", and that the labour force was already employed in cultivation and herding that contributed to the war effort in Egypt and beyond. Siphoning off of labour would "entail reduction of output of those commodities which Egypt and Egyptforce are continually pressing us to increase."<sup>2</sup> To this note it was minuted by the private secretary that "His Excellency does not consider it advisable to add anything as regards irrigation schemes and cotton growing or any matters which the military authorities might possibly say should be postponed during the war".<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> J.W. Sagar to asst. director of intelligence, 26/11/15, SGA, INTEL 2/41/345. John Warburton Sagar (1878-1941) entered the Sudan service in 1903, was asst. civil secretary, 1909-10, governor of Kordofan from 1917 to 1922, and governor of Halfa from 1922 until his retirement in 1924. (MacMichael, SPS, p. 13.)

<sup>2</sup> Telegram, Willis to Sudan agent, 21/2/18, SGA, INTEL 1/8/40.

<sup>3</sup> Governor-general's office to Willis, 20/2/18, SGA, INTEL 1/8/40.

Clearly Stack was determined to minimize the Sudan's direct part in the war. But this is not to say that the Sudan withdrew from the war effort. On the contrary, the war was a definite boon to the Sudan's economy and this, more than censorship, martial law, and all the rest, served to keep the Sudan generally content. Stack noted in 1917 that "we have sent over 20,000 camels now and it is thundering hard to get a suitable one at any price. The natives are so well off, they won't part" with any.<sup>1</sup> In 1918 a political intelligence report noted that "trade is very good and prices are high. The traffic in camels, cattle, and durra is now very great". As an example, it was instanced that in 1898, "the Head Sheikh of the Kababish Tribe ... owned three camels; now, as a nucleus of a camel stud, he owns 2,000 female camels". To illustrate what this meant in financial terms: before the war, a camel's market value was put at £E5-£E6; in mid-1918 it was £E18-£E20. A sheep's value had risen from 50 P.T. to £E2, and a cow's from £E4 to £E11-£E12 in the same period.<sup>2</sup> In 1915, 20,000 cattle were exported, and more than 87,000 sheep and goats. Between January and October of 1917 alone, 18,518 head of cattle and 101,597 sheep were exported. In the corresponding period of 1918, the numbers increased to the quite remarkable figures of 31,782 head of cattle and 151,712 head of sheep.<sup>3</sup> For cultivators too the results were good. In 1917, 84,779 tons of dura were exported; in 1918, the figure was put at 54,945 tons. But in 1919, the

<sup>1</sup> Stack to Clayton, 28/6/17, SAD 470/6.

<sup>2</sup> M.V. Morris, "Political intelligence report", 12/17/18, SGA, INTEL 1/8/40.

<sup>3</sup> Naval Staff Intelligence Division, A handbook of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, 1922, p. 411.



first year of peace, only 1,656 tons were exported.<sup>1</sup> Dura exports from 1912 to 1914, a time of low Niles and poor floods, amounted to a mere 3,500 tons; in the period 1915-17 the figure was about 200,000 tons.<sup>2</sup> The value of external trade increased from £E3,056,530 in 1914 to £E6,889,443 in 1917.<sup>3</sup> Imports of what might be called luxury items (cotton fabrics, sugar, coffee, tea and spices) increased in value in the same period (1914-17) from £E684, 328 to £E1,428,507.<sup>4</sup> In 1918 the figure was put at £E2,062,631.<sup>5</sup> Similar increases in the values of exports and imports were experienced across the board.

<sup>1</sup> A handbook of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, p. 388.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 480.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 456.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 459.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 464.

An index of selected prices for the war period shows large increases (the pre-war price at Khartoum is expressed as 100):<sup>1</sup>

	<u>Pre-war</u>	<u>Nov., 1919</u>
Dura	100	281
Butter	100	234
Mutton	100	171
Beef	100	167
Abyssinian coffee	100	204
Rice	100	300
Wheat flour	100	373
Tea	100	225
Sugar	100	344
Cotton fabrics	100	368
Petroleum	100	381

Over the same period, however, wages rose from a reported average of  $3\frac{1}{2}$  P.T. per day for an unskilled worker in the North, to at least 5-6 P.T. per day, and in many localities to much higher rates. In 1919 a report from the Blue Nile Province noted wages as high as 45 P.T. per day.<sup>2</sup> The seasonal nature of much work and widely varying conditions and supply of labour make averages misleading, but there can be little doubt of general prosperity.<sup>3</sup> Significantly, however, Sudan Government remuneration of its employees did not reflect this general rise of

<sup>1</sup> A handbook of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, p. 465.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 483.

<sup>3</sup> For further details of the labour situation, see Appendix I.

wages and prices. A note prepared by the civil secretary in 1919 commented that "it is evident that the pay and prospects of sub-mamurs do not at present attract the most desirable candidates". For the training programme of Sudanese sub-ma'mūrs in 1918, the average salary was £E6 (per month). In 1919 it stood at £E7.50. Indeed, translators and clerks in the civil secretary's department were making more,<sup>1</sup> although their salaries as well did not reflect the general rise. These subordinate officials may well have gained least from what was otherwise a boom period, even as they might have expected, because of their training and education, to have seen their financial positions improved.<sup>2</sup> In any event, the political intelligence report cited above closed by noting that prosperity and faith in the Sudan Government were the two factors contributing, in 1918, to the "present state of quietness".<sup>3</sup>

These two factors were, of course, inseparable, the level of prosperity being a ready gauge of the government's efficacy. The government had recognised this from the outset. In the high commissioner's Report for 1914-19 it was noted that

1914 was a bad year for the north and centre of the country. The 1913 rains were scanty and the Nile flood abnormally low.... During the period of distress from May till November, the work of the administration was centred on famine relief measures. The situation was greatly restored by the importation of large quantities of millet from India. This step was not without its

<sup>1</sup> Civil secretary to legal secretary and others, 18/12/19, SGA, CIVSEC 50/1/5.

<sup>2</sup> All salaries were increased by 20% from 1 October 1919. (A handbook of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, p. 297.

<sup>3</sup> Morris, "Political intelligence report".

effect during the critical time of the war....  
 Rains and flood, however, in the autumn of 1914  
 were excellent, and the people, busy with the pros-  
 pect of a good season, paid little heed to the out-  
 break of war. <sup>1</sup>

The health of the economy, then, and the government's refusal of more involvement of Sudanese in the war, were probably more important for ensuring internal security than all the special precautions taken to avoid disorders.

Such incidents of unrest as did occur were minor. Certainly the departure of Wingate and the succession of Stack excited no passions. The most serious of the several recorded incidents was a "rising" at Kassala which has come to be known as the Sambo revolt after its leader, Muḥammad Sanbū, a Fellata. <sup>2</sup> This man, of obscure origins, had first come to the government's attention in 1909. He led a peripatetic existence in several northern provinces, earned a living in various menial positions, and was occasionally noted as having made disparaging remarks about the administration. In 1916 he was deemed "a meskin, half-witted creature" with "no influence and no one heeds him or considers him other than imbecile and beggar.... He used to suffer from severe fits, and used to climb trees, go down into deep wells etc. Illiterate." <sup>3</sup>

On the night of 28 December 1918, Muḥammad Sanbū led thirty men, mostly Hadandūa, against the government fort at Kassala. Twelve N.C.O.s

<sup>1</sup> Annual Report for 1914-19. Dongola was especially hard hit by the poor Nile. C.A. Willis, then inspector in Dongola, was sent to Khartoum to plead the province's case. According to him it was Stack who, as civil secretary, having seen photographs of famine victims, took the immediate step of ordering grain from India. (Willis, "Sidelights", p. 68.)

<sup>2</sup> Fellata was a term used to describe persons of Northern Nigerian origin.

<sup>3</sup> Asst. director of intelligence to civil secretary, 31/12/18, SGA, CIVSEC 5/1/17.

and men were killed, along with eight of the attackers.<sup>1</sup>

Although the attack never came close to success, and its nature might be deduced from its hopelessness, several aspects of the misadventure worried the government. It had at first been reported that the attackers "appear to have all been believers in the Mahdi", and all government reports of the incident referred to them as "Dervishes". Further, though the number directly involved was small, they were thought to be "supported morally if not actively by a considerable body of men living in Kassala itself". Also, the evocative name of 'Alī 'Uthmān Diqna, son of the famous Mahdist amir (Uthmān Diqna, who was still alive, in detention) was at first erroneously linked with the attack.<sup>2</sup> Interestingly, while the several reports of the incident all pointed to Mahdist inspiration or "fanatic" instigation, Lyall<sup>3</sup>, the governor of Kassala, in another brief note, shifted the focus of the attack from the government by stating that "the outstanding characteristic of the Hadendoa is their dislike and contempt for the Egyptians and while any part of the Kassala garrison is Egyptian there is a possibility of another attempt being made on it."<sup>4</sup> There had not been, in any of the reports,

<sup>1</sup> SIR, December 1918, F.O. 371/3724.

<sup>2</sup> Lyall to civil secretary, 16/1/19, SGA, CIVSEC 5/1/7.

<sup>3</sup> Charles Elliott Lyall (1877-1942) served in Kordofan, 1901-05, White Nile Province, 1906, in the legal department, 1907, White Nile Province for a second tour from 1908 to 1912, and in the Red Sea Province from 1912 to 1914. He was governor of that province in 1914, governor of Halfa from 1914 to 1917, and of Kassala from 1917 to 1921. He was civil secretary from 1921 until his retirement in 1926. (MacMichael, SPS, p. 11.)

<sup>4</sup> Lyall to asst. director of intelligence, 15/4/19, SGA, INTEL 2/24/345.

any indication that this hatred was behind the Sanbū attack, and while the significance of the incident should not be over-emphasized, it is noteworthy that the governor should lay the blame on the presence of Egyptians rather than simply on the antipathy of the Hadandūa to the government.

A similar incident occurred in the spring of 1919. One Muḥammad Ibn Sa'īd Ḥamīd, a "nephew of the late Mahdi ... suddenly announced in April that he was 'Isa'." A following quickly developed and on 1 June they were engaged by the Sennar Province Mounted Police and forty of the "rebels" were killed. There were no government casualties.<sup>1</sup> Muḥammad Sa'īd was executed at Singa in August. While this incident was of no great import, it was, typically, considered a "movement" capable of assuming dangerous proportions.<sup>2</sup>

By far the most serious threat of this type to government authority in the north during Stack's governor-generalship occurred at Nyala in southern Darfur in 1921. Because of its implications, this will be discussed in the following chapter.

#### The succession of Allenby as high commissioner

Lyall's remark, laying the blame for the Sanbū attack on the provocative presence of an Egyptian garrison at Kassala, is indicative of a change of thinking among British officials in 1919. This was due

<sup>1</sup> SIR, June 1919, F.O. 371/3724.

<sup>2</sup> SIR, August 1919, F.O. 371/3724.

largely to events in Egypt. For at the close of the war, an outburst of Egyptian nationalist feeling radically changed the assumptions on which British authority in Egypt - and therefore in the Sudan - had for long been based.

The British war effort in Egypt, unlike that in the Sudan, which had been indirect and economically beneficial, had been extremely unpopular and burdensome. Declaration of the Protectorate at the outset of the war, while not effectively altering the de facto relationship of the British occupation and the Egyptian populace, had been considered a gratuitous insult to Egyptian nationalist aspirations. Immediately after the war's conclusion, years of pent-up frustration burst to the surface. The disturbances in Egypt in 1919 arose directly out of the refusal of the foreign office to allow Egyptian representation at the Versailles Peace Conference. President Wilson's widely discussed fourteen points and the Anglo-French declaration of 7 November 1918 to the effect that national regimes would be established in former Ottoman territories had led Egyptians to believe that the protectorate, which had always been considered a war-time improvisation, would be abolished. Independence was expected soon to follow. When an Egyptian delegation was barred from the conference and the Egyptian prime minister, Rushdī Pasha, was refused permission even to come to London to put the Egyptian case, the British intention of retaining the protectorate seemed clear. Serious disturbances broke out throughout Egypt, with considerable loss of life and property damage. Wingate was made the scapegoat and recalled, to be replaced by Lord Allenby, who was appoin-

ted on 5 May 1919 as "H.M. Special High Commissioner for Egypt and the Sudan".<sup>1</sup>

As Allenby remained in office until 1925, the entire period of Stack's term as full governor-general was served with Allenby in the high commissioner's chair. Stack's promotion from acting to actual governor-general came about on 12 May 1919,<sup>2</sup> and was a direct result of the Egyptian troubles. At the foreign office his definite appointment was seen as a way of allaying Sudanese doubts and denying Egyptian hopes as to Britain's future role in the Sudan. A foreign office minute spoke of Stack's appointment as a way to show "that we mean business".<sup>3</sup> The appointment was further seen as a way of keeping, in Wingate's view, Sudan and Egyptian affairs "totally apart".<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> When finally relieved of his title, Wingate threatened to make public the manner of his dismissal. Writing bitterly to Lord Milner, he said: "The general impression will be that - as I kept silent - there must be something against me which I dare not tell for my own sake.... It is possible my reputation may not be publicly attacked, but I shall have to undergo an even worse ordeal, viz. 'to be damned with faint praise'...." (Wingate to Milner, 12/10/19, DEP MILNER 163.) Wingate finally took the advice of his friends, remained silent, was given a baronetage and disappeared into the oblivion he had feared. See "Main points which have given rise to the present situation", Nov. 1919, SAD 238/3, an aide-memoire in which Wingate recorded the web of personal and political differences at the Residency, the foreign office and in influential London circles that led to his downfall. See also Ronald Wingate, Wingate of the Sudan, pp. 237-246.

<sup>2</sup> Journal Officiel du Gouvernement Egyptien, no. 45, 12/5/19.

<sup>3</sup> Minute by A. Loyd, n.d. (1919), F.O. 371/3711.

<sup>4</sup> Wingate to Hardinge, 27/12/18, F.O. 371/3711.



The departure of Wingate was significant from the Sudan point of view. His knowledge of and sympathy for the country were unquestioned, and while his interest had flagged in recent years, there could be no doubt in Khartoum that while Wingate was high commissioner the Sudan's interests would be taken into account. His attitude toward the country was paternalistic. Stack, despite his criticisms of "Master's" style and increasing lack of interest in day-to-day affairs, nevertheless was doubtless sincere when he wrote to Wingate that "it is with a sad heart I am going back [to Khartoum] knowing that I shall not have you to go to in difficulties".<sup>1</sup> Whether or not one subscribes to a judgement of Wingate as "father" of the modern Sudan, he was certainly the father-figure to the first generation of the Sudan Government, and his style and attitudes would long outlive his direct influence.

Allenby was quite another matter. The war-time career of Edmund Henry Hynman Allenby is well known. Taking command of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force in June 1917, a series of famous victories - Jerusalem, Damascus, Aleppo - ensured his place in history. His reputation as soldier and leader and his great prestige made his selection as Wingate's replacement, despite its circumstances, a natural one. But Allenby's experience of Egypt had been brief and of an exceptional nature; his experience of the Sudan was non-existent.

Whether or not he was disposed to take an interest in Sudan affairs, Allenby had little choice in the matter. His time as high commissioner was one during which the Sudan was of prime concern in Cairo and London. Direct Residency involvement in the Sudan's internal af-

<sup>1</sup> Stack to Wingate, 21/10/19, SAD 238/2. In an earlier letter, Stack had told Wingate that the whole matter of the latter's supersession had "given me such a distaste for public service that did I not think ... it would not be playing the game to the Sudan I would gladly leave it." (Stack to Wingate, 17/10/19, SAD 238/2.)

fairs, however, continued to decline. In 1922, Allenby reminded Stack that it was within the province of the high commissioner to authorise "punitive expeditions" in the Sudan, though notification after the fact had become the practice.<sup>1</sup> In 1923, Allenby sought to revive the procedure, which had lapsed, by which the governor-general's annual report was first sent to Cairo, to be forwarded, with deletions and additions, to London. These incidents should be considered as indications of how independent of the Residency the Sudan Government had become, rather than as parts of a concerted effort to reimpose detailed Residency supervision. Indeed, in late 1924, one Residency official complained:

Unless and until the established relations between Cairo and Khartoum are changed, it seems that due forms ought to be observed. During the last two months they have been flagrantly neglected. Stack and Sterry<sup>2</sup> arrange things between themselves direct not only without consulting us but without even informing us of things we ought to be told at once were Khartoum as separate from Cairo as it is e.g. from Jeddah.<sup>3</sup>

The one area in which Cairo was to seek to maintain control was what the Sudan Government saw as its "foreign relations", that is, relations among the Sudan, Egypt and the British government. It was in this area, as hinted in the above quotation, increasingly during Stack's administration, that the Residency and the Palace were to fall out. By

<sup>1</sup> Allenby to Stack, 24/1/22, F.O. 371/7768.

<sup>2</sup> Sir Wasey Sterry, legal secretary. See below, p.63n.

<sup>3</sup> R.A. Furness to Walford Selby, foreign office, 27/9/24, F.O. 800/218. Sir Robert Furness (1883-1954) served in the Egyptian civil service from 1906 to 1923 and was Oriental secretary to the high commissioner from 1923 to 1926. (WWW, 1951-1960, p. 401.) For a note on Selby, see below, p.258n.

late 1924 there was distinct hostility between the two great bastions of British power on the Nile. This will be detailed in Chapter III. But it might be mentioned here what was the crux of the problem. In the words of one foreign office expert:

Khartoum thinks Cairo ignorant and unsympathetic....  
Cairo thinks Khartoum self-centred. Khartoum desires emancipation from Cairo and I doubt whether anybody in Cairo wishes to retain a control over Khartoum which is in practice vexatious and ineffective....  
What Cairo needs is a diplomatist. What Khartoum needs is an administrator. <sup>1</sup>

That anyone should have written of Khartoum and Cairo as if they were co-equal centres is itself a comment on the increased significance of the Sudan in British thinking after 1919, and especially after nominal Egyptian independence, which was embodied in the British government's declaration to Egypt in February 1922. And that one should remark that "Cairo thinks Khartoum self-centred" is an indication of the natural development of the Sudan, under Stack, and more importantly, of the self-perception of the Sudan Government as being in some way responsible for and even answerable to the Sudan above all else, rather than as servants of British policy in Egypt.

#### The central government under Stack

The reasons for the increasing tendency of the Sudan Government to view itself as autonomous are to be found both in the Sudan and in Egypt. Wingate had sought, as governor-general, not only to detach the Sudan from Egypt politically, but also to combat a British perception

<sup>1</sup> Foreign office memorandum by Mervyn Herbert, 2/4/25, F.O. 371/10908.

of the two countries as halves of a whole. His view, coupled with the remoteness of the Sudan and consequent independence of action of its government, and the real affection with which British officials viewed the Sudanese, led inevitably to a feeling of responsibility for and defence of the Sudanese as against Egyptian (and even, it would seem, home government) interests. Further, Egyptian independence, no matter how limited by the so-called "reserved points" of the 1922 declaration, meant that the Egyptian government's stance on the Sudan could be influenced but no longer dictated by the British.

By the 1920s the Sudan Government, even in its highest echelons, had begun to pass out of the hands of those British officers of the Egyptian Army who had administered the country since the occupation. In their stead as provincial governors and heads of departments in Khartoum were cooler, more professional administrators who had either risen from the ranks of the civil service or had been recruited from outside the Sudan because of special expertise.

The civil secretaryship, under Stack, slowly assumed more significance, a trend begun when he himself served as Wingate's last civil secretary.<sup>1</sup> The exact functions of the civil secretary had never been enumerated. In practice he headed the civil service and acted as liaison between the provinces and the governor-general in all matters outside the direct responsibility of the governors themselves.<sup>2</sup> Stack's first civil secretary was Lt. Col. R.M. Feilden<sup>3</sup>, who was not, however,

<sup>1</sup> See Warburg, The Sudan under Wingate, pp. 63-66.

<sup>2</sup> Keown-Boyd, Memorandum dated 24/2/20, DEP MILNER 161.

<sup>3</sup> Lt. Col Randle Montague Feilden (1871-?) served in the Baḥr al-Ghazāl in 1904-05, in the Red Sea Province from 1905 to 1908, and as asst. civil secretary from 1908 to 1910. He was governor of Baḥr al-Ghazāl, 1910-1917, and civil secretary from 1917 until his retirement in 1921. (MacMichael, SPS, p. 11.)

Stack's first choice for the post. Stack had offered the position, even before Wingate's departure for Cairo, to his old friend Gilbert Clayton, who preferred, however, to stay on in Cairo as Sudan agent and director of intelligence. Feilden's experience had been mostly in the South, where he had served in the Bahr al-Ghazāl (in 1904-05 and as governor from 1910 to 1917). His was a lacklustre occupation of the civil secretary's office. On his retirement from the Sudan in 1921, he was succeeded by C.E. Lyall, whose experience was much wider than Feilden's, but whose mark on the Sudan administration was hardly noticed. The appointment went to him purely through seniority,<sup>1</sup> and he was variously described by colleagues and subordinates as being of "limited intelligence"<sup>2</sup> and lazy and uninterested.<sup>3</sup> In any case, both of Stack's civil secretaries were little more than figureheads, as the department was, almost from the moment of his appointment as assistant civil secretary in 1919, run by Mr. (later Sir) Harold MacMichael,<sup>4</sup> who finally succeeded to the civil secretaryship on Lyall's retirement in 1926.

<sup>1</sup> Interview with Sir Angus Gillan, 24/5/76. Gillan served in Khartoum, 1909; Kordofan, 1910-16; Darfur, 1917-18; the Red Sea Province, 1919-20; and Berber, 1920-21. He was deputy governor of the Nuba Mts. Province, 1921-28, and governor of Kordofan, 1928-32. He was asst. civil secretary, 1932-34, and civil secretary from 1934 until his retirement in 1939. (See MacMichael, SPS, p. 21.)

<sup>2</sup> Interview with Sir George Schuster, 19/5/76.

<sup>3</sup> Interview with Brigadier Maurice Lush, 7/10/76. Lush was posted to the intelligence department, 1923; served in Kassala, 1923-26; Khartoum, 1927; and as asst. civil secretary, 1928-29. He was private secretary to the governor-general, 1929-30; deputy governor of the White Nile Province, 1931-32; deputy governor of the Upper Nile, 1932-35; and Sudan agent in Cairo, 1935-38. He was governor of the Northern Province, 1938-41. (See MacMichael, SPS, pp. 30-31.)

<sup>4</sup> Sir Harold MacMichael (1882-1969) served in Kordofan, 1905-12; Blue Nile, 1912-13; and Khartoum, 1913-15. He served on the Red Sea patrol of 1915 and in the Darfur campaign of 1916. He was sub-governor of Darfur, 1917-18; and asst. civil secretary from 1919 until he became civil secretary in 1926. (MacMichael, SPS, p. 15.)

It is difficult to overestimate MacMichael's significance in the Sudan Government during the Stack years and during his tenure as civil secretary (1926-34). In the words of a contemporary, MacMichael "was really the moving spirit in the government from 1919 'til 1933.... There was a profound trust in him" by the civil service. "Governors-general could come and go but MacMichael was the head of the service to whom we gave unqualified loyalty." <sup>1</sup> To the civil secretariat MacMichael brought fourteen years of experience in Kordofan (where he played an important part in establishing patterns of future administrative development), Khartoum, the Red Sea Province, and Darfur. Reserved (and therefore thought to be cold and unapproachable by the Sudanese), <sup>2</sup> and scholarly, a stickler for detail and exacting as a manager, he came to be known to subordinates as "The Great White Chief". <sup>3</sup> His experience as administrator and, during Stack's governor-generalship, his role as policy-maker, set a standard that greatly increased the importance of the civil secretariat, as evidenced by the calibre of his successors.

<sup>1</sup> Interview with Mr. Martin Parr, 3/6/76. Martin Willoughby Parr served in Kordofan, 1920-23; the Blue Nile Province, 1923-24; and as asst. civil secretary, 1925-27 and 1931-33. He was private secretary to the governor-general in 1928-29; deputy governor, White Nile Province, 1930; and deputy civil secretary, 1934. He was governor of the Upper Nile from 1934 to 1936; and governor of Equatoria from 1936 until his retirement in 1942. (See MacMichael, SPS, p. 29.)

<sup>2</sup> Interview with Sir Gawain Bell, 2/6/76. Bell served in Kassala, 1931-33; Kordofan, 1933-38; Blue Nile, 1941-42; Kordofan, 1945-49; and in the Sudan agency, Cairo, 1949-51. He was deputy civil secretary, 1953-54, and permanent under-secretary in the ministry of interior, 1954-55. (MacMichael, SPS, p. 60.)

<sup>3</sup> Interview with Sir Shuldham Redfern, 8/10/76. Redfern served in Khartoum, 1920-21; Darfur, 1922-23; Blue Nile, 1924-29; was asst. civil secretary, 1930-32; and served in the Port Sudan-Suakin administration, 1932-34. He was governor of Kassala in 1934-35. (See MacMichael, SPS, p. 31.)

The post of financial secretary during the Stack regime was occupied by two men. The first was Sir E.E. Bernard (see page 12n.), known, without affection, as "Ikey", who had assumed the post in 1902. A Catholic of Maltese origin, he was regarded always as an outsider by the rest of the government establishment.<sup>1</sup> Like those of the civil secretary, the duties of the financial secretary had never been set down clearly. It was his responsibility to draw up, control and administer the Sudan's budget.<sup>2</sup> "Every expenditure, even if sanctioned in the budget, had to be authorized by him."<sup>3</sup> The great power therefore inherent in the position, while curtailed somewhat by Wingate, nonetheless proved a stumbling block in Stack's time, since the financial secretary's ability to veto expenditures gave him an effective power to control the implementation of policy. This was evidenced especially when the seed of Indirect Rule began to germinate in the early 1920s (see Chapter IV). In 1902, when Bernard was appointed, the Sudan's revenue was £E126,569; in 1923, the year after he resigned, it was £E3,766,133.<sup>4</sup> Bernard was simply unable to cope with this growth and its concomitant complexities. He was, in the words of a contemporary, "a good regimental paymaster",<sup>5</sup> but much more than this was required in the post-war

<sup>1</sup> Warburg, The Sudan under Wingate, p. 63.

<sup>2</sup> Keown-Boyd, memorandum entitled "The Sudan", n.d. (1920), DEP MILNER 161.

<sup>3</sup> Warburg, The Sudan under Wingate, p. 64.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Interview with Sir Angus Gillan, 24/5/76.

Sudan. Apparently notorious for the lengths to which he would go to remain outside the Sudan, he personally prepared the budget in Cairo, attending to everything from the negotiation of a loan to "the numbers of forks and spoons".<sup>1</sup> But possessed of seniority and well-established in his office, Bernard was to remain financial secretary until 1922, when a financial crisis forced his resignation and replacement by Mr. (later Sir) George Schuster.<sup>2</sup>

Schuster, like MacMichael, was to wield great influence in the Sudan Government. Because of the amorphous nature of the central administration and the blurring of areas of responsibility, and by virtue of his intellect and forcefulness, Schuster's effect was to be felt far beyond the sphere of finance. This was especially true during the grueling Anglo-Egyptian negotiations of 1924 in London, when, by default, he was chief spokesman for the Sudan. Schuster, unlike his colleagues, had not risen from the ranks, but was appointed at the insistence of London during the crisis precipitated by the financing of the Gezira Scheme (see Appendix I). At that time

It was suggested that some official in whose ability [the Treasury] had confidence should be appointed Financial Secretary to the Sudan Government. In this capacity he could furnish their Lordships with all the information they might require, and direct financial policy in the

<sup>1</sup> Interview with Sir George Schuster, 19/5/76.

<sup>2</sup> Sir George Ernest Schuster (1881- ), a barrister and director, held numerous financial advisory posts, within and outside government, before his appointment as financial secretary to the Sudan Government in 1922. He resigned in 1927, and became finance member of the executive council of the viceroy of India in 1928, resigning in 1934. He was M.P. for Walsall during World War II.



Soudan along general lines indicated by their Lordships. Nor would this constitute any interference with the financial independence of the Soudan or impair the sense of responsibility of the Soudan Government.<sup>1</sup>

Schuster, because of his extensive experience, was the choice. Although an outsider, Schuster was not resented as such. Indeed, the closedness of the Sudan Government and the general dissatisfaction with Bernard made Schuster's appointment a welcome one. His coming, said one official, was "a real blessing. We needed somebody from the outside".<sup>2</sup>

The Sudan's finances during the Stack administration did not allow extravagance. The general poverty of the country and the inefficiency of tax collection, the increased costs of labour and of goods of all kinds, financial demands made by external forces, and the agreed political necessity of self-sufficiency combined to make the Sudan financially insecure throughout the Stack years. The facts that, on the one hand, the Sudan Government desired to eliminate financial dependence upon Egypt, and, on the other, that it could not depend on the British government, dominated financial matters.

Even though the annual Egyptian subvention, of varying amounts, had ceased in 1912, the Sudan continued to rely financially on Egypt in two important ways. First, the Sudan benefitted from the "reproductive capital expenditure" invested by Egypt, on which no interest was being

<sup>1</sup> Foreign office to Treasury, 7/10/21, F.O. 407/191. Indeed, when Schuster was to leave the Sudan in 1927, Sir John Maffey, then governor-general, proposed creating a special post for him, as adviser to the financial department in Cairo, but with Schuster based in London. Maffey's confidence was evident: "The main basis of the position should be acceptance of the principle that no step that might materially affect the general financial position of the Sudan will be taken without reference to Sir George Schuster." (Memorandum by Sir J. Maffey, 27/10/27, F.O. 371/12379.)

<sup>2</sup> Interview with Sir Angus Gillan, 24/5/76.

paid. Secondly, the maintenance of the Egyptian Army in the Sudan was not only charged solely to Egypt, but was an indirect source of revenue to the Sudan Government. <sup>1</sup> In 1924 the financial secretary reported that since the institution of the Condominium, Egypt had advanced £E5,584,525 for development, and £E5,353,215 to cover the Sudan's budget deficits. Egyptian expenditure for the army in 1922-23 alone amounted to £E515,725. Thus even without actual subventions, Egypt still contributed heavily to the Sudan's solvency, and was a major creditor. <sup>2</sup> (See Appendix II, table 1.) Throughout the Stack years the budget was in surplus. Revenues increased from £E2,195,355 in 1917 <sup>3</sup> to £E4,298,856 in 1924. <sup>4</sup> For complete figures, see Appendix II, table 2. A breakdown of the sources of the government's revenue shows a heavy reliance on the railways and steamers, and posts and telegraphs departments for income. In 1924 direct taxes accounted for only 10.9% of government revenue; royalties and receipts from irrigation projects for 7%; consumption duties (including the sugar monopoly) for 22%; and miscellaneous taxes and dues for 8.8%. Gross revenue from railways and steamers, posts and telegraphs, timber and government commercial undertakings amounted to 51.3% of revenues. <sup>5</sup> (For complete details see Appendix II, table 3.) The figures for previous years show a similar reliance for revenue on these

<sup>1</sup> Schuster to civil secretary, 9/4/24, SGA, CIVSEC 50/15/67.

<sup>2</sup> Schuster, "Note on the payments made by Egypt to the Sudan since 1899", July 1924, F.O. 371/10068.

<sup>3</sup> Annual Report for 1920, 1921, Cmd. 1487.

<sup>4</sup> Annual Report for 1927, 1928-29, Cmd. 3284.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

Government monopolies. This reliance and the inconsequential percentage of revenue from direct taxation were not encouraging. But until the war, all seemed to be running smoothly, and the war itself brought prosperity. The Sudan Government was, at least on the face of things, "paying its own way". The future was thought to be assured by the Gezira Scheme, which was intended to make the Sudan a major cotton exporter, to earn foreign exchange and to bring prosperity to the cultivators of the Gezira.

But because of faulty estimates of the costs involved and increased prices of materials and labour after the war, the Sudan faced a financial crisis over the funding of the scheme. This crisis was resolved only after a series of negotiations in London in 1921-22, in which the Sudan officials were able to convince the British government of not only the economic but also the political necessity for carrying out the scheme. These negotiations are discussed in detail in Appendix I.

One immediate result of the financial crisis was a change in the financial secretary's office. Curzon, the British foreign secretary, wrote in 1921 that Bernard, "though not directly responsible for the present difficulties ... cannot be held entirely blameless for the situation".<sup>1</sup> Sir Murdoch Macdonald, adviser to the Egyptian public

<sup>1</sup> Foreign office to Treasury, 19/8/21, F.O. 407/190. It is undoubtedly true that Bernard had either been unaware of or insufficiently concerned by the general state of finances. In 1920 he led Keown-Boyd, the Milner mission's representative in the Sudan, to believe that "the Sudan Government have every reason to be sanguine". (Keown-Boyd, "Col. Sir E. Bernard, K.B.E., C.M.G., civil secretary" (sic), n.d. (1920), DEP MILNER 161.) Others were less optimistic. Willis wrote privately in 1921 that "money is going to be very tight this next year.... Things are going to be difficult and Bernard will have a job to make out his budget without a deficit, and personally I think it would be much more truthful to show it so than to fake the figures as he generally does.... I do not think there is much doubt that we have been living over our income lately". (Willis to "Pasha", 8/12/21, SAD 204/3.)

works department, had been summarily sacked by Allenby after the former's revised estimates of March 1921 had been digested.<sup>1</sup> Criticism of the Sudan Government, however, seems to have been directed solely at Bernard. Lindsay,<sup>2</sup> the under-secretary of state at the foreign office, thought that the governor-general's council, through Bernard, should have exercised more control over Macdonald, but Lindsay concluded that it was "not surprising that the Maltese gentleman should fail to restrain a rough headstrong Scotch engineer."<sup>3</sup> But suggestions that the Treasury should take on some kind of direct supervision of Sudan finances were rejected. Lindsay disdained the idea, writing that he knew "from experience how easily the Sudan can cheat Egypt", and felt "frankly sure they will be able to cheat the Treasury".<sup>4</sup> The result was the appointment of Schuster, whose own representations concerning the Gezira Scheme must have carried great weight at the Treasury.

Schuster immediately reformed the system of accounting and reconstructed the system of pay and promotions. In the period 1919-24, government expenditure for pensions and gratuities increased from

<sup>1</sup> Sir Murdoch Macdonald (1866-1957), adviser to the Egyptian public works department, 1911-1921, was M.P. for Inverness, 1922-1950. (WWW, 1951-1960, pp. 696-697.)

<sup>2</sup> Sir Ronald Lindsay (1877-1945), was under-secretary of state at the foreign office, 1921-24, permanent under-secretary of state, 1928-30, and ambassador to Washington, 1930-39. (DNB, 1941-1950, pp. 507-508.)

<sup>3</sup> Lindsay to Curzon, 5/8/21, F.O. 371/6319.

<sup>4</sup> Minute by Lindsay, 1/11/21, F.O. 371/6320.

£E30,944 to £E96,000.<sup>1</sup> Promotions, which had been almost automatic and based on seniority, were to depend in future on efficiency tests and educational qualifications. These and other reforms, affecting as they did subordinate Sudanese officials, were in part responsible for their increasing dissatisfaction.

At the very time the Sudan Government was embroiled in negotiations for Gezira financing, the prices of cotton and cotton seed plummeted. This was due in large part to a general world-wide slump after the war, but only served to raise further doubts as to the viability of the scheme. It also pointed out what would in later years be a major economic problem for the Sudan: the early and continuing over-reliance on the Gezira and the dangers of a one crop economy. The difficulties of planning and budgeting which the government faced can be deduced from the erratic nature of prices in the Stack years. It should be noted especially that while production increased from 89,224 kantars<sup>2</sup> in 1920 to 117,659 kantars in 1921, the value of the crop decreased from £E1,608,407 to £E385,138, a truly disastrous fall.<sup>3</sup>

The third of the "three secretaries", the legal secretary, under Stack, was Mr. (later Sir) Wasey Sterry.<sup>4</sup> The first civil judge in the Sudan (in 1901), he became acting legal secretary in May 1917, when

<sup>1</sup> Stack to Allenby, 6/8/24, F.O. 371/10068.

<sup>2</sup> One kantar = approximately 100 lbs. of ginned cotton.

<sup>3</sup> Annual Report for 1922, Cmd. 1950 (1923).

<sup>4</sup> Sir Wasey Sterry (1866-1955) was a barrister at Lincoln's Inn, 1892, and civil judge in the Sudan from 1901. He became chief judge in 1903, and from 1915 was styled "chief justice". He served as legal secretary from 1917 to 1926. (WWW, 1951-1960, p. 1041.)

Bonham-Carter <sup>1</sup> went on leave. On the latter's retirement later in the year, Sterry was made legal secretary, <sup>2</sup> a post he held until resigning in 1926. Having collaborated with his predecessor in the establishment of the Sudan's legal system, Sterry more than anyone in the country was acquainted with it. Like Schuster and MacMichael, Sterry was to have influence well beyond the scope of his official duties, especially during the crisis of 1924 and its aftermath. He was often acting governor-general in Stack's absence.

Another important post in the central government was that of private secretary. Most government departments reported to the governor-general through the private secretary's office, and it was he who drafted the governor-general's replies, reports, minutes and recommendations. Three private secretaries served under Stack. The first was Lt. Col. (later Sir) Mervyn Wheatley, <sup>3</sup> who held the post from 1917 to 1920. He was succeeded by his assistant, A.B.B. Howell, <sup>4</sup> who served until 1923.

<sup>1</sup> Sir Edgar Bonham-Carter (1870-1956) entered the Sudan Government in 1899 and held the post of legal secretary until his retirement in 1917. See Warburg, The Sudan under Wingate, p. 17n.

<sup>2</sup> Sudan Gazette, no. 318, 14/6/17, and no. 324, 18/10/17.

<sup>3</sup> Lt. Col. Sir Mervyn Wheatley (1880-1974) was deputy asst. civil secretary from 1907 to 1911, served in Kordofan in 1912, and was asst. civil secretary from 1913 to 1916, when he acted as civil secretary. After his service as private secretary he was governor of the Bahr al-Ghazāl, whence he retired in 1928. (MacMichael, SPS, p. 19.)

<sup>4</sup> Alban Berkeley Butts Howell (1884-1966) served in Khartoum in 1908, in Berber, 1909-12, and in the financial department, 1913-16. After serving as asst. private secretary and as private secretary he was deputy governor of the Red Sea Province, 1924-25, and served as governor of Dongola from 1926 until his retirement in 1930. (MacMichael, SPS, p. 20.)

Howell was in turn succeeded by his assistant, R.V. Bardsley,<sup>1</sup> who served in the post until 1925. The private secretary, in addition to his other duties, acted as secretary to the governor-general's council.

Throughout the early Condominium the position of Sudan agent in Cairo was an important one. His duties were defined in several circulars issued between 1903 and 1910. The 1903 circular described the Sudan agent as

The channel of communication between the outer world and the Civil Administration of the Sudan Government.... He will be the channel between the Sudan and the various offices of the Egyptian Ministries and the Army of Occupation.... He will be the sole channel between the Departments of the Sudan Government ... and the British Agent and Consul-General.<sup>2</sup>

The last-mentioned duty was the most important in practice. As liaison officer between Palace and Residency, the Sudan agent had to be someone in whom the governor-general could repose total confidence. Having been Sudan agent himself - at a time when this meant dealing with Wingate on the one hand and Kitchener on the other - Stack was well aware of the diplomatic skills required by the occupant of the post. When Clayton declined his invitation to come to Khartoum as civil secretary, Stack was not overly disappointed, as Clayton would be staying on in Cairo as Sudan agent. New in his own post, it was all the more important for Stack to have Clayton as his spokesman and, perhaps more significantly, as his source of information in Cairo. Indeed, he admit-

<sup>1</sup> Robert Vickers Bardsley (1890-1952) served in Khartoum from 1913 to 1915, and in the Blue Nile Province from 1916 to 1920. After serving as asst. private secretary and as private secretary he was briefly asst. civil secretary (1926), and was governor of the Blue Nile from 1928 until being invalided in 1932. (MacMichael, SPS, p. 24.)

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Warburg, The Sudan under Wingate, p. 60.

ted to Clayton that "one letter of yours owing to its frankness gives me more insight into the 'heart of things' than a dozen from other sources".<sup>1</sup> Even before it was decided that Clayton should stay on, a possible successor was being considered,<sup>2</sup> and when Clayton retired in 1920, R.E. More,<sup>3</sup> who had sought the post in 1917, became Sudan agent. He served from 1 February 1920<sup>4</sup> until his retirement in 1931.

### The intelligence department

Of the occupants of the chief posts of the Sudan Government during Stack's administration, the only one other than a secretary to play a leading role was C.A. Willis,<sup>5</sup> the director of intelligence. As an institution, the intelligence department was a direct descendant of the Egyptian Army intelligence department. In part because its functions were so broad and ill-defined, it was to become a source of embarrass-

<sup>1</sup> Stack to Clayton, 19/5/17, SAD 470/6.

<sup>2</sup> Stack to Clayton, 7/6/17, SAD 470/6.

<sup>3</sup> Richard Edwardes More (1879-1936) served in the Red Sea Province, 1902-03, in Kordofan in 1904, in the White Nile Province in 1905, and in Khartoum from 1906 until 1919. In 1914 he served briefly as governor of Khartoum. (MacMichael, SPS, p. 11.)

<sup>4</sup> Sudan Gazette, no. 357, 13/4/20.

<sup>5</sup> Charles Armine Willis (1881-1975) served in Khartoum in 1905 and in Kordofan in 1906-07. In 1908 he worked in the legal department. He was posted in Kordofan, 1909-12, the Red Sea Province, 1913, and in Dongola, 1914-15. He was asst. director of intelligence, 1915-19, and director from 1920 until 1926, when he was made governor of the Upper Nile, where he remained until his retirement in 1931. (MacMichael, SPS, p. 16.)



ment, ridicule, and serious misunderstanding during the Stack period. In 1919 Willis was asked by the war office in London for an account of the department's history and duties, and his reply well describes the confused state of affairs:

The Intelligence Department of the Sudan Government holds a somewhat anomalous position. The organisation previous to the outbreak of war consisted of a Director [and assistant director] in Cairo, and an Asst. Director and Intelligence Officer in Khartoum. The Director was also Sudan Agent ... and he included in his duties Intelligence work to do with the Sennoussi, and Tripoli, and Sinai. On the outbreak of war the Director became immersed almost wholly in work for the British Army.... Both A.D.I.'s were taken into military employment in Egypt and the whole work devolved upon the Intelligence Officer. Temporary assistance was brought in, amongst others the present writer, who was lent in November 1915, and finally transferred as A.D.I. in March, 1916. Previous to the war the Inspector-General, Slatin Pasha, had had so predominating an influence in Intelligence matters that any questions requiring expert knowledge tended to be referred to, and decided by, him rather than the department. <sup>1</sup>

Thus the duties of the intelligence department came to be as few or as many as the government chose to pass its way. In regard to the Egyptian Army, the department was, in the 1920s, still responsible for collecting information "regarding the political situation, the geography and resources of the Sudan and neighbouring countries", compiling and publishing reports, and for preparing and issuing cyphers. <sup>2</sup> The department was to collect information as to "races, tribes and natives of the Sudan"; to "make and maintain acquaintances as far as possible with all Sheikhs and notables who are of influence with the natives"; to maintain and compile archives; "to keep account of all Robes of Honour

<sup>1</sup> A.D.I. to director of military intelligence, war office, London, 31/5/19, SGA, INTEL 1/20/105.

<sup>2</sup> Standing order for intelligence department, 17/1/20, SGA, CIVSEC 36/1/2.

issued and withdrawn"; to arrange detention and maintenance of political prisoners; to examine refugee cases and generally supervise the pilgrimage to Mecca; to advise the chief censor; to oversee the local press; to act as a liaison between native notables and the government; to maintain the labour bureau (which was itself to keep records of labour resources, arrange for employment of surplus labour and act as a central reference bureau); to intercept obscene and politically undesirable films; etc. <sup>1</sup> Willis, in fact, writing much later, noted that "the central government had a way of throwing at the Department any job that was not specifically defined elsewhere." <sup>2</sup>

To perform these myriad duties the department employed in Khartoum, as of January 1920, in addition to the director, assistant director and intelligence officer, seventeen classified staff, most of whom were clerks. Several officers were stationed in Cairo and a few interpreters posted to provincial towns to deal mostly with matters arising on the eastern borders. <sup>3</sup>

While the intelligence department had evolved from the Egyptian Army's intelligence department and had, in the absence of any reorganisation or rationalisation of its functions, continued to perform many duties relative to military intelligence, it had, after 1914, also taken on the responsibilities of the inspector-generalship, a post created for and held only by Slatin Pasha until its abeyance at the outbreak of the war. The assumption by the department of the duties of

<sup>1</sup> Standing order for intelligence department, 17/1/20, SGA, CIVSEC 36/1/2.

<sup>2</sup> Willis, "Sidelights", p. 72.

<sup>3</sup> Standing order for intelligence department, 17/1/20.

that office, which were themselves sweeping and nebulous, can be seen in Willis's description under such headings as "Robes of Honour" and "acquaintances ... with all Sheikhs and notables."

The intelligence department became the focus for a good deal of bitter complaint during Stack's administration. This can be traced to several causes, among them the department's inefficiency (which in part resulted from its institutionalized disorganisation), its methods, and above all its director, C.A. Willis.

Willis's appointment as director in 1920 marked the first time the director of intelligence was to be stationed in the Sudan itself. From the outset he was hampered by the memory of Slatin, whose influence and tactics had made him extremely unpopular, especially with provincial officials. Slatin's methods had been highly personal, and the complete freedom given him by his intimacy and influence with Wingate brought him often into conflict with other members of the administration. His legacy to Willis was an amalgam of duties so disparate as to be conveniently referred to only as dealing with "native affairs" (which, by definition, might include anything), and an inherent distrust of and prejudice against the intelligence department. As Willis himself later observed, "the maintenance of an Intelligence system, however carefully kept separate from Slatin's old organisation, was suspect, both by natives and officials".<sup>1</sup>

This problem was exacerbated by Willis himself, who, lacking both the personal prestige and the native contacts of Slatin, was, however, altogether too willing to see himself, both personally and professionally, as the successor to the inspector-general. It was at least in

<sup>1</sup> Willis, "Sidelights", p. 41. For details of Slatin's role in the administration, see Warburg, The Sudan under Wingate, pp. 46-58.

part due to this that Willis's relations with other senior officials were notably unsuccessful. His great rival was MacMichael, who became assistant civil secretary at about the same time as Willis was made director of intelligence. Aside from their policy differences, which were many, Willis "was always at daggers drawn" with MacMichael.<sup>1</sup> By some Willis was considered clever - too clever - and all resented the influence which by government default and historical accident had come to be his. It was, however, in the area of intelligence work itself that his critics were most vociferous.

Because of his personal attention to detail, Slatin had left behind him no system of intelligence-gathering except for a collection of "agents", whose very numbers and identities can probably never be known. Willis found it easy to fit into this method of operating. But a contemporary inspector reports that Willis's agents "blackmailed" people, saying "'Give me this horse', or 'give me a girl tonight or I'll report you'".<sup>2</sup> In a report commissioned by Stack just before his death (but which did not appear until January 1925) the matter of "secret agents" was prominent:

The use of unofficial 'agents' ... requires to be definitely regulated.... There is no justification for the employment of ostensibly secret agents for contact with public opinion.... Officers in Provinces and Departments should ... have the assurance that unofficial agents are not being employed for general espionage or for reporting on local matters without

<sup>1</sup> Interview with Mr. Martin Parr, 3/6/76.

<sup>2</sup> Interview with Sir James Robertson, 18/6/76. Robertson served in the Blue Nile, 1923-25; White Nile, 1926-31; Fung, 1931-34; Kordofan, 1934-36; White Nile, 1936-39; and as deputy governor of the Blue Nile Province, 1939-40. He was asst. civil secretary, 1941-42; deputy civil secretary, 1942-45; and civil secretary, 1945-53. (See MacMichael, SPS, p. 39.)

their cognisance.... the bad odour in which the Sudan Intelligence Department is at present held in many quarters is largely due to ideas, often erroneous, as to the extent to which 'agents' are employed. <sup>1</sup>

When writing to a provincial governor, Willis was in the habit of beginning with the words, "Agent reports...". The information subsequently imparted might be (and often was) wholly trivial, but the governor had nonetheless been put on notice that an "agent" from Khartoum was at large in his province. While a governor might have nothing to hide, complaining of the presence of agents might give the opposite impression. On purely practical grounds, the exaggerated cloak and dagger aspect of these agents, their often amateurish methods and undeniably poor results, all called into question the necessity for the inconvenience they undoubtedly caused. One former official recalls that at Nahud in 1915 a wire arrived informing him that a spy, disguised as a merchant, would soon be arriving. No one, save the inspector, was to know of this. Subsequently a local vendor appeared at the office and said: "'Sir, the government spy has arrived. Where shall we put him?'" <sup>2</sup> Such ludicrous happenings only increased annoyance with the intelligence department.

<sup>1</sup> Report of Mr. J.M. Ewart, Indian Police, on the organisation of public security intelligence in the Sudan, 8/6/25, SGA, CIVSEC 36/1/2. Stack had expressed "decided dissatisfaction" with the intelligence reports he was receiving in London in 1924, and asked the Indian Government to second to the Sudan Government someone who could report on the subject and suggest reforms. Ewart was selected.

<sup>2</sup> Interview with Sir Angus Gillan, 24/5/76. Willis's successor, Reginald Davies, recalled that "In Darfur we had been unconscious of the existence of the Intelligence Department; and in Kordofan we were inclined to laugh at it. The secret intelligence agent sent out from Khartoum was a figure of fun." (Davies, The camel's back, London, 1957, p. 180.)

Attempts were made, without much success, to put a stop to what was seen as clear interference in province affairs. At the Northern Governors' Meeting of 1922, the governors felt forced to resolve that "The Meeting were of opinion that direct communications between the Director of Intelligence and Province staff should be restricted to correspondence between the Director of Intelligence and the Governor...." <sup>1</sup>

The clear implication, of course, was that the intelligence department had been communicating directly with subordinate officials without the knowledge of the province governor.

The general criticism of the "bad old days" of Slatin notwithstanding, an important aspect of his method had been constant direct contact with native opinion, especially with tribal leaders, through his friendships and frequent treks into the hinterland. This, because of the increased responsibilities of the intelligence department and by personal inclination Willis was unable to do. Combined with the often useless information retrieved by agents and the unsophisticated and disorganised methods of collation, the result was the department's inability to perform much in the way of useful service. In the words of one who served in the department under Willis: the intelligence department "was very bad.... We didn't really know much about the Sudan. It wasn't a police intelligence...." Willis "was quite useless ... a lone wolf". The department "was just on its own." <sup>2</sup>

These sentiments were echoed in Ewart's report on public security intelligence in 1925. The fault was not altogether with Willis. But cir-

<sup>1</sup> Record of the Northern Governors' Meeting, 1922, SGA, CIVSEC 32/1/3.

<sup>2</sup> Interview with Brig. Maurice Lush, 7/10/76. Indeed, Willis wrote that "a system of Intelligence for the Sudan has largely to be based on a very full and personal knowledge of the leading personalities ... and if possible ties of personal friendship with them". (Willis to director of military intelligence, war office, 31/5/19, SGA, INTEL 1/20/105.)

cumstance, historical and personal, combined to make cooperation between the provinces and the department, always difficult, at last impossible. The lack of cooperation ensured in turn that the work actually done by the department was often valueless. <sup>1</sup> Ewart reported that the method therefore followed by the department was always deficient:

The Intelligence Department amasses a vast amount of inchoate detail, which, tested by the experience of the Director, enables the latter to form opinions upon the problem as a whole. The value of such opinions would be greatly enhanced if their formation had been influenced by a wider and more general knowledge of the subject, and by the informed views of equally experienced provincial officials. Further ... even the Intelligence Department itself ... is usually following on events instead of anticipating them. <sup>2</sup>

The Ewart report on public security intelligence sealed Willis's fate. In 1926 he was made governor of the Upper Nile Province, a transfer nearer to exile than to promotion. It has often been assumed that the departure of Willis from the intelligence department was a result of the 1924 disturbances, but the problems of that department, noted above, and Willis's unpopularity, were the real causes for his removal. The 1925 report simply legitimized the feeling against him. Indeed, in a private letter to MacMichael in 1924, Schuster, by then active in many areas of the government, joked that "'C.M.G.' might be our

<sup>1</sup> Ewart report on the organisation of public security intelligence.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. As an example of "following on events" one may cite the Sudan Intelligence Reports. While, like the annual Reports, these were rather official press releases than organs for disseminating current information, they were nonetheless the chief periodical source of intelligence, on the Sudan as a whole, available to the provincial authorities. Yet they were often issued months after the occurrence of the events they described, obviously limiting their utility, if any, to their recipients. Rather than syntheses on which local policy could be based, they became simply interesting historical accounts, processed for consumption outside the Sudan.

slogan", meaning Charles (or "Chunkie", Willis's nickname) must go.<sup>1</sup>

We have dwelt somewhat on the deficiencies of the intelligence department for two reasons. First, of course, it is useful to understand, before discussing the security problems of the period, which were many and varied, what apparatus the government had available for obtaining information about and dealing with those problems. It will have been seen that the apparatus was inadequate and, indeed, became itself a problem to be dealt with. Further, the unique position of the director of intelligence gave him a strong voice in determining policy, which, from several points of view (not the least being that intelligence work should be independent of policy-formation) was to be discounted. Thus, the importance of Willis himself, especially in his dealings with leaders of Sudanese opinion and his consequent recommendations, was inevitably exaggerated beyond that appropriate to the head of a department. Secondly, in the examples of the intelligence department and the financial secretaryship can be noted the parallel of two arms of the government without clearly limited areas of responsibility. Both were headed by men who, while perhaps equal to the tasks facing the young Condominium, when pacification on the one hand and only rudimentary fiscal management on the other had priority over the development of a bureaucratic structure, were not competent to deal with increasingly complex post-war realities. These deficiencies, compounded by structural and personal problems, were part of the "legacy" of the Wingate-Slatin regime. Both situations were not to be dealt with until crises demanded urgent action. It must be concluded that Stack and his immediate advisors, most of whom, to be sure, were imbued with the same preconceptions and hampered by their parochial experience, failed to respond to the challenge to the Sudan's administration by streamlining

<sup>1</sup> Schuster to MacMichael, 30/9/24, MECOX.



the old or creating the new machinery necessary to deal with the challenge.

### The provinces

Even with the best intentions and most efficient methods, the intelligence department's communications with the provinces would have suffered. Great distances and poor internal communications led on the one hand to Khartoum's feeling that the provinces were insufficiently receptive to the views of the central government, and on the other, to the feeling of provincial officials that Khartoum lacked understanding and knowledge of the conditions in the provinces. This fact, reflected in (and exacerbated by) the powers devolved upon provincial governors, gave great independence to the governors - at times more than they would have liked. Khartoum's control was felt mainly in financial matters <sup>1</sup> but, of course, differed from one province to another.

With the conquest of Darfur in 1916, the Sudan had a total of fifteen provinces. <sup>2</sup> Local conditions varied so greatly, not only from one province to another, but even within a province, that standard procedures were often difficult to adopt. Thus certain provinces in the northern riverain areas were closely administered - areas of "direct" rule - whereas others, notwithstanding official policy and government pronouncements to the contrary, were from the beginning loosely administered. The number of staff, the state of the local tribes, and the attitudes of the individual British official were determinants of the form of administration.

<sup>1</sup> Warburg, The Sudan under Wingate, pp. 71-73.

<sup>2</sup> Bahr al-Ghazāl, Blue Nile, Darfur, Dongola, Halfa, Khartoum, Kordofan, Mongalla, Nuba Mts., Red Sea, Sennar, Upper Nile, Equatoria, White Nile, and Berber.

The provincial administrations were all theoretically centralised. The governor (mudīr) was responsible directly to the governor-general, though communication was in fact through the appropriate secretary or department. Each province was divided into districts (marākiz; sing.: markaz) presided over by a British inspector (mufattish) who from 1922 was styled "district commissioner". Each district in its turn was divided in sub-districts (ma'mūrīyat) under a ma'mūr (usually an Egyptian, though increasingly, in Stack's time, a Sudanese). The provincial governor was the supreme authority within his province. He was charged with preserving order, maintaining the system of justice, and regulating the province's staff. He was the province's chief magistrate. He drew up the provincial budget and was responsible for supervising conformity to the financial regulations.

When Stack took office in 1917, his provincial governors had all had long experience of the Sudan. They, like Stack himself and the central government hierarchy, were graduates of the Wingate-Slatin school, possessing many of the same virtues and prejudices of those two great figures. The British service in the Sudan, while often called a corps d'élite, suffered because of its isolation, not only from administrative and political developments in Britain's colonial empire, but also within the Sudan itself. Thus, while well-versed in the history and ways of the country (or, at least, of their particular provinces) they were, as a group, rather too parochial, uncritical and satisfied with the prevailing state of affairs. Stack's tenure saw the retirement of many of this first generation of British officials. Of the fifteen governors in office when he was confirmed as governor-general, one (Sir Herbert

Jackson Pasha) <sup>1</sup> had served since 1899; three since 1901; four since 1902; one since 1903; three since 1904; and one since 1905. The remaining two had served since 1912, but they (Hawarden Bey and Northcote Bey) <sup>2</sup> were both military men and governors of southern provinces (Bahr al-Ghazāl and Nuba Mts. respectively). <sup>3</sup>

In practice, the role of governor in the north was very different from that of a southern governor. Even in Stack's time, after twenty years of Condominium rule, the southern Sudan could hardly be said to have been administered at all. The southern governor's chief responsibility was to maintain order. Poor communications, even by Sudan standards, the climate, terrain, a heterogeneous and suspicious population made the whole south unattractive even to the adventurous types of the Sudan civil service. The southern governors were usually military or ex-military men. The so-called "Bog barons" <sup>4</sup> were a breed apart from

<sup>1</sup> Sir Herbert Jackson (1861-1931) was governor of Berber, 1899; civil secretary and deputy governor-general, 1900-01; and governor of Dongola, 1902-22. In 1922-23 he was styled "inspector-general". (MacMichael, SPS, p. 9.) Why Jackson was given this title is unclear, but it was possibly to give him more prestige when he was acting governor-general in Stack's absence.

<sup>2</sup> Viscount Hawarden (1877-1958) served in the Bahr al-Ghazāl from 1912 until he retired in 1920. (MacMichael, SPS, p. 24.) Cecil Northcote (1878-1945) served in Bahr al-Ghazāl, 1912-17, and was governor of Mongalla in 1918-19. He was governor of the Nuba Mts. from 1919 until he retired in 1928. (MacMichael, SPS, p. 21.)

<sup>3</sup> MacMichael, SPS, *passim*.

<sup>4</sup> This is a reference to the Bahr al-Ghazāl Province, which was popularly known as "the Bog".

their northern counterparts. The central government's ignorance and neglect of the south allowed the Bog baron to assume

the role of paternal autocrat and benevolent despot. He hammered out peace in his district, fought off innumerable diseases, and paid little heed to the pious and well-meaning administrative diktat which reached him from Khartoum. This life attracted the self-sufficient officer who could shoot, an officer who did not need the companionship of the mess, a man who was resilient to the isolation and loneliness yet with the sympathy and understanding to win the loyalty of what were in reality his people, his subjects. <sup>1</sup>

Not infrequently the central government was called upon to send troops against one or another recalcitrant tribe in the south. <sup>2</sup> Stack himself had gained a modest fame from his command of the Shambe Field Force in 1902. <sup>3</sup> "Patrols" were, in fact, simply a continuation of the process of pacification begun with the annihilation of the Mahdists. Even as late as the 1920s a patrol might be the first government contact with a tribe. A typical campaign was that in the Lau-Nuer country in 1917. The motive for this operation was that no administrative post had yet been established there due to a "paucity of staff" and lack of funds. The Lau section of the Nuer had evaded its tribute payments and was equipped with rifles obtained from Abyssinia. They were therefore to be made an example, to show the whole of the Nuer that the government must be obeyed. In several engagements the government force was successful. Stack's report to Wingate concluded that

<sup>1</sup> R.O. Collins, "The imperialists - the Sudan political service", unpublished paper, n.d., p. 10. Differences also existed in the method of recruitment of southern officials. Ex-officers were often taken into service, usually on a contract basis. (See MacMichael, SPS, p.6)

<sup>2</sup> See Warburg, The Sudan under Wingate, pp. 147-154.

<sup>3</sup> Report of the Shambe Field Force, SIR, May 1902.

Although no decisive defeat was inflicted owing to the enemy not having effected any large concentration, they were severely punished by loss of prisoners, casualties and captured stock. They have learned that Government is strong enough to enforce its orders....<sup>1</sup>

Other such operations, some on a large scale, punctuated the Stack years. A major campaign was fought in the Nyima Hills of the Nuba Mts. Province in 1917-18. "The patrol's objectives were limited to the harassing of Nubas while cultivating, the destruction of crops and villages, and the capture of cattle."<sup>2</sup> The record of this campaign is of almost incredible Nuba tenacity and courage, of tribesmen dying of thirst rather than surrendering, villages burnt and whole herds captured.

In 1919 the Aliab Dinka revolted. A police post south of Bor was attacked by a force of some three thousand Aliab in October. In December the column led by the governor of Mongalla, Major C.H. Stigand,<sup>3</sup> to restore order, was ambushed. The column lost twenty-five men, including the governor himself.

The loss of Stigand ... and White, the officer commanding the Equatorial Battalion, embittered officials from Khartoum to Mongalla.... Throughout March, April, and May 1920, nearly a thousand Sudanese and Equatorial troops scourged the three thousand square miles of Aliabland, supported by gunboats on the Nile and equipped with artillery and the ubiquitous machine guns.... Over four hundred Aliab, Atwot, and Mandari [were]

<sup>1</sup> Stack to Wingate, 14/11/17, F.O. 371/3711.

<sup>2</sup> "Operations in the Nyima Hills. Patrol no. 32", 25/2/18, F.O. 371/3203.

<sup>3</sup> Chauncey Hugh Stigand Bey (1877-1919), Egyptian Army, was governor of the Upper Nile, 1917-18, and was appointed governor of Mongalla in 1919. For biographical details, see Wingate's memoir in Stigand's Equatoria, the Lado Enclave, London, 1923.

killed, seven thousand cattle seized, and every village burned and the durra destroyed. Peace and famine settled over the Aliab country. <sup>1</sup>

But after 1920, it was later reported, the

Governor-General set his face against any more patrols, and especially against cattle-raiding. A return was made to the old plan of peaceful penetration, but under circumstances far more difficult, as the natives were suspicious and over-confident in the value of their own arms. But from 1920 on there is the growth of new spirit. It took several years before even the Shilluk could be trusted to let a D.C. enter their village without showing fight, whilst the process with the Nuer was bound to be slower....There were still places that were unknown and practically inaccessible. <sup>2</sup>

Thus, while administration in the north, however unsystematic, was at least continuing, the south under Stack was still undergoing the process of pacification. Indeed, in 1920, Woodland, <sup>3</sup> the new governor of Mongalla Province, was "all in favour of withdrawing our very advanced posts and only grabbing what we can really administer". <sup>4</sup> One

<sup>1</sup> R.O. Collins, Land beyond the rivers, the southern Sudan, 1898-1919, New Haven, 1971, p. 214. The British tended to play down the revolt. Allenby told Curzon that "Unrest amongst such partially administered tribes is a normal feature of work in equatorial provinces. There is nothing unusual in this particular occurrence, except the accidental death of a British officer.... The case, as a whole, is quite normal". (Allenby to Curzon, 19/1/20, quoting telegram from Khartoum, 18/1/20, F.O. 371/3722.)

<sup>2</sup> C.A. Willis, "A brief survey of the policy of the Sudan Government in the Upper Nile", n.d., SAD 212/10/1.

<sup>3</sup> Vincent Reynolds Woodland (1879- ?) served in Dongola, 1905-08; Kordofan, 1909-11; White Nile, 1912-17; Kordofan, 1917-18; Kassala, 1918-19; and was governor of Mongalla from 1920 until his retirement in 1924. (MacMichael, SPS, p. 14.)

<sup>4</sup> L. Phillips to Somerset, 24/4/20, MECOX.

inspector, in a private letter, described the situation in Mongalla (and the relationship between the provincial and central governments)

thus:

The S.G. [Sudan Government] are a stiff-necked lot of sods. How they expect anyone to administer a district without knowing the language I don't know. One doesn't realize how much it means till one gets down here and has cases to try and no one but a useless interpreter to explain it to one.... They are short of Inspectors now ... the whole of the west bank is inspectorless.... There is a new post now just under the Boya at Khor Losinga. There is a company there and an Inspector. The latter's job is purely an Intelligence show, as he doesn't administer or take tax.... The present Inspector (at Torib) complains that now the troops are gone ... he can't get carriers, not even dura owing to the famine, and of course he doesn't know the language.... Everyone has gone ... Barker and I are afraid the administration is in a bad way. They'll never do anything in this place unless they make roads and give a fellow a long enough time to know his district before shifting him round. They've had an extraordinary number of changes both in the Civil and the Equats lately - about a dozen fellows one after the other.... Owing to dura shortage all Equat dura has had to be brought from Khartoum - also 500 donkeys to transport it.... You should have seen the song Khartoum made at having to fork out this £5000 extra-budgetary expenditure. Keep troops on patrol for 8 months in a famine season and then expect them to grow their own dura.... It is most refreshing having Woodland as Governor ... but, as he says, the whole province is in such a muck-up state he doesn't know where to start, especially as they won't give him any staff.... Am now at Rejaf and going to 'inspect' details. Can't get ashore as stuck on a sandbank. <sup>1</sup>

A reflection of the differentiation of north and south was the institution of governors' meetings. Because of the distances involved and the different nature of the problems faced in the two halves of the country, each group of governors met separately on an annual basis.

<sup>1</sup> L. Phillips to Somerset, 24/4/20, MECOX. In 1920 Sterry, in commenting on southern policy, said that "what a failure it is after 20 years can be seen (a) from the frequency of semi-military operations, (b) from the appalling excess of expenditure over revenue." (Sterry to Woodland, 23/9/20, SGA, CIVSEC 1/9/31.)

Yet even at this it was recognised, after several of these meetings, that the discussion of common problems and the coordination of policy were impossible even within the narrower context of the northern provinces alone because of the varying conditions obtaining in one province from another. The meetings thus tended toward the discussion of trivialities, and in 1927 formal annual meetings were abandoned.<sup>1</sup>

Below the governor in the chain of command (and far more important both in day-to-day administration and to the people to whom he was often the only contact with the government) was the inspector (after 1922 called "district commissioner"). In a memorandum on the duties of the inspector written in 1920, MacMichael noted that for the whole country, with an estimated area of one million square miles, budgetary provision existed for a mere seventy-three inspectors. Even with this small provision there was "a large number of present vacancies". The inspector's duties were listed under nine main headings: land, taxation, municipal, civil suits, matrimonial, personnel, criminal, police and prisons, and "miscellaneous".<sup>2</sup>

The first area of responsibility, land, referred to the settling of disputes over land ownership, a time-consuming and difficult job because only a small fraction of the country's land was registered. Ownership of cultivable land, grazing rights, boundaries of gum gardens, and watering rights made up the bulk of the cases. In the area of taxation, supervision was required of ushur and herd tax assessment and dues collection. Municipal responsibilities (where applicable) included "inspection of sanitary arrangements", town planning, allotment of

<sup>1</sup> Civil secretary to all governors, 29/11/27, SGA, CIVSEC 32/1/1.

<sup>2</sup> MacMichael, "Memorandum on the duties of inspectors in charge of districts", 1920, SGA, CIVSEC 50/15/67. See also Warburg, The Sudan under Wingate, p. 73.



sites, organising markets, prices, licenses, etc. Civil suits, again especially in towns, took up an enormous amount of time, and the numbers of these tended to increase in proportion to urbanisation (and concomitant de-tribalisation). Under "personnel" were included investigation of complaints against shaykhs and supervision of police and office staff. Criminal cases made up perhaps the bulk of the inspector's work, as

The powers of a Mamur or Sub-mamur are very limited and consequently almost every case of major or comparatively major theft has to come before the Inspector. In more important cases a court has to be formed and its sittings often take away the whole administrative staff of the district from their other duties. Cases of cheating, grievous hurt, abduction, slave dealing, false evidence, dishonest receiving or concealing, and offences under the various ordinances are also common and almost all have to be dealt with by the Inspector. <sup>1</sup>

Finally, under "miscellaneous", MacMichael listed the duties which contributed to the inspector's characterisation as the "jack of all trades", and made obvious the impossibility of one man's carrying them out: the preparation of an annual local budget; confidential correspondence; inspecting accounts; issuing of licences; compiling reports; control of cattle diseases; recommendations regarding agricultural loans; contracts for markets, ferries, etc.; erection and upkeep of rest-houses; supervising matters relating to construction and maintenance of roads and wells; supervising schools; formalities regarding sales, leases, and mortgages; sitting on compensation boards; recommendations for local honours, etc. <sup>2</sup>

The time consumed by performance of these duties varied, of course, from district to district. In western Kordofan, for instance, cases

<sup>1</sup> MacMichael, "Memorandum on the duties of inspectors..."

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

concerning camel theft and problems relating to gum gardens were predominant concerns. Also, "there were streams of petitions, petitions about tebeldi trees,<sup>1</sup> gum gardens, or how the local omda had oppressed someone ... interminable petitions. You might get fifty in a day. There was no one to decide these disputes except the commissioner".<sup>2</sup>

This picture of the harried inspector has been re-inforced in the memoirs and histories published by former Sudan Government officials.

A quotation from one is illustrative:

We spoke of the many criminal and civil cases to be heard, land disputes to be settled, the maintenance of law and order, building of stores and police lines, the development of the economic possibilities of the country, the issuing of licences for various enterprises, and the thousand and one duties involved in the administration of a large and backward district.... We spoke of constant bouts of fever, the exacting climate, vast distances to cover with slow and inadequate means of transport. We told of different languages still to be learnt, of tribal customs and characteristics which we were striving to understand ... of the great tracts of land still unmapped which we hoped to explore and, some day, to administer. To this information we added the somewhat staggering fact that there were, of course, practically no funds to finance our efforts.<sup>3</sup>

The impression given is of exactly the sort of "jack of all trades", working in intolerable conditions, that MacMichael described in his memorandum. But while the inspector was, in fact, theoretically responsible for all these varied works, is this an accurate impression of his actual performance? Another former inspector wrote:

<sup>1</sup> Tebeldi trees were hollowed out to form cisterns, and were therefore a valuable asset.

<sup>2</sup> Interview with Mr. Martin Parr, 3/6/76.

<sup>3</sup> H.C. Jackson, Behind the modern Sudan, London, 1955, pp. 59-60.

The only member of the Political Service in the station [Medani on the Blue Nile] when I arrived was W.R.G. Bond. <sup>1</sup> ... The District Inspector whom I was supposed to succeed had been absent on leave for a considerable time owing to ill-health so there was nobody I could take over from. I had an interview with Colonel Dickinson <sup>2</sup> ... and asked him if he would explain to me what I was supposed to be responsible for. He answered shortly that I would find out, but that was not exactly helpful. I did, however, gradually discover ... what my duties were.... Amongst other things I found that I had under my immediate command a force of police and a prison and I was in addition responsible for a good deal of magisterial work. <sup>3</sup>

He went on to describe the routine under his next governor, J.H. Butler: <sup>4</sup>

He did not seem to bother over much about how his Province was administered so long as the local inhabitants appeared to be happy and content.... [He] used to spend a good deal of time going up and down the White Nile in the Province Steamer and stopping here and there to see the local inhabitants and ... where possible, having a duck shoot.... [He] used to come into my office and say 'I think it is about time you went on circuit. I would like you to come

- <sup>1</sup> William Ralph Garneys Bond (1880-1952) served in Dongola, 1905-07; in the legal department, 1908-09; in the White Nile Province, 1910-15; in Dongola, 1916-19; and in Khartoum, 1919-21. He was governor of the Fung Province from 1921 to 1924, and governor of Dongola from 1924 until his retirement in 1926. (MacMichael, SPS, p. 14.)
- <sup>2</sup> Colonel Ernest Arthur Dickinson (1864- ?) served in the Blue Nile Province from 1903 to 1914. (MacMichael, SPS, p. 12.)
- <sup>3</sup> E.G. Sarsfield-Hall, From Cork to Khartoum, privately published, 1975, pp. 29-30. Edwin Geoffrey Sarsfield-Hall (1886-1975) served in Khartoum, 1909; in the Blue Nile Province, 1910-12; in the legal department, 1913-16; in Darfur, 1917-21. He was deputy governor of Kordofan, 1921-26, and governor of that province from 1926 to 1928. He served as governor of Khartoum from 1929 until retiring in 1936. (MacMichael, SPS, p. 21.)
- <sup>4</sup> James Henry Butler (1863-1927) served in Sennar in 1899-1900, in Kordofan from 1901 to 1904, and was governor of the White Nile Province from 1905 until his retirement in 1913. (MacMichael, SPS, p. 9.)

with me on the Province Steamer tomorrow'. I had practically no work to do as a District Judge in the Province headquarters and I don't think I ever heard a case on circuit....<sup>1</sup>

Added to the vicissitudes of "on the spot training" (perhaps as well described as trial and error) was the language problem. Even though all candidates for the civil service had to spend a year studying Arabic before they were posted to the Sudan,<sup>2</sup> this was seldom sufficient to conduct a district's administration with confidence. H.C. Jackson, in describing as his most "distasteful" duty "having to try a man for his life", noted that

the trial was in a foreign language ... the accused was usually ignorant and unable to make the best of any defence he might have. He had no counsel to plead for him; there was no jury. The Major Court ... was presided over by a British officer whose difficulties were increased by the fact that he sometimes had to prepare a case which he afterwards had to hear.<sup>3</sup>

With such obvious liabilities as staff shortages, lack of funds, language difficulties, etc., how, then were the "thousand and one" duties of the inspector performed? It must be concluded that what the inspector could not do either went undone or, to a much greater extent than the government admitted (or was even aware of) was done through and by traditional native authority. This will be discussed at greater length in Chapter IV; it will suffice here to note that Direct Rule, outside of the large towns, remained more theoretical than actual, more a part of the Sudan Government's self-view than of objective reality.

Below the inspector in the province hierarchy were the ma'mūrs and sub-ma'mūrs. At the beginning of the Condominium this class of of-

<sup>1</sup> Sarsfield-Hall, From Cork to Khartoum, pp. 39-40.

<sup>2</sup> "Information to candidates. Egyptian and Sudanese Civil Services", June 1913, F.O. 371/2938.

<sup>3</sup> Jackson, Behind the modern Sudan, p. 121.

ficial was made up almost entirely of Egyptians seconded from the Egyptian Army. They were, in fact, an intervening class between the British inspectors and the Sudanese population, with whom they shared a common language and religion. A ma'mūr served as local police official and "revenue and executive officer and magistrate as well, but always under control of a British officer to every three or four Egyptian mamurs." <sup>1</sup> As early as 1912, Sudanese sub-ma'mūrs had been introduced, both as a matter of administrative necessity and as an extension of the policy of reducing the numbers of Egyptian officials with a view toward their eventual elimination. These Sudanese were selected "in conformity with the Government policy of giving authority to persons of good secular, as opposed to religious standing", and in keeping with this principle, "careful consideration" was given to their family connections as well as educational qualifications. <sup>2</sup> After the troubles in Egypt in 1919, this process was accelerated. In 1920 the composition of the ma'mūr and sub-ma'mūr class was as follows: there were three Egyptian sub-inspectors, <sup>3</sup> fifty-three Egyptian ma'mūrs and eighty Egyptian sub-ma'mūrs; one Syrian ma'mūr and two Syrian sub-ma'mūrs; four Sudanese <sup>4</sup> ma'mūrs and fifteen Sudanese sub-ma'mūrs; one Arab ma'mūr and forty-five Arab sub-ma'mūrs; and four ma'mūrs of "mixed" <sup>5</sup> descent and ten sub-ma'mūrs of "mixed" descent. <sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Keown-Boyd, "Report in 3 parts", 14/3/20, DEP MILNER 161.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> When an Egyptian ma'mūr who had been seconded from the army came up for promotion to the rank of sagh (adjutant-major), he was either returned to the army or promoted to sub-inspector. The title indicated seniority and implied no added responsibility. Egyptians never became inspectors.

<sup>4</sup> "Sudanese" refers to southerners; "Arab" refers to northerners.

<sup>5</sup> "Mixed" refers to muwallads, persons of mixed Egyptian-Sudanese parentage.

<sup>6</sup> Keown-Boyd, "Report in 3 parts".

As of the time of Keown-Boyd's report (March 1920) the White Nile and Darfur provinces were staffed entirely by Sudanese of sub-ma'mūr rank (called ma'āwinīn; sing.: mu'āwin), and the system was being extended. <sup>1</sup>

At the height of the Egyptian crisis of 1919, a commission was established under the chairmanship of Viscount Milner, secretary of state for the colonies, to report to the British government on the situation and to make recommendations as to Egypt's future. (See Chapter III.) No mention was made of the Sudan in the mission's terms of reference, but considerable attention was paid to the country in the final report, based on memoranda written by Keown-Boyd, who was delegated to Khartoum in the winter of 1920 to investigate all aspects of the Sudan's position. Another indication that the future status of the Sudan was of considerable concern to the mission is the amount of private and official correspondence dealing with the country undertaken by Lord Milner. Among Milner's observations (discussed in Chapter III) was that

It is undesirable to multiply propagandists of Egyptian Nationalism in the Soudan. Egyptian Nationalism has its good as well as its bad side in Egypt. But it has no *raison d'être* in the Soudan, and its introduction into that country is simply an element of disturbance without any corresponding advantage. <sup>2</sup>

The Milner report saw the education of Sudanese on an increased scale as one solution to the problem, but warned that "care should be taken, in the matter of education, not to repeat the mistake made in Egypt of introducing a system which fits pupils for little else than employment in clerical and minor administrative posts, and creates an overgrown body of aspirants to Government employment." <sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Keown-Boyd, "Report in 3 parts".

<sup>2</sup> Private and confidential general comments, n.d. F.O. 371/4978.

<sup>3</sup> Report of the special mission to Egypt, 1921, Cmd. 1131.

Thus there was concern, even at this early date, not simply with the potential threat of Egyptians in the Sudan, but also with the prospect of a large and inevitably expanding Sudanese official class which might take on the same anti-British characteristics of its Egyptian - and Indian - counterparts. Certainly the Sudan Government, or at least elements thereof, were alive to this possibility as the logical requirement of "direct" rule for closer administration. This awareness is reflected in the early recourse to Indirect Rule. (See Chapter IV.)

The policy of diminishing the numbers of Egyptians in the administration was greatly accelerated after 1919, and while this question will be discussed in detail in Chapter IV, it might be pointed out here that at the time of the Milner report's composition there were 130 British, 533 Egyptian, 605 Sudanese, 24 Syrian, and 9 "others" employed. Clerical staff positions were being reserved for Sudanese, and Egyptian clerical staff allowed to diminish through retirement, resignation, etc.<sup>1</sup> These figures are for classified personnel only, and therefore do not include, for instance, the Egyptian Army railway battalion, which numbered some 2500 Egyptians. Although reductions in Egyptian personnel were deemed desirable in all departments, in only a few were Egyptians thought to be an immediate danger. Posts and telegraphs was described as "a thoroughly Egyptian Department", whose staff, while efficient, were "troublesome, discontented, and politically disaffected".<sup>2</sup> But replacement by Sudanese would be difficult because "the work is very arduous and hours are long: Sudanese or Arabs are temperamentally unsuited ... only boys who have failed to attain a high standard of

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix II, table 4.

<sup>2</sup> Keown-Boyd, "Report in 3 parts".

education will go to [the department] and many of those who do come leave after six months or so".<sup>1</sup> The railways and steamers department similarly caused alarm. At Atbara, the railway headquarters, it was said that "the Egyptian Staff is so numerous that the railway cantonment is practically an Egyptian village. The Egyptian clerks were inclined to be troublesome during the disturbances in Egypt...."<sup>2</sup>

In summarising his report on the Sudan's civil administration, Keown-Boyd made the following recommendations:

- (1) The replacement of the mamur system with the 'muawen' system.
- (2) Prohibition of the employment of any further Egyptian personnel in permanent posts - except in a few special cases.
- (3) Expansion and enlarging of the educational system.
- (4) Reduction of the Railway Battalion.
- (5) Greater facilities for Egyptian officials of the Sudan Government to find posts in Egypt.<sup>3</sup>

The point of this summary was that greater numbers of Sudanese should be trained to replace Egyptians. From the inception of the Condominium the Sudan Government had pursued a policy of educating Sudanese with this end in mind, but progress toward it was slow. As early as 1901, a principal aim of the education department was expressed as "the creation of a small native administrative class who will ultimately fill many minor posts".<sup>4</sup> This was to be done primarily through the medium of the Gordon College. In 1905 there were but fifteen boys enrolled. By 1917 the number had increased to seventy-four. The substantial in-

<sup>1</sup> Keown-Boyd, "Report in 3 parts."

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Annual Report for 1901, Cd. 1012.



crease from that year can be attributed directly to this need to replace Egyptian civil servants: the figures for 1921 (the year of the Milner report) and for 1926 (reflecting the evacuation of Egyptian officials following the 1924 troubles) are especially noteworthy.<sup>1</sup>

Gordon College became, in fact, and despite the warnings of Milner and others, such a training ground for government employment, that a government position came to be considered as the natural outcome of graduation. In 1933, Lord Lloyd, Allenby's successor as high commissioner, wrote, however, that "any idea that the education given in [the government schools] was in any way a qualification for government service was deliberately and actively discouraged".<sup>2</sup> The fact remains, however, that the "western-educated" Sudanese began to see himself as the natural heir at least to the gradually departing Egyptian official, a perception which, while perfectly valid, was to have increasingly sorry results as time went on.

To conclude, the central government under Stack faced certain structural and related political problems. The degree to which the government of the Sudan was a centralised administration, even in the relatively accessible north, must be assessed with caution, and care must be taken not only to distinguish north from south, but also town from village, and sedentary from nomadic areas. For instance, when

<sup>1</sup> Enrolment in 1917 stood at 74; in 1918, 86; in 1919, 114; in 1920, 134; in 1921, 180; in 1922, 191; in 1923, 207; in 1924, 212; in 1925, 235; and in 1926, 303. ("List showing number of boys in Gordon College", 10/3/35, SGA, CIVSEC 1/57/162.)

<sup>2</sup> Lord Lloyd, Egypt since Cromer, London, 1933, vol. 1, p. 324.

asked by the writer if he had ever met the governor-general, one former inspector, who had been stationed in Darfur, responded in the negative, commenting that "for Stack to see me would have taken him out of Khartoum for two months".<sup>1</sup> Another former official remarked that he "didn't think Khartoum was very much in touch ... like the chap on the front line in a war", there was little contact with headquarters.<sup>2</sup> The inefficiency of a theoretical Direct Rule that was, in fact, in many cases indirect or merely the most general supervision and maintenance of law and order was one, if not the major impetus, toward acceptance, in Stack's time, of the efficacy of formal Indirect Rule.

It would be incorrect to assume, notwithstanding the critiques cited above, that Khartoum was blissfully unaware of the plight of the provincial administrator. But before the Egyptian crisis of 1919 had shaken British confidence, and before the idea of Indirect Rule had consequently taken hold, the usual remedy for administrative problems was to increase the numbers of British staff. Thus, in 1920 a proposal was made to create "double inspectorates", that is, to assign two inspectors to one district, with the aim being that while one inspector was on leave or on tour, the other would be at the district headquarters. Greater continuity would be achieved, since one man familiar with the district would always be available to train a replacement for his fellow inspector.<sup>3</sup> The governors were in agreement with the idea. But Stack, while agreeing in principle, warned that "one of the objects of putting two or more Inspectors in a District should be to

<sup>1</sup> Interview with Sir Shuldham Redfern, 8/10/76.

<sup>2</sup> Interview with Sir James Robertson, 18/6/76.

<sup>3</sup> MacMichael, "Memorandum on the duties of inspectors".

eliminate or reduce the subordinate administrative staff...." <sup>1</sup> This theme was articulated more forcefully by Schuster, the financial secretary, who warned in 1924 that there was already a tendency to overstaff, at least from the financial point of view, in some provinces. He asked: "If the administrative organisation is allowed to grow unchecked is there not a danger that it will always be in advance of what the country can economically support, so that it will be unable to pay its way - without charitable supplements to its income?" <sup>2</sup>

By "charitable supplements" Schuster referred, of course, to the past and present Egyptian contributions discussed above. The double-inspectorate idea prevailed, but in the concerns voiced by Stack and Schuster are traces of the political and financial motives for moving away from Direct Rule, a system which built up large staffs which the country could not afford. Stack's desire to eliminate "subordinate staff" was the administrative side of the problem; Schuster's concern that the Sudan should "pay its way" was the financial side. Indeed, Schuster warned that it was "very urgent that we should not allow a system of administration to grow which will be such a burden on the country's back that it can never stand without the support of demoralising subsidies from Egypt." <sup>3</sup> It was imperative, therefore, that the Sudan should achieve financial independence and make the administrative changes necessary to attain that overriding end.

The outcome of the financial crisis precipitated by the funding of the Gezira Scheme was a happy one, politically, as viewed by the

<sup>1</sup> "Remarks of H.E. the governor-general on the subject", 23/3/21, SGA, CIVSEC 50/15/67.

<sup>2</sup> Schuster to civil secretary, 9/4/24, SGA, CIVSEC 50/15/67.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

Sudan Government. They had succeeded not only in ensuring the completion of the irrigation works, but had also managed to increase Britain's financial involvement in Sudan affairs, which could only strengthen British resolve to resist Egyptian nationalist demands. The major political argument in favour of continuing the Scheme had been of a familiar dual nature: it was essential to reduce or even eliminate Egyptian influence in the Sudan, on the one hand, and, on the other, the continuance of the irrigation scheme would prevent the emergence of radical Sudanese opposition. Stack's remarks in this regard were not an isolated expression of concern. Rather, they reflected what, up to the point of the Gezira negotiations (1922), were, in the eyes of the government, the two basic problems of the Sudan's internal security. (See Appendix I.)

The first of these was the sinister, anti-British propaganda emanating from Egyptian nationalists which was seen as seducing the emerging educated class of Sudanese officials and officers. Discerned as the inevitable continuation of a pattern evident in Egypt and India, spawned by the war and the concomitant rising expectations of embryonic nationalist movements, the emergence of Sudanese nationalism, or, at least, of what in later decades was seen as its first manifestation, came as a rude shock to the Sudan Government. The government had no experience of opposition that stressed a secular rather than religious motive. But the second of the government's major concerns regarding internal security, the resurgence of Mahdism, met with a similarly bewildered response. The Sudan Government as a whole was committed to a view of Mahdism that relied on the psychological detritus of the Gordon legend. Conceived by the Gordon literature and nurtured by the Wingate-Slatin world-view, the idea of Mahdism was frozen in time and incapable of modification. Thus, when as a result

at least in part of the government's own policies the "recrudescence" of Mahdism took place, it was inevitably seen as reactionary and implacably anti-British. Indeed, by government definition it could be nothing else.

We have seen that the Sudan Government emerged from the war unprepared for the harsh new realities with which it would have to cope. The Gezira funding crisis was, among other things, an example of how deeply the government could become involved in matters with which it was incapable of dealing in a business-like way. The almost farcical inadequacies of the intelligence department are evidence enough of the government's staidness and complacency, and of its deficiencies of staff. The experience of provincial administrators point to the haphazardness and inefficiency of general administration. Thus, when confronted after the war with the complex threats of Egyptian nationalism and its Sudanese parallel, and of a seemingly resurrected Mahdism, the government was ill-equipped, structurally, financially, and intellectually, to deal with them.

It is not surprising, then, that the record of Stack's government in dealing with these problems is, at best, mixed. Wingate's tentative rehabilitation, during the war years, of various religious leaders, had presaged an era of changing patterns of collaboration and, indeed, of resistance. Old friends became threats to security. Inevitable enemies became new friends. The record of this process is complicated and many faceted, with a history pre-dating the Condominium. It seems ironic that C.A. Willis, writing in later years, pointed out that "the principle of 'Quieta non movere' or Let Sleeping Dogs Lie, was one any administrator is only too glad to support".<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Willis, "Sidelights", p. 47.

Chapter II: Sudanese Resistance To British Rule

Part One: The Development Of Mahdism During The Slack Years

Introductory

It has been possible only in recent years for students of Sudanese history to obtain an objective picture of the Mahdia.<sup>1</sup> Even today, however, the legends persist and, indeed, are reinforced. Propaganda has been accepted as fact both through its repetition and because of a general lack of interest in a truth less thrilling and more complex than myth. If false impressions are accepted uncritically today, how much easier must their acceptance have been by the British officials of the early Condominium?

The three outstanding works on the Mahdia to be published before the Anglo-Egyptian conquest were Wingate's own Mahdiism and the Egyptian Sudan (1891),<sup>2</sup> Father Joseph Ohrwalder's Ten years' captivity in the Mahdi's camp (1892),<sup>3</sup> and Slatin's Fire and sword in the Sudan (1896).<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The publication in 1958 of Holt's The Mahdist state in the Sudan 1881-1898, a study of its origins, development and overthrow (2nd ed. Oxford, 1970), and the availability to scholars of the Mahdist archives at Khartoum have been important developments in reaching an understanding of the organisation and administration of the Mahdist state. See also Holt's "Modernization and reaction in the nineteenth century Sudan" in W.R. Polk and R.L. Chambers (eds.) Beginnings of modernization in the Middle East, the nineteenth century, Chicago and London, 1968, pp. 401-415.

<sup>2</sup> F.R. Wingate, Mahdiism and the Egyptian Sudan, 1891 (2nd ed. London, 1968.)

<sup>3</sup> J. Ohrwalder, Ten years' captivity in the Mahdi's camp 1882-1892, London, 1892. Father Ohrwalder (d. 1912), an Austrian priest, was stationed at Dilling in the Nuba Mts. when he was captured by Mahdists in 1882. He escaped from Omdurman in 1892, and returned there after the Anglo-Egyptian occupation. (Hill, BD, p. 298.)

<sup>4</sup> Rudolf von Slatin, Fire and sword in the Sudan, London, 1896.

All, according to Holt, "should be regarded primarily as war-propaganda"<sup>1</sup> because of Wingate's editing and because of their common thrust: unrestrained depiction of the horrors of the Khalīfa 'Abdallāhi's regime and the call for military action to destroy the Mahdist state. It is important in investigating the political history of the period not only to avoid over-reliance on these (and other) works of dubious evidential value, but also to realise that it was upon such accounts that the opinions and attitudes of the early Condominium officials were founded. Examples abound in Wingate's private correspondence of his own tenaciously held opinion of Mahdism as essentially a wrong-headed doctrine cynically exploited by Muḥammad Aḥmad and wantonly perverted by the Khalīfa for worldly ends. In this view Mahdism's early success was based on widespread dissatisfaction with Turco-Egyptian rule, but its sustained cohesion was attributable solely to the tribal dictatorship of the Khalīfa's own Ta'āīsha over an increasingly disenchanted and miserable population. This attitude was, of course, reinforced by publications subsequent to the foundation of the Condominium, and provided as well a useful (and often used) argument with which the Sudan Government could threaten Cairo and London with the danger of renewed Mahdist opposition unless one or another of the government's policies was approved. Stack, for example, warned of the rise of "a reactionary movement with the unexpectedness characteristic of Eastern countries" if the Gezira Scheme was not completed.<sup>2</sup> Wingate's official correspondence frequently emphasised this possibility, which, among other things, made the harsh suppression of "disturbances" more acceptable to remote Cairo and London officials unconcerned of Mahdism's dangers.

<sup>1</sup> Holt, "The source-materials of the Sudanese Mahdia", SNR, XL, 1959, p. 107.

<sup>2</sup> Stack to Lindsay, n.d. (1922) F.O. 371/7753.

In 1908, for instance, the Dongola authorities reported a rumour that an ex-Mahdist at al-Debba was planning an insurrection. An inspector sent from Khartoum to investigate reported that the matter was insignificant, and that members of the "Tariget el Mahdi" in the area were few and discredited.<sup>1</sup> Wingate, however, ordered that the legal secretary draft legislation (which was, of course, never enacted) making illegal "all beliefs in the Mahdi or practice of Mahdist doctrines"; he brought the grand qādi, the muftī, and the Board of Ulema into the case; ordered the ex-Mahdists at Debba detained until he could discuss the matter with Slatin in London; forwarded the entire dossier to Gorst, the agent and consul-general in Cairo; and deduced from the case that "all children of the Mahdi and Khalifa are a serious danger".<sup>2</sup> In a subsequent letter, Wingate, in describing the inspector's report, wrote that "when he talks of the 'Tariget el Mahdi' as he would talk of any more or less legitimate Tariga it rather takes one's breath away".<sup>3</sup> In communicating the views of the muftī and Board of Ulema, however, Bonham-Carter, the legal secretary, wrote:

There are a considerable number of men who believe in the Mahdi. Although logically a belief in Mahdism should necessarily involve disloyalty to the Government, in fact it does not do so necessarily. Most of these men are ignorant and illogical. Others, who are better educated, are attracted by the puritan element in the Mahdi's teaching and reject the political side of the teaching.<sup>4</sup>

Wingate was unprepared to accept this view, which was, in any case,

<sup>1</sup> Woodland to governor, Dongola, 25/5/08, SGA, INTEL 9/1/9. For a note on Woodland, see above, page 80.

<sup>2</sup> Wingate to asst. director of intelligence, 6/6/08, SGA, INTEL 9/1/9.

<sup>3</sup> Wingate to Jackson, 10/6/08, SGA, INTEL 9/1/9.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted in R. Davies, "Memorandum on the policy of the Sudan Government towards the Mahdist cult", 11/12/26, F.O. 371/12374. (Hereafter referred to as "Davies Memorandum, 1926.")



very advanced for its time. He had, in fact, to some extent been persuaded by his own propaganda: certainly he had not seen fit to alter the view of Mahdism he had formulated and expounded in the 1880s and '90s.

It is not difficult to appreciate the effects of the Wingate-Slatin view of Mahdism on their subordinates. The new inspector arriving in Khartoum would have had at his disposal information of limited scope and common viewpoint: the journals of Gordon, the propaganda of Wingate and others, dramatic stories of the fall of Khartoum, of the menacing, fanatic tribesmen imbued with the spirit of jihād and rushing to certain death before the Maxims at Kararī; Kipling's fuzzy-wuzzies; and Sudan Government communiqués. H.C. Jackson, for example, wrote that during his first journey to the Sudan he was thrilled at the prospect of living "in a country of which we knew but little, and that little we had learnt from various British officers in the Egyptian Army who had been our companions on the way out".<sup>1</sup> Once in the Sudan, the new inspector would see what was passed off as the result of the Khalīfa's barbarous rule: poverty, under-population, ignorance, suspicion.<sup>2</sup> Any opposition expressed in religious terms was seen as "revivalist", "fanatic", or "Dervish-inspired" (see above, pp. 47-48). Further, opposition characterized as "fanatic", seemingly irrational and without specific direction, could easily be explained away as an inevitable reaction of undisciplined barbarians to just and orderly administration. But if a disturbance occurred with some religious implication or motivation, was it therefore "Mahdist"? Was the Mahdism of the Stack

<sup>1</sup> H.C. Jackson, Sudan days and ways, London, 1954, p. 15.

<sup>2</sup> For a note on population statistics, see above, page 38.

era identical to the movement of Muḥammad Aḥmad, was it a lineal descendant, or was it something entirely different? <sup>1</sup>

Within a few months of the Mahdī's greatest victory, the capture of Khartoum and the death of Gordon, he himself died. At the pinnacle of success, the limits of his military power - and therefore of his very claim to Mahdī-ship - had not yet been realised by his followers. With his death the common problem of all charismatic <sup>2</sup> leaders, that of

<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, reliance has been placed on the Wingate-Slatin line not only for the facts about and an interpretation of the Mahdī, but also for the very concept of Mahdism in Sudanese Islam. In his treatment of the subject, Margoliouth, for instance, writing in the Encyclopaedia of religion and ethics ("Mahdī", p. 339), accepted uncritically the received Wingate view: "After the strong hands of Zubair Pasha, Samuel Baker, and General Gordon had been withdrawn from the Sudan, that country was subject to violent oppression". Muḥammad Aḥmad, Margoliouth asserted, identified himself as the Mahdī "in the Shi'ite sense; he claimed to be the twelfth imam, the son of Hasan Askari". This assertion is a mere re-wording of Wingate's odd and completely unfounded claim in Mahdism and the Egyptian Sudan (2nd ed., p. 5). Margoliouth also accepted the canard that "Success also appears to have made of the Mahdī a coarse voluptuary". Sir Winston Churchill, in his introduction to R.A. Bermann's The Mahdī of Allah (London, 1931, p. xiv) referred to the Mahdī as "the Twelfth Imam that was to come". Incidentally, Bermann devoted a page of acknowledgement to both Wingate and Slatin who had "read this work in manuscript and made many valuable suggestions and corrections".

<sup>2</sup> I use the term in the Weberian sense, as describing one whose legitimacy rests not upon "rational" authority but upon his own extraordinary quality. The relationship of this concept to important aspects of Sudanese Islam (baraka, saint-veneration, and sufism generally) is a close one. One published attempt to relate Weber's concepts to the Sudanese Mahdī is R.H. Dekmejian and M.J. Wyszomirski, "Charismatic leadership in Islam: the Mahdī of the Sudan", in Comparative studies in society and history, XIV, 1972, pp. 193-214. For a concise discussion of the Mahdist phenomenon and the Sudanese example, see Holt, The Mahdist state, pp. 22-31. For the concept of charismatic authority, see Max Weber, From Max Weber: essays in sociology, trans. and ed. by H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, London, 1948.

"routinization", or the inevitable compromising of the revolutionary ideal, was avoided, or, in the event, bequeathed to his successor. The ultimate failure of the Mahdist state to defend itself could be (and therefore was) ascribed to the real or imagined shortcomings of the Khalīfa 'Abdallāhi. The image of the Mahdī, the successful revolutionary, "national" leader and holy man, would survive. The regime of the Khalīfa, so often compared unfavourably by and with the Condominium government, appeared equally disastrous in comparison with the vibrant days of Mahdism triumphant. Thus the prestige of the Mahdī survived both the process of routinization, involving the hard-reality of coping with internal disorder and external threats, and also the Anglo-Egyptian conquest which, while discrediting utterly the Khalīfa who bore its brunt, left the Mahdī, by comparison, a shining symbol of independence. The psychological importance to Mahdism during the Condominium of the fact that the Mahdī had, after all, defeated the Europeans in battle, should not be lost sight of.

There is another aspect of the process of routinization aside from the purely political: that is, the effect on the cult of the Mahdī of its apparent total defeat. Holt has pointed out the problem faced by the Expected Deliverer:

If he fails in his mission, the Golden Age is again deferred. If he gains power, expectation is cheated when the Golden Age does not ensue. In either event the hopes of his followers are disappointed, and the expectation reverts to a passive belief.<sup>1</sup>

In this respect the eschatological aspect of the Mahdist concept gains further significance. Among the ascriptions to the Expected Mahdī is that his coming heralds the end of the world, that he will be succeeded

<sup>1</sup> Holt, The Mahdist state, p. 23.

by the Anti-Christ (al-Dajjāl) who, in turn, will be followed and destroyed by the Prophet Jesus (al-Nabī'Īsā). In this scheme of things, the disastrous events subsequent to Muḥammad Aḥmad al-Mahdī's death might not only be mitigated but indeed be seen as the unfolding of an expected schedule of events. The identification of al-Dajjāl and al-Nabī'Īsā thus becomes a central problem and a constant source of dispute.

It is not difficult, given the nature of Sudanese Islam, to comprehend the important role that might be assumed in this scheme by the descendants of Muḥammad Aḥmad. Nor is it surprising that a multiplicity of Nabī'Īsās (and even Mahdīs) presented themselves during the early Condominium. The government was determined to deal harshly with these. The most effective method of coping with one who claimed some supernatural characteristic was naturally thought to be a clear demonstration of his mortality. The demoralisation of the Mahdī's surviving followers, the incarceration or conciliation of his lieutenants, the demonstrable absurdity of the claims of various Nabī'Īsās, a partial reassertion of traditional tribal and religious authority, and the relative prosperity of the early Condominium years worked against all but the most fleeting attempts to revive militant Mahdism.

At the time of the Anglo-Egyptian conquest of the Sudan, the family of the Mahdī was in disarray. After the Mahdī's death in 1885, his family (the Ashrāf) had been unsuccessful in two attempts (in 1886 and 1891) to seize power,<sup>1</sup> and in August 1899 the Khalīfa Muḥammad Sharīf and the two eldest of the Mahdī's surviving sons were killed.

<sup>1</sup> See Holt, The Mahdist state, pp. 141-146, 197-203.

This incident, at Shukkābā on the Blue Nile, is a controversial one. The Khalīfa Muḥammad Sharīf and the Mahdī's sons had been sent there after the battle of Kararī. On 27 August the khalīfa and the two eldest sons, Fāḍil and Bushrā, were arrested and charged with planning a revolt. An attempt was made to rescue them, during which the Mahdī's youngest son, 'Abd al-Raḥmān, was wounded.<sup>1</sup> A court martial ensued and the khalīfa, Fāḍil and Bushrā were executed. Whatever the exact circumstances of the Shukkābā incident,<sup>2</sup> it resulted in the disappearance from the scene of those most qualified by birth immediately to lead the disorganised remnants of the Mahdī's followers. Of the Mahdī's survivors, 'Alī al-Mahdī (1881-1944) was interned at Rosetta until 1905, at which time he entered the government service, which he resigned in 1926

<sup>1</sup> Reid, "Note on Mahdism with special reference to the White Nile Province".

<sup>2</sup> K.D.D. Henderson, in Sudan republic, London, 1965, p. 46, wrote that "A small force was sent to arrest them and while discussions were going on there was an attempt to rescue the prisoners. After a drum-head court martial the Khalifa Shereef and the two adult sons ... were executed". Holt, in The Mahdist state, p. 242, has essentially the same account. But Reid, governor of the White Nile Province from 1931 to 1937 (see note on following page) wrote in 1934 that "whilst negotiations were going on in quite a normal manner, a fanatical westerner who had been gathering wood, rushed in and attacked a soldier. The troops fearing treachery opened fire and the Khalifa with both the Mahdi's sons were shot-dead with about twenty others.... There is little doubt that the order to fire was given in misapprehension but to the Mahdists in the Sudan Shukaba is what Glencoe is to the Highlanders of Scotland." ("Note on Mahdism") The account in Sayyid 'Abd al-Raḥmān's memoirs, Jihād fī sabīl al-istiqlāl, Khartoum, n.d. (1965), pp. 10-11, disagrees: soldiers arrived at Shukkābā, a drunken man raised an axe and the soldiers then opened fire, killing seventeen people; a military tribunal decided upon the execution of the three Ashrāf and this was carried out. This account, incidentally, adds that the bodies of the three were tied to stones and thrown into the Nile, probably to avoid the possibility of pilgrimage to their tombs.

to become an agent of his younger brother; <sup>1</sup> Abd al-Rahmān al-Mahdī (1885-1959) was at first lodged with a government official near Wad Medani, and was brought to Omdurman in 1906 where he lived under the tutelage of the muftī and the president of the Board of Ulema. <sup>2</sup> Abd al-Rahmān and other members of the Mahdī's family were subjected to what Reid <sup>3</sup> unabashedly called "The Vengeance of Slatin":

Slatin was regarded as the implacable foe of the Mahdi's family. It was his doing which kept them poor, it was his hatred which continued to degrade them and denied to the Mahdi's son and heir even his courtesy title (Sayid) and it was only his departure which enabled them to leave the vally [sic] of despond [sic]. This was the view of the man in the street in the Sudan. <sup>4</sup>

Davies, <sup>5</sup> writing in 1926, stated (with much less sympathy than Reid):

<sup>1</sup> Hill, BD, p. 49.

<sup>2</sup> R. Davies, "A note on the recent history of Mahdism and the government's policy towards this movement", 6/11/25, SGA, CIVSEC 56/2/18. (Hereafter referred to as "Davies note, 1925".)

<sup>3</sup> John Alexander Reid (1890- ?) served in Khartoum in 1914, in Kordofan in 1915, and in Khartoum in 1922-23. He was deputy governor of the White Nile Province from 1924 to 1929, deputy governor of the Blue Nile Province in 1930-31, and governor of the White Nile Province from 1931 to 1937. He served as personal assistant to the civil secretary in 1937-38. (MacMichael, SPS, p. 26.)

<sup>4</sup> Reid, "Note on Mahdism".

<sup>5</sup> Reginald Davies (1887-1971) served in Khartoum in 1911, in Kordofan from 1912 to 1920, and in Darfur from 1920 to 1924. He was asst. director of intelligence from 1924 to 1927, and director in 1927-28. He served as asst. civil secretary in 1929, asst. financial secretary in 1930-31, secretary for economic development in 1931-32, deputy financial secretary in 1932-33, and director of the department of economics and trade from 1933 to 1935. (MacMichael, SPS, p. 23.)

Sayed Abdel Rahman was kept in a decent retirement. About 1909 the Inspector-General issued instructions that he was not to be accorded the title of Sayed, nor was he to be permitted, in official correspondence, to sign himself Abdel Rahman-el-Mahdi, but only Abdel Rahman Mohammed Ahmed.... In 1909 and 1910, £E94 was considered an adequate building loan for Abdel Rahman and his family, and this was recovered by docking an allotment which then stood at £E5 per mensem. In 1911 the families of the Mahdi and his khalifas made a written appeal for better treatment, social and economic.... They received a severe and public snub at the hands of Slatin Pasha. <sup>1</sup>

The psychological effect on Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān of the Shukkābā episode and the subsequent years of humiliation should not be overlooked. He could not have been left in doubt of the government's ability, in the last resort, to apply whatever sanctions it wished against him. This realisation may well have been responsible for the nature of his early relationship with the government, one which saw him tentatively probing for weakness rather than boldly reaching for political power. But the Mahdists were not alone in suffering the disfavour of the government. The ṭarīqas, in general, were also subject to regulation, suspicion and non-cooperation. This government policy was unrealistic, of course, for it ignored, or chose to undervalue important traditions of Sudanese Islam.

One of those traditions has been the emergence of what have been called "holy families". <sup>2</sup> Baraka, the peculiar quality of grace that sets apart the holy man, is heritable. Thus, in the Sudan, the Majdhūbiyya, the Khatmiyya, and other ṣūfi orders were established by holy men whose descendants, imbued with the baraka of the founders, have maintained and extended their influence. In this context the re-establishment (or "recrudescence", as the government called it) of

<sup>1</sup> Davies memorandum, 1926.

<sup>2</sup> P.M. Holt, "Holy families and Islam in the Sudan", in Studies in the history of the Near East, London, pp. 121-134.

Mahdism during the Condominium can be seen as another example of this repeating phenomenon. Thus, despite the government's attempts to suppress Mahdism and Slatin's attempts to downgrade Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān, they could never successfully cut the essential tie of baraka that bound the son to the father. It was, of course, that link which the sayyid exploited to increase the numbers of his followers and, therefore, augment his influence and potential value - or danger - to the government. In this evolution from resistance to collaboration we see the real process of routinization at work. The manoeuvring, compromises, and agreements, the letters of loyalty, and the urging of support for the government were hardly the marks of a revolutionary. To suggest, as many did, that Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān was pretending cooperation but "biding his time" until he could destroy the government, was to refuse even the possibility of change, a refusal inherent in the view that Mahdism was essentially revolutionary. But, as will be seen, change had in fact occurred.

The notable exception to the government's policy of non-cooperation with the ṭarīqas was the Khatmīyya. This order had maintained close relations with the Turco-Egyptian regime. An example of the influence a shaykh could have occurred in 1864, when Sudanese troops at Kassala mutinied and Sayyid al-Ḥasan al-Mīrghani, the head of the ṭarīqa, was asked by the government to intervene. For his efforts on this occasion (which ended with a massacre of the rebels) he was granted a government pension.<sup>1</sup> With prophetic irony, a contemporary wrote:

<sup>1</sup> D.C. Cumming, "The history of Kassala and the province of Taka", SNR, XXIII, 1, 1940, pp. 44-52.



As for Sayed el Hassan it is difficult to give an idea of his real power. A word from him would suffice to unite all these discordant elements against the Egyptians; the Arabs know him alone. The Egyptians, who sought his help in their hour of danger, almost fear him because they know he has small liking for them. They are wrong for Sayed el Hassan is too intelligent to change the moral and constant power he now enjoys, for the temporal and ephemeral power that was his for the taking.... It is to be hoped that ... there will always be these prophets, venerated and feared, who when governments totter in the throes of revolution, are there to throw themselves between the combatants, to quieten for the salvation of society the passions and hate that are let loose. <sup>1</sup>

These sentiments could as well have been applied to Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān half a century later, but they were not. Because of the limitations imposed by their particular view of Mahdism, the British found it difficult to believe that Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān would not, in fact, seek that "temporal and ephemeral power" at the risk of the "moral and constant power" he already had. To be sure, he wanted both, but Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān never forgot that his influence derived from the latter.

The special status of the Khatmīyya continued in the early Condominium, because of the tariqa's opposition to the Mahdists and long record of cooperation with government.

Sayyid 'Alī al-Mirghani was awarded the C.M.G. in 1900, thus becoming the first and only notable of the Sudan to receive a British decoration until the First World War. Furthermore, the central mosque of the Khatmīya which was destroyed during the Mahdia was rebuilt by the government in the Khatmīya quarter of Kassala despite the official policy not to assist sūfi zāwiyas.... In 1912 ... Wingate wrote a letter to Sayyid 'Alī, which granted him semi-official recognition as head of his family.... When Cecil in 1916 suggested that their subsidy should be stopped, Wingate objected strongly, stating that they were 'amongst the few who are genuinely and entirely on our side....' <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cumming, "The history of Kassala", citing J.A.W. Munzinger, Affaires etrangeres, Corresp. consul., Massawa, from Kassala, 12/8/1866. Munzinger (1832-1875) was French consul at Massawa, 1864-70. (Hill, BD, pp. 281-82.)

<sup>2</sup> Warburg, The Sudan under Wingate, pp. 98-99.

While the policy of suppression of Mahdism during the Wingate years is taken for granted, towards the end of that period it was not systematically implemented. It was, on the contrary, inconsistent, without clear objectives, and often whimsical. As in the cases of other aspects of central government administration, this was the result of mismanagement, carelessness, and the nature of the person responsible for framing the policy. In the case of Mahdism, that person was Slatin Pasha.

Slatin first came to the Sudan in 1874, when he was employed by the German vice-consul at Khartoum. In 1878 Gordon, then governor-general, invited Slatin to join his staff. He was made governor of Dārā in 1876, and governor of all Darfur in 1881, when he became caught up in the Mahdia. In March 1884 he surrendered to the Mahdists at Dārā, and spent the next eleven years in Omdurman before escaping in 1895. He provided valuable information for Wingate, who was then director of military intelligence of the Egyptian Army, and served in the Dongola and Nile campaigns. When Wingate was made governor-general, he created the post of inspector-general especially for Slatin, who held it until, as an Austrian national, he was forced to resign in 1914.<sup>1</sup> One of the most controversial aspects of Slatin's career was his supposed conversion to Islam before his surrender to the Mahdists. In Fire and sword in the Sudan, Slatin wrote that he had done this to boost the morale of his depressed soldiers, who were blaming Slatin's Christianity for their dire circumstances.<sup>2</sup> Be that as it may, Slatin was later to be criticized and mistrusted because of his apparent apostasy, and, of course,

<sup>1</sup> Hill, BD, pp. 339-340.

<sup>2</sup> Slatin, Fire and sword, pp. 214-217.

despised by many Sudanese for his rejection of Islam upon his escape from the Khalīfa. In any case, Slatin's contempt for the Mahdists generally and for the families of the Khalīfa 'Abdallāhi and the Mahdī in particular is well documented. This animosity in itself would not have assumed significance had Slatin not been invested with almost unlimited authority as inspector-general. This was no mere delegation of authority by Wingate, but was rather a free hand to deal in whatever way he saw fit with matters affecting "tribal" and "religious" affairs. Though usually seen as self-assured and confident in his own knowledge of the Sudan, Wingate came, in fact, to be increasingly reliant on Slatin's advice. The Debba incident is a case in point (see above, p. 98). Regarding Mahdism, Wingate wrote in 1911 that "It has been my invariable rule, in all matters appertaining to the families of the Mahdi and the Khalifa, to accept without question the views of the Inspector-General, who can claim an absolutely unique knowledge of all the intricate facts connected with those families...." <sup>1</sup> Wingate might have written the same in regard to a whole range of matters. It is no exaggeration to note that in questions affecting especially nomadic tribes and the tariqas and Mahdists, Slatin guided Sudan Government policy until the outbreak of World War I. As will be seen, a similar concentration of authority, though not nearly so great, existed through the Stack years. Willis clearly dominated the government's treatment of Mahdism. Stack himself seems to have made little or no contribution to the formulation of policy toward Mahdism.

The focus of Slatin's contempt, Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Mahdī, came into prominence only after Slatin's departure. It should not,

<sup>1</sup> Wingate, 18/5/11, quoted in Davies memorandum, 1926. Symes later wrote that despite Wingate's "wide experience and knowledge" he "seldom took an important decision without consulting" Slatin. (Symes, Tour of duty, London, 1946, p. 16.)

however, be thought that the sayyid was a mere opportunist who otherwise would have remained discreetly in the background. Whatever his dealings with the government through a long and complicated period, the extraordinary nature of the man was evident. K.D.D. Henderson,<sup>1</sup> himself no great friend of Sayyid ʿAbd al-Raḥmān,<sup>2</sup> has offered this description:

He was a man of considerable height and presence, western Sudanese in appearance (his mother came from the west), emotional, sometimes petulant, with a keen sense of the dramatic. He never failed to rise to the occasion or seize an opportunity. Irked to ask as a favour what he felt to be his of right; prone at times to listen to unsound advice, yet always basically shrewd; moving in public with a studied grace and dignity, yet capable of throwing the whole thing aside with his ceremonial head-dress and going down on his knees to play with a three-year-old child.... He had a very endearing quality.<sup>3</sup>

At least in retrospect, almost all those ex-officials interviewed in connection with this work expressed liking, even admiration, for Sayyid ʿAbd al-Raḥmān. But the experience of later years cannot erase the opinions and attitudes of the 1920s, and at that time there is no doubt that despite his charm and apparent loyalty, he was considered "a very cunning creature"<sup>4</sup> who was not to be trusted.

The great rivalry between Sayyid ʿAbd al-Raḥmān and Sayyid ʿAlī al-Mīrghani is a theme running through Sudanese history until the death of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān in 1959. Much less active personally in public affairs than ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, Sayyid ʿAlī was, because of the Khatmīyya's long

<sup>1</sup> Kenneth David Druitt Henderson (1903-) served in the Blue Nile Province from 1927 to 1930, in Kordofan from 1930 to 1936, in the White Nile Province from 1936 to 1938. He was in the civil secretary's office from 1938 until 1944. He served in Kassala from 1944 to 1946, was asst. civil secretary from 1946 to 1949, and governor of Darfur from 1949 until his retirement in 1953. (MacMichael, SPS, p. 49.)

<sup>2</sup> Interview with K.D.D. Henderson, 21/6/76.

<sup>3</sup> Henderson, Sudan republic, p. 60.

<sup>4</sup> Interview with Sir Angus Gillan, 24/5/76.

association with the government, at an enormous advantage. But it was probably that unquestioned loyalty of the man and the quiescence of his followers that proved in the end to be a disadvantage: in the words of one ex-official, "Sayyid 'Alī Mīrghanī was perhaps a safer bet, a bulwark against the danger of Mahdism".<sup>1</sup> Thus, his support could be taken for granted in the Stack years, and by disdaining direct involvement in politics,<sup>2</sup> he confirmed that view. An example of the continuing rivalry occurred in 1917 when some merchants at Wad Medani applied to Willis for permission to erect a tent, to be considered that of the Mahdists, at the mawlid al-Nabi celebrations. A similar application came from Nahud. The dilemma posed by this had two aspects. If the tents were not permitted, the government would make enemies of those prominent citizens who had made the applications. Secondly, there would inevitably be criticism from the ṭarīqas if the project was approved. But Willis felt that the criticism would be based on jealousy, and that by approving the requests the government would be able to obtain "the whole-hearted public support of that section of society, which has been, up to the outbreak of war opposed to it".<sup>3</sup> The requests were, in the end, approved.

<sup>1</sup> Interview with Sir Gawain Bell, 2/6/76.

<sup>2</sup> Interview with Sir James Robertson, 18/6/76.

<sup>3</sup> Willis to private secretary, 29/3/17, SGA, INTEL 1/18/89.

Government policy towards Mahdism: the years of drift

Like so many other aspects of the government already discussed, its conduct toward the heads of tarīqas and the Mahdists was overly personalized. We have noted the effects on the intelligence department of Slatin's methods. In his important memorandum on Mahdism written in 1926, Davies, in discussing changes in government policy toward the Mahdists, said:

Of these changes some ... have been due to a modification of policy deliberately proposed; others have been the unforeseen consequence of action taken; others, perhaps the majority, appear superficially to represent a gradual drift, of which the Government was at the time unconscious.<sup>1</sup>

This drift is certainly evident in government policy after 1914, and was caused by several related factors. Until then, Slatin's hand in policy formation was so strong as to allow his personal aversion to the Mahdists (a result, one must assume, of his years of captivity) to dictate the government's attitude. This element of personal bias, together with Slatin's methods and secretiveness, served to make that official attitude increasingly irrelevant and obscure even to his colleagues and subordinates. Decisions had to be made without reference to any clear guidelines, and therefore had to be left to him to decide on a case by case basis. Even Wingate, as we have seen, deferred decisions until he could consult the inspector-general. Records were poorly kept or not kept at all, thus rendering valueless to the administration the undoubtedly detailed knowledge of personalities and personal and tribal affairs that Slatin had gained. With Slatin's sudden and unexpected

<sup>1</sup> Davies memorandum, 1926.

departure from the scene, the Sudan Government was therefore faced, at a time of great uncertainty, with a vacuum of knowledge in the one area that had always been considered the potential source of its greatest danger. This was the major cause of the "drift" of which Davies later wrote. The apparent about-face of government policy at the outbreak of World War I was not so much the result of a reasoned analysis carried out in order to determine the best way of adapting the administration to a war situation; it was, in fact, the precipitate reaction of an administration that lacked both the facts on which to base such an analysis and the confident executive authority to decide what must be done. It must be noted that in relaxing its attitude toward Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān and the Mahdists, the Sudan Government was not taking the confident action of a regime safe enough to reconcile its old enemies. In attempting to conciliate Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān and the Mahdists Wingate was dealing, not from a position of strength, but from one of real, or imagined, weakness.

The oft-discussed "modification" of government policy toward the tariqas and Mahdists was not, in any case, fitted into a theoretical or political framework until mid-way through the war. The change in policy - the drift- was gradual and not without opposition. At the beginning of this new phase in the relationship of the government and Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān, distrust was profound: "policy" may have undergone change, but the ideas behind it had not. This simple distinction, however, was never fully realised by government officials. It was unarguable, after all, that the British had come to destroy Mahdism. How then, and why, were they now to allow its regeneration? A tension began between those, on the one hand, who believed that Mahdism could evolve from its admittedly revolutionary beginnings into a religious force devoid of political content, and those, on the other hand, to whom Mahdism was, by

definition, in fanatical opposition to the government. Both views recognised Mahdism as potentially dangerous. The disagreement, based on different interpretations of Mahdism's twentieth-century nature, concerned how best to deal with it - by suppression, which seemed to have been unworkable, or by cooperation, which seemed a promising but delicate and risky path. In other words, could Mahdism be routinized and still retain its cohesion, or must it honour the avowed aims of Muḥammad Aḥmad? Davies reported in 1926 that

It was realised at the time that this change of policy involved an element of risk, for in 1917 Colonel Symes ... with the concurrence of General Wingate, placed it on record that, when sending out Sayed Abdel Rahman in 1915, he warned him against taking this opportunity to organise Mahdists and told him plainly that he would be held personally responsible if the Government was kept in ignorance of any revivalist activity amongst them.

Davies went on to opine that "the event proved that Colonel Symes had estimated the Sayed's docility and powers of self-effacement too highly".<sup>1</sup>

A word about Davies is appropriate here. His name is not often met in general histories of the Condominium, yet he had great influence in the evolution of administration in the Sudan. He was a member of the Ewart committee of 1925 that dissected the intelligence department and delivered the coup de grâce to Willis, and he thereupon succeeded Willis as director of intelligence. Davies's memoranda while acting director of intelligence bristle with thinly-veiled or outright insults of his predecessor's capabilities and policies: a correspondence between the two in 1926, carried out through the medium of the civil secretary's office, was extremely acrimonious and centred, as al-

<sup>1</sup> Davies memorandum, 1926.



ways, on the nature of and proper conduct toward Mahdism.<sup>1</sup> Davies was the greatest exponent of Indirect Rule to serve in the Sudan until the arrival of Sir John Maffey as governor-general in 1927. This advocacy is inseparable from his disapproval of Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān, to whom the strengthening of native authority was considered an antidote. Davies was Resident in Dar Masalit at the time of the Nyala rising (see below, pages 144-161) and had seen the impact and influence of Mahdism in the west. In 1923 he toured Northern Nigeria to study the workings of Indirect Rule, and upon his return to the Sudan gave a theoretical basis for the codification and extension of tribal authority. Thus, in two important areas, policy toward the Mahdists and the adoption of Indirect Rule, Davies played a key role. His relative obscurity may well be, as is so often the case, because of personal conflicts within the government hierarchy. Davies's colleague in Dar Masalit, Redfern, believed Davies to be "the best administrator in our service", one who had "immense resources". But, possibly because of differences with MacMichael, Davies never became even a provincial governor.<sup>2</sup>

Notwithstanding Davies's criticism, Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān certainly never intended to assume the role that Wingate naively envisaged for him. Why should he? Indeed, could either party to the "bargain" tentatively reached in 1915 have expected the son of the Mahdī to become a mere unofficial apologist for government policy, ready to be called out when the need arose to reassure the populace of the Government's righteousness?

<sup>1</sup> SGA, INTEL 9/3/31.

<sup>2</sup> Interview with Sir Shuldham Redfern, 8/10/76.

In December 1915 Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān was sent to the Gezira, "with private instructions from his Excellency the Governor-General, of which there seems to be no written record",<sup>1</sup> to urge support for the government during the war, the first of several such tours. The comments of one of Willis's agents on a tour give a picture of how a visit by Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān was conducted:

At each Hilla or tribe he visited he was welcomed with rejoicing and ecstasy and extolled, many people carrying spears and swords came to meet him, as they did in Dervish days, addressing him by 'O son of our Mahdi, happy is the day in [sic] which we see you', and offering him presents, such as dura, goats, sheep, cows, money.... The following is the speech of Abdel Rahman addressed to Arabs at their meetings:

'You should be devoted to your religion, read your Rateb, pay Govt. taxes, do not listen to those that sow corruption as by listening to them you will bring trouble on yourselves. Listen not but to the words which we say.'

After Sayed Abdel Rahman's return ... it was rumoured among the Arabs that 'the time has approached', otherwise Govt. would not have permitted the son of the Mahdi ... to visit them. They believe that God has willed that this visit should be made.<sup>2</sup>

Reports from other localities told of a similar enthusiastic reception of Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān. This confronted the government, of course, at an early date, with the problem with which it was to grapple throughout the post-war period: to ensure its security the government hoped to rely on the personal prestige of Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān to control the distrusted masses; but this very process naturally increased that prestige to the point where it was itself perceived as a definite threat to the government. This was the result of a change in government policy unsupported by a prerequisite change in the attitude of British officials toward Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān and his supporters. In

<sup>1</sup> Davies memorandum, 1926.

<sup>2</sup> "Report by an agent, dated Kosti 13/2/16", SGA, INTEL 2/41/345.

practical terms this was succinctly put by a provincial governor who noted that "at Wad El Shigl", Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān "was received in full Dervish manner but his conversation there resulted in a letter of loyalty from the Sheikh of the village...." <sup>1</sup> Another governor quoted a private letter from a Sudanese correspondent who thought that it was "rather strange that the Government allows such a person to wander in the country and deliver speeches" because these would surely serve to incite the Mahdists. <sup>2</sup> J.W. Sagar, then stationed in the Blue Nile Province, described in a letter to Willis what he considered to be the effect of Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān's tours: previous to these, he wrote,

The Mahdists kept very much to themselves, and were always afraid of making themselves in any way conspicuous. ... now they have come right out into the open boldly. They consider that they have been officially recognised and that the Government needs them. <sup>3</sup>

An agent's report from Kamlin gave similar information, but with a different conclusion:

Abdel Rahman El Mahdi is believed in, in this district a great deal - it is safe to say the greatest percentage are Mahdists. Since the visit of Abdel Rahman they read the Rateb openly. The talk of Abdel Rahman, in the open was loyal - but secretly the Mahdists believe he will one day rule as his late father. Abdel Rahman El Mahdi is here next to God in the eyes of natives. <sup>4</sup>

Thus the inevitable result of the government's expedient use of Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān without at the same time its actually feeling satisfied with the arrangement or certain of his intentions, was con-

<sup>1</sup> "Extract from a report by governor, Blue Nile Province", 5/3/16, SGA, INTEL 2/41/345.

<sup>2</sup> "Extracts from a private letter; dated 1/1/16", SGA, INTEL 2/41/345.

<sup>3</sup> Sagar to Willis, 11/5/16, SGA, INTEL 9/1/13.

<sup>4</sup> "Extracts from reports by secret agent, Kamlin district, 24th March to 1st April 1916", n.d., SGA, INTEL 9/1/13.

fusion in the minds of populace and officials alike, as to what exactly the government policy was toward Mahdism. One example of this confusion was the government's attitude toward the possession and reading of the Rātib. This was a collection of Qur'ānic and other religious verses compiled by the Mahdī which had been, and continued to be used by Mahdists in private and public devotions. Its use had been officially proscribed, although possession of the book was not technically illegal. Indeed, in 1917 Willis, then assistant director of intelligence, submitted the Rātib to the grand qādī<sup>1</sup> and asked for his opinion. The grand qādī replied that

There is nothing in the Ratib, from the beginning to the end of it, that shows a call for Mahdism or alludes to same in the least.... There is also nothing objectionable in it from a religious or political point of view.... I advise the Government not to prevent the people from using the Ratib, but to give them a free hand to use it as they like. <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Shaykh Muḥammad Muṣṭafā al-Marāghī (1881-1945), an Egyptian, was grand qādī of the Sudan from 1908 to 1919. (Hill, BD, p. 267.) See also Warburg, The Sudan under Wingate, p. 131.)

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Davies memorandum, 1926. Davies was later highly critical of the grand qādī, going so far as to impugn his loyalty: "From motives which must necessarily be a matter of speculation", Davies speculated, "but which may have been connected with the course of the war, he [the grand qādī] began, towards the latter part of 1916, to cultivate an intimate friendship with Sayed Abdel Rahman-el-Mahdi. They were continually meeting and exchanging visits.... it is not unjustifiable to suspect that the influence of the Grand Cadi was partly responsible for the forward movement towards the unofficial recognition of Mahdism, which seemed then to acquire a new impetus". In answering enquiries about the Rātib and other matters, the grand qādī had, in Davies's opinion, conveyed "the impression that his intention was to encourage Sayed Abdel Rahman and actively to assist him towards the realisation of his ambitions." Davies's conclusion tarred Stack himself with the same brush: "It is clear", he wrote, "that Wingate would not have permitted any such pronouncements by the official spokesman of Islam in the Sudan Government." (Davies memorandum, 1926.)

Davies, in his 1926 memorandum, pointed out that the last seizure of a Rātib from its owner had occurred in 1917, at which time Willis had advised that no definite action should be taken regarding the whole matter of the Rātib, "pending the consideration of the whole question of the Mahdist Sect" by Stack.<sup>1</sup> Yet, according to Davies, the governor-general apparently made no pronouncement on the subject before 1921. At that time the civil secretary, Lyall, wrote that "His Excellency considered that no general ruling in regard to the reading of the Rateb is possible, and directs me to say ... that the local authorities must use their discretion in each individual case."<sup>2</sup>

What, then, was the government's policy toward the possession and reading of the Rātib? In early 1919 Willis wrote that the

fact is that a very large proportion of the people here always followed the Ratib El Mahdi and are doing so openly instead of secretly.... In a very short time every one will be used to it and it will not matter. The Rateb is a very innocent in fact, a highly moral work.<sup>3</sup>

A year and a half before Stack's statement of "policy" quoted above, which Davies later described as the first on the matter, Willis had told the governor of Darfur that the "policy of the Government is not to interfere with the reading of the Rateb, provided that this causes no breach of the peace or hindrance to the administration".<sup>4</sup> Finally,

<sup>1</sup> Willis to H.C. Jackson, acting governor, Blue Nile Province, 10/11/17, SGA, INTEL 9/1/2.

<sup>2</sup> Davies memorandum, 1926. Davies went on to mention, in obvious criticism of the treatment given the matter by Willis, a 1921-22 edition of the Rātib, of which no copy reached the intelligence department before December 1926.

<sup>3</sup> Willis to Cameron, 2/3/19, SGA, INTEL 9/1/2. Cf. the conclusion of Symes that the Rātib "combined the incitement of Mein Kampf with the solace of a missal." (Tour of duty, pp. 11-12.)

<sup>4</sup> Willis to governor, Darfur, 6/7/20, SGA, INTEL 9/1/2.

Davies himself, who in 1926 would note that official policy, in the absence of its emendation by the governor-general (which had come only in 1921) remained suppression of the Rātib, wrote, as Resident in Dar Masalit, that "it may be stated confidently that there is no prevention of the reading of the Rateb" in that area. <sup>1</sup>

Thus, in this as in so many areas of administration generally and in dealings with Mahdism specifically, Khartoum failed to define policy. The result was an unavoidable confusion as to what the policy, if any, was. Indeed, Stack's pronouncement in 1921 that "no general ruling" was possible and that the "local authorities must use their discretion in each individual case" only served to ratify both existing practice and the confusion of officials and public alike. Davies could well write of "drift" regarding the government's attitude, for this drift was made inevitable by the lack of definition of the problem itself and of consensus in how to deal with it.

The problem of the reading of the Rātib - and the larger problem of how much latitude to allow the Mahdists in their activities - were therefore left in large degree to the local official. Because of the widely differing views as to the nature of Mahdism and its potential threat, widely different treatment ensued. This soon developed, however, into a conflict pitting provincial officials on the one hand against, on the other, Willis. He was one of the very few who perceived in Mahdism, as it was constituted in war-time and post-war Sudan, not the antipathy to government inherent in the Mahdī's call, but an evol-

<sup>1</sup> Davies to Savile, governor of Darfur, 15/8/20, SGA, INTEL 1/18/89. Lt. Col. Robert Savile (1873-1947) served in Kassala, 1902-06; Dongola, 1906-07; and as asst. civil secretary, 1907-08. He was governor of the Bahṛ al-Ghazāl, 1908-09; governor of Kordofan, 1909-17; and governor of Darfur from 1917 until he retired in 1923. (MacMichael, SPS, p. 12.)

ving confraternity, much like a tariqa, with Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān as its leader. In early 1917 Willis penned his first elucidation of this theme, noting the anomalies of the government's present position and suggesting a real revision in official thinking:

Since the outbreak of the European war, the whole standard of loyalty in the Sudan has been altered. Previous to the war, disloyalty implied a hankering after the Dervish Regime and an active desire to restore it.... The war has made the Turks the enemy of the British Government and in enmity of the Turk the most fanatical Dervish can meet the Government on common ground.... Hence disloyalty is now the sign of sympathy with the Turk, the long-standing enemy of the Sudan.

This does not mean that the danger of Mahdism is dead, for there is not a year in the history of the Sudan Government in which at least one false prophet has not arisen against the Government. This however is the result of a natural and endemic fanaticism which may only after generations if ever be eradicated.... But it does mean that the danger of the old Mahdism is infinitely less.... Not only have the old followers of the Mahdi got the common ground of enmity of the Turk to unite them with the British rulers, but they feel to a great degree that they have risen from the ranks of the enemy outcast to that [sic] of an effective if humble ally.<sup>1</sup>

Willis went on to point out the anomalies of the present position. On the one hand the government had admitted the existence of Mahdists, and on the other could not condone the existence of a "sect" the views of which were (supposedly) opposed to the government. Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān had shown "by his loyalty and good will to the Government" that restrictions should be lifted from him. But if restrictions were removed, the tariqa leaders would be alarmed and uncertain of the government's intentions. On the other hand, if restrictions were not lifted, Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān might be driven into opposition. Willis pointed out that he had "carefully avoided at any time enquiring from the Grand Cadi ... whether the Mahdists could be accepted as true Moslems, as if he answered in the affirmative the Government would find

<sup>1</sup> Note by Willis entitled "Mahdism", 17/2/17, SGA, INTEL 1/18/89.

difficulty in suppressing them and if in the negative a very large body of public opinion ... would be profoundly shocked". Willis's proposed solution was to treat the Mahdists as an offshoot of the Sammāniyya tariqa (to which the Mahdī had once belonged) and that in all matters Mahdists should be treated as would any others - on the bases of personal merit and loyalty. <sup>1</sup>

The opposing view was put by Symes in Cairo. "'By their fruits ye shall know them' is the safest guide", he wrote. It would be "inexpedient and possibly dangerous to afford the same tacit recognition to Mahdists as we do to other religious sects." He reminded Stack that Mahdism "was a national (and therefore political) revolt against a foreign government", and advised the continuation of the same dual policy: "Let us continue to deal with those of their leaders who seem to be intelligent and well disposed to us ...; on the other hand let us show clearly that we regard Mahdism as an exploded cult and that we cannot sanction its followers advertizing their creed or organizing themselves on tarika or other lines." Symes appended to this note that the high commissioner (Wingate) "agreed with these views". <sup>2</sup> This debate was to continue but, significantly, without resolution.

Willis gained the reputation of, at the least, the chief sympathiser in the government toward Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān, at most, the sayyid's credulous dupe. Willis, indeed, made much of his friendship with Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān, to the point that their fortunes became linked. A colleague in the intelligence department has said that Willis

<sup>1</sup> Willis, "Mahdism".

<sup>2</sup> Symes to Stack, 4/3/17, SGA, INTEL 1/18/89.



"saw Sayyid 'Abd al-Raḥmān coming to the fore and put his cards on him." <sup>1</sup>

It is of course possible that the dislike for Willis throughout the government was extended to his protégé. In any case Willis never changed his opinion of the proper way in which to deal with the Mahdists. His personal relationship with Sayyid 'Abd al-Raḥmān continued after his retirement from the government, as he paid many visits to Khartoum, stopping at the Grand Hotel as the guest of the sayyid, to the profound annoyance of his ex-colleagues. <sup>2</sup>

While the arguments went on, Sayyid 'Abd al-Raḥmān was not relegated to the sidelines. The simple fact that he had been allowed to tour the provinces with government approval had already altered his status, no matter what the government decided. By the end of the war it had become clear that he was actively "organising" his followers.

Again the government was faced with a problem of policy. Sayyid 'Abd al-Raḥmān had been warned not to make use of his tours for the purpose of organising. The government were generally agreed not to allow this. But what exactly was "organising"? Again, lack of a coherent policy (rather than a vague attitude), and conflicting views led to "drift" on a large scale. Davies pointed out in 1926 that Sayyid 'Abd al-Raḥmān had instituted a system of "agents" (manādīb; sing.: mandūb) <sup>3</sup> in the provinces as early as 1916. His ability to do this resulted directly, Davies said, from the tours in the early years of the war. In a letter

<sup>1</sup> Interview with Brig. Maurice Lush, 7/10/76.

<sup>2</sup> Interview with Sir James Robertson, 18/6/76.

<sup>3</sup> Apart from its literal meaning, this term may have had psychological import. During the Mahdia a mandūb (translated by Holt as "deputy") was a low-grade administrative official, who could be involved in tax-collection. (Holt, The Mahdist state, pp. 248, 262.)

of 29 November 1921, Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān listed his agents in the provinces and stated that he had begun appointing them five years earlier, that he had "submitted the project" to the director of intelligence, and that "all agents appointed, in the provinces or in smaller districts, were appointed after consulting the Governor of the province concerned and after obtaining his verbal approval".<sup>1</sup> How this could come about without arousing concern in Khartoum (and whose fault it was) is clear from the Davies memorandum of 1926:

In the Fung Province the system of agents comes to notice at the same time as in the Blue Nile [1916] .... Thus in May 1916, there is correspondence about the affairs of an agent collecting grain from the faithful, and this agent's name appears in the list of 1921. Western Kordofan was visited in 1917-18 by Mohamed Ibrahim (El Taalbawi) ... who, in January 1922, was appointed as agent for Darfur.... He collected 'zeka' and informed the Mahdists that they could practice their rites and read the Ratib without fear and should pay Government taxes regularly. This visit only came to the knowledge of the A.D.I. in June 1918. In Kassala, the question of agents seems to have been raised formally, for the first time, in 1919. On the 7th May, 1919, D.I. telegraphs to Governor, Kassala, as follows: 'Abdel Rahman-el-Mahdi receives reports about alleged followers of Mahdi in your province. He knows little about them and suggests he should send agents on his behalf to visit them and if necessary instruct them to follow Government loyally....' In Berber Province, the Sayed's agent is first heard of in April 1917 as his representative in a business matter concerning land.

Davies concluded that

the truth seems to be that, by getting assent to the sending of individual agents to particular places, and, ostensibly, for particular and innocuous purposes, Sayed Abdel Rahman gradually familiarised the minds of Government officials with an idea which would have encountered considerable opposition had it been brusquely presented without concealment of its implications.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān to intelligence department, 29/11/21. Quoted in Davies memorandum, 1926.

<sup>2</sup> Davies memorandum, 1926.

According to Davies and others, Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān's favourite tactic in dealing with the government was the *fait accompli*. The sayyid would do something covertly of which he knew the government would disapprove, and when the government finally expressed concern, he would either disclaim knowledge or rightly state that the activity had been going on for years and the government had never objected before. Why did it object now? One ex-official said that Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān would "start a pump scheme, then express no knowledge when the government brought the matter to his attention - then he'd ask for permission".<sup>1</sup> Davies noted several examples of this "method", which he saw as an overall scheme of the sayyid to enhance his prestige with the unwitting aid of the government. But Davies's anger was misplaced. If, for instance, the existence of manādīb in a particular province, or in all the provinces, went unnoticed for years, this was, of course, the fault of the government itself, specifically of the intelligence department and the provincial governors who were supposed to be reporting to it. Again the government was shown to be "drifting", to be reacting rather than carrying out a predetermined and coherent policy. As a result, Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān emerged from the First World War greatly enhanced in the eyes of the Sudanese, feared and envied by the heads of ṭarīqas, and the object of a continued ambivalence by the government.

As was noted above, however, the Mahdists were not alone in organising during the war. Reporting in late 1915 that "heads of sects" were apparently all actively recruiting members, the acting governor of

<sup>1</sup> Interview with Mr. George Bredin, 10/6/76. Bredin served in the White Nile Province, 1922; Kordofan, 1922-26; as asst. civil secretary, 1927-29, and 1932-33. He served in Darfur, 1930-31, was deputy governor of Kordofan in 1934-35, and deputy governor of the Blue Nile Province, 1935-39. He was deputy civil secretary, 1939-41, and governor of the Gezira Province from 1941 until he retired in 1948. (MacMichael, SPS, p. 35.)

the Blue Nile Province opined that "it may be that they feel that there is possibility of change in the air, and wish to be in as strong a position as possible should any such change occur".<sup>1</sup> The same sentiment was expressed by a loyal shaykh at Kamlin, who said that the Mahdists were "preparing ... to be strong and to become masters of the country, should the Government fall or leave the country from any outside cause".<sup>2</sup>

A feeling of uncertainty as to the outcome of the war, and the simple taking of advantage of the government's preoccupation dictated that the tariqas and the Mahdists alike should seek to enhance their positions vis à vis each other. Sagar, at the time acting governor of the Blue Nile Province, offered a further elaboration of this idea by suggesting "a more comfortable explanation" for the "special efforts ... to increase ... adherents":

Since the War started Religious Sheikhs and Heads of Sects have been taken much more into the confidence of Government, and have been consulted more freely on all sorts of subjects. Consequently they have, I think, tended to vie with one another to gain importance in the eyes of Government, and to do this they make every effort to increase the number of their followers and, in consequence, their prestige and wealth.<sup>3</sup>

So far from worrying about this increase in activity, he saw it as favourable to the government, since "by keeping a strong hold on the Heads of Sects we can control an increasing number of people". This, in a nutshell, was the theoretical basis of government policy in the post-war period. Sagar, in fact, went so far as to suggest extending official

<sup>1</sup> Sagar to acting director of intelligence, 26/11/15, SGA, INTEL 2/41/345.

<sup>2</sup> Sagar to acting director of intelligence, 13/5/16, SGA, INTEL 2/41/345.

<sup>3</sup> Sagar to acting director of intelligence, 26/11/15, SGA, INTEL 2/41/345.

recognition to local religious shaykhs.<sup>1</sup> This was not an entirely isolated position. K.C.P. Struvé,<sup>2</sup> writing from the White Nile Province, had stated after a meeting with Sayyid 'Abd a-Rahmān in 1914 that the sayyid struck him "as being very young and unbalanced" and that he could "be pretty easily frightened when necessary".<sup>3</sup> This was a recognition of the government's attitude not only toward Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān, but toward the shaykhs of tariqas as well. As we shall see, this was more in the way of wishful thinking - an outcome to be hoped for as the result of lifting restrictions - than it was a practical cause for their relaxation. So long as the war continued, however, and so long as Khartoum felt it necessary to curry the favour of influential Sudanese, concern over such things as the Rātib or competition among tariqas were secondary to the paramount interest in preserving order. As Sagar pointed out to Willis in another connection, the alleged misdeeds of 'Abdallāh Abū Sinn<sup>4</sup> (who was described as "probably corrupt ... but...undoubtedly loyal ... hates the Mahdists, and has very wide influence"): "If you

<sup>1</sup> Sagar to acting director of intelligence, 26/11/15, SGA, INTEL 2/41/345.

<sup>2</sup> Kenneth Chetwood Struvé (1876-1961) served in Sennar in 1901-02; in Khartoum, 1903-05; and in the Upper Nile Province, 1906-10. He was asst. civil secretary, 1911-13, and was stationed in the White Nile Province from 1913 to 1919, where he was governor in 1914. He was governor of the Upper Nile Province from 1919 until his retirement in 1926. (MacMichael, SPS, p. 11.)

<sup>3</sup> Struvé to Lewis, 30/11/14, SGA, INTEL 2/41/345.

<sup>4</sup> 'Abdallāh 'Awaḍ al-Karīm Abū Sinn ( -1923) an ex-Mahdist, shaykh of the Shukriyya tribe from 1902 until his death. (Hill, BD, p. 4.)

want the support of big men, which we undoubtedly do at present, we must be prepared to wink at several things...." <sup>1</sup>

The delegation to London, 1919

In July 1919 a delegation of ten Sudanese notables went to London and were received by King George V, ostensibly for the dual purpose of proffering their congratulations to him upon the successful conclusion of the war, and his recognition of their part in the Sudan's contribution to the war effort. The delegation was composed of representatives of the three classes by then most closely associated with the Condominium government. These were Shaykh al-Ṭayyib Aḥmad Hāshim, <sup>2</sup> the muftī of the Sudan; Shaykh Abū'l-Qāsim Aḥmad Hāshim, <sup>3</sup> the president of

<sup>1</sup> Sagar to Willis, 11/5/16, SGA, INTEL 9/1/13.

<sup>2</sup> Shaykh al-Ṭayyib Aḥmad Hāshim (c.1857-1924), a Ja'ali Arab, was a clerk of court at Berber before the Mahdia, during which he held several important posts. On the conquest he became the first Islamic judge at Khartoum, and served as muftī from 1900 until his death in 1924. (Hill, BD, p. 354.)

<sup>3</sup> Abū'l Qāsim Aḥmad Hāshim (?-1934), brother of al-Ṭayyib Aḥmad Hāshim, the muftī, had been secretary to the Khalīfa 'Abdallāhi, and after the Anglo-Egyptian conquest became a judge in the Blue Nile Province. He served as president of the Board of Ulema from 1912. (Hill, BD, p. 23.) A secret "Personality report form" on Abū'l Qāsim (n.d., 1927), observed that he was "very intelligent and capable; reticent in his dealings, ... to all practical purpose loyal and useful, and has rendered many good services both as Kadi and in his present office. Ambitious both for himself and for Islam. Overestimates his own worth. Went to England in 1919. Is a Mahdist at heart." (Personality report form, n.d., SGA, CIVSEC 69/1/1.)

the Board of Ulema; and Shaykh Ismā'īl al-Azhari, <sup>1</sup> qādī of Darfur; Shaykh 'Abd al-'Azīm Bey Khalīfa, <sup>2</sup> nāzīr of the 'Abābda; Shaykh 'Alī al-Tūm, <sup>3</sup> nāzīr of the Kabābīsh; Shaykh Ibrāhīm Farah <sup>4</sup> of the Ja'aliyyīn; and Shaykh 'Awaḍ al-Karīm Abū Sinn, <sup>5</sup> "deputy Nazir of the Shukriyya"; <sup>6</sup> Sayyid 'Alī al-Mīrghani, Sharīf Yūsuf al-Hindī, and Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Mahdī. <sup>7</sup>

The importance of this delegation, indeed the Sudan Government's reasons for sending it, went far beyond its formal purpose. For by the spring of 1919, when the idea was first raised, the violent surge of

- <sup>1</sup> Ismā'īl al-Azhari (1868-1947), after serving as a provincial judge, was mufti of the Sudan from 1924 to 1932. He was the grandfather of Ismā'īl al-Azhari, the first prime minister of the Sudan. (Hill, BD, p. 184; Holt, "Holy families and Islam in the Sudan", p. 128.)
- <sup>2</sup> 'Abd al-'Azīm Bey Khalīfa (c.1850-1928) led his 'Abābda forces for the Anglo-Egyptian side against the Mahdists. He was nāzīr of the 'Abābda from 1899. (Hill, BD, p. 8.)
- <sup>3</sup> Sir 'Alī al-Tūm (1874-1938) was appointed nāzīr of the Kabābīsh, a post previously held by his father, upon the Anglo-Egyptian occupation. In 1915 he was appointed nāzīr 'umūm. He was knighted in 1925. (Hill, BD, p. 52.)
- <sup>4</sup> Ibrāhīm Bey Muḥammad Farah (?-1926) was treasurer of Metemma during the Mahdia, whence he fled from the Khalīfa in 1898. He led a force of irregulars under the Anglo-Egyptian command. (Hill, BD, p. 175.)
- <sup>5</sup> 'Awaḍ al-Karīm 'Abdallah Abū Sinn (1877-1943) succeeded his father as nāzīr 'umūm of the Shukriyya in 1923. He had previously served as 'umda and shaykh of khuj. (Hill, BD, p. 63.)
- <sup>6</sup> His father was too infirm to make the trip.
- <sup>7</sup> Willis, in "Sidelights", p. 87, adds another member to the delegation, Shaykh Ibrāhīm Mūsā of the Hadandūa.

nationalism in Egypt altered the thinking of the government and made collaboration with influential elements of the population all the more important. Thus the delegation was to represent insitutional religious and tribal authority and, significantly, the still formally unrecognised authority of the ṭarīqas and Anṣār, as being supporters of the British position in the Sudan.

At the height of the troubles in Egypt the government received welcome support from this last sector. On 21 April 1919 Sharīf Yūsuf al-Hindī wrote to Stack to assure him of his personal loyalty and that of all the Sudanese, as against the pretensions of Egyptian nationalists, who were claiming Egyptian sovereignty over the Sudan. The Sudanese, he wrote, were "confident that they have been finally separated from [the Egyptians] since the Re-Occupation", and declared that "the Sudan is capable now of bearing its own expenses and of carrying out its own independence under the protection of Great Britain".<sup>1</sup> The importance of this statement goes far beyond its assurances of loyalty, for it embodies, in its reference to "independence under the protection of Great Britain" an early, if not the first public reference of a Sudanese to the idea that Britain was acting as trustee for the Sudanese nation: in other words, the concept of "the Sudan for the Sudanese".

Two days later, on 23 April 1919, a similar letter arrived from more high-powered sources. Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān, Sayyid 'Alī, the muftī, the president of the Board of Ulema, al-Azhari, and Sayyid Mīrghani al-Sayyid al-Makki, the head of the Ismā'īliyya order, the signatories, claimed to speak not only for themselves but for "the whole population

<sup>1</sup> Sharīf Yūsuf al-Hindī to Stack, 21/4/19, F.O. 371/3717.



of the Sudan". They expressed gratitude to the British for all they had done "for the welfare of the Sudan, which has resulted in the country's advancement and progress". And they expressed their "great loyalty and sincerity to the British Government which is unalterable". They added an assurance that they had "no hand in, or connection with the movement which is now in progress in Egypt, nor is the movement in accordance with our wishes ".<sup>1</sup> This was not the first indication Sayyid ʿAbd al-Raḥmān had given of his sentiments. He had previously received an anonymous letter urging him "to emulate his father and take over" the country. "This threw him into a great state of alarm and he at once brought the letter round to the Intelligence terrified lest he should be suspected of intriguing against us".<sup>2</sup>

It was against this background of the challenge of Egyptian nationalism and the expressed loyalty of the Sudanese notables that the idea was conceived of a delegation to London. The Sudan Government was more anxious to send the notables than London was to receive them, and Stack expressed gladness that the foreign office "consented to receive" the delegation.<sup>3</sup> The delegation, as can be seen from the brief notes on its members, was dominated by long-standing supporters of the government, but contained the new element of Sayyid ʿAlī (who was styled in a foreign office list of the delegation as "principal Religious Notable of the Sudan, Descendant of the Prophet") and Sharīf Yūsuf al-Hindī and Sayyid ʿAbd al-Raḥmān. It is interesting to note that the last-named was

<sup>1</sup> Notables to Stack, 23/4/19, F.O. 371/3717.

<sup>2</sup> Stack to Wingate, 7/4/19, F.O. 371/3722.

<sup>3</sup> Stack to Wingate, 8/5/19, F.O. 371/3711.

listed as "El Sayed Abderrahman Mohamed Ahmed (son of the MAHDI)",<sup>1</sup> yet another reflection of the government's ambivalence: at the very time when it recognised the sayyid as one of the premier figures in the Sudan, Slatin's petty refusal of 'Abd al-Rahmān's courtesy title was honoured. This is further reflected in the account of the delegation given in Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān's memoirs, wherein it is stated that he was happy to be part of the delegation because it meant recognition of his position, despite his rivals' opposition. But even though the king received him with friendship, Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān was told that since it was a private meeting, the king's attitude need not signal a change in the official attitude toward the sayyid.<sup>2</sup>

Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān had been rather a last-minute addition to the delegation. Stack wanted him included because the sayyid had been "constantly loyal through the war and the recent trouble, and he further stands for a big following in the Sudan". The governor-general feared, however, that the sayyid might not be "an acceptable visitor to England, as there may be some sentimental objection". In any case, as Stack told Wingate, he considered the inclusion of the Mahdī's son as "living proof of the change that can be effected in one generation of sympathetic administration".<sup>3</sup>

Willis was put in charge of the delegation and accompanied it from Khartoum. They stopped only briefly at Cairo because "there had

<sup>1</sup> "Deputation of Sudanese notables visiting England for the purpose of congratulating His Majesty on the conclusion of a victorious peace", n.d., F.O. 371/3722.

<sup>2</sup> Jihād fī sabīl al-istiqlāl, pp. 23-24.

<sup>3</sup> Stack to Wingate, 8/5/19, F.O. 371/3711.

been threats of violence against the party as being 'pro-British' and it was thought advisable to get them out of Cairo as soon as possible".<sup>1</sup> At Port Said "there were rather futile but noticeable efforts to make 'demonstrations' against the Sudanese party, stone throwing and slogan shouting but not more than enough to show the party that they had not the sympathy of the Egyptians".<sup>2</sup> Similar incidents occurred on the return journey.<sup>3</sup>

In London, after initial mix-ups that relegated the Sudanese to tents at Hampton Court, the party was shown the sights and prepared for their audience with the king. At their interview Wingate acted as interpreter. The queen was also present, and she recalled meeting Sayyid 'Alī on her visit to Port Sudan in 1912. When she failed to recognise Sharīf Yūsuf, Willis told her that the sharīf "was in gaol" during her visit because "Slatin Pasha was cross with him". When Sayyid 'Abd al-Raḥmān came along the queen asked if he too had been in gaol, to which Willis replied that "it was only luck that he hadn't been".<sup>4</sup>

It was during this audience that the famous presentation took place of the "Mahdī's sword" to the king. The authenticity of this sword was seriously in doubt. Upon presentation of the sword to His Majesty, he returned it to Sayyid 'Abd al-Raḥmān "to keep in defence of the Sudan and the Empire forever".<sup>5</sup> The presentation apparently caused

<sup>1</sup> Willis, "Sidelights", p. 89.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 90.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 102.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 99.

<sup>5</sup> The African world, 2/8/1919.

no misgivings at Buckingham Palace, where all were, in Willis's words, "quite accustomed to the business of 'touch and return' with Indian princes and took it as quite natural and simple".<sup>1</sup> But the manner in which the presentation had been decided, and its later effects, carried more importance. According to Davies,

El Sayed Sir Ali Mirghani, the leader of the delegation ... heard of the proposed presentation of the sword, which he and the other members knew to be a forgery ... and announced that he refused to be presented to His Majesty and that he wished to return to the Sudan at once. It required an all-night argument to convince him that he must repress his chagrin, and he remained angry for the rest of the tour....

The following extracts from a written Mahdist account of the incident speak for themselves: 'There he presented to the King the sword of the Khalifaship of his father the Mahdi, and the King received it with pleasure, and exalted him above the other notables who were with him.... Then they engraved the following words on the sword: "This is the sword of the Imam the Mahdi...." Now Saiyid Abdel Rahman presented it to the King of Britain, who accepted (or approved of) Mahdism, and returned the sword to Saiyid Abdel Rahman in order that he might protect his Sudanese subjects'.<sup>2</sup>

The conduct of the 1919 delegation showed the importance to the British of Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān's help, and also indicated that he had no intention of acting as a mere rubber-stamp of British policy without extracting some personal advantage. The 1919 delegation marked, however tacitly, official government recognition of Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān's influence and standing. But his presence in London was not only, or even primarily, a reward for past services, as the government described it, but a service in itself, since it came at a time when the government was attempting to muster Sudanese opinion against the claims of Egyptian

<sup>1</sup> Willis, "Sidelights", p. 99.

<sup>2</sup> Davies memorandum, 1926. I have seen neither any other reference to this "written Mahdist account", nor the account itself.

nationalism. To ascertain the value to the British position of his presence in the delegation, it has only to be considered what interpretation would have been placed on a refusal to participate. This is further emphasised by the demonstrations against the delegation in Egypt. The Sudan Government, however, seems not to have appreciated fully the value to the sayyid's standing in the Sudan of the publicity he would receive, especially from the ingenious presentation of the sword.

The delegation also had an interview with Lord Curzon, the foreign secretary, during which Sayyid 'Alī spoke favourably of Egypt's historic role in the Sudan and the common "religion, language and custom" of the two countries. Sharīf Yūsuf al-Hindī thereupon "rose in his wrath" and decried Egyptian influence and "how it had always been for the worse". Willis acted as interpreter at this meeting and felt that the interview had at least impressed Curzon that the Sudanese "had very definite views as to the degree they were prepared to accept any guidelines or superiority from Egypt."<sup>1</sup> The interview must also have completed Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān's coup: by stealing the show at the royal audience and by Sayyid 'Alī's impolitic defence of Egyptian influence at such a critical juncture in Anglo-Egyptian relations, Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān's position was greatly strengthened.

The relationship of the government and Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān between the close of the war and the upheavals of 1924 should be considered against this background of Anglo-Egyptian relations and the uncertain status of the Sudan, as well as in the context of increasing Sudanese opposition to the Condominium. From 1919 to 1924 Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān's progress was in the nature of "two steps forward, one step

<sup>1</sup> Willis, "Sidelights", pp. 101-102.

back" as his influence and power increased and the government administered occasional "checks". It was a process full of tension, the result of government indecision and of Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān's determination.

As Davies pointed out in his memorandum of 1926, the status of Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān was not "uniformly the same throughout his following". This was in fact true and was to a great extent responsible both for his rise to prominence and for the government's internal divisions of opinion as to how to deal with him. In the sedentary, riverain areas of the central Sudan, Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān's influence increasingly was felt as that of any other traditional religious notable, and in these districts the local officials looked upon him not with great alarm but as an influential leading citizen. But in the western, nomadic areas, in Darfur, Kordofan, and the White Nile Provinces, Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān was viewed by his followers as a "deliverer", as the Nabī 'Īsā, occasionally even as embodying the spirit of the Mahdī. The authorities of those provinces therefore considered the sayyid as a real and increasing danger. In 1923 Willis articulated this division by referring to "the modernist Mahdist sect" on the one hand, and "old-fashioned Mahdism" on the other.<sup>1</sup> It was, in effect, a distinction between the emerging modern Sudan and those parts of the Muslim north, still largely nomadic, where government control had been late in coming and light when it came. This distinction was rejected by most provincial authorities as an artificial one, one that in fact played into the hands of Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān since he, while rejecting the claim to

<sup>1</sup> Willis to private secretary, 28/5/23, SGA, INTEL 9/2/26.

Nabī 'Īsā-hood, nonetheless drew much of his support from those who accepted him in that sense.

A 1926 report listed four categories of Sayyid 'Abd al-Raḥmān's followers: relations and ex-lieutenants of the Mahdī, who felt entitled to a share of the increasing power and prestige of his son; manādīb and jallāba, mostly Dongalawis whose only motive was in collecting zakāt for themselves; muhājirīn<sup>1</sup> from Darfur and elsewhere who considered the sayyid "the most important person in the world and beyond the power of the Government", and who were instrumental, in their comings and goings, in spreading the faith; and lastly, "Anṣār", or old Mahdists who followed Sayyid 'Abd al-Raḥmān because they had followed his father or because their fathers had.<sup>2</sup> A later note further supported the Willis view of the dual nature of Sayyid 'Abd al-Raḥmān's following. This report, written in 1930, spoke not of Mahdism at all, but of the "Rahmania sect" - so central had the sayyid himself become in the minds of Mahdists. This report further broke down the category of "sincere" believers in the sayyid by distinguishing two types of these: those who compared the Mahdī with the Prophet Muḥammad and thus believed that, after his having been succeeded by his four khalīfas, the Khalifate of the Mahdī had been passed now to one of his own blood; and those who recognised Sayyid 'Abd al-Raḥmān as Nabī 'Īsā or "the body into which the spirit of the prophet Jesus will descend on his second coming". The holders of these two views were, the report noted, easterners and westerners respectively.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Muhājirīn ("exiles"; sing.: muhājir). The parallels to the hijra of the Prophet and to that of the Mahdī himself in 1881 should be noted.

<sup>2</sup> Karrar Effendi Muhammad Beshir, "Mahdism", n.d. (1926), SGA, CIVSEC 56/2/18.

<sup>3</sup> Karrar Muhammad Beshir, "Note on the Rahmania sect in the White Nile Province", 1/6/30, SGA, CIVSEC 56/2/18.

The concern of the western governors was early voiced over the matter of Sayyid 'Abd al-Raḥmān's agents, referred to above. The recruitment and passage of manādīb were facilitated by the "pilgrimage" to Abā Island, which, as Davies later pointed out, had several aspects: "visits" (ziyārat) to Sayyid 'Abd al-Raḥmān to pay respects; "large, organised congregations ... for the Ramadan festival"; and finally, Davies said,

pilgrims from the unsophisticated, fanatical tribes of the west have been exploited for economic purposes by the Sayed, by means of a specious propaganda encouraging them to 'exile' ('muḥajara') by quotations from the Koran promising spiritual benefits and rewards in the life to come to those who undergo hardship and toil for the sake of the faith.

These distinctions, Davies said, had "only become clear with the lapse of time".<sup>1</sup>

An undated report by a sub-ma'mūr at Tendelti in the White Nile Province, probably written in late 1925 or early 1926, described the way in which belief in Sayyid 'Abd al-Raḥmān had spread as being the result of "deliberate propaganda ... the use of the Sayed's name by unscrupulous people for the furthering of their own ends ... and unintentional but natural development". Propaganda, the report indicated, was

deliberately spread by Gellaba, who live in the Sayid's entourage, and wish to increase their own wealth and standing through association with his name, and who tour the country collecting zeka,<sup>2</sup> some with the knowledge of

<sup>1</sup> Davies memorandum, 1926.

<sup>2</sup> Zakāt, the Muslim alms-tax, one of the principal obligations of Islam, is to be paid by all Muslims who can afford it. Based on a percentage of crops and animals, money and goods, the amount to be paid varies. During the Mahdia this was made a direct government tax. (J.S. Trimmingham, Islam in the Sudan, London, 1949, p. 155; see Holt, The Mahdist state, p. 126.) In the early Condominium the term zakāt was used for an animal tax. (Warburg, The Sudan under Wingate, p. 167.) But the original meaning remained, and zakāt continued to be paid, despite government objections, to various religious leaders.



the Sayid and by his orders, and others on their own initiative. These all in their own interests magnify the Sayid's name, describing him as the Nebi Isa that is to come, ... saying that they are his representatives and the 'keys of him the Door'.... They add that to see the Sayid's face once is equal to seventy pilgrimages to Mecca, and that to visit Aba is the same as to visit the holy places. Their assertions are made as if backed by the Sayid's authority, and the gullible Arabs readily believe them, with the result that these Gellaba, who call themselves 'manadib el Sayid' profit by this teaching both in wealth and influence, as well as by the commissions they receive from the Sayid. When the Government occupied Darfur and allowed Gellaba to enter, the manadib rapidly arrived spreading their propaganda....

Then the policy of Gellaba merchants and pedlars in the villages of Kordofan, W.N.P., and Darfur, was, on finding the Arabs devoted to Mahdism, to repeat in exaggerated form the stories of the manadib about the Sayid, thus succeeding in attracting the custom of the Arabs, whom they cheated....

In one instance a pedlar of Um Ruaba merkaz, by producing a letter written by S.A.R. on his printed notepaper, attracted a large number of Arabs, who came to place the letter on their heads to obtain merit (baraka), and stayed to buy all the goods in the pedlar's shop. The result was that other pedlars and even merchants in merkaz towns, obtained letters written on the Sayid's printed notepaper, which was identified by Arabs through fikis who read the address on the paper. The merchant would pretend to read out from the paper a message from the Sayid, admonishing the Arabs to follow his sect, and mentioning the most important of them by name. The merchant would say that it was he who had first acquainted the Sayid with the man's name, and that the Sayid asked after him personally, and hoped to see him in Aba on a visit before long.... The sheikh, who hitherto had not been an Ansari, would immediately consider himself as such, and would be flattered to think that the Sayid knew of him. He would then repeat the merchant's tale to many others in order that they might accompany him on his journey to Aba.... <sup>1</sup>

By the end of the war, Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān already had a considerable establishment at Abā. Since 1908 he had been allowed to cultivate there, and in 1915 "a large and fertile tract" on Abā, "contai-

<sup>1</sup> Karrar Muhammad Beshir, "Mahdism".

ning rich forests" was allocated to the Mahdī's family.<sup>1</sup> Sayyid 'Abd al-Raḥmān was given large government contracts for wood, especially during the construction of the Sennar Dam. The government reasoned that if Sayyid 'Abd al-Raḥmān became absorbed in business he would have little time or inclination for politics.<sup>2</sup> In the twenties he was, in fact, generally considered to be the richest native of the Sudan. A report of 1926 on the sources of the sayyid's wealth, listed zakāt collected in his name by agents; muhājirīn who cut wood or cultivated for him on Abā and received no pay; and wood contracts. It was reported that in 1926 Sayyid 'Abd al-Raḥmān's wood contracts brought in £E14,000.<sup>3</sup> Many reports of the Stack period referred to the sayyid's extravagance, ostentation and un-businesslike management of his affairs. None, however, took note of his obligations. In a note written in 1934, Reid pointed out that at that late date there were still fourteen widows of the Mahdī alive (including "concubines"), another son ('Alī), "a number of grandsons and great-grandsons with their families, and ... a very large number of more distant relations". Sayyid 'Abd al-Raḥmān paid about £E300 per month in support of these relations. There was also the matter of "constant appeals from the indigent and the afflicted" and requests for loans (which were seldom if ever repaid). "His position", Reid said, "and Sudanese custom" precluded refusing to meet such claims. Until the establishment of the Abā cotton scheme in 1928, Sayyid 'Abd al-Raḥmān

<sup>1</sup> Davies note, 1925.

<sup>2</sup> Interview with Sir James Robertson, 18/6/76.

<sup>3</sup> Karrar Muhammad Beshir, "Mahdism".

was, in fact, "at his wits ends to find sufficient money to satisfy his dependents' demands".<sup>1</sup> In 1926 Davies reported, characteristically, that by the middle of that year "the large profits made by the Sayed, out of contracts in connection with the construction of the Sennar dam and with the supply of wood to Government Departments, had been squandered in extravagant living and in various speculative and unprofitable enterprises". The sayyid thus found himself in debt to the amount of £E3400. The government lent him £E4500<sup>2</sup> but his financial straits damaged his prestige.<sup>3</sup> If this was true, then it was a tacit admission of the failure of the government policy to deflect Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān from political to economic pursuits: if financial problems lowered his prestige, it must be reasoned that financial success would increase it. In any event, despite a commonly held view that his aspirations were "purely financial",<sup>4</sup> he did not become the single-minded man of affairs the government expected.

As early as June 1918, the inspector at Kosti, Guy Pawson,<sup>5</sup> had

<sup>1</sup> Reid, "Note on Mahdism".

<sup>2</sup> This loan was later made a gift. (Gaafar Bakheit, British administration and Sudanese nationalism 1919-1939, Cambridge, Ph.D., 1965, p. 117.

<sup>3</sup> Davies memorandum, 1926.

<sup>4</sup> "Comments by C.G. Dupuis", n.d. (9/25), SGA, INTEL 9/2/26.

<sup>5</sup> Albert Guy Pawson (1888-) served in Khartoum in 1911, in the White Nile Province from 1912 to 1914, in the legal department in 1915, in the Upper Nile Province from 1917 to 1920, and in Khartoum in 1921-22. He was deputy governor of the White Nile Province in 1922, and deputy governor of the Blue Nile Province from 1923 to 1926. He was governor of the White Nile from 1927 to 1931, and governor of the Upper Nile Province from 1931 until his retirement in 1934. (MacMichael, SPS, p. 23.)

reported the increasing influence of Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān at Abā Island. Pawson had no doubt that "discontented men" of the Jawāma'a, Salīm, and other tribes were visiting the sayyid there, and while he had no evidence that Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān gave them anything but "sound and loyal advice", he was concerned about the "position of influence" the sayyid was acquiring. "Omdahs like Mohammad Hamad Abu Jojo", he reported, were "puzzled how to treat" the sayyid, "and the latter even asked if he was supposed to go and pay court to him like everyone else".<sup>1</sup> Pawson's point was taken up by the acting governor of the province, who wrote to Feilden, the civil secretary, that it was being openly stated that people came even from Kordofan to work for Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān without remuneration. The acting governor asked ironically if it was the intention of the government "to make a Mahdist Centre of power in this province", and he asked in exasperation: "What is the government policy?"<sup>2</sup> In answering this, Willis wrote to the civil secretary that

The policy of the Govt. though no doubt never very accurately defined is not one of repression but of absorption.... Sayed Abdel Rahman el Mahdi is a special case. Owing to his lineage and the hold he has over the minds of a very large proportion of the population it is necessary for the Govt. to control his movements to a certain degree, not because he is in himself suspect but because his more ignorant followers make his position impossible by overdoing their veneration for him. It must be remembered however that in the case of the Mahdists ... though they may be for an increase in temporal power, there can be no question in their case of another Mahdi.... I am confident that Sayed Abdel Rahman is loyal to the Govt., and I would add that it is not a question of allowing him to acquire influence but seeing that he does not misuse an influence which he has already got.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Pawson to governor, White Nile Province, 3/6/18, SGA, INTEL 2/41/341.

<sup>2</sup> Acting governor, White Nile Province, to civil secretary, 6/6/18, SGA, INTEL 2/41/341.

<sup>3</sup> Willis to civil secretary, 24/6/18, SGA, INTEL 2/41/341.

The immediate occasion for the concern voiced by the White Nile Province officials was Willis's proposal for the settlement of members of the Khalīfa's and Mahdī's families on a plot of cultivable land somewhere, in an apparent attempt to rehabilitate them and "assimilate" them by economic integration into the population as a whole. To this proposal the provincial governors agreed in principle, but none would agree to his province as the site for the proposed settlement. <sup>1</sup> As has been noted, the White Nile authorities objected because of the already great influence of Mahdism there; the Berber authorities pleaded an insufficiency of arable land; Kassala objected because of "the recrudescence of Mahdism among the Hadendoa"; <sup>2</sup> Dongola, like Berber, argued the unavailability of land. <sup>3</sup> The acting governor of Sennar reported that his experience compelled him to disapprove of the scheme, as his province was "probably a happier hunting ground for these parasites than any other". <sup>4</sup> The governor of Kordofan thought it "inadvisable to settle the Khalifa Abdullahi's family in a Province where they would be in close touch with the Baggara tribes." <sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> MacMichael to Willis, 28/4/20, SGA, INTEL 2/41/341.

<sup>2</sup> Willis to civil secretary, 4/2/20, SGA, INTEL 2/41/341.

<sup>3</sup> Jackson to Willis, 9/5/20, SGA, INTEL 2/41/341.

<sup>4</sup> Acting governor, Sennar, to Willis, 13/5/20, SGA, INTEL 2/41/341.

<sup>5</sup> Sagar to Willis, 10/5/20, SGA, INTEL 2/41/341. The scheme was eventually launched at al-Makhalif, near al-Jabalayn on the White Nile, but failed and was abandoned in 1926, after Willis left the intelligence department. (See Hasan Ahmed Ibrahim, "The policy of the condominium government towards the Mahdist political prisoners, 1898-1932", SNR, LV, 1974, pp. 33-45.)

From this response can be clearly seen the lines of division between the "policy" of the government and the attitudes of provincial governors (and, incidentally, a weakness of the central government in dealing with the provinces). This division became more and more pronounced as Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān was seen to be daily increasing his influence. By 1921 it appears that concern in the west bordered on panic. And it was at this time that one of the most serious uprisings of the Condominium took place, at Nyala in Darfur.

Unrest in the west: the Nyala rising and its consequences

The attack on Nyala on 26 September 1921 became a landmark of Stack's administration. It was certainly the most widely discussed and worrying incident of anti-government feeling to occur before 1924. Why this was so, however, is not at all a straightforward or easily understandable matter. There had been, after all, numerous similar outbreaks throughout the short history of the Condominium, and Darfur was notorious as a hotbed of "fanatical" opposition to the government. The importance of the Nyala rising was, in fact, mostly psychological, firstly because it nearly succeeded in its apparent immediate objective, and secondly because it fully revived the old fear of large-scale, religiously inspired revolt, at a time when concern in the west over the "recrudescence" of Mahdism was already at a high pitch.

On 22 September 1921, the acting governor of Darfur, at Fasher, received a letter <sup>1</sup> from the inspector at Nyala, Mr. McNeill, <sup>2</sup> stating

<sup>1</sup> There was as yet no telegraph line between Fasher and Nyala.

<sup>2</sup> Tennent McNeill (1887-1921) served in Khartoum, 1912; in the Blue Nile Province, 1913-16; and in Darfur from 1917 until his death. (MacMichael, SPS, p. 24.)

that a fakī, ‘Abdallāhi al-Siḥaynī, had declared himself to be the Nabī ‘Īsā and that "steps were being taken to effect his arrest". A force of fifty mounted infantry was despatched to assist in tracking down the fakī. There was at that time no concern about an attack on Nyala. On 23 September another letter from McNeill reached Fasher, indicating imminent danger of an attack, and another detachment with two machine guns was sent out. As "no combatant British officer was available at the time to go with this small force", a veterinary officer, Captain H. Chown, volunteered to accompany it to Nyala to help McNeill. On 26 September a force estimated at between five and six thousand tribesmen led by the fakī ‘Abdallāhi attacked Nyala. In the ensuing battle McNeill and Chown were among the forty-one officers and men killed. Only because the attackers failed to follow up their initial success and because ‘Abdallāhi was wounded did the remaining defenders manage to hold out. According to the government, at least six hundred of the insurgents were killed in the attack. <sup>1</sup> ‘Abdallāhi was later captured by "friendlies" and brought to Nyala, where he was tried and executed on 28 October 1921. <sup>2</sup>

If this had been the entire story, Nyala would have gone down as just another of the periodic revolts so common in the early Condominium. The extent of this revolt, however, was much greater than the typical fakī-led affair. The sheer numbers involved in the attack indicate this, even though an early report stated that perhaps as many as two thousand of them "were either there to see what was going to happen, or those who had joined the Fiki by persuasion of his followers and were not in

<sup>1</sup> Stack to Allenby, 30/11/21, F.O. 371/6340.

<sup>2</sup> Yockney to Savile, enclosed in Savile to civil secretary, 8/2/22, Sga, INTEL 2/50/422.

a position to refuse".<sup>1</sup> Further, although an estimated eighty percent of the rebels were "either Massalat or Fellata", and 'Abdallāhi himself was a Masalati, the "Gimr, Fur, Beigo, Bergig, Beni Halba, Beni Hussein, Zayadia, Habbania, Messaria, Taaisha, Rizeigat, Turmani and Murrati" tribes were also represented,<sup>2</sup> a collection that would, of course, indicate a very widespread interest and involvement.

The cause of the uprising was at first put down to the usual religious instigation of a wild-eyed fakī promising the certain defeat of the alien and irreligious government. Willis's first despatch to the provinces on the matter stated flatly that "the rising was purely local and had no political significance."<sup>3</sup> The governor of Darfur, Col. Savile, was not even in the Sudan at the time, but on leave in England, and on 3 October he wrote to the foreign office requesting an interview to discuss the Nyala situation, "of which", he said, "I have heard nothing beyond what I have seen in the papers".<sup>4</sup> Having admitted that, he claimed the next day that he "was at a loss to explain this outbreak as the people were prosperous and contented". He therefore determined "that the rebels must be composed of Baggara Arabs who are liable to outbursts of religious excitement...."<sup>5</sup> Savile's reflexive response shows how stolidly the "official" view of events in the Sudan was main-

<sup>1</sup> Yockney to Savile, enclosed in Savile to civil secretary, 8/2/22, SGA, INTEL 2/50/422.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Willis to all governors, 29/9/21, SGA, INTEL 2/50/423.

<sup>4</sup> Savile to asst. secretary (Egypt and Sudan), foreign office, 3/10/21, F.O. 371/6340.

<sup>5</sup> Minute by J. Murray, 5/10/21, F.O. 371/6340.



tained. Indeed, to claim as Savile did that "the people were prosperous and contented" was to contradict the fact that the rising had taken place. And to explain the rising out of hand as another outburst of "religious excitement" without recourse even to the earliest of government investigative reports showed clear prejudice.

The inability of senior officials to explain immediately the causes of the revolt stemmed from the very remoteness of Nyala, and their absence from the scene. The Residency in Cairo told the foreign office on 22 October that reinforcements were being sent to Kereinik "which may also be attacked".<sup>1</sup> Despite the fact that this was almost a month after the attack on Nyala, the foreign office could not even determine where Kereinik was, nor was its location known to anyone in the London offices of the Sudan Government, "as Darfur Province has not yet been surveyed".<sup>2</sup>

Later reports suggested other than purely religious motivation for the attack on Nyala. In any event, the capture and execution of the fakī 'Abdallāhi did not end the affair. Information was received that "ringleaders" had reassembled the rebels and were determined to attack any patrol sent against them. Another fakī, "Mohamed el Tor" emerged as a leader, and the rebels attacked in a strength of between two and three thousand a patrol on 27 November and were beaten off with at least eighty-seven dead. The patrol then proceeded through the Masalit country without organised resistance, and captured considerable numbers of horses and cattle.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Scott (Cairo) to foreign office, 22/10/21, F.O. 371/6340.

<sup>2</sup> Minute by J. Murray, 24/10/21, F.O. 371/6340.

<sup>3</sup> Yockney to Savile, enclosed in Savile to civil secretary, 8/2/22, SGA, INTEL 2/50/422.

The facts of the Nyala rising as such were not debated. But, as has been noted, arguments began as to the reasons behind it even before any investigation had begun into its causes. Inevitably certain people considered the possibility of Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān's involvement. To discourage such thinking he offered to do what he could to restore calm in Darfur. On 30 October Willis wrote to Darfur that "Sayed Abdel Rahman el Mahdi fears that ignorant followers of his sect may be misled into involving themselves in Nyala troubles and suggests Yaghub Ahmed might be allowed to go and instruct them that they are to keep quiet and obey Government orders".<sup>1</sup> The governor replied in the negative, as he did not consider the suggested emissary a "suitable person for such a mission". Savile went on to say that Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān had for years been writing many letters to people in Darfur which, while "possibly perfectly innocent" in intent, had nonetheless had a disturbing effect.<sup>2</sup> On 3 November the governor of Kassala reported that several Fellata had been arrested after spreading rumours to the effect that the Nyala rising had been organised by Sanūsī agents.<sup>3</sup> The governor of Darfur quickly rejected this suggestion, and said that he was confirmed in his belief that

all unrest here and in Masalit is due to Mahdist activities and recrudescence of their propaganda. No evidence here to support report of Senussist participation. Attitude of leading Senussists here has been consistently correct. Abdallahi himself apparently a Mahdist....<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Willis to governor, Darfur, 30/10/21, SGA, INTEL 2/50/423.

<sup>2</sup> Governor, Darfur to Willis, 1/11/21, SGA, INTEL 9/1/8.

<sup>3</sup> Governor, Kassala to Willis, 3/11/21, SGA, INTEL 9/1/8.

<sup>4</sup> Governor, Darfur to Willis, 5/11/21, SGA, INTEL 9/1/8.

Three days later Savile wrote that he had confirmed from the son of Siḥaynī that his father had been "a Mahdist and was continually reading the Rateb".<sup>1</sup> Willis used this occasion of Savile's second connection between Siḥaynī and "Mahdism" to deliver yet another exposition of what he was convinced was the real nature of the movement. "Re Mahdist tendencies", he wrote, the "word is used in dual sense as indicating belief in Mohammed Ahmed El Dongolawi as true Mahdi, secondly as revolutionary movement under religious leader claiming to be true Mahdi. Translation of Abdallah's proclamation<sup>2</sup> more approaching second

<sup>1</sup> Governor, Darfur to Willis, 8/11/21, SGA, INTEL 9/1/8.

<sup>2</sup> The proclamation to which Willis referred was, in fact, a letter from Siḥaynī to Nāzir Ibrāhīm Mūsa. It read as follows:

"In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Gracious. Praise be to Allah, the Lord, the Gracious, with prayers and peace.

"Now then, from the slave of Allah, Abdalla El Hussein (Siheini) peace be to him, the chosen for fight against the enemies of Allah, the infidels and other hypocrites - solely for the sake of Allah, the Gracious - O! Sultan Ibrahim Musa, blessings be upon you, you should rise to fight the enemies of Allah - the infidels and other hypocrites who follow them, and you are hereby told by El Sayid Abdalla El Hussein peace be to him, O you Ibrahim Musa, don't do any harm to the faithful, but you should rise for the sake of religion and fight for the sake of Allah, and die. On your way with firmness, O you slaves of Allah, you faithful, rise up to fight for Allah's sake without delay, and come to the place Um Belula to El Sayed Abdalla, the Khalifa of Allah on earth and the Khalifa of the prophet of Allah on his nation .... Don't fail to turn up for the Jihad quickly." (My underlining.)

Clearly Willis's assessment of the letter's character is correct, and Siḥaynī was making no claims for Sayyid 'Abd al-Raḥmān. (This translation, without the original, of Siḥaynī's letter was enclosed in Nicholls, acting governor, Darfur, to director of intelligence, 8/11/21, SGA, INTEL, 9/1/8.) See also 'Alī 'Abdallāh Abū Sinn, Mudhakhira ta'rikhiyya 'an mudiriyyat Dār Fur, Khartoum, n.d., pp. 44-51.

than first...." He added that the "Rateb consists of extracts from Koran and teaching of highly moral character and being only prayer book available to large sections of natives is not necessarily indication of Mahdist tendencies either kind." <sup>1</sup> This was stretching a point. As Davies pointed out in his 1926 memorandum:

The more ignorant Mahdists do not, and the Government cannot, view these texts in the setting of the Rateb with the detachment which is justified towards them when they are read as part of the Koran. The Rateb, moreover, is much more the outward and visible symbol of Mahdism.... It must not be forgotten ... that most of the copies must fall into the hands of people who cannot read them. <sup>2</sup>

The extent to which Willis was willing to defend Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān soon became clear, as Willis forwarded to the governor of Darfur for his approval a draft letter by the sayyid to the governor. Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān wrote:

It is to my great regret to hear of the recent disturbances caused by the so-called Abdulla El Soghayer which would have a detrimental effect on the country, besides the fact that they stand as obstacles in the way of its advancement and prosperity.

Therefore I beg Your Excellency to make it clear to all, particularly those who attribute to us disloyalty ... that we are loyal and sincere to this Government which is sparing, and has spared, no pains to make our country flourish and prosper and grow in wealth, which is building our mosques and giving us full freedom of religion ... and which is assisting the inhabitants in every way possible and looking after their well-being and success.

Anyone, however, who claims that he is a messenger from us or who fabricates false charges against us to serve his own purposes - contrary to the things I have expressed above - he is nothing but a liar and defamator [sic] and we beg that he should be dealt with drastically, in order that our innocence is shewn.

<sup>1</sup> Telegram, Willis to governor, Darfur, 10/11/21, SGA, INTEL 9/1/8.

<sup>2</sup> Davies memorandum, 1926.

Further, any letter that we may send to any wakil of ours there, he is directed by us to bring the same to you to see....<sup>1</sup>

Without knowing to what use this letter was put in Darfur, the records suggest that it served to suspend debate, at least between Willis and the Darfur authorities, as to Sayyid 'Abd al-Raḥmān's supposed indirect involvement in the Nyala rising. This was probably not because the governor had been convinced of the sayyid's loyalty, never explicitly at issue, at least openly, in the terms in which the debate was phrased. Rather, the complaint from Darfur (and elsewhere) had been of Sayyid 'Abd al-Raḥmān's contacts as being, in themselves, conducive to increased interest in and adherence to him. The fact that at this juncture (December 1921) this argument was temporarily shelved, was more likely the result of new facts related to the Nyala rising being uncovered in Dar Masalit. And these facts pointed not to religious fanaticism but to simple resistance to the imposition of government control as the cause for the disturbance.

It should be remembered that Darfur came under the administration of the Turco-Egyptian regime only in 1874, and under the Condominium only in 1916, and that for the duration of the war only the most superficial attempts had been made to govern. But whatever claim the government had to Darfur, its attempt to extend administration into Dar Masalit, west of Darfur proper, was seen by the Masalit tribesmen rather as an invasion. Davies, who was Resident in Dar Masalit in 1921, pointed out that the government's claim to that territory on the grounds that it had formed a part of Darfur before the Mahdia, whatever its value in boundary negotiations with the French, was

<sup>1</sup> Draft letter from Sayyid 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Mahdī to governor, Darfur, enclosed in Willis to governor, Darfur, 15/11/21, SGA, INTEL 9/1/8.

too remote to carry weight with a tribe and its ruling family who successfully maintained their independence for nearly forty years. Our moral claim to their loyalty is nil. No widespread oppression has been removed or exists to be removed.... Under these circumstances the words 'loyalty' and 'disloyalty' are inappropriate to an account of the recent unrest. <sup>1</sup>

This truly remarkable statement, probably as forceful an argument as there could be for Indirect Rule, was partly acknowledged by Stack in his report to Sultan Ahmad Fu'ād of Egypt on the Nyala rising:

The people of Southern Darfur in the vicinity of Nyala consist partly of 'Baggara' tribes of Arabs, partly of Fellata ... and partly Masalat.... The first of these are notoriously fanatical, the second are equally fanatical, ... and the third, the Masalat, are intolerant of outside rule.

Under the rule of Sultan Ali Dinar these people were sufficiently strong to evade any but a minimal taxation, and the introduction of a closer system of administration inevitably aroused an undercurrent of discontent, especially amongst the Chiefs and ruling classes.... their prejudice against a change of Government, coupled with discontent at direct administration would prepare a field in which the seeds of rebellion would rapidly thrive. <sup>2</sup>

But Stack was apparently unwilling to allow this interpretation, unqualified, to stand as the last word. Interestingly, the annual Report for 1921 contained an explanation almost identical to that given to Sultan Fu'ād, but with a new emphasis: "this discontent, coupled with resentment at an external domination of any kind and a non-Mahomedan one in particular, would provide sufficient fuel for the preaching of a fanatical agitator to kindle". <sup>3</sup>

Another point worth noting is that the conquest of Darfur in 1916 had brought with it not only the first attempt at the imposition

<sup>1</sup> Davies to governor, Darfur, 5/12/21, SGA, INTEL 2/51/430.

<sup>2</sup> Stack to Sultan Fu'ād, 28/12/21, SGA, INTEL 2/50/425. Stack was reporting in his capacity of sirdar.

<sup>3</sup> Annual Report for 1921, 1923, Cmd. 1837.

of European control, but it also accelerated the previous very gradual islamization of the western Sudan. Trimingham has stated that Darfur "was pagan in all but name before Mahdist agents arrived", <sup>1</sup> a remark that is borne out by provincial officials in the early and mid-twenties. Recent events - the destruction of the Fur sultanate, the defeat of the Masalit at the hands of the French in 1911 and the consequent partition of their dār, the gradual but inexorable increase in European penetration and concomitant interference - coincided with a marked increase in proselytization. As it happened, this was to an extent carried out by agents of Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān and by fakīs claiming that status. In an area of relatively backward tribes, the result was a fusion of these new influences, easily viewed respectively as disaster and salvation. A.J. Arkell, <sup>2</sup> reporting on Mahdism in the west in 1926, wrote that

Mahdism in Darfur and parts of Northern Nigeria, especially Bornu, as far as my knowledge goes, is the only definite current in the sea of native thought. There is very little religion except where Mahdists abound. For the rest the people, though Mohammedan in name, are virtually pagans, more or less contented, except where the coming of civilised government has curtailed their natural pursuits such as cattle raiding. There is no getting out of it that [the tribal leaders] have a fundamental belief that the Government is not here for ever. As the old 'Turkeia' was replaced by the Mahdia, so the present 'Turkeia' will be replaced by the coming of the true Messiah. <sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Trimingham, Islam in the Sudan, p. 160. See also R.S. O'Fahey and J.L. Spaulding, Kingdoms of the Sudan, London, 1974, pp. 164-171.

<sup>2</sup> Anthony John Arkell (1898- ) served in Darfur, 1921-26; in the White Nile Province, 1927-29; in the Blue Nile Province, 1930-32; as deputy governor of Darfur, 1932-37; and in the civil secretary's office in 1937. (MacMichael, SPS, p. 32.)

<sup>3</sup> A.J. Arkell, "Mahdism in the western Sudan", 1926, SGA, CIVSEC 56/2/18.

This raises yet another question not only in regard to the general unrest in Darfur in 1921 but in the spread of Mahdist propaganda throughout the northern Sudan. That is the spread of the Mahdist idea and, specifically, of the reputation of Sayyid 'Abd al-Raḥmān, in various forms, beyond the boundaries of the Sudan into the French possessions and Nigeria. This was inevitable owing to the steady passage of pilgrims on their way to and from Mecca. This passage could take years, as pilgrims would stop to earn money, travel on and stop again until they reached the Holy Places. Crossing the Sudan they came into contact with the agents, legitimate or self-appointed, of Sayyid 'Abd al-Raḥmān. Contact between Mahdists and the far west dated from the days of the Mahdī himself; the Mahdia undoubtedly influenced events as far off as Northern Nigeria.<sup>1</sup> Thus, "the Eastern Sudan was regarded as the main source of Mahdist beliefs, with the Ḥijāz as a secondary focus and the ḥajj route providing the main communications network".<sup>2</sup> In an interview with MacMichael, Sayyid 'Alī al-Mīrghānī claimed that a major reason for the coming of the pilgrims from Nigeria was expectation of the imminent appearance of the Nabī 'Īsā. Because there had been no Mahdī in Nigeria, there was no hope there of a Nabī 'Īsā, he said. But in the Sudan, "as they think the Mahdi has already come, it follows that the Nebi Isa must be about due".<sup>3</sup> There was an intense feeling of expectation among

<sup>1</sup> See Muḥammad al-Ḥājj, "Hayātu b. Sa'īd: a revolutionary Mahdist in the western Sudan", in Yūsuf Faḍl Ḥasan (ed.), Sudan in Africa, Khartoum, 1971, pp. 128-141. Hayātu b. Sa'īd (d. 1898), a great-grandson of 'Uthmān dan Fodio, adhered to the Mahdī. Although he never performed the hijra to the east, his activities further stimulated western interest in Mahdism.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Hodgkin, "Mahdism, Messianism and Marxism in the African setting", in Yūsuf Faḍl Ḥasan (ed.), Sudan in Africa, p. 117. See also 'Umar al-Naqar, The pilgrimage tradition in West Africa, Khartoum, 1972, pp. 82-91.

<sup>3</sup> MacMichael to director of intelligence, 13/6/23, SGA, INTEL 9/2/26.



these pilgrims, and their readiness to accept a self-proclaimed Nabī 'Isā was therefore great. Their contribution to the general rise in tension in the west, while obscure, was nonetheless a real one, and no doubt had its effect in the events leading up to the Nyala rising. The government always considered these Fellata a danger. <sup>1</sup>

Stack and the government generally were, of course, well aware that local political grievances had often exhibited themselves under the cloak or with the impetus of religious reaction. But in all such cases the religious appearance rather than political complaints was stressed in official reports. In the Sudan Intelligence Report for November 1921, Willis listed five causes for unrest in the west that had erupted at the same time as and immediately after Nyala. These were

- (1) The world-wide condition of unrest which has affected even the most remote tribes.
- (2) The fact that the older men have seen the disappearance of two regimes in the Sudan and feel that the present Government has lasted its allotted time.
- (3) False reports of the successes of the Nyala rising.
- (4) The unsettling effect of seditious circulars.
- (5) The increase this year of the Homr herd tax rate. <sup>2</sup>

Suggesting that the "world-wide condition of unrest" was responsible seems to have been the sheerest fantasy, probably considered capable of ingestion in London, but never taken seriously in the Sudan. Notwithstanding the fact that in a "confused and shadowy way 'Mahdist propaganda was thought of ... as associated with Bolshevism, the Third International, Egyptian nationalism, Pan-Islamism, and ideas of "world

<sup>1</sup> Interview with Sir Gawain Bell, 2/6/76. Bell noted that each large town had its Fellata quarter. In El Obeid, in fact, there was a clearing of about four hundred to five hundred yards kept between the Fellata section and the rest of the town in the event of the necessity of taking action against them.

<sup>2</sup> SIR, November 1921, F.O. 371/7746.

revolution" in general"', <sup>1</sup> there was no evidence of any such association in fact. It is more likely that for reasons of "public relations", more specifically relations with London, responsibility for domestic opposition was, as in the case of the Sanbū rising of 1919, being feebly and unconvincingly deflected from the Sudan Government to external sources. As a former member of the intelligence department put it: the Sudan Government called all who disagreed with it "'bolshies'". <sup>2</sup> The disappearance of the two previous regimes may well have been a psycho-religious factor, but it was given no prominence in reports at the time, either by Willis or by provincial officials, as an underlying cause of the troubles. The "unsettling effect of seditious circulars" is a reference to alleged Egyptian nationalist propaganda in the Sudan, but its invocation here is, again, of the same calibre as Lyall's attribution of the Sanbū rising to the presence of Egyptian troops at Kassala (see above, page 47). It should be borne in mind, of course, that Anglo-Egyptian relations were at a critical stage in early 1922, and the status of the Sudan itself was in question. "False reports of the successes of the Nyala rising" may well have caused more general unrest, but this does not explain the Nyala rising itself. Finally, Willis's unqualified mention of the increase in herd tax should be noted as a probable cause of unrest, as it was one of the very few points of contact between the government and the tribesmen, and the methods of collection were reportedly reminiscent of Turkish times. <sup>3</sup> Indeed, Willis himself

<sup>1</sup> Hodgkin, "Mahdism, Messianism and Marxism...", p. 117, quoting G.J.F. Tomlinson and G.J. Lethem, History of Islamic propaganda in Nigeria, London, 1927, passim.

<sup>2</sup> Interview with Brigadier Lush, 15/10/76.

<sup>3</sup> 'Alī 'Abdallāh Abū Sinn, Mudhakhira, p. 44.

seems to have felt fairly certain that taxation was the single most important cause of unrest. Notwithstanding his official pronouncements, he wrote in a private letter in December 1921 that he

was always sure that these Southern people in Darfur would give us trouble sometime, as they were never really handled by anyone, and they think that they can defeat anyone. Besides, I think that we went a little too quick with them and put them on taxation etc. too soon. But the young inspector is like that, as I know. I was one once. <sup>1</sup>

It is interesting to note, in Willis's letter, the criticism of McNeill, which was not echoed in any of the official correspondence, let alone in the published reports. It may, however, have been generally accepted in the government that his manner or methods had been incorrect. In 1928 Sir John Maffey, then governor-general and paying a visit to Darfur, wrote privately to MacMichael: "What a bad show Nyala was! And terribly unnecessary if McNeill had only played his hand with a little common sense, poor fellow". <sup>2</sup> Davies, in his reminiscences, wrote that McNeill "had been slow to appreciate the magnitude of the danger which threatened. He reported the first news of the false prophet's appearance in a letter which was not even marked 'Urgent' and did not ask for immediate military support". <sup>3</sup> There was also talk at the time that an Egyptian ma'mūr in the vicinity had been a cause of discontent. <sup>4</sup>

No matter what various officials believed to be the underlying cause of the Nyala rising, it was easier and more convenient to blame

<sup>1</sup> Willis to "Pasha", 8/12/21, SAD 204/3.

<sup>2</sup> Maffey to MacMichael, 25/11/28, SAD G// s 469.

<sup>3</sup> Davies, The camel's back, London, 1957, p. 149.

<sup>4</sup> Interview with Mr. George Bredin, 10/6/76.

it on "fanaticism" than to admit the possibility of dissatisfaction with government policy. This explanation, after all, conformed with the traditional view of the Sudanese and was one that apparently could be put repeatedly to London without engendering embarrassing questions. But whatever the inaccuracies involved in blaming "fanaticism" for the outbreak, it was not the most outrageous of the suggestions made. Willis wrote a long and tortured essay vaguely linking the defeat of "the Caliph" (i.e. the Ottoman Sultan), the emergence of Egyptian nationalism, and the Sanūsīyya jarīqa with the Nyala rising, although he had not an iota of proof. <sup>1</sup> Col. Balfour, <sup>2</sup> assistant director of intelligence, in a letter to Cairo, opined that a French-Sanūsī intrigue may have underlain the rising, saying that "it is noteworthy that there has been native talk at El Obeid - and possibly elsewhere - that the French are mixed up in it somehow". <sup>3</sup> While the casualness of these and other unsubstantiated theories - not only rumours but "possible" rumours, uninformed guesses, really - is striking evidence of the way in which the

<sup>1</sup> Willis to governors, 7/12/21, SGA, INTEL 9/1/8.

<sup>2</sup> Lt. Col. Francis Campbell Balfour (1884-1965), served in the public works department from 1906 to 1912 before being appointed to the political service. He was posted in Berber, 1912-15; in the Nuba Mts. Province in 1916; and in Kassala in 1916-17. He was seconded for service in Iraq from 1917 to 1920. He served as asst. director of intelligence in 1921-22, was deputy governor of Kassala in 1923-24, deputy governor of the Red Sea Province in 1926, and governor of that province in 1927. He served as governor of Mongalla from 1929 until his retirement in 1931. (MacMichael, SPS, p. 23.)

<sup>3</sup> Balfour to Major C.M. Tweedy, 4/11/21, SGA, INTEL 2/51/429. The underlining is mine.

intelligence department operated, so is the apparent necessity of government officials to look for external causes for their troubles, a procedure which was followed time and again. But the Nyala rising confirmed the western governors in their determination to oppose the increasing influence of Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān and the government's collaboration with him.

One way in which to do this was to counter that influence with another. In the west, in the years immediately following Nyala, a common complaint of the governors was of the disturbing effect on tribal leaders and tribal authority of the manādīb of Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān. It was early recognised (even before Nyala) that whereas an increase in Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān's influence would necessarily mean a diminution of tribal authority, the converse was also true: that enhancement and extension of tribal authority would tend to diminish Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān's influence. This was to be another of the factors that led to the government's adoption of theoretical Indirect Rule. In the first chapter it was noted that finances dictated recourse to this system; reaction to Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān demanded it as well. At the 1920 Northern Governors' Meeting, C.P. Browne, <sup>1</sup> governor of Berber, put forward proposals that were to lead eventually to the Powers of Nomad Sheikhs Ordinance in 1922. He noted that "One of the principle reasons for these recommendations is to counteract the present preponderating influence of religious leaders in the Sudan". <sup>2</sup> Nyala only increased the fear of

<sup>1</sup> Cecil Pownall Browne (1876-?) served in the Blue Nile Province, 1902-04, 1906-09, and in 1913; in Sennar, 1905-06; in the Upper Nile Province, 1910-12; and in Berber, 1913-21, where he was governor from 1914. He was governor of Kassala from 1922 until he retired in 1926. (MacMichael, SPS, p. 11.)

<sup>2</sup> Browne to Northern Governors' Meeting, 1920, n.d., SGA, CIVSEC 1/9/30.

that influence and the pressure to respond to it. But another lesson that could also have been learned from the relationship of Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān and the tribes was that it was in those areas where central authority was weakest that "fanatical" influence was greatest. On the other hand, where direct rule had been strongest and tribal authority weakest, in the riverain provinces and towns, Mahdism tended to be quiescent. Also ignored was the question of how the strategy of propping up tribal authority to counter Mahdism would fare if tribal leaders themselves were to become followers of Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān.

A related consequence of the Nyala rising was the new life it gave to the old Gordonesque imagery of the political service. In his preliminary report to Allenby, Stack described the deaths of the two Englishmen at Nyala thus:

Captain Chown emptied his revolver, and then seized his rifle, which unfortunately jammed [sic]. He was then surrounded and died fighting gallantly inside the Square. Mr. McNeill rallied the retreating troops and police and made a determined stand, but he was forced slowly backwards through the fort, and was killed 150 yards to the North of it. He fell pierced by four spears....<sup>1</sup>

It took little imagination to picture that scene - the two Europeans and a handful of Egyptian and Sudanese police and troops facing thousands of screaming tribesmen - it did, in fact, confirm the worst fears that had been harboured for two decades. Though the rising failed to destroy the government, its limited success was taken as a warning. Mr. Martin Parr, who was stationed in western Kordofan at the time of the rising, said that he and his colleagues "had a pretty bad week,

<sup>1</sup> Stack to Allenby, 30/11/21, F.O. 371/6340.

wondering if the whole thing was going up in smoke.... It was the only time I was ever thoroughly alarmed in the Sudan, much more than in 1924." <sup>1</sup>

The attitude consequently taken by the western governors and by some members of the central government at Khartoum was therefore that

The fanatical rising of Abdullah-el-Siheini at Nyala ... cannot be regarded as independent of the spreading influence of Mahdism in the west. That this fiki and his followers were Mahdists is a legitimate inference from his claim that he was Jesus, the Prophet of God, <sup>2</sup> and it is to be noted that the scene of the rising had been visited, within the year preceding its outbreak, by fikis, newly returned from Aba Island, though it would not be justifiable to infer a direct eastern instigation of the rebellion from those visits. <sup>3</sup>

Government relations with Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān after Nyala, 1921-23.

Whatever the relation of these visits to the troubles at Nyala and elsewhere, the effects of the agents (and of those who simply claimed to be agents) of Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān in the west were great. After the Nyala rising the sayyid was asked to provide information about his agents. According to him, their duties consisted in:

<sup>1</sup> Interview with Mr. Martin Parr, 3/6/76.

<sup>2</sup> I have seen no direct evidence that 'Abdallāhi made such a claim. Rather, as Willis pointed out and as the translation of 'Abdallāhi's letter shows (see above, page 149n.) he did, however, claim to be the "Khalifa of God". 'Alī 'Abdullāh Abū Sinn, in *Mudhakhira*, p. 45, says that 'Abdallāhi claimed to be a "prophet sent by God". It might be argued, however, along the lines suggested by Sayyid 'Alī al-Mirghani, that a claim to prophethood made by a Mahdist was implicitly an assumption of the role of Nabi 'Isā.

<sup>3</sup> Davies memorandum, 1926. In this memorandum, Davies used as an evidential document "the Intelligence Department's note of 1924". That note was, in fact, written by himself, in 1925, and was speculative.

Notifying me about all important events - also about any state of things in the relations between the people and the Government which may reflect badly on the Mahdist believers. They represent me in all affairs I have with local Governors.... This is as far as the Government's interests, in people who are related to me, are concerned.

As far as private affairs are concerned, they represent me in all interests I have with natives and are entrusted with anything which the natives wish to transmit to me. They act, further, as commercial and agricultural agents. The same may be said are the duties of the local agents. They transmit to the local authority and ... to me, all that there is of interest - since the natives in the districts are Arabs or nomads, who cannot read or write. <sup>1</sup>

Clearly the agents were active. The governor of Kordofan wrote that whereas in 1916 "Mahdism was almost non-existent in Northern Darfur", by 1922 it had "gained a firm footing". Whereas in 1918 only "four or five men" among the Ḥumr tribe used the Rātib, by 1922 "Mahdism had obtained an amazing hold on the Baggara tribes ... there was a constant coming and going of Homr, Messeria and Rizeigat to and from Aba Island and Omdurman". <sup>2</sup> In February 1922 Willis questioned Sayyid ʿAbd al-Raḥmān about these visits, and the sayyid replied that

there had been in the course of the last two years a considerable number of such; they had caused him considerable expense as his guests and had never brought him in the value of 10 p.t. so that it was not to his profit that they should come. Besides that, they never made any enquiry on matters of faith and it was only indirectly that he could obtain information as to their object in coming. He found that there was considerable disaffection to Govt. amongst the Darfur tribes who looked upon the taking over of Darfur as an encroachment of the Christians, and he was of opinion that the visits had been useful in demonstrating to the natives that the best friend of the Mahdist sect was the Government.... In the matter of agents, he admitted that there were agents appointed by agents in places remote from Government posts and not easily accessible to his regular agents; but he maintained that they were only his eyes and ears, and enabled

<sup>1</sup> Davies memorandum, 1926, quoting letter from Sayyid ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, 29/11/21.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Davies note, 1925.



him to know what was going on, and he felt confident that this was to the advantage of the Government. <sup>1</sup>

This was the argument usually put forward by Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān to justify the presence in the west of his agents. If the government wanted his cooperation and that of his followers, surely it must concede the necessity of his having contact with the people there. But the western officials argued that this very contact was what excited the populace against the government. Indeed, in a 1924 letter Stack wrote that "it is undoubted that Mahdist agents played their role in the initial propaganda" that resulted in the Nyala rising. <sup>2</sup> But what "role"? The government officials opposed to Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān found themselves in the position of a prosecuting attorney who is sure of the defendant's guilt, but has no evidence sufficient to obtain a conviction.

The alarming reports and pressure from the west culminated in 1923. "The crop of incidents detrimental to tribal discipline became so heavy and so deeply resented by the Nazirs of the western tribes" that on 11 March 1923 Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān was told that the use of agents in Darfur, Kordofan, and among the Salīm Baggara of the White Nile Province must be discontinued. <sup>3</sup> The situation in the west continued to worsen. In May Willis reported the findings of an investigation among certain western tribes, that the Baggara were "seething" with Mahdist propaganda and that "with few exceptions" were awaiting "the call to be first in the field". Propaganda emanated from at least three sources.

<sup>1</sup> Willis, "Review with Sayed Abdel Rahman on the 6th of February 1922", 7/2/22, SGA, INTEL 9/1/7.

<sup>2</sup> Stack to Allenby, 20/5/24, SGA, CIVSEC 36/4/10.

<sup>3</sup> Davies note, 1925.

The first was reportedly Ibrāhīm Tarjamāwī, identified as having been an official of the Khalīfa ʿAbdullāhi, who had a considerable reputation in Kordofan. He had been interned at Damietta from 1901 to 1907. He was removed from there to Halfa where, in Willis's words, "his dignified appearance and impressive beard enabled him to lift the fortuitous florin from tourists". From that time he was not closely supervised because he was reported to be 85 years old in 1920, and therefore unlikely to cause trouble. <sup>1</sup>

But in 1923 this man was reported to be "constantly touring" in the west. He taught that after the Mahdī must come the Dajjāl, to be followed by the Nabī ʿIsā. He described the Dajjāl in detail: "he wears a crescent in his hat and <sup>garters</sup> garters on his legs and puffs smoke like the smoke of hell, and the donkey of the Dajjal is black". In fact, Willis explained, "the Dajjal is the British officer". Further, Ibrāhīm taught that Sayyid ʿAbd al-Rahmān was the Nabī ʿIsā and that the probable date for his manifestation was in July of the following year (1924). <sup>2</sup>

Two other sources of propaganda were mentioned in Willis's letter, both simply fakīs whose whereabouts were unknown. Willis wanted them rounded up, but was uncertain whether it was possible to bring criminal charges against them. In early May, Reid, who was then district commissioner in Omdurman, reported rumours to the effect that Sayyid ʿAbd al-Rahmān had been asked "when the 'sign' would be given" and had replied that the "sign" would be given "when the hands of the Government were fully employed with other things and the breath of the Prophet Isa

<sup>1</sup> Willis to governor, Nuba Mts. Province, 1/5/23, SGA, INTEL 9/2/26.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. Al-Tarjamāwī was placed under surveillance in Omdurman in 1923 and was allowed in the following year to move to El Obeid, where he died in 1929. (Hasan Ahmed Ibrahim, "The policy of the condominium government", p. 39n.)

had descended on him". Reid suggested that these rumours might have had a "Mirghanist or Khalifa Abdullahi source".<sup>1</sup> But whatever the source, it is difficult to imagine any thoughtful member of the government crediting Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān with such stupidity. These rumours were only what had percolated down to Omdurman from the west, where the situation gave greater alarm every day. On 13 May Willis concluded that

without being unduly alarmist a situation has arisen in the western Sudan which requires careful and immediate consideration. From reports received the whole of the Baggara country from the Nuba Mountains Province westward and throughout Darfur the natives are on the tip-toes of expectation for the Second Coming. This they interpret in their several ways, and being largely Mahdist, the form of rumour is that Sayed Abdel Rahman el Mahdi is Nebi Isa and is shortly to declare himself.... the Governor, Darfur, reports unwillingness ... to pay taxes on the eve of the new Government.<sup>2</sup>

Willis felt it urgently necessary to empower local officials to apprehend and send to their homes "strangers" who were spreading these rumours. On 16 May a meeting of Stack, Willis, and MacMichael was held to consider the situation, and it was decided that it was to be

explained to Sayed Abd el Rahman el Mahdi that the situation [had] got beyond him and the Government must now set things right, and he must remain remote; and if he cannot do so, he will have to be put somewhere out of the way....

The C.S. will arrange to get legislation to enable undesirables who without strictly speaking breaking the law are a source of danger and mislead the people, to be removed to their original homes and kept under surveillance or imprisoned if necessary.<sup>3</sup>

It was decided to allow governors to act immediately "in flagrant cases". The civil secretary was also to inform the governors of Darfur

<sup>1</sup> Reid to Willis, 9/5/23, SGA, INTEL 9/2/26.

<sup>2</sup> Willis to civil secretary, 13/5/23, SGA, INTEL 9/2/26.

<sup>3</sup> "Note of a meeting between H.E. the G.G., the D.I., and the A.C.S.", 16/5/23, SGA, INTEL 9/2/26.

and Kordofan that "Fekis are absolutely forbidden to collect Zeka". Willis was to go to Abū Zabad to explain to the local shaykhs and ʿumdas that they must assist the government in stopping all the Nabī ʿĪsā talk. <sup>1</sup>

On the day after this meeting Stack wrote to Allenby to request authority under martial law, until the necessary legislation was prepared, to detain "rumour-mongers". <sup>2</sup> On the 19th MacMichael told all governors that because in many cases "the provisions of the Penal Code are not technically applicable without an undue strain of interpretation", wider powers would soon be available. Until then, however, they were empowered to arrest and confine anyone whose "offence is one which would normally be punished under martial law and if the case is a flagrant one". <sup>3</sup> Any "strangers" causing unease should be sent to their homes "by order but if necessary under escort". The governors were assured that the governor-general would support them "if at any time they may have occasion to deal with cases of the sort described by emergency measures of an administrative nature." <sup>4</sup>

In mid-May 1923 the "pilgrimage" to Abā Island assumed what to the government seemed to be alarming proportions. On the occasion of the Ramaḍān Bairam a crowd of people estimated by the government at between five thousand and fifteen thousand "charged with religious excitement" had gathered at Abā. Sayyid ʿAbd al-Raḥmān was called to Khartoum "to remove ... the objective of the pilgrims" and he was ordered to dis-

<sup>1</sup> "Note of a meeting between H.E. the G.G., the D.I., and the A.C.S.", 16/5/23, SGA, INTEL 9/2/26.

<sup>2</sup> Stack to Allenby, 17/5/23, SGA, INTEL 9/2/26.

<sup>3</sup> MacMichael to all governors, 19/5/23, SGA, INTEL 9/2/26.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

perse them, which he did. The government considered the particularly large assemblage so soon after the sayyid had been ordered to discontinue the use of agents in the west as a purposeful demonstration by him of his power.<sup>1</sup> At the time, the incident was treated with the greatest seriousness. Reid, however, writing later as governor of the White Nile Province, stated that the importance of the gathering had been exaggerated, that the case had probably been "worked up" by anti-Mahdist elements, and that British witnesses had discerned neither a fanatical nor an anti-government tone in the Abā proceedings.<sup>2</sup> This was what Sayyid 'Abd al-Raḥmān himself argued at the time. Upon his recall to Khartoum he had a meeting with Willis. Willis told him that the gathering of large numbers of people, especially from the west, was "embarrassing", to which the sayyid replied that he had no idea the government wished to curtail visits to him. Willis argued that Sayyid 'Abd al-Raḥmān's actions were misinterpreted by his ignorant followers, who spread rumours that he was the Nabī 'Īsā. Sayyid 'Abd al-Raḥmān responded that whenever he heard such a rumour he repudiated it.<sup>3</sup> Willis said that the rumours had been increasing and had now to be stopped, and Sayyid 'Abd al-Raḥmān agreed, saying that Sharīf Yūsuf al-Hindī was behind the rumours and that Sayyid 'Ali al-Mirghani as well was "stirring up trouble against him". If anyone asked him, he said he was Wad al-Mahdī, and "his hope was that his position could be defined, simply

<sup>1</sup> Davies memorandum, 1926.

<sup>2</sup> Reid, "Note on Mahdism".

<sup>3</sup> Even Sharīf Yūsuf al-Hindī had attested to this. In an interview with Willis he had recounted that someone had called the sayyid Nabī 'Īsā at public prayers on Abā and Sayyid 'Abd al-Raḥmān had imprisoned the man. (Note by Willis, 21/5/23, SGA, INTEL, 9/2/26.)

as a religious notable, the head of a known sect widely distributed in the Sudan". Towards the end of the interview Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān mentioned the presentation of his father's sword to the king as "proof of his special position of confidence". In concluding his minutes of the meeting, Willis noted that "Abdel Rahman said he can guarantee all Mahdists who know his name - but not those who don't. That, I said, was just the point and the latter outnumber the former, and the Government had to control them." <sup>1</sup>

Willis conveyed to the private secretary his thoughts on this interview. He had concluded that Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān contemplated a Mahdist Sudan developing under British rule. Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān, Willis felt, meant well and any impression that the government impugned his "personal loyalty" should be avoided at all costs. <sup>2</sup>

At a subsequent, "very strenuous interview" with Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān, Willis forced him to admit that he had been in the wrong (presumably in the matter of the Abā congregation) and then, Willis wrote, the sayyid "broke down completely and wept like a naughty child: and a broken and contrite heart I was not prepared to despise". But Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān recovered sufficiently to argue again that his troubles were the work of his competitors who, now that he was down and

<sup>1</sup> Report dated 27/5/23, SGA, INTEL 9/2/26. Sayyid 'Alī insisted that all the "loose talk" was caused by "Mahdist influence". After all, he said, only a Mahdist could logically expect the coming of the Nabī 'Isā. (Note by Willis on a conversation with Sayyid 'Alī al-Mirghani, 1/6/23, SGA, INTEL 9/2/26.)

<sup>2</sup> Willis to private secretary, 28/5/23, SGA, INTEL 9/2/26.

in disfavour, would "jump on him in their hob-nailed boots".<sup>1</sup> This episode may well reflect the lingering lesson of Shukkābā and the sayyid's realisation that he may have tried to push the government too far.

Thus the next day the sayyid wrote to Willis protesting his loyalty and at the same time reiterating that his enemies were responsible for all the Nabī 'Īsā talk.<sup>2</sup> Willis seems to have been sufficiently impressed by this to write to the governor of Kordofan two days later that it appeared "that a good deal of the rumours that Sayed Abdel Rahman El Mahdi is the Nebi Isa is being disseminated by envoys of Sayed Ali and Sherif Yusef El Hindi".<sup>3</sup> As part of his campaign to convince the government of his good intentions (and probably urged by Willis) Sayyid 'Abd al-Raḥmān thereupon announced his intention of performing the hajj to Mecca in July.<sup>4</sup> Willis, writing to the British consul at Jeddah to ascertain whether automobile transport would be available for the sayyid, stated that Sayyid 'Abd al-Raḥmān had proposed the pilgrimage "in order

<sup>1</sup> Willis to Stack, 16/6/23, SGA, INTEL 9/2/26. On the same day, someone identified only as "sayed A.R.'s correspondent (Ibrahim) in Obeid" wrote to the intelligence department that an agent of Sayyid 'Alī was touring in Kordofan and "telling people that A.R. is the Nebi Isa! He covers his face and leaves his eyes only to be seen - so as not to be known (and to impress people)". Furthermore, a disciple of Sharīf Yūsuf al-Hindī was reported to be in El Obeid and to be swearing some colleagues to go out and pretend they came from Sayyid 'Abd al-Raḥmān to tell the people he was the Nabī 'Īsā. (Note entitled "Sayed A.R.'s correspondent (Ibrahim) in Obeid writes to me", 16/6/23, SGA, INTEL 9/2/26.)

<sup>2</sup> Sayyid 'Abd al-Raḥmān to Willis, 17/6/23, SGA, INTEL 9/2/26.

<sup>3</sup> Willis to governor, Kordofan, 19/6/23, SGA, INTEL 9/2/26.

<sup>4</sup> Willis to governor, Red Sea Province, 22/6/23, SGA, INTEL 2/38/321.

counteract rumours amongst Mahdists that pilgrimage to Aba Island ... is more efficacious than Mecca".<sup>1</sup>

The dispersal of the crowds from Abā in 1923 succeeded neither in ending the "pilgrimage" nor in returning the thousands to their homes. In fact, very few seemed to return to their provinces; most had settled in various agricultural colonies in the Gezira,<sup>2</sup> where their labour was required for the Gezira Scheme.<sup>3</sup> After the dispersal in May 1923, various provincial governors were instructed that this pilgrimage was to be prohibited, and pressure should be exerted to prevent its being made. This pressure might take the form of confinement or being put on gurantee, or having one's animals seized as a pledge. Governors were told to limit Fellata pilgrims to the main routes, and to turn back emigrants from Darfur.<sup>4</sup> But regarding the Masalit, for example, it was reported two years later that none who had joined Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān at Abā had yet returned to Dar Masalit, and that tribesmen were still leaving for the east.<sup>5</sup> The governor of Darfur reported in 1925 that

<sup>1</sup> Telegram, Willis to consul, Jedda, 4/7/23, SGA, INTEL 2/38/321. Later in July the trip was abruptly cancelled. (Willis to consul, Jedda, 17/7/23, SGA, INTEL 2/38/321.) Sir Shuldham Redfern, who was stationed in Darfur in 1922-23, recalls inspection tours on which he would meet a "string of pilgrims" who were told by Mahdist agents "'don't go to Mecca, go to Abā Island and do your pilgrimage to Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān'". (Interview with Sir Shuldham Redfern, 8/10/76.)

<sup>2</sup> Davies to governor, Darfur, 21/8/25, SGA, INTEL 9/2/26.

<sup>3</sup> See Isam Ahmad Hassoun, "'Western' migration and settlement in the Gezira", SNR, XXXIII, 1952, p. 67; and Warburg, The Sudan under Wingate, p. 98.

<sup>4</sup> Davies memorandum, 1926.

<sup>5</sup> Davies to governor, Darfur, 21/8/25, SGA, INTEL 9/2/26.



prohibition of the pilgrimage to Abā had obviously failed and that Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān's influence continued to spread, even to tribes previously without interest in him.<sup>1</sup> A report from Obeid in early 1926 spoke of Mahdism "spreading among the Arabs to a shocking extent.... They go to Abba Island on pilgrimage. They believe that anyone who is not Ansari is an infidel.... The Mirghania and Ismailiyya Tarikas in El Obeid are practically 'nil'".<sup>2</sup> These were just two reports of many which were to indicate the futility of half-hearted government restrictions or, worse, of restrictions the enforcement of which the government was incapable.

In attempting to turn back immigrants from the west and control the flow of Fellata pilgrims, the government embarked on an inevitably vain course. It is, in fact, difficult to believe that provincial authorities could have expected such a policy to be effective. The pilgrimage from West Africa was well established, as we have seen, and had increased in the first two decades of this century because of the imposition of colonial rule in West Africa and the effects of Mahdist propaganda and rumours.<sup>3</sup> After the battle of Burmi in 1903, which marked the end of Fulani resistance to the British in Nigeria, twenty-five thousand Fellata were allowed to settle on the Blue Nile, where "they were welcomed by the Sudan government on account of their thrift and industry".<sup>4</sup> Indeed, the government had long encouraged the hajj because

<sup>1</sup> Acting governor, Darfur to director of intelligence, 8/10/25, SGA, INTEL 9/2/26.

<sup>2</sup> "Report from El Obeid", 22/3/26, SGA, INTEL 9/2/26.

<sup>3</sup> Umar al Naqar, "The historical background of 'The Sudan Road'", in Sudan in Africa, pp. 104-105.

<sup>4</sup> Warburg, The Sudan under Wingate, p. 104.

of the acute shortage of labour in the Sudan. This was partly alleviated by the settlement, temporary or permanent, of Fellata pilgrims going to or coming from Mecca. <sup>1</sup> Wingate once reported a saying of the townspeople to the effect that "'Allah took away our slaves, but sent us the Fellata.'" <sup>2</sup> Major communities of Fellata had grown up. To stop the flow of pilgrims was impossible.

In the last months of 1923 Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān was suffering his worst setback since the "drift" had begun during the war. This was because, simply, the "bargain" of collaboration had become too one-sided: his position and influence had been growing tremendously, but he had failed, at least in the eyes of some, to restrain his followers. Nyala had resulted. His agents had disrupted the west, incurred the wrath of the governors, and been ordered out. In short, he had, it was felt, the influence and prestige accruing from his large following in the west, but had not the responsibility for their actions. Thus, while a situation like Nyala would increase his power, the only apparent way to prevent another such situation was to allow him direct access to the western tribes, which would, again, inevitably increase his influence. The result of this, Davies warned in 1925, was bound to be an "imperium in imperio", which would itself be only a step toward establishment of Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān as undisputed ruler of the Sudan, an end which the sayyid "no doubt" foresaw. <sup>3</sup>

But at the same time as the government was administering one of its periodic "checks" to Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān, it was also being con-

<sup>1</sup> Warburg, The Sudan under Wingate, p. 98. See also Appendix I.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Warburg, The Sudan under Wingate, p. 181.

<sup>3</sup> Davies note, 1925.

fronted with the rising tide of what it saw as an embryonic modern nationalist movement. This movement may have been deprecated publicly, sneered at in official reports and minimized in retrospect, but in late 1923 and in 1924 its character, membership and potential were unsure, and therefore the danger it posed was ungauged. If, as had happened in Egypt, nationalist propaganda could be used to stir up the latent hostility of the mass of the population, especially in the west, with what could the government combat it? Worse, if this new, secular opposition exploited rumours of the Nabī 'Īsā and the like simply to cause unrest and to publicise opposition to the government, could the government stop such propaganda? And, worst of all possibilities, if an educated elite of purposeful nationalists could ally itself with the traditional authority of the tribes or with the Anṣār, could the government withstand such a concerted opposition? The answers to these questions had to be viewed in the context of Anglo-Egyptian relations and the consequent importance of maintaining, at least publicly, Sudanese support for the government and thus for the British position. Thus it was that just as it seemed drastic action might be taken, or attempted, against him, Sayyid 'Abd al-Raḥmān was again called upon to assist the government by influencing his followers and stimulating their protestations of loyalty. Within three years of the "check" of 1923, Sayyid 'Abd al-Raḥmān was to be a Knight of the British Empire and had been responsible, albeit indirectly, for the resignation of a governor-general.<sup>1</sup> (See above, page 34.)

<sup>1</sup> In his memoirs, Symes noted Sayyid 'Abd al-Raḥmān's rise: "I had known him anxiously scrounging round the government offices for the wherewithal to support his numerous dependents: now [1934] he was a K.B.E. and a considerable cotton magnate." (Symes, Tour of duty, p.221.)

Before considering this new threat to the government, it should be noted that the events of 1922-23, despite the useful services of Sayyid 'Abd al-Raḥmān in the crisis to come, were to cause the downfall of Willis at the intelligence department. The shock of Nyala, of which there had been no warning, and subsequent unrest in the west, the Abā pilgrimage, the apparent disregard by Sayyid 'Abd al-Raḥmān of government wishes, all served to convince the government of the bankruptcy of Willis's lenient and vague policy toward the sayyid, and, perhaps more importantly, of the uselessness of the intelligence department's work. Indeed, the services of Sayyid 'Abd al-Raḥmān in 1924 were themselves, at least in retrospect, to be a cause for criticism, in the same way in which the sayyid's rationale for having agents in the west was criticized: his "services" only served to increase his prestige, and his prestige, it was felt, was the greatest danger the government faced. The events of 1923, culminating in the banning of agents from the west and the break-up of the Abā congregation, indicated the predicament not only of Sayyid 'Abd al-Raḥmān, but of Willis as well. The official position, although still ambivalent, seemed to be that the sayyid was accepted as a religious leader of importance, respected by the government, but that any "political" activities, or religious or other activities that might take on a "political" colour, must be avoided and, if necessary, would be forcibly halted.

Was this distinction of religious and political functions valid? It is easy to observe that most officials of the Sudan Government thought that it was not. This is understandable, as the received view of Mahdism made no provision for such a distinction, indeed contradicted it. Thus, Mahdism was inherently political, incompatible with any government, and could not be reconciled. To this view, as we have seen, Willis took early exception.

Willis had come to see in "Mahdism" first a semantic problem: a single word was used to describe, if not two entirely different movements, two very different facets of one. There was, on the one hand, the Mahdism of the west which was, admittedly, closely akin to that of the 1880s, radical, unconsolable, complex in its motivations and uncompromising in its dissatisfaction with the current state of affairs. The expression of this dissatisfaction was turning to belief in the Nabī ʿĪsā, a belief, in its motives, no different from that of so many of the futile uprisings that punctuated the first two decades of the Condominium. Newly and imperfectly islamized, roused by the wildest rumours, susceptible even to the least artful charlatans, but instinctively opposed to the changes imposed on them by a remote and foreign government, these tribesmen made up the great numerical bulk of Sayyid ʿAbd al-Raḥmān's followers.

On the other hand, in the east, among the sedentary, more sophisticated population, Mahdism had assumed the character of a tariqa. Its followers were quiet, more interested in the conduct of their day-to-day existence than in the approaching millenium. To them Sayyid ʿAbd al-Raḥmān was Wad al-Mahdī, the possessor of his father's baraka, a holy and revered figure. But his importance lay chiefly in his prestige, his obvious influence with the government, and in his wealth and generosity. It should not be forgotten that we are considering his rise from what has been called a life of "disagreeable penury" before the war,<sup>1</sup> to the status of first citizen after the war, a spectacular rise in any society, and to the people of the Sudan a phenomenal one con-

<sup>1</sup> Holt, "Holy families", p. 132.

sidering the obstacles the sayyid originally confronted. Thus, in the eastern areas, among a sedentary, often urban population, the revolutionary element of Mahdism had been successfully routinized by the Mahdī's son. Loyalty and devotion remained, but expectation of the millennium was dormant.

Willis recognised this distinction of the two "branches" of Mahdism. Clearly Sayyid ʿAbd al-Raḥmān recognised it as well. While he no doubt saw himself in the position he occupied in the minds of the eastern "neo-Mahdists", he depended, however, on the unsophisticated westerners for mass support and, more importantly, for provision of the ready threat to security that gave him his influence with the government.

To many in the government that influence was not only dangerous, but an affront. By what right did he have it? Had not the government come to the Sudan to rid it of the movement Sayyid ʿAbd al-Raḥmān now led? To many (most prominently Davies) Sayyid ʿAbd al-Raḥmān had no claim to political or religious legitimacy, but was an impostor cynically manipulating the superstitious for his own very worldly ends. Thus, even after Sayyid ʿAbd al-Raḥmān's role in the 1924 troubles, Davies considered the Willis line a failure for two familiar but fatal reasons:

It is founded on a distinction between the religious and political aspects of Mahdism which has no historical justification and is not, in fact, recognised by the rank and file of the cult.

In practice it has not succeeded in preventing a spread of Mahdism in the West, of a kind and on a scale to cause anxiety as to its effect on the whole fabric of tribal discipline....<sup>1</sup>

This view of Mahdism, whatever its recommendations, is especially important because of its effects. First, it dominated government policy toward the Mahdists in the decade following the death of Stack, until

<sup>1</sup> Davies note, 1925.

its essential errors were recognised. But even then the thinking reflected in Davies's point of view lingered on. Indeed, when asked what he thought had been the danger posed by Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān, an ex-official said, in 1976, "Well, what were the dangers of the original Mahdī?...If he [Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān] had called a holy war in the early '30s he'd have had a tremendous response. He was wise enough not to." <sup>1</sup> That, of course, was just the point, and a point which tacitly admitted both the role the sayyid saw for himself and the efficacy of Willis's analysis of Mahdism in the 1920s.

A second, and more important result of the ascendancy of the Davies point of view, was that it was a major impetus of Indirect Rule. Davies's citing of Mahdism's effect on "the whole fabric of tribal discipline" was a clever play on the fears roused by the Nyala and 1924 disturbances. To be sure, the importance of tribal discipline in the minds of British officials increased in proportion to the influence of Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān: The first two decades of the Condominium had seen little concern for it. Indeed, its survival at all was the result not of careful cultivation but of a lack of funds and staff.

Before discussing the subject of Indirect Rule, its third basic cause should be explained: the rise of secular opposition to the Condominium government. It will then be possible to investigate the interaction of that opposition with the traditional authority of religious leaders, the competition of the two sides, and the policies the government adopted to deal with them.

<sup>1</sup>Interview with Mr. Martin Parr, 3/6/76.

Part Two: The Emergence Of Secular OppositionIntroductory

There is to my mind no doubt that we are face to face with the early beginnings of a Sudanese nation and it is our business to decide what we are to do with it.

— Wingate to Curzon, 26/3/19. <sup>1</sup>

Just as the Sudan Government's attitude toward Mahdism during the early years of the century was the product of the Wingate-Slatin line, so too was its attitude toward Egypt. While the Condominium Agreement in theory called for joint Anglo-Egyptian control of the Sudan, in practice Wingate and his government had no intention of allowing more than the necessary Egyptian involvement. That involvement, in fact, was to be limited as much as possible to financial subsidies. As has been noted above, Cromer never countenanced this view, a fact that curtailed but did not prevent Wingate's steady lessening of what he and others called Egyptian "interference". We have seen how, in 1919, the Sanbū rising at Kassala was blamed on the presence of Egyptian troops, and how the Nyala rising and unrest in the western Sudan was implausibly ascribed to Egyptian nationalist propaganda. These were only symptoms of a more general problem: the danger, at first apparent and later very real, of Egyptian nationalist influence in the Sudan and second, the tendency, at first restrained but after 1919 quite rampant, of the Sudan Government to blame all of its problems on that influence. The former was, in part, to lead to the troubles of 1924; the latter was to lead to a lack of anticipation and undersatnding of those troubles when they oc-

<sup>1</sup> F.O. 371/3711.



curred. As an early example of this may be cited the mutiny of the Egyptian Army in 1900:

All the accounts of the mutiny indicated that its major cause was to be found in Kitchener's maltreatment of the Egyptian army. Wingate, however, was convinced the centre of trouble lay in Cairo and was supported by the Khedive.<sup>1</sup>

Whether or not Wingate did believe this is less important than the results. No attempt was ever made to effect a practical application of condominium: Egyptians were employed in large numbers in minor administrative posts; they were employed only because British staff was unavailable or too expensive, and Sudanese replacements took time to train. In the Stack years this policy was reemphasised and the government accelerated the process of replacing Egyptians with Sudanese.

It is worth noting that, despite all the myriad claims made by the British from 1919 onward as to the differences between Egypt and the Sudan - the animosity of the Sudanese towards the Egyptians, the different stages of their development, indeed, the very natures of the peoples - Wingate and his colleagues clearly always recognised the natural circumstances that drew the two countries together. First and foremost of these was what had brought the British to the Sudan in the first place: the Nile, the key to Egypt. Then too, the community of religion and language and, therefore, of culture, were homogenising, not separating agents. A political relationship in the 19th century of ruler and ruled became in the twentieth century one of equal sufferers under a foreign yoke. To be sure, it should not, on the other hand, be considered that the people of the Sudan longed for a return to the days of the Turco-Egyptian regime. What should be remembered, however, is the strength and significance of the ties that bound the two countries.

<sup>1</sup> Warburg, The Sudan under Wingate, p. 21.

Sudanese nationalism is a late-comer to the stage we are viewing - how it would develop and to whose benefit were very much open questions. That the latter question was asked at all indicates the position the Sudan occupied in Anglo-Egyptian relations. But it was only natural that Egyptian nationalists should look to young western-educated Sudanese as potential allies; only natural that discontented Sudanese should look toward Egyptian nationalism as an example; and only natural, given the information at their disposal, the exigencies of the diplomatic situation and the legacy of the Wingate era that the British should blame Egyptian nationalist "interference" for the rise of a secular, anti-British sentiment in the Sudan. Just as Wingate's propaganda line stressed the iniquities of the Khalifa's rule in order to justify the British intervention, so too it stressed the corruption and oppression of the old Turco-Egyptian rule, an attitude which not only corroborated the British justification for occupying Egypt but which also served as the standard apology for the necessity of Britain's dominant position in the Sudan.

It is important to remember, when discussing the politics of the period 1919-1924, that whatever role Egyptian influence played in the emergence of a new secular opposition, the British officials believed that influence to be paramount. Thus the Sudanese involved came to be considered either as dupes of the Egyptians or as merely motivated by personal considerations.

The events in Egypt in late 1918 and early 1919 elicited various responses in the Sudan. Reports indicate that concern centred almost entirely on the attitude of the Egyptian units of the army. In March 1919 Clayton, the Sudan agent in Cairo, reported to the foreign office that the "Black and Arab troops" in the Sudan were "not affected" and could therefore be relied on. Further, the senior Egyptian officers

seemed to "deplore" the disturbances in Egypt "as militating against any future measure of self-Government". The junior officers, however, were reported to be excited and "ready to create a situation embarrassing to Government if they dared to." <sup>1</sup>

The religious leaders had early sought to associate themselves with the government against the claims of Egyptian nationalists. In a very important memorandum, significantly entitled "Note on the growth of national aspirations in the Sudan", Stack had written in February 1919 that the three sayyids had expressed their wish that the government take firmer action to emphasise "the fact that the Sudan is under the British Empire and that its future is identified with British control". They asked to be allowed "to institute among their followers a kind of propaganda ... with the ultimate object of cultivating a spirit of national unity among the Sudanese". Stack wrote that "the natural accompaniment" of the sayyids' aims was the elimination of the "Egyptian element" from the administration. The governor-general believed the sayyids to be sincerely desirous of contributing something "from the side of the governed", but he counselled against allowing the "propaganda" they suggested. Not only did administrative concerns (staffing and finance) argue caution in de-Egyptianizing the administration, but also, Stack believed, "if the sense of nationality is to grow, it will do so naturally", and in any case it had always been the policy of the Sudan Government "to gradually associate the Sudanese with the Government, and to train them to govern themselves". As proof of this he instanced the establishment of the Gordon College and the institution of the Military School, and also noted that it was pro-

<sup>1</sup> Clayton to foreign office, F.O. 371/3714.

posed to utilise "sheikhs and Chiefs of Tribes as an element in the civil and criminal judiciary".<sup>1</sup>

This was an important memorandum. First, it can be seen how early the three sayyids rushed to support the government.<sup>2</sup> Secondly, the memorandum indicated that the British saw "a spirit of national unity" among the Sudanese as potentially of great value, not necessarily for the Egyptians but quite possibly against them. Thirdly, it stated, albeit in a surprisingly off-hand way and at a surprisingly early date, that the Sudan Government had "always" worked toward training the Sudanese to govern themselves, and indicated the dual way in which this was to be carried out: through the assumption by educated Sudanese of positions in the bureaucracy and by the devolution of powers to tribal leaders. It need hardly be noted that the Sudan Government had not in fact previously entertained the notion that it was training the Sudanese to govern themselves. It had, to be sure, been following the guideline established in 1900 to create a "small native administrative class who will ultimately fill many minor posts".<sup>3</sup> This and other policies had not been seen as preparatory for self-government, but merely as tending toward inexpensive administration.

<sup>1</sup> Stack to Wingate, 23/2/19, enclosed in Wingate to Curzon, 26/3/19, F.O. 371/3711.

<sup>2</sup> Indeed, a note prepared by Willis in December 1918 indicated that "some of the more enlightened natives" had intended circulating an appeal requesting the government to remove the Egyptians from the country. The appeal had not been sent around, however, because there was a fear that "the desired result might not be attained" and that the Egyptians might exact revenge. (Willis, "Note", n.d., enclosed in Stack to Wingate, 22/12/18, F.O. 371/3711.) It was in this letter to Wingate that Stack raised the point of his "confirmation or otherwise" as governor-general as a way of allaying the fears of the Sudanese. See above, page 50.

<sup>3</sup> Annual Report for 1900, 1901, Cd. 441.

The main concern of the government was that the crisis in Egypt might drag on over a long period, thus increasing uncertainty as to the future status of the Sudan. It was hardly to be expected that a violent clash of the co-domini could have no repercussions in the Sudan. Rumours were rife that Britain would soon have to leave Egypt and would then and therefore have to abandon the Sudan.

In mid-March 1919 Willis reported that "volunteers on behalf of the Zaghloul Party", Maḥmūd Pasha al-Dīb and 'Īsāwī Bey Zayid, had arrived in the Sudan to reassure their sympathisers; to learn "the real attitude of the Sudan in view of their agitation in Egypt"; and to meet secretly with some "notables" to "explain to them the value of the assistance they [the notables, could] render by themselves supporting the Egyptians to turn out the British from Egypt and the Sudan". Willis claimed that these two emissaries had interviewed the grand qādī and several other important people. <sup>1</sup> Apparently, again according to Willis, the results of their enquiries were disappointing. They were, in fact, advised not to speak to any Sudanese (as opposed to Egyptian) dignitaries, because "'the religious leaders [were] traitors to their religion who [had] sold their conscience during the war for British money - and other Sudanese are animals who know nothing except their women and food.'" <sup>2</sup> The two Egyptians were told that the "hope of Islam" lay in "the new generation who are being educated in Government schools" and in the new merchant class which "had the making of a violent nationalist party". As evidence on which to base this prediction it was

<sup>1</sup> "Report received from assistant director of intelligence Khartoum", 14/3/19, F.O. 371/3716.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. The words are Willis's.

explained to the Egyptians that Sudanese employees of the government were treated badly enough "to breed this spirit".<sup>1</sup>

Stack took a more pessimistic view. He feared that if the situation in Egypt continued serious, it would combine with "the high price of dura" and shortages of commodities, especially sugar, and lead to "outbursts of violence in shape of looting by lower orders". He therefore recommended the despatch of a British battalion to reinforce the British garrison.<sup>2</sup> Wingate agreed with Stack's analysis of the danger, and saw the situation as both a justification of his own fears of Egyptian influence and as an opportunity to end that influence once and for all. "We have got to recognise", he wrote, "that decent Government is producing what it ought to produce - a sense of national self-respect - and it is our duty to decide how to turn it to the best account". But what form was that "sense of national self-respect" assuming? Wingate believed it was "inevitable" that "it should display itself primarily in a desire to have done with Egyptian control". To accommodate this desire, Wingate suggested that the British should take "steps in the direction of identifying the Sudan more closely with Great Britain than with Egypt".<sup>3</sup>

It should be recalled that Wingate's career had by this time been destroyed by the Egyptian crisis, perhaps introducing a new impetus into his campaign to eliminate Egyptian influence in the Sudan. As if to claim credit for a prophetic understanding of that influence,

Report received from a  
14/3/19, F.O. 371/3716.

<sup>1</sup> "Report received from assistant director of intelligence Khartoum",  
14/3/19, F.O. 371/3716.

<sup>2</sup> Telegram, Stack to Cheetham, n.d., enclosed in Cheetham to foreign office, 23/3/19, F.O. 371/3714.

<sup>3</sup> Wingate to Curzon, 26/3/19, F.O. 371/3711.

Wingate wrote to Curzon in April that after the Anglo-Egyptian conquest of the country

It was ... soon apparent that the racial antagonism between the Sudanese and the Egyptians (generally called 'Turks' by the local inhabitants) was far too deep-seated to be easily eradicated and it became clear that the gradual introduction of a policy of the 'Sudan for the Sudanese' <sup>1</sup> was that best suited to the condition of the country. This policy was facilitated by the growth of the Gordon College and the Military School in Khartoum in which institutions Sudanese and Arabs were trained for subordinate positions in the Government and as officers in the Army. Almost imperceptibly the personnel of the Army was changed - Sudanese and Arabs gradually taking the place of the purely Egyptian elements. The transformation requires very delicate handling, in order to avoid raising fears amongst the Egyptians. <sup>2</sup>

Why, indeed whether, Wingate had considered that Sudanese national consciousness should inevitably focus on the less powerful of the co-domini is an open question. He may well have been indulging his habit of telling London what they wanted to hear, or what he wanted them to believe, or was simply paraphrasing Stack's note. In any case, the next day in yet another letter to Curzon, Wingate dared to "go so far as to suggest that ... His Majesty's Government may find the present a suitable moment to definitely take over the Sudan, thus eliminating the intensely unpopular Egyptian element" and punishing the Egyptian nationalists for their campaign of "lawlessness, pillage and murder." <sup>3</sup>

In May Stack told Allenby (who had by then replaced Wingate) that the Egyptian crisis had, if anything, strengthened Sudanese dis-

<sup>1</sup> This is, as far as I am aware, the earliest reference to the phrase. Cf. Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān's memoirs, wherein it is stated that the pretensions of the White Flag League in 1924 caused the sayyid to coin the slogan "Sudan for the Sudanese" himself. (Jihād fī sabīl al-istiqlāl, p. 24.)

<sup>2</sup> Wingate to Curzon, 2/4/19, F.O. 371/3711.

<sup>3</sup> Wingate to Curzon, 3/4/19, F.O. 371/3711.

like of Egypt, but that a general feeling was abroad that "a big change in politics" impended, which would end in Britain's abandoning the Sudan. Alarm at this prospect, Stack said, had caused the religious leaders to come forward with the idea of "the Sudanese developing as a nation by themselves and not as a mere appanage to Egypt. This was said not in a spirit of hostility to British rule, but by way of suggesting that they know their interests to be bound up with the British." <sup>1</sup> Such then, it appears, was the birth of the "Sudan for the Sudanese" idea, a product as much of Wingate's concern about Egyptian influence as of the desire of the three sayyids to consolidate their own influence.

Such protestations as Stack's and Wingate's to London produced the desired effect. A.T. Loyd, who was later to be secretary to the Milner mission, suggested in a minute to a Stack report on the future status of the Sudan that it was "very desirable" to "reassure" the Sudanese as soon as possible: "All the evidence that we have had from Sir R. Wingate and others shows that the Sudanese are only afraid of one thing and that is that we shall leave them to the hated Egyptians." <sup>2</sup> More dangerous than the fear of British abandonment was the fact, according to Willis, that there was at least by May much

propaganda of a kind we cannot stop. Conversational stuff, stories of atrocities by British soldiers - criticisms of British methods and imputations against our good name.... As the junior administrative officials are all Egyptians and they deal direct with the native, the opportunities are endless. <sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Stack to Allenby, n.d., enclosed in Allenby to Curzon, 4/5/19, 371/3717.

<sup>2</sup> A.T. Loyd, minute, Allenby to foreign office, 8/5/19, transmitting a telegram from Stack, n.d.

<sup>3</sup> Willis to "O", 7/5/19, SAD 209/11. "O" was Willis's sister Olive. It is interesting to note the change in official government pronouncements of this period. After reporting for years that the Egyptian official was harsh, dictatorial, usually corrupt and almost universally



In the Sudan Intelligence Report for May Willis noted the type of occurrence that was causing concern. "A few drunken Egyptians" created a disturbance at Port Sudan by yelling Egyptian nationalist slogans; a wire declaring that complete independence had been granted to Egypt caused trouble at Atbara; a retired Egyptian officer delivered a "seditious speech" in Omdurman mosque, calling on the Sudanese to join the Egyptians in ejecting the British.<sup>1</sup> Subscriptions to the "Afflicted in the Egyptian National Revolution" were solicited by the grand qādī<sup>2</sup> in his own name and the names of the senior Egyptian officials in the three towns. Apparently few Sudanese subscribed, following the advice of "their religious leaders". Junior officials were reported to meet in order to "conspire in a somewhat theatrical but ineffective manner."<sup>3</sup> While such activities as these were in themselves disconcerting, they did not escalate to the scale of widespread anti-government action. Of more concern, of course, was the effect such activities, and the authors of such activities, were having on the Sudanese.

The Sudan Intelligence Report for June 1919, after reporting the plan for the Sudanese notables' delegation to London (the motive of

disliked, suddenly he was presented after 1919 as having the ear of the local population. Indeed, MacMichael, writing in the 1930s, suggested that the official's influence was derived from his corruption: "The somewhat venal methods of the Egyptian official ... con-sorted with their [the Sudanese] own inclinations". (MacMichael, "Memorandum. The attitude of the Sudanese towards Egypt, 1905-1932", 10/9/32, SAD 403/7.)

<sup>1</sup> The ex-officer, Muḥammad Amīn Hudīb, was arrested, tried and sentenced to three years in jail. (SIR, May 1919, F.O. 371/3724.)

<sup>2</sup> Shaykh Muḥammad Muṣṭafā al-Marāghī retired as grand qādī in 1919. See above, page 118n.

<sup>3</sup> SIR, May 1919.

which may be better appreciated in this context),<sup>1</sup> noted that "a few agitators"(of unspecified nationality) had "endeavoured to spread the story that the notables [had] been induced to go to England to sell their country". The same report noted that "propaganda" was producing "an undesirable effect ... on a small proportion of junior officials and students". Willis minimized this effect, however, in noting that "a word of warning" had sufficed "to check occasional undesirable talk", and in any case the majority of the population were "too much occupied in the prospect of rains ... to evince any interest in politics."<sup>2</sup> Such "undesirable talk" continued throughout the summer, becoming more and more worrying. But in communicating the situation to Cairo and London the Sudan Government faced a dilemma: it wished, on the one hand, to minimize the effect of the "propaganda" because it was important to show how solidly the Sudanese supported the British; but on the other hand it wished to exaggerate that effect in order to convict the Egyptians and hasten their departure from the Sudan. Certainly the Intelligence Reports indicate, at least on the part of Willis, their author,

<sup>1</sup> In November 1919 the British foreign secretary, Curzon, told the House of Lords of the "encouraging picture that is presented by the Soudan. Under the able rule of the Governor-General, Sir Lee Stack, the inhabitants of that country have continued to maintain perfect order and have given notable evidence of their affection towards Great Britain by the visit to this country in July of a deputation of notables who were received by His Majesty the King. Both to His Majesty and subsequently to myself they expressed their warm appreciation of the work accomplished by Great Britain for the regeneration of their country and their dissociation from the events which have happened in Egypt. Their one desire is to remain in the Empire and not to be dissevered from it. This gratifying testimony of loyalty is largely, if not entirely, due to the admirable work accomplished by the late Governor-General, Sir Reginald Wingate...." (PD, HL, vol. XXXVII, 25/11/19, 347-348.)

<sup>2</sup> SIR, June 1919, F.O. 371/3724.

an ambivalence which is evidenced by alternate references to the disdain of the Sudanese for Egypt and cryptic references to the "subtle poison"<sup>1</sup> the Egyptians were introducing into the consciousness of the naive Sudanese.

In August Stack wrote to Wingate suggesting that if the "Egyptian Government" continued to encourage attacks on the "British Administration" in the Sudan, then the only course would be to declare a British protectorate over the Sudan. He rejected the idea of outright annexation because he feared that that might "'switch'" the "Sudan for the Sudanese" party to the side of the Egyptians.<sup>2</sup> Thus it was believed that the Sudanese "nationalism" which was emerging (or was expected to emerge) must be allied to either British or Egyptian interests. Indeed, the Sudan Intelligence Report for November recorded the discovery of a violently anti-British pamphlet, in Arabic, entitled "A Call to the Natives of the Sudan", which demanded "perfect independence [for] the Nile Valley". Willis believed the pamphlet to have been written by Egyptians. It stated, among other things, that Gordon had led the Sudan to disaster, that the Mahdī had been its saviour, that the Gezira Scheme represented British capitalist exploitation and that the British should be driven out.<sup>3</sup>

#### The Milner mission

The unrest of 1919, as has been noted, was played down in official reports because of the necessity of preserving the appearance

<sup>1</sup> SIR, July 1919, F.O. 371/3724.

<sup>2</sup> Stack to Wingate, 22/8/19, SAD 237/8.

<sup>3</sup> SIR, October 1919, F.O. 371/3724. This "call" was one of many.

of a united front against Egyptian nationalism. But despite the fact that a good deal, if not all, of that unrest was indeed the consequence of unrest in Egypt and repercussions among Egyptian officers and officials in the Sudan, the government was undoubtedly concerned about the possibility of future Sudanese eruptions. References are vague in the reports of the actual events of that year, and the Intelligence Reports, as always, gave (ironically) a heavily censored account. But it is clear that the 1919 troubles in Egypt had a profound psychological effect on the Sudan Government. Indeed, the 1919 rising in Egypt was not only a shock to the British in Egypt but was also very depressing for British morale in the Sudan. The possibility of at least a semblance of Egyptian independence meant, inevitably, a whole range of problems in the administration of the condominium. Further, the danger posed in the Sudan by Egyptian nationalism, notwithstanding the much-publicized disdain of the Sudanese, aroused the deepest fears in the minds of government officials. The Egyptians, who heretofore had been tolerated as necessary cogs in the machine of government, were now viewed as the spanner in the works. The emerging western-educated Sudanese, previously seen as the natural replacements of the Egyptians, but at no time popular as a class with the British, now became the object of intense suspicion. This distrust of the so-called "effendi class", usually seen as a result of the 1924 disturbances, in fact dates at least to 1919 and, indeed, was one of the prejudices of the day, nourished by the experience of Egyptian politics and the social preference of the British (see Chapter IV). In any event, from 1919 the goal of the Sudan Government was to remove the Egyptians and somehow to circumvent those Sudanese who were thought to be susceptible to Egyptian "extremist" notions.

This brief analysis is borne out in papers prepared in connection with the investigations of the Milner mission in 1920. (See above, pp. 88-90.) The place of the Milner mission in Anglo-Egyptian relations will be discussed in the next chapter. But it is remarkable, in the present context, that the British in Khartoum, Cairo and London were unanimous as to the desirability of removing Egyptian influence from civil and military capacities in the Sudan; there was an equal certainty of the grave dangers posed by a Sudanese educated class, and the necessity of frustrating its development.

The Milner mission arrived in Egypt at the beginning of December 1919. In January 1920 (if not before) it was decided that representatives should go to the Sudan because, in Lord Milner's words, "if, as is highly probable, we withdraw more and more from the 'administrative occupation' of Egypt, the strengthening of our hold on the Sudan becomes increasingly important". But this, Milner said, was "impossible if the Sudan service is full of people in open or secret sympathy with Egyptian 'nationalism'".<sup>1</sup> Milner's views were strengthened by the subsequent memoranda from and correspondence with officials in the Sudan and his own representatives.<sup>2</sup> It can therefore be said that the recommendations regarding the Sudan in his mission's report had the one goal in mind of reducing and ultimately eliminating Egyptian influence and the danger of an "infected" Sudanese official class. This, of course, provided the third motive - after finances and fear of Mahdism - for Indirect Rule. Long before Keown-Boyd went to the Sudan to report for the mission on conditions there, Milner wondered whether "a system

<sup>1</sup> Notes by Milner on Sudan, n.d. (Jan. 1920), DEP MILNER 163.

<sup>2</sup> Stack himself "put in quite a bit of paper to the Milner commission". (Interview with Sir James Robertson, 18/6/76.)

like that prevailing in Northern Nigeria" might be implemented, in which case "the necessity of creating an effendi class would thus be obviated".<sup>1</sup> Milner went on to state that he had heard "very unpromising accounts of the young Sudanese trained in their own country", but that they could hardly be worse than the Egyptians and were at least less susceptible to Egyptian nationalism.<sup>2</sup> In February Milner recorded in his diary a conversation with Keown-Boyd, who was about to leave for the Sudan:

For some time we talked about the Sudan. He is alive to the danger of its becoming infected with the virus of Egyptian Nationalism, wanted the Egyptian Army got out of the country, also Egyptian Mamurs and other officials removed as soon as possible.... Different regions of the Sudan were ethnically quite distinct and should be kept as far as possible locally independent.<sup>3</sup>

It is therefore clear that even before the mission had begun its work its views on the Sudan situation were fairly well-formulated. At the risk of labouring the point, it might be noted that Keown-Boyd did have a few positive thoughts on the subject of Sudanese nationalism. These were necessarily hypothetical and are reminiscent of the rather naive sentiments expressed by Wingate in 1919. Reporting from Khartoum, Keown-Boyd wrote that

One thing we can be fairly certain of and this is the growing feeling towards a nationality amongst the Sudanese themselves. This feeling should be fostered, led in the right direction, and as far as possible anticipated by taking them gradually into the Government of their country.... But under no circumstances can we allow any National feeling to rise that is anti-British, such as has occurred in Egypt.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Notes by Milner on Sudan, n.d. (Jan. 1920), DEP MILNER 163.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. One assumes that these "accounts" came from within the Sudan Government.

<sup>3</sup> Milner's diary of conversations while chairman of the mission, 24/2/20, DEP MILNER 165.

<sup>4</sup> Keown-Boyd, "Sudan 1920", n.d., DEP MILNER 161.

These sentiments probably originated with the Sudan Government: there was a great deal of communication among Milner, Wingate and officials in Khartoum, and, of course, Keown-Boyd himself had long experience of the country. In any event, it is obvious that opinions were formed in 1919 and 1920 as to the course that should be followed regarding Egyptians in the Sudan, as well as the appropriate attitude to adopt toward the impending Sudanese nationalism. These opinions were later expressed in the Milner mission's report. The problem soon to be faced by the Sudan Government, however, was that the brand of "nationalism" that emerged was not what had been hoped for, but that which had been feared: anti-British activity, along Egyptian lines and among government employees. The Milner report recognised, as did the Sudan Government, the potential danger of an "effendi" class. Indeed, the report stated that the mistake made in Egypt, of creating "an overgrown body of aspirants to Government employment" must be avoided in the Sudan.<sup>1</sup> To a great extent, therefore, the political orientation of the subordinate official class was prejudged. This will be examined more fully in the final chapter, but it should be noted here that by the time of the Milner report there was already a strong bias against the educated Sudanese and in favour of tribal authority.

#### The League of Sudan Union

In his note of 23 February 1919 Stack had remarked that the three sayyids had "asked to be allowed to institute among their followers a kind of propaganda which will endeavour to foster loyalty and co-

<sup>1</sup> Report of the special mission to Egypt, 1921, Cmd. 1131. See above, p. 88.

operation with the British Imperial idea". Stack rejected the plan as "out of keeping with the spirit of our administration and unfair to the Egyptians".<sup>1</sup> In June 1920, however, the three sayyids were allowed to buy Ḥaḍārat al-Sūdān, a literary paper edited by Ḥusayn Sharīf,<sup>2</sup> who stayed on as editor of what became the "mouthpiece" of the sayyids.<sup>3</sup> In 1915 Ḥusayn Sharīf had been suspected of involvement in the distribution of a "seditious circular" and was exiled to Mongalla and later to Dongola until 1917. In 1919 he accompanied the delegation to London as a correspondent. A 1925 "Personality report" concluded that he identified himself with the party "that includes the leading Govt. officials (graduates of Gordon College) and the senior native Officers whose motto is: Nothing to do with Egypt. The Sudan for the Sudanese: We want Great Britain to help us but for a fixed period only."<sup>4</sup> In August 1920 Ḥusayn Sharīf wrote four articles in al-Ḥadāra presenting the case for "the Sudan for the Sudanese": the continued separation of Egypt and the Sudan and a desire for British guidance until the Sudan could govern itself.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Stack, "Note on the growth of national aspirations".

<sup>2</sup> Ḥusayn al-Khalīfa Muḥammad Sharīf (1888-1928) was the son of the Mahdī's cousin, the Khalīfa Muḥammad Sharīf, who was killed at Shukkābā in 1899 (see above, page 103), and was a grandson of the Mahdī. He attended Gordon College and became a teacher. In 1917 he was editor of al-Rā'id al-Sūdānī, a post he held until it ceased publication in 1919. He was editor of Ḥaḍārat al-Sūdān until his death in 1928. (Hill, BD, p. 169.)

<sup>3</sup> Bakheit, British administration and Sudanese nationalism, p. 31. See also Mahgoub Mohamed Salih, "The Sudanese press", SNR, XLVI, 1965, pp. 1-7.

<sup>4</sup> "Personalities [sic] report form", 22/2/25, SGA, CIVSEC 69/1/1. The report commented that Ḥusayn Sharīf "probably grasps the political situation in the Sudan better than any other native...."

<sup>5</sup> Bakheit, British administration and Sudanese nationalism, p. 32.



In the same year as the sayyids began actively to propagate their views as to the future status of the Sudan, there also emerged the first of a series of secular political organisations. This was the League of Sudan Union. Its five founding members were all from leading families, and four of them were graduates of Gordon College. Two were sub-ma'mūrs, two were clerks, and all moved in graduate circles.<sup>1</sup> The league was at first little different from the graduate clubs, social organisations including among their membership anyone who had gone beyond the primary level of education. These clubs had been deemed by the government to be perfectly harmless: in fact, the Omdurman graduates' club, established in 1917 by Ḥusayn Sharīf and others, had as its first president a British official, Mr. M.F. Simpson.<sup>2</sup>

The League of Sudan Union was apparently organised, or was at least supposed to be organised in a system of cells, each cell consisting of five members, but this system did not work well, nor was it really necessary, since

Much of the Union's effort went into organising plays and literary festivals, but its chief political work took the form of sending attacks on [the] British administration and its Sudanese collaborators, the orthodox religious leaders and ulemma through the post. Typical of this 'patriotism by post' was a circular written by Obeid Hag El Amin charging the three tariqa heads with 'worshipping King George and Lee Stack, ... his prophet', and with turning the 'Hadara' newspaper into a mouthpiece of imperialistic propaganda. He appealed to the educated to ignore British attempts to sow discord among Sudanese and accused the government's Gezira scheme of robbing the Sudanese of their land and giving it to a British company.... Another of the Union's methods was publishing anti-British articles and poems

<sup>1</sup> Bakheit, British administration, pp. 65-66. They were 'Ubayd Ḥājj al-Amin, Tawfiq Ṣāliḥ Jibrīl, Muḥī al-Dīn Jamāl Abū Sayf, Ibrāhīm Badrī, and Sulaymān Kisha.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 34-35, 35n.

in Egyptian newspapers ... and it is significant that these were more explicitly pro-Egyptian than the leaflets for home consumption.... Lastly, the Union attempted to smuggle Gordon College students into Egypt for higher education and sometimes succeeded; but most of them founded [sic] the experience disenchanting because no arrangements were made with Egyptian friends or associations to look after them. <sup>1</sup>

This type of activity, on a small scale at that, does not seem to have greatly exercised the Khartoum government. Indeed, no notice was taken of the Sudanese Union Society until 1922. After a brief tour in the Sudan in February 1921, Allenby could report that propaganda was "still carried on" by Egyptian officers, officials, and "others", but that it met with "contempt or ridicule". Little was to be feared from such crude attempts at subversion "so long as His Majesty's Government make it quite clear that they intend to continue to govern the Soudan". <sup>2</sup> But the publication of the Milner report in 1921 appeared to alter the political situation. Whereas Egyptian efforts had, in the eyes of the government, been half-hearted before, as uncertainty over British intentions and various negotiations occupied attention, the Milner report served notice both of Britain's intention to allow only a gradual and limited autonomy for Egypt, and the British goal of further separating the Sudan from Egypt.

The Ewart committee's "Report on political agitation in the Sudan", <sup>3</sup> issued in 1925, placed all the blame for the increased troubles in 1921 and thereafter squarely on Egyptian efforts to undermine the Sudan Government and embarrass the British. While the political climate

<sup>1</sup> Bakheit, British administration, pp. 67-68.

<sup>2</sup> Allenby to Curzon, 18/2/21, F.O. 371/6311.

<sup>3</sup> J.M. Ewart, called in to report on the organisation of the intelligence department (see p. 71n.), stayed on after the 1924 disturbances to report on the whole range of political unrest. On the committee with him were Davies and R.E.H. Baily.

prevailing at the time of its composition should be kept in mind, the Ewart report is nonetheless one of the few documents prepared in the mid-twenties that took a comprehensive view of the events of the 1919-1924 period, and it is therefore important. Beginning in 1921, it said,

every conceivable subject of grievance was seized upon in the hope of stirring up trouble among different classes; ... the religious prejudices of Moslems, the personal grievances of dissatisfied officials, the conceit of the educated negroids were each appealed to. The idea of the 'Sudan for the Sudanese' was fostered in places where it found favour, while simultaneously the essential unity of Egypt and the Sudan ... was sedulously preached in quarters where such a prospect might find favour. The conclusion is irresistible that the object of the directors of agitation was simply to promote hostility to British rule and to use manifestations of such a spirit for the furtherance of purely Egyptian political ends. <sup>1</sup>

In other words, Ewart argued, Egyptian provocateurs were inciting aggrieved Sudanese so as to influence the course of the Anglo-Egyptian negotiations then (1921) in progress.

Ewart's reference to "the conceit of the educated negroids" is an indication of what is probably the most interesting aspect of the pre-1924 troubles. These "negroids" were "of slave or ex-slave extraction", and were thus

detriberalised ... [and] outside the orbit of normal control or of appeal to tribal or national sentiment, for [they] have no contact whatever with the southern tribes to which they trace their origin. This class has shown itself readier in the past than most others to avail itself of the educational facilities offered since the British occupation, and is, consequently, strongly represented in the lower ranks of officials, military and civilian, and similar capacities in commercial life. While the best have done well, many have failed and the majority have grafted upon an overweening conceit ambitions which their capacity makes impossible of fulfilment. These failures and their dissatisfied brethren offer a fertile field for any propagandist against the state of things as they are. <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ewart report on political agitation, 1925, enclosed in Henderson to Chamberlain, 27/6/25, F.O. 371/10905.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

From this maligned class was to come the man most closely associated with Sudanese politics in the period under review - 'Alī 'Abd al-Latīf. He was a mulāzīm awwal (lieutenant) <sup>1</sup> of Dinka origins, who first appeared on the scene in May 1922 when he submitted for publication to al-Ḥadāra an article calling for "self-determination for the Sudanese." In no sense did he advocate union with Egypt or support for Egyptian claims. The Ewart report, in one of its more outlandish passages, is worth quoting in this regard, for it illustrates both the tenseness of the government and its ignorance of how to deal with anyone outside the usual tribal or religious bounds of authority:

Through the influence of an Omdurman merchant this young savage, who had begun life by holding horses for half-pence outside the Sudan Club, found himself a military cadet in his teens, and at the age of 22 became a commissioned officer, and so was translated at a bound from the dregs to the cream of native society.... even on such a stock, no love for Egypt could be grafted. The document, for writing which he was convicted, contains no word in favour of Egypt; it advocates the government of the Sudan by a Sudanese and the ending of foreign rule. In this respect, and in view of its inflammatory phraseology, the document was actionable.... Formulated by minds less ill-balanced than that of Ali Abdul Latif, these sentiments represent views honestly held and certain to be pressed, within constitutional bounds, with growing persistence by some of the best elements in the country. <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Oddly, there is some confusion as to which battalion 'Alī 'Abd al-Latīf belonged. The 9th, 10th, 11th and 14th all found mention in official reports.

<sup>2</sup> Ewart report on political agitation, 1925. 'Alī 'Abd al-Latīf seems to have enjoyed some success as a cadet, despite the invective of Ewart and whatever his later troubles. The Sudan Herald, a weekly published in Khartoum for the foreign community, recorded in its edition of 22 March 1913 the results of "military school sports". In the high jump, "Cadet Ali Abd El Latif" placed first, as he did in the 100 yard race. It was observed that "the winner in the 100 yards final became distressed and showed signs of coming to pieces, but managed to clutch himself together and pass the post first. Presumably he will look to his buttons on any future occasion." (The Sudan Herald, 22/3/13, no. 78.) This is probably the first reference in print to 'Alī 'Abd al-Latīf.

‘Alī ‘Abd al-Latīf was convicted under section ninety-six of the Sudan Penal Code for "exciting disaffection of the Government established by law in the Sudan" and was sentenced to a year in prison.<sup>1</sup> Why he was arrested at all seems arguable. If, as was admitted, his statement was unremarkable, one can only guess. The fact that he was a commissioned officer may have been responsible, although this was, of course, not stated at the time. Ironically, ‘Alī ‘Abd al-Latīf's trial became a cause célèbre in Egypt, where the newspapers claimed that his only crime had been upholding Egyptian sovereignty.<sup>2</sup> Another factor may have been that tension was unusually high following the unilateral British declaration of Egyptian independence in February 1922. This reserved to the British "absolute discretion" over four matters, the last of which mentioned was the Sudan. This declaration was rejected as non-binding by the Egyptian nationalists and exacerbated the tensions in the Sudan. In these circumstances any stirrings in the army, no matter how innocuous, probably had to be treated seriously.

The development of opposition, if, indeed, there was significant development, during 1922-23, is difficult to trace. This is partly

<sup>1</sup> "Report on general situation in Egypt, 15 June - 21 June 1922", enclosed in Allenby to Curzon, 25/6/22, F.O. 371/7742. See Sudan Government, The Penal and Criminal Codes of the Sudan, London, 1924, p. 55.

<sup>2</sup> "Report on general situation in Egypt, 15 June - 21 June 1922". Another account of how ‘Alī ‘Abd al-Latīf began his opposition to the government is given in Muhammad ‘Abd al-Rahīm, al-Sirā‘ al-musallab‘ala'l-waḥda fi'l-Sūdān, Cairo, n.d. According to this version, ‘Alī ‘Abd al-Latīf was mistreated by a British officer who, while walking in civilian clothes, took exception when ‘Alī ‘Abd al-Latīf passed without saluting. His ambitions having been dealt a mortal blow, he embarked on his career of opposition to British rule. (pp. 8-9.) This account is in part verified by R.E.H. Baily in his journal. Baily wrote that ‘Alī ‘Abd al-Latīf "had been treated with gross discourtesy by a British officer seconded to the Sudan during the Great War. A tall, fine looking man of considerable personality and power of leadership, being embittered he became an excellent instrument for the Egyptian agitator.... He was a very dangerous man but he was a gentleman." (Baily, journal entry for 30/11/24.)

owing to a definite lull in public displays of pro-Egyptian activity, and partly the result of the intelligence department's inability to probe deeply into the matter. Also worth noting is an instruction given by Willis to all provincial governors and the manager of the Sudan Government Railways in September 1922 to "destroy ... your whole file relative recent Egyptian agitation regarding status of Sudan" and other specifically designated telegrams.<sup>1</sup> Why this was done is unknown, and what, if anything, of importance was involved must therefore be a mystery. In any case, in 1925 the Ewart committee had no doubt that this period was one of deceptive quiet, as Egyptian leadership of the Sudanese agitation was decided in Cairo, and as more immediate concerns occupied the Egyptian masterminds. So many of the committee's conclusions are undocumented, however, that the degree, although not the fact, of the Egyptian connection becomes a matter of conjecture.

#### The White Flag League

By 1923 the League of Sudan Union could not be said to have achieved much. This apparently caused a split in the league's ranks between those who wished to pursue the same line of relatively quiet and largely legal activity, and those who wanted to escalate activities and aim for mass involvement. In 1923 'Alī 'Abd al-Laṭīf, by then released from prison and something of a hero because of his widely-publicized trial and conviction, and 'Ubayd Hājj al-Amīn (see above, page 195), a founding member of the League of Sudan Union, founded the White Flag League. From the beginning its membership was drawn from the same

<sup>1</sup> Willis to all governors and general manager, Sudan Government Railways, 3/9/22, SGA, CIVSEC 36/4/16.

sources as that of the League of Sudan Union - "graduates" who were government employees. <sup>1</sup>

Both the Ewart report of 1925 and a memorandum by R.E.H. Baily, <sup>2</sup> governor of Khartoum, written in 1925 and included in the Ewart report as an appendix, stressed an early connection between the White Flag League and Egyptian nationalists. Important negotiations between Britain and Egypt over the "reserved points" of the 1922 declaration were impending, and it was considered, according to these reports, that the greater the anti-British commotion in the Sudan, the stronger would be Egypt's hand in negotiating. <sup>3</sup> In December 1923 Hāfiẓ Bey Ramaḍān, leader of the Watanist party in Egypt, visited the Sudan and began to make contact with various people. <sup>4</sup> In February 1924, according to Baily, Hāfiẓ Bey had a "secret meeting in the gardens of the Grand Hotel" with 'Alī 'Abd al-Laṭīf and Muḥammad Tawfiq Wahbī, an Egyptian judge. <sup>5</sup> Other meetings are noted in several official reports. With the

<sup>1</sup> The first "cell" consisted of, in addition to the founders, three government employees: Ṣāliḥ 'Abd al-Qādir, a muwallad, who was a postmaster; Ḥasan Sharif, "an Egyptian from Aswan" who was employed in the post office; and Ḥasan Ṣāliḥ, a minor official in the posts and telegraphs department. (Bakheit, British administration, p. 71; and SIR, June 1924, Annex B, F.O. 371/10039.)

<sup>2</sup> Robert Edward Hartwell Baily (1885-1973) served in Khartoum 1909; Kassala, 1910-11; Berber, 1911-15; Sennar, 1915-21; and as deputy governor of Khartoum, 1921-25. He was governor of Kassala from 1926 until his retirement in 1933. (MacMichael, SPS, p. 20.)

<sup>3</sup> Baily, "The origin and history of the White Flag League", n.d., Appendix 7 to Ewart report.

<sup>4</sup> Ewart report on political agitation, 1925.

<sup>5</sup> Baily, "The origin and history". One wonders how a meeting in the gardens of the Grand Hotel could be "secret".

demise of the Watanist party in the Egyptian elections of January 1924, however, the Egyptian backing for the league and "other manifestations of unrest and propaganda inspired from Cairo" reportedly passed to the Wafd of Sa'd Zaghāl. <sup>1</sup> 'Alī 'Abd al-Latīf was to be president of the White Flag League, which took its name from a white banner on which were represented the Nile, a small Egyptian flag in one corner, and the word "forward" written in Arabic. From the beginning the ostensible aim of the league was the union of Egypt and the Sudan.

A note by Willis on the subject attempted to analyse the league's motivation at this stage. He listed "the chief items of instructions to the new members " of the league as follows:

- (a) Every one of them should realise that he is as important as any Englishman on earth, and wherever he meets an Englishman he should, by his behaviour show him that he is such.
- (b) The Englishmen have made donkeys of the Sudanese up to now and have ridden on their backs. If the Sudanese are brave and know their rights they will ride on the backs of the Englishmen.
- (c) Wherever a member of the League meets people or sits with them he should abuse the British, talk of their repression and speak good of the Egyptians our Mohammedan brethren.
- (d) Do not believe that the Government is very strong. Right is on our side and through it we are much stronger.
- (e) Take part in any demonstrations that you find taking place and do not be afraid. Shout as much as you can and especially your motto should be 'No God but God, Mohammed is the prophet of God'.
- (f) Our instructions now are to behave very peacefully and to obey the Police in whatever they tell us. But circumstances may change and we may receive other instructions. If these instructions are received then every body should be ready to risk his life. It is better for most of us or all to die and our sons live free. The British force in the Sudan is small and can be disposed of easily. Up to now the British get the Mohammedans to fight the Mohammedans. ...We should do our best to put a stop to this.
- (g) The Egyptian Government will shortly come to the Sudan and will get rid of the British. <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Baily, "The origin and history".

<sup>2</sup> "Summary of news", enclosed in director of intelligence to private secretary and others, 25/6/24, SGA, PALACE 4/10/49.



From these "instructions", as from subsequent communications with the government, it is apparent that not only the methods but the goals of the Sudan Union League had been discarded by the breakaway White Flag League. No longer was "the Sudan for the Sudanese" the ostensible aim. Reliance on Egyptians had taken the place of the "guidance" of the British and eventual self-determination. To what degree, if any, this was tactical - to win financial and political support from Egypt and the publicity of the Egyptian press - has always been the subject of argument. Clearly the British saw the White Flag League as no more than Egyptian exploitation of socially discontented Sudanese who were tools of Egyptian nationalism.

Despite the paucity of reliable information about the origins of the White Flag League, a good deal can be deduced as to its actual make-up. By June 1924 the membership of the league was estimated at one hundred and fifty.<sup>1</sup> This estimate was based in part on a list, discovered in the house of a member, of some one hundred and twenty-one persons identified as members of the league. The Ewart report scorned these people for being, with few exceptions, "insignificant persons, disgruntled employees with unsatisfactory records or with grievances, low-class merchants, negro ex-officers without employment, petty artisans, ex-convicts and vagabonds.... muwallads and Dinkas preponderate, and Arabs of good family or with tribal ties are very few."<sup>2</sup> Bakheit has produced a list of some one hundred and four members of the league, of whom thirty-nine were identified as "junior officials", twenty-three as army officers, eleven as artisans, nine as merchants and the

<sup>1</sup> Willis to governors, 12/5/25, cited in Bakheit, British administration, p. 74n.

<sup>2</sup> Ewart report on political agitation, 1925.

remainder as postal clerks, students, teachers, two sub-ma'mūrs, two qādīs, and the imām of the Khartoum mosque.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, no tribal origins are given in this list, but the records of the prison riot trial of December 1924 (see below, p.285) include a list of the seventy accused and their ethnic origins. Of these, eleven were muwallads, eleven Dinka, nine Ja'ali, and the rest from some twenty-two tribes,<sup>2</sup> almost all being northerners. We can conclude from this information that the White Flag League was dominated by low-ranking officials and army officers and that there was clearly no tribal basis to it. There is reason to believe that southerners living in the north played an important part, but not, as the involvement in the prison riot showed, a dominant one numerically.

The first contact made with the government occurred on 16 May 1924 in the form of a telegram signed by the first five members. The telegram protested against the exclusion of the Sudanese people from the coming Anglo-Egyptian negotiations. The Sudanese, the telegram insisted, would not "be bought and sold like animals". They protested against the "secret and compulsory methods" by which the Sudan was being separated from Egypt. If the government would not listen to them, then they would "send delegates to convey our views to our exalted King [Fu'ād] and to

<sup>1</sup> Bakheit, British administration, appendix B, pp. 336-338. The imām of the Khartoum mosque, Shaykh Ḥasan al-Amin, was arrested for preaching a "seditious sermon" on 20 June. On 17 July Baily, in lieu of prosecution, arranged for the shaykh to be sent to live at Hasaheisa. (Baily, "Notes on an interview with Sheikh Hassan El Amin", n.d., SGA, PALACE 4/10/49.) In his sermon the shaykh stressed that the Gezira had been stolen from the Sudanese, and said that religion, race, language, habits and customs all tied the Sudanese to the Egyptians. ("Exerpts from sermon given on 20 June by Hassan el-Dariri, Imam of Khartoum mosque", enclosed in director of intelligence to private secretary and others, 26/6/24, SGA, PALACE 4/10/49.)

<sup>2</sup> Prison riot trial, list of accused and sentences, n.d., SGA, PALACE 4/10/51.

the consuls of the European Powers in Cairo".<sup>1</sup> In mid-June Mulāzim awwal Zayn al-ʿAbdīn ʿAbd al-Tāmm, a Dinka ex-officer, and Muḥammad al-Mahdī, a son of the Khalīfa ʿAbdallāhi and now a clerk in the White Nile Province, were arrested at Halfa en route to Cairo. Muḥammad al-Mahdī was in possession of petitions of loyalty to the king of Egypt.<sup>2</sup> He was conveyed back to Khartoum but the authorities suspected that a demonstration was planned to coincide with his arrival there, and he was removed from the train at Khartoum North. Indeed, about two hundred demonstrators had gathered at the station, "to which was added another hundred of the usual riff-raff of the town".<sup>3</sup> Apparently other minor demonstrations were also attempted, but these failed to develop, "especially after the police were provided with a motor lorry and some stout Special Constables from the Taaiṣha tribe, who were the Khalifa's tribe and enjoy a little bit of a scrap and hate Egyptians".<sup>4</sup>

Throughout the rest of June, July and August demonstrations occurred in the three towns and in other localities in the northern Sudan, all of them, it should be noted, in towns. Few of these incidents were

<sup>1</sup> White Flag League to Sudan Government, 16/5/24, quoted in SIR, June 1924, Annex B, F.O. 371/10039.

<sup>2</sup> Willis to private secretary, 19/6/24, SGA, PALACE 4/10/49. In a note on the events of 1924, Willis later reported that "the fun began when a young officer went to Cairo ostensibly on leave but really carrying documents (probably faked) to show what a lot of people loved the Egyptians.... My own belief is that [Muḥammad al-Mahdī] suffers from periodic dementia, but anyway he was outwardly sane enough". (Willis, untitled note, n.d. (1925), SAD 212/8.)

<sup>3</sup> Willis to private secretary, 19/6/24, SGA, PALACE 4/10/49.

<sup>4</sup> Willis, untitled note, n.d. (1925), SAD 212/8. The Ewart report on political agitation, appendix 7, noted that the acting governor of Khartoum (Baily) decided to rely on Taʿāiṣha for security work: "All the able-bodied of this colony volunteered and eighty were selected. These irregulars were consistently loyal and enthusiastic. They did invaluable work".

of individual significance and they are recounted elsewhere,<sup>1</sup> but they increased in frequency and in intensity as the summer went on.<sup>2</sup> Proclamations were issued under the Public Order Ordinance of 1921 (which had itself been devised to deal with increased political activities) banning demonstrations without the written permission of the district commissioner. As of 26 April 1924 it was unlawful for anyone to "organise, establish, open or continue a club except with the written consent of the Governor given after submission to him of the proposed rules of the Club". Once a year a list was to be presented of the officers of all such clubs.<sup>3</sup> This ordinance was strengthened by proclamation of the "Unlawful Associations Ordinance" on 15 November.<sup>4</sup> Public assemblies were banned in the three towns from 22 June.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Bakheit, British administration, pp. 85-94.

<sup>2</sup> The Sudan Herald published an article in mid-August advising merchants to take out "riot insurance" against "loss or damage which may occur during the next few months". (Sudan Herald, 16/8/24.)

<sup>3</sup> Sudan Gazette, no. 433, 26/4/24.

<sup>4</sup> Sudan Gazette, no. 445, 15/11/24. An unlawful association was defined as one "which encourages or aids persons to commit acts of violence or intimidation or other criminal offences or of which the members or some of the members habitually commit such acts, or ... which has been declared to be unlawful by the Governor-General in Council...." Fines and imprisonment or both could be inflicted.

<sup>5</sup> Acting civil secretary to private secretary, 19/8/24, SGA, PALACE 4/10/48. Similar orders banned assemblies at Medani and Makwar from 8 July; in Halfa from 21 July; in the whole of Kordofan from 5 August; in Atbara, Shendi, Damer, Berber and Abu Hamad from 11 August; in Kerima, Dongola, Merowe and Argo, and in Port Sudan from 16 August; and in Singa, Roseires, Kurmuk and Karkaj from 23 August.

On 3 July 'Alī 'Abd al-Latīf sent a telegram to the British prime minister, Ramsay MacDonald:

The Association of the White Standard backed by the masses vehemently protests against statements of responsible Britishers concerning alleged British rights in Sudan. No true Sudanese can ever accept imperialistic tactics and capitalistic schemes intended annex Sudan forcibly into British Empire. Separation means death both Sudan and Egypt. <sup>1</sup>

The next day 'Alī 'Abd al-Latīf was arrested. His house was searched and "numerous incriminating documents" were found. <sup>2</sup> He was brought to trial on 11 July, found guilty under section 90 of the Penal Code and sentenced to three years in prison. <sup>3</sup>

It is probable that 'Alī 'Abd al-Latīf was arrested at this juncture not because of his telegram to MacDonald but because of new rumours that had reached the government concerning a planned escalation of the White Flag League's activities. The civil secretary's office reported on 1 July that the league had "received instructions from Cairo to adopt measures of violence and crime". The Ḥadāra press was to be destroyed and several persons murdered, including the superintendant of police and Ḥusayn Sharīf, as well as Samuel Bey Atiyah of the intelligence department. <sup>4</sup>

On the same day Willis wrote to the Palace expressing his views that the White Flag League was "for the time being" quiescent, and that two broad groups had emerged which were more "likely to produce some

<sup>1</sup> 'Alī 'Abd al-Latīf to MacDonald, 3/7/24, SGA, PALACE 4/10/49.

<sup>2</sup> Ewart report on political agitation.

<sup>3</sup> "Daily bulletin", civil secretary's office, 19/7/24, SGA, PALACE 4/10/49. See The Penal and Criminal Procedure Codes, pp. 52-53.

<sup>4</sup> Civil secretary to private secretary, 1/7/24, SGA, PALACE 4/10/49.

results" adverse to the government than was the league. These two groups were identified as the "forward" group of intelligentsia who favoured the Sudan for the Sudanese at the earliest possible date, who were not pro-Egyptian but could "be stirred up to cause trouble to the Government"; and the "educated blacks" who saw the Sudan as their own, to the exclusion of all others, even the Arab northerners. The "leaders of political thought" in Egypt were looking forward to a time "in the near future" when these two groups could become a "serious menace" to the government, and cause "mutinies, strikes and riots and general confusion, thus disproving the British claim to administer the Sudan." <sup>1</sup>

One of the chief causes for the spread of the White Flag League, and therefore of the disturbances of 1924, was the government's insufficient action against the league. Instead of arresting suspected or proven agitators within the government service, it was more usual to transfer them from the three towns to some outlying town in order to isolate the men concerned from their comrades. These men then proceeded to organise branches of the league in their new posts. <sup>2</sup> Stronger measures would have prevented this. But again, it is likely that the government wished to play down, whenever possible, the extent of the opposition, especially when the officials involved were native Sudanese rather than Egyptians.

<sup>1</sup> Willis to private secretary, 1/7/24, SGA, PALACE 4/10/49.

<sup>2</sup> There are many examples of this. Ṣāliḥ 'Abd al-Qādir, for instance, was transferred on 23 June to Port Sudan where he started a branch of the league. He was arrested there on 5 August, after which there were disturbances in Port Sudan. (Baily, "The origin and history".)

The Atbara mutiny and the Military School demonstration

Atbara was the headquarters of the Sudan Government Railways and therefore of the Railway Battalion which, while composed of Egyptian troops, was exclusively an engineering unit charged with the maintenance of the railways. The troubles at Atbara in August 1924 seem to have been sparked by news of the arrest in Port Sudan of Ṣāliḥ ʿAbd al-Qādir on the 5th of that month. It was learned that he would be passing under escort through Atbara en route to Khartoum on the 9th, and a crowd, mostly of Egyptians, gathered to cheer him at the station. The reception went off without violence, but later that night a crowd armed with sticks and clubs assembled. According to the proceedings of the court of enquiry convened to investigate, the crowd was made up of some thirty to forty men of the railway battalion, fifty to sixty "boys and loafers from the Suk", and twenty to thirty "effendis". They shouted cheers for Zaghlūl, and for King Fu'ād as "King of Egypt and the Sudan".<sup>1</sup> Ṣāliḥ ʿAbd al-Qādir delivered an address to the crowd from the train, in what words it is not known, although according to the Ewart report "it was doubtless inflammatory".<sup>2</sup> The crowd then marched on, and inflicted damage to workshops and other buildings. On the 10th a large crowd of men from the railway battalion and others gathered outside the general manager's office. The officer commanding, Liwā Muḥammad Pasha Fāḍil was shouted down. Province police were pushed aside and the offices were ransacked. British troops had been called in from Khartoum and these arrived on the evening of the 10th.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Proceedings of the general court of enquiry, Atbara, 16/8/24; P.C. Lord, Mirilai, "Memorandum on events at Atbara from the 9th August 1924 onwards", n.d., SGA, PALACE 4/10/52.

<sup>2</sup> Ewart report on political agitation, appendix 9.

<sup>3</sup> Proceedings of the general court of enquiry.

On the morning of the 11th, the rebellious railway troops attempted to break through a cordon of loyal forces who had surrounded the barracks. These forces opened fire. The casualties were two dead, eighteen wounded and two small boys in the barracks wounded also; three of the wounded died later. <sup>1</sup> According to the Sudan Intelligence Report for August, a warning volley had been fired into the air to frighten the rioters, but "the other soldiers hearing the shot opened fire and continued to shoot for nearly a minute and a half, although every effort was made to stop them". <sup>2</sup> After several more days of tension it was decided to evacuate the entire battalion to Egypt. This was done between the 17th and 28th of August. <sup>3</sup>

The court of enquiry found that "a spirit of discontent and insubordination" had begun in the battalion when it was learned from the Egyptian newspapers that the unit was to be disbanded. "When to the men in this bolshevistic frame of mind was added political propaganda matters came to a head." Thus the court ruled that a lack of discipline, "the unsettled state of mind of the soldiers", and the "incitement from civilian influences outside" had been responsible for the disturbances. <sup>4</sup> The real significance of the Atbara mutiny was in terms of Anglo-Egyptian relations. The rising showed that the British would not hesitate to eliminate Egyptians forcibly if the need arose. Also, the Sudan Government used the incident as ammunition in its campaign, then under-

<sup>1</sup> SIR, August 1924, F.O. 371/10039.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Proceedings of the general court of enquiry.



way in London, to persuade the British government of the necessity for evacuating all Egyptian troops from the Sudan (see below, p.261 ).

Like the Atbara mutiny, the demonstration by cadets of the Military School in Khartoum was to have wide-ranging effects out of proportion to the event itself. On the morning of 9 August the cadets refused orders and told their commandant of their intention to hold a "demonstration". If interfered with, they said, they would use their arms. Carrying an Egyptian flag, they marched, armed, through Khartoum, stopping at the mosque and at the house of 'Alī 'Abd al-Laṭīf, where they presented arms. They then marched back to their barracks where they were surrounded by British troops and persuaded to relinquish their weapons. The next day eleven "ringleaders" were surrendered. <sup>1</sup> On 18 August the interned cadets were transferred to gunboats in the Nile. <sup>2</sup>

Again, like the riots at Atbara, the cadets' demonstration had an immediate cause. On 4 August it had been announced that twelve cadets from the Cairo Military School but only two from the Khartoum Military School had been commissioned. According to the Ewart report,

This apparent inequality of treatment naturally created a grievance, which found a natural expression the same afternoon in the telegram of protest signed on behalf of the cadets by the bash shawish of the school ... to the War Minister in Cairo.... The facts that the resentment of the boys changed direction, four days later, from the Egyptian Minister to the British element of the Sudan Government, and that its expression took the form of a political demonstration, pointed to outside instigation from an Egyptian or pro-Egyptian source. <sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> SIR, August 1924, F.O. 371/10054.

<sup>2</sup> Corbyn to private secretary, 18/8/24, SGA, PALACE 4/10/48.

<sup>3</sup> Ewart report on political agitation, appendix 8.

The British were at a loss to explain the mutiny. The promotion grievance was a real one, but it could not alone account for the rising. The court of enquiry found no reasons for it. Col. Huddleston,<sup>1</sup> who was acting sirdar in the absence of Stack, thought that the mutiny "was the result of intensive anti-British propaganda carried on by outsiders probably either Egyptian or young Sudanese officers".<sup>2</sup> By "Sudanese" he meant southerners. Indeed, the private secretary reported that there were indications that the "ringleaders" were southerners rather than "Arabs",<sup>3</sup> but this was never proved satisfactorily. The Ewart committee was satisfied, however, as to the complicity of Egyptian officers in the mutiny. According to the committee's report, a certain mulāzim thānī Ibrāhīm Shaḥbān had told the cadets that the Egyptian war minister had not been responsible for the inequality of promotions but that the British had arranged this in order to make the cadets hostile to Egypt. The report also concluded that the cadets believed their demonstration to be only a part of a much more extensive show of force to be made that day by all the Sudanese battalions.<sup>4</sup>

The most disturbing aspect of the mutiny was that the cadets had always been considered "'the best disciplined, smartest, most contented and most loyal military formation in the Sudan'".<sup>5</sup> Further, of course,

<sup>1</sup> Sir Hubert Jervoise Huddleston (1880-1950) joined the Egyptian Army in 1908. He was appointed chief staff officer and adjutant-general in 1923, and was the first commander of the Sudan Defence Force in 1925. He served as governor-general from 1940 to 1947. (DNB, 1941-1950, p. 415.)

<sup>2</sup> Private secretary to Nichols, foreign office, 1/9/24, F.O. 371/10053.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ewart report on political agitation, appendix 8.

<sup>5</sup> Bakheit, British administration, p. 91, quoting director of intelligence to governor-general, 16/8/24.

the native officers were the basis of all hopes for the future elimination of Egyptians from the army officer corps. The British attitude to the mutiny was well put in the Ewart report. It was a feeling more of sadness and regret than of anger:

In fact, the incident was the half-way house between the earlier 'White Flag' demonstrations, than which it was more effective and more important but which it otherwise resembled in being a defiance of British authority, and subsequent disloyal outbreaks by serving soldiers. Had it been less tactfully, yet firmly, handled by the authorities, this demonstration would have developed into a tragedy of the gravest nature. As it was, it wrecked the future careers of a large number of carefully chosen youths, many of whom bore but little share of personal guilt....<sup>1</sup>

The demonstration by the Military School cadets was the last major outbreak of unrest until November. A relative lull ensued, although the mood in Khartoum and Omdurman was described, in the days immediately following the demonstration, as of "great uneasiness both as regards the possibility of trouble among the Sudanese troops and the effect of recent disturbances ... on public opinion in the provinces".<sup>2</sup> The acting director of intelligence, in fact, noted that

The general opinion is that the uneasiness felt here will very quickly communicate itself to the fighting tribes of Kordofan and the fanatical Mahdist element, and while immediate trouble is unlikely unless a serious mutiny were to break out in the army, trouble is to be expected in a month or two unless a demonstration that the Government is strong enough to deal with any situation is made. I am told that any serious mutiny among Arab or Sudanese troops would cause an almost immediate reaction among the Arabs, parties of whom would at once be out for loot all over the Western Sudan.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ewart report on political agitation.

<sup>2</sup> Skrine to private secretary, 14/8/24, SGA, CIVSEC 36/1/3. Arthur Wallace Skrine (1885- ?) served in Khartoum, 1908; in Fung, 1909-12; in Dongola, 1913-17; and in Kassala, 1918-22. He was asst. to Willis in 1923-24, and governor of Mongalla, 1924-29. (MacMichael, SPS, p. 20.)

<sup>3</sup> Skrine to private secretary, 14/8/24, SGA, CIVSEC 36/1/3.

To combat the apprehended threat of a large-scale mutiny, a British battalion was added to the one already stationed at Khartoum. The letter quoted above raises interesting questions about the participation in and effects of the disturbances of 1924. The possibility that the Mahdists in the western Sudan might take advantage of a serious rising to rise against the government was appreciated. Secondly, Skrine indicated to what extent and with what alacrity the situation had developed: what had seemed at first a minor annoyance caused by inept agitators had, by August, grown to the point where the government had serious doubts as to the loyalty of the Sudanese units of the army, to say nothing of the purely Egyptian units. We will take up the former point first. The position of the army will be discussed in the next chapter, since its future was the chief concern of the Sudan Government in the Anglo-Egyptian negotiations of 1924.

#### The response of traditional authority

From the beginning of the disturbances the traditional leaders of the Sudan, the heads of ṭarīqas and Sayyid ʿAbd al-Rahmān al-Mahdī, and those tribal leaders of high standing, had opposed them. Any concern the government had over the disposition of these figures was misplaced, since the threat posed by ʿAlī ʿAbd al-Laṭīf and his colleagues was directed as much against the established Sudanese leadership as it was against the British. Several approaches were made both to Sayyid ʿAlī al-Mīrghānī and to Sayyid ʿAbd al-Rahmān in the hope of enlisting the support of one or the other for the anti-government cause, but all failed. The Sudan Intelligence Report for June 1924 stated that the White Flag League recognised that "unless they could get the support of at least one of the chief religious leaders, there was nothing further to be done".

Unfortunately for the league, they considered that Sayyid 'Abū al-Rahmān "was simply English", and Sharīf Yūsuf "was too cunning and double-faced". They therefore turned to Sayyid 'Alī al-Mīrghani, who, despite supposed grievances against the government and pro-Egyptian sentiments, rebuffed the overture.<sup>1</sup> No doubt Sayyid 'Alī felt, as had his ancestor in a similar situation, that it would be foolish "to change the moral and constant power" he enjoyed "for the temporal and ephemeral power that was his for the taking".<sup>2</sup> So complete was the breach between the White Flag League and the established religious notables, that it was reported in September 1924 that at the Khartoum North prison, where most of the political prisoners, including 'Alī 'Abd al-Laṭīf, were being detained, a "maglis" was held at which the league members

'tried' Sayed Ali El Merghani, and sentenced him to imprisonment for 20 years and banishment from the Sudan to Mecca at the end of it; at the same sitting they tried Sayed Abdel Rahman El Mahdi, and sentenced him to 20 years imprisonment without banishment; also Sherif Yusef El Hindi, and sentenced him to 15 years imprisonment and banishment; also Sheikh Hussein Sherif, whom they sentenced to death; also the Mufti and Sheikh Abu El Gasim to 20 years imprisonment each....<sup>3</sup>

No matter how seriously one takes this, the report is a fair indication of the hostility that developed between the White Flag League and the recognised Sudanese leadership. It will be recalled that during the troubles in Egypt in 1919 the Sudanese religious notables had hastened to assure the government of their loyalty and their opposition to Egyptian claims to sovereignty over the Sudan. The Sudan Intelligence Report

<sup>1</sup> SIR, June 1924, F.O. 371/10039.

<sup>2</sup> J.A.W. Munzinger writing in 1866 of Sayyid al-Ḥasan al-Mīrghani. See above, pp. 106-107.

<sup>3</sup> Evidence given by Fu'ād 'Alī, 7/9/24, SGA, PALACE 4/9/44.

for June 1919 noted that in Egypt and among Egyptians in the Sudan, the members of the delegation to London in July 1919 were viewed "in the light of traitors".<sup>1</sup> From the religious notables, as has been noted, came the earliest support for the idea of "the Sudan for the Sudanese" as a counter to pro-Egyptian claims. Over the next few years the situation was not fundamentally different. In early 1922, before the British declaration to Egypt, various notables wrote to Willis to assure the government that the Sudan's "attitude with regard to the Egyptian question is the same as it has always been", namely "that whatever is given to Egypt should have no connection whatever with the Sudan".<sup>2</sup> In a minute attached to this letter Willis remarked on the signatures of the mufti and his brother (the president of the Board of Ulema) "who hitherto carefully avoided any definite opinion on the subject of the Egyptian movement".<sup>3</sup>

The emergence of the White Flag League in the spring of 1924 prompted greater efforts on the part of the traditional leadership. Taking the initiative in June, to the surprise of many, was Sayyid ʿAbd al-Rahmān, though a better understanding of his own position would have clarified his willingness to defend the government. He was, at the time, under grave suspicion because of the events in the west and at Abā Is-

<sup>1</sup> SIR, June 1919, F.O. 371/3724. MacMichael later credited the members of the delegation with the "failure" of the anti-British "campaign" in 1921. (MacMichael, The Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, p. 5.)

<sup>2</sup> Letter addressed to Willis by ʿAlī al-Mirghani, ʿAbd al-Rahmān al-Mahdi, Yūsuf al-Hindi, al-Tayyib Hāshim, Ismāʿīl al-Azhari, Abū'l Qāsim Ahmad Hāshim, ʿAlī al-Tūm, Ibrāhīm Muḥammad Farah, Ibrāhīm Mūsa, ʿAwad al-Karīm ʿAbdallāh Abū Sinn, 11/2/22, SGA, INTEL 11/2/8. The letter was signed at first only by the religious leaders, but Willis wrote to various governors suggesting that the tribal leaders might be "desirous" of joining in. (Willis to private secretary, 13/2/22, SGA, INTEL 11/2/18.)

<sup>3</sup> Willis to private secretary, 13/2/22, SGA, INTEL 11/2/ 8.

land in 1923, and the opportunity to show his loyalty was too fortuitous to be ignored. On 10 June he held a meeting at his house in Omdurman of a number of the leading religious and secular notables. An intelligence department note records that

Sayed Abdel Rahman opened the meeting by calling the attention of those present to the political situation in Egypt, and to the claims of the Egyptians and said that it was high time the Sudan notables gave frankly and bravely their opinion; as it was their duty to do so and not to leave the future of the nation to be decided without saying a word in the matter. <sup>1</sup>

Husayn Sharif then read the draft of a declaration to be submitted to the governor-general. Two notables, Shaykh Bābikr Badrī <sup>2</sup> and Shaykh Ahmad al-Sīd al-Fīl, <sup>3</sup> asked that the declaration be amended to the effect that "demands be made from the English as to the period of Guardianship, and conditions of same, but finding no support, they dropped the subject". <sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Note by intelligence department, 19/6/24, SGA, PALACE 4/10/49. In Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān's memoirs it is stated that the White Flag League was "an extension of the nationalist movement in Egypt and although I appreciated the courage and patience which characterized the members of the White Flag League I did not believe the movement to have been representative of the true aspirations of the Sudanese people. This made me coin the slogan to which I adhere to this day: the Sudan for the Sudanese...." (Jihād fī sabīl al-istiqlāl, p. 24.)

<sup>2</sup> Bābikr Badrī (1861-1954) was a teacher and noted innovator, especially in the area of girls' education. His Memoirs of Babikr Bedri was published in London in 1969.

<sup>3</sup> Shaykh Ahmad al-Sīd al-Fīl was an inspector of Mahkamas.

<sup>4</sup> Note by intelligence department, 19/6/24, SGA, PALACE 4/10/49. This note also recorded that following the meeting there was another, at which "the Mufti and Ismail [al-Azhari] declared, secretly, that they had long been waiting for this moment and that they had always held this opinion [sic]. But that at different times they felt some faint-heartedness on behalf of England, who tried to arrive at a solution by an agreement with the Egyptians". Fearing that they would be ruined if they supported Britain only to have the British hand over the country to the Egyptians, they had preferred silence. "Now that it [was] obvious there could be no grounds for agreement" with Egypt, they could speak their minds.

The text of the declaration was in part as follows:

The party assembled today in the house of Sayed Abdel Rahman El Mahdi at Omdurman comprises personages of Sudanese nationality who are enlightened and competent to give an opinion. They have included in this their declaration, details of the general principle upon which the whole Sudan has agreed, namely the choice of England to be the guardian of the Sudan and to bring up the country until they become a self-governing nation.

With this in view we beg to explain and to declare the following:

...When the Sudan began to be administered by Egypt absolute chaos prevailed and oppression became paramount, so that the Sudanese revolted against the Egyptian administration and turned it out of their country by the power of the sword, and the Sudan for the second time became independent from North to South, and from East to West.

The Egyptian Government having decided to occupy the Sudan a second time sought the assistance of Englishmen and English military leaders and others, and in partnership, they reoccupied the Sudan and concluded a treaty known as the 1899 treaty.

This treaty was concluded when the Sudan was emerging from revolution and wars; and was utterly exhausted, thus opportunity prevented itself for the Sudanese to give their opinion on the treaty or to point out its good side from evil side.

The truth about this treaty is that it does gross injustice to the rights of the Sudan, its conditions and its people, because it places the Sudan in the hands of two partners who dispute its administration as time has proved. Therefore people of the Sudan who have the greatest right in the matter, do not acknowledge this agreement.

The Sudan, further, after being looked upon by the Govts. of the world as the home of an independent nationality, begs of these Govts. to pay due and deserved attention to the voice of its people. This people wishes to declare to the whole world: -

...That they are a poor nation and in need of much material progress....

That they are a weak and scattered people, who seek leadership and education and the advancement of the levels of our minds and of our living ... until we become a living nation, able to administer our own affairs.

The Sudanese have had the good fortune of experience of the administration of the English people, they were fully pleased with them, they are perfectly contented with the Englishmen and for these reasons they (the Sudanese) ask of their best free will and perfect accord, with the greatest pleasure and with the fullest liberty and loyalty, that the British Govt. should continue to administer the Sudan's affairs, to reform its conditions, and to advance its individuals and classes, until they reach the stage which they hope that they will attain of independence and self rule.



The question is not a question of hatred of either Egypt or the Egyptians who are our neighbors and friends and it is not a question of love to [sic] England void of self interest. It is, on the contrary, a question of pure self interest.

The people of the Sudan ... refuse any partnership to either Egypt or any other nation, in the administration of the Sudan, as well as they do refuse to exchange the present English administration for any other....

They request that they may have the qualifications of nations - which entitles them to take a share in the Govt. of their country, to supervise the march of their own interests and the means of their education according to the natural laws of progress. <sup>1</sup>

The importance of this declaration is that it firmly committed the traditional leadership to the side of the British. It must be pointed out, however, that this does not imply an unqualified support for the British, but rather, as the statement said, was a matter "of pure self interest". If there was any doubt as to this point, al-Haḡāra of 25 June dispelled it. Ḥusayn Sharīf's leading article condemned the activists as tools of Egypt and ridiculed their leaders as men who in their own society were "worth nothing ... are composed of stupid discharged men, small employes [sic] and some other negligible quantity who are unable to gain their daily bread...." <sup>2</sup> The same issue of al-Haḡāra published a letter signed "Wad Al Nilein" under the title "Low is a nation if it can be led by Ali Abdel Latif":

<sup>1</sup> Letter to the governor-general, 10/6/24, SGA, PALACE 4/10/49. This declaration was signed by Sayyid 'Abd al-Raḡmān; the mufti; Ismā'īl al-Azhari; Aḡmad al-Sīd al-Fīl; the president of the Board of Ulema; the qāqī of Khartoum province; Bābikr Badrī; and a large number of 'umdas, shaykhs, merchants and other notables. In a telegram to Khartoum from London in August, Stack was to admit that "when in May information was received of intensive campaign of Egyptian propaganda natives were informed that restraint was removed and they were invited to express their wishes...." (Stack to Hakimam (the palace), 14/8/24, F.O. 371/10053.)

<sup>2</sup> "Note on the vernacular press", 28/6/24, SGA, PALACE 4/10/49.

Who is this Abdel Latif, to what tribe or sub-tribe does he belong, who is his chief of tribe and has he consulted his chief...? The country is not so stupid and simple to allow Ali Abdel Latif to subject the whole nation to another for his personal interests. The country has its own chiefs who are working for its good....<sup>1</sup>

The attitude of the notables toward 'Alī 'Abd al-Laṭīf, which this letter reflected, could be summed up as, "who does he think he is?" Aside from anger at the effrontery of this parvenu and his friends (a feeling shared by the British) another more basic consideration brought the notables together: Sayyid 'Abd al-Raḥmān and his supporters were, of course, historically antipathetic toward Egypt; the tribal and other leaders who were anti-Mahdist were, however, historically pro-British. On this issue of the status of the Sudan they could all therefore unite. But, as the proposed amendment to the June 10th declaration indicated, there was in addition to the White Flag League and the highest religious notables a third force, or, at least, a body of opinion unfavourable to the former's pro-Egyptian claims but uncomfortable with the latter's apparently unqualified backing of the British.

In one of those appreciations of a situation for which Willis never received due credit, he wrote in June of the two sections into which the "intelligenza" could be divided. One was that represented by 'Alī Abd al-Laṭīf, which would "undoubtedly grow in future and will be the 'noisy party'". The other, however, was that "which has to be taken into account in future". This group included Aḥmad al-Sīd al-Fīl, Ḥusayn Sharīf, and "most of the young province Kadis, District Kadis, Schoolmasters, Officers of Arab origin and well to do merchants nearly everywhere". This "party", Willis suggested, had no direct relations with Egyptians: they believed in the Sudan for the Sudanese. But in resis-

<sup>1</sup> "Note on the vernacular press", 28/6/24, SGA, PALACE 4/10/49.

ting pro-Egyptian activities they discerned a danger of simply handing over the Sudan to Britain. They desired from the British a definite statement as to future policy. Willis described them as "the party to count as the older generation of present Nazirs and Omdas pass away",<sup>1</sup> a remark, incidentally, which must have greatly annoyed the proponents of Indirect Rule then mustering their arguments.

This group of "graduates" felt entitled, as the educated elite, to be consulted over the country's future. This was certainly their major tactical demand in the months preceding the Zaghāl-MacDonald negotiations in London which began in September. The vice-president of the Graduates' Club, Abū Shāma ʿAbd al-Majīd, wrote to Willis in June to assure him of the loyalty of "those among us who have received some education" but noted that "those enlightened would like certain reforms". He proceeded to sum up the political views of the Sudanese. The general public, he claimed, had "no opinion to give", since all they desired was "to be lightly taxed, to find a cheaper living, and to see slavery reestablished". But the "more enlightened class" wanted the present administration to remain "for a period sufficient to realize the education of the Sudanese to rule themselves after giving them trustworthy guarantee".<sup>2</sup> As Sterry, then acting governor-general, wrote in August, the moderates recognised "that they cannot get on without British assistance now, but they would like not only a pronouncement from us that we consider ourselves trustees ... but also a promise that we shall clear out at a definite date".<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Willis, "The political situation", 16/6/24, SGA, PALACE 4/10/49.

<sup>2</sup> Abū Shāma ʿAbd al-Majīd to Willis, 7/6/24, SGA, PALACE 4/10/49.

<sup>3</sup> Note by Sterry, enclosed in Kerr to MacDonald, 31/8/24, F.O. 371/10053. Sterry was acting governor-general from 16 July. (Sudan Gazette, no. 439, 10/8/24.)

This fear that, should the Egyptians be removed the British would have an unrestrained and unlimited power over the Sudanese was evident also in a letter addressed by Ḥusayn Sharīf to The Times, which was, however, never sent. Ḥusayn Sharīf believed that if the Egyptian propaganda had from the start been "counter-balanced ... by a promise or pledge to establish in the Sudan some native form of government which guarantees to the Sudanese their participation in the administration of their affairs ... this movement would never have come into existence...." The Sudan question, he stressed, "must be settled on the basis that the Sudan is for the Sudanese and not for the English nor for the Egyptians...." A declaration should be made to this effect by the government. The position of Britain should be defined and the legitimate interests of Egypt determined. The Egyptians "should share with the English in guiding and teaching" the Sudanese. Further, there should be "a sort of union between" Egypt and the Sudan, "to retain the historical ties of these two brother countries".<sup>1</sup> Ḥusayn Sharīf and those who shared his views hoped to safeguard the Sudan's future by retaining the balancing effect of condominium, but at the same time insisting on the naming of a date for independence.

<sup>1</sup> Ḥusayn Sharīf to The Times, enclosed in acting assistant private secretary to civil secretary, 28/8/24, SGA, PALACE 4/9/44. In a letter to the Sudan agent in Cairo in August, Davies, by then in the intelligence department, wrote that al-Ḥadāra was not pro-government and that Ḥusayn Sharīf belonged to "one or more of the leagues". He said that the "moderation in the tone" of al-Ḥadāra came "solely from our censorship" and that an uncensored article by Ḥusayn Sharīf would be an "exposition of the views of the Leagues". Davies, as usual, saw the situation in black and white terms, a fact illustrated by his remark to the Sudan agent that the incidents of 1924 proved that "the tide of gratitude" for the "Pax Britannica" was "on the ebb." (Davies to More, 20/8/24, F.O. 800/218.)

One manner in which the Sudanese might achieve "participation in the administration of their affairs" was through "native advisory councils", the discussion of which increased in mid-1924.<sup>1</sup> But the reaction to this and other suggestions, indeed, to this middle force of graduates generally had already begun with events in 1919. Indirect Rule was coming into its own, and the pretensions - for as such they were viewed - of the intelligentsia were ridiculed and denounced. They claimed to be "the only reliable mediary between the Government and the people" but numerically were insignificant: "outside the larger towns, especially Khartoum and Omdurman" they were not as influential as they believed.<sup>2</sup> In any event, it had already been made clear from the intervention of the religious and other traditional leadership, the statements of loyalty they had inspired, and the relative quiescence of the vast bulk of the population outside the towns, that mass support still - perhaps more than ever - resided with them and not with this new class of self-appointed leaders. And it was command of respect that determined political influence with the government. That being the case, the claims of the moderate graduates could be tossed on the same fire as the wild demands of 'Alī 'Abd al-Latīf, for neither had elicited mass support, whereas their detractors had shown their retention of that support. But in British eyes the Sudanese minor officials had by mid-1924 assumed not only some of the posts but also the political ideas of the Egyptians, a fact that destroyed the rationale for their very existence in the bureaucracy. The effect of all this was a strengthening of the

<sup>1</sup> See below, pp. 314-15.

<sup>2</sup> SIR, October 1924, F.O. 371/10039.

ties between traditional authority and the government, a tactical alliance that froze out radical and moderate alike. The army mutiny of November served only to solidify that position, as the risings of tribal populations which were postulated to take place as the result of such a serious incident did not, in the event, occur, thus giving apparent added testimony to the power of traditional leadership. As in the archetypal tribal society, in which the tribe exerts influence over its individual members and in turn protects them, so the individual outside of the tribe, while free of the constraints of tribal society, also loses the protection that society affords. In the Sudanese case the leaders of the White Flag League, and, indeed, the moderates, once the government moved against them, were isolated and without support.

Whatever the role of the White Flag League, in terms of its aims it cannot be called nationalistic. There is, however, a great deal to be said of the role of the league and of the League of Sudan Union in the psychological roots not only of latter day Sudanese nationalism but in its embryonic development in the 1920s. The search for these roots has, however, probably missed the mark in settling on 'Alī 'Abd al-Laṭīf and his associates. The roots lie rather in the Sudan Union Society and in the middle group of Ḥusayn Sharīf and his colleagues. It was they who, having come from the "best" of the tribal or religious notable families, could combine the ideas of nationhood with the familiar socio-political attachments of their fathers. To be sure, this was a long and gradual process, but it began with the moderate graduates, not with the vocally pro-Egyptian White Flag League. It follows that the disturbances of 1924 were not nationalistic in inspiration. Religious affinity, general dissatisfaction, personal grievances may all have played a part, but the same could be said of the Mahdist appeal in the 1880s.

There is an essential point to be drawn here. It has usually been assumed, not without reason, that until 1923-24 British policy had been to educate and train Sudanese increasingly to administer the country, that in 1924 this new elite showed that they could not be trusted as collaborators and that therefore the British embarked on a path toward full-fledged Indirect Rule. This is only partially accurate. As has been noted, policy had been to train Sudanese as minor officials, but the acceptance of Indirect Rule as the proper course for the future began long before 1924, for reasons already mentioned. In the immediate post-war period, governors had been canvassed for their opinions as to the extension of the powers of shaykhs; in 1922 the Powers of Nomad Sheikhs Ordinance appeared (see below, pp.301-309 ). Other related programmes were being evolved. The Milner mission's report had been issued. The whole future of the Egyptian Army (and its Sudanese components) was being discussed as early as 1920. The thrust of all this surely did not escape the notice of the Sudanese minor officials and officers. In brief, it can be argued that a major factor in the attitude of the "disgruntled" Sudanese officials and officers, and in that of the moderate graduates, was their reaction against an apprehended shift of power away from them and toward tribal authority. That shift had, in fact, already begun: this is the reverse of the argument that presented Indirect Rule as a response to the 1924 disturbances.

It will have been noted that Ḥusayn Sharīf, in his unpublished letter to The Times, stressed the necessity for "some native form of government which guarantees to the Sudanese their participation in the administration of their affairs". This may have been a plea for further democratization, or for the opening up of more positions to Sudanese: it was surely not a call for statutory increases in tribal authority. The presence of Egyptian ma'mūrs and other officials at least ensured

the continuation of a bureaucratic government that offered employment to educated Sudanese and, more importantly, appeared to offer through its promotion system a gradual assumption of increased responsibility by that class. The Power of Nomad Sheikhs Ordinance and the direction it indicated foresaw a curtailment of that progress, perhaps even its reversal. This may help to explain the concern of Husayn Sharīf and his colleagues for retaining the Egyptian connection. It also explains the disdain of tribal leaders for the White Flag League and other such groups which were, in fact, the enemies of tribal authority. Thus, in October 1924 the deputy governor of the Blue Nile Province could write that the native officials'

idea of the Sudan for the Sudanese is a Sudan governed on existing lines with the government posts, high and low, filled from the Sudanese official and intelligentsia classes. They have no idea of a Sudan composed of powerful local tribes or groups of tribes managing their own affairs with a minimum of interference from the Central Government. They are in fact definitely hostile to such ideas. <sup>1</sup>

Pawson, the deputy governor, went on to advise that no Sudanese be allowed to rise above the position of ma'mūr, and warned that "experience shows that many of them will become dissatisfied with their positions and some of them will be the natural leaders of the discontented official classes." <sup>2</sup>

What, then, caused the discontent? Pawson seems to have had no doubt that behind it was the realisation that the door to the district commissioner's office was forever closed. In forwarding Pawson's report, his chief, A.J.C. Huddleston noted that "a year ago" policy had been that "we were not giving the Sudanese Sub-Mamur the power the Egyptian

<sup>1</sup> Guy Pawson, "Note on the native mamur and sub-mamur as affecting the Government policy of decentralization", 2/10/24, SGA, CIVSEC 50/2/10.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.



Mamur had".<sup>1</sup> This was the direction in which the government was heading; surely this was no secret to the Sudanese official class. Even though it was the prime concern of the British to reduce the numbers of Egyptians in the administration, a policy of devolving powers to tribal chiefs was understandably perceived as anti-graduate. What more understandable a response than rallying to the defence of Egypt, since the continued presence of Egypt ensured continued bureaucratic government? The young Sudanese official had come to feel, not without British encouragement, that it was his destiny to occupy a position of some influence in the affairs of the country; now in the 1920s he was faced with a future of, in MacMichael's words, "bottle-washing".<sup>2</sup> The result of their "thwarted ambitions" would, he felt, be "dissatisfaction ... and, ultimately, illicit pressure on the Government to leave them to manage a country which could never be managed by them at all".<sup>3</sup> As a

<sup>1</sup> A.J.C. Huddleston to civil secretary, 9/10/24, SGA, CIVSEC 50/2/10. Sir Arthur Huddleston (1880-1948) served in Berber, 1905-10; the Upper Nile, 1911; Blue Nile, 1912; Berber for a second tour, 1913-19; as governor of Khartoum, 1920-22; governor of the Blue Nile Province, 1922-27; and as financial secretary, 1928-31. (MacMichael, SPS, p. 14.)

<sup>2</sup> MacMichael argued that it had never been the intention that the Sudanese sub-ma'mūr should have "functions comparable to those of Egyptian Mamurs.... 'Bottle-washing' is too extreme a term ... but it might be used of the relation between the young Sudanese Sub-Mamur and his District Commissioner". (MacMichael to governor, Blue Nile Province, 11/10/24, SGA, CIVSEC 50/2/10.)

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. In his Behind the modern Sudan (with a forward by MacMichael), H.C. Jackson wrote of the 1924 situation that "the eventual self-government of the Sudan by the Sudanese had always been the policy of the Sudan Government. With this in view, the first step taken in the Sudan after the First World War was the gradual substitution of Sudanese for Egyptian officials in the lower posts.... as Sudanese candidates acquired the necessary qualifications, the British would in their turn make way for them in the higher posts - as indeed they have recently done". (p. 194.)

final example, of many, of the British attitude, may be cited another circular by MacMichael, in which he concluded that "the cry 'the Sudan for the Sudanese' of which we shall no doubt hear more, carries the germ of a legitimate aspiration, but it is the aristocracy rather than the subordinate bureaucracy whose claims to our consideration are paramount." <sup>1</sup>

This being the attitude of the central government, it is hardly surprising that an apparent major aspect of the Egyptian propaganda in the Sudan in the early 1920s was promises of increased pay and promotions for Sudanese officers and officials in the event of the political "unity of the Nile Valley". <sup>2</sup> Thus we can conclude that the move toward Indirect Rule was at least a partial cause of the 1924 troubles rather than an effect. The activities of both the White Flag League and the moderates in 1924 reflected not only concern about the future status of the Sudan but also over the role of their tiny and vulnerable class in that future. In a 1927 note Davies confirmed this view when he wrote that "Mamurs and Submamurs from all parts of the Sudan report that they are now mere tax-collectors, all responsible work having been taken over from them by the District Commissioners." <sup>3</sup>

There is, as has been indicated, a danger, in assessing the events of 1924, of exaggerating the importance of the "activists" - the White Flag League and the other vague and sometimes unidentifiable

<sup>1</sup> MacMichael to all governors, 20/10/24, SGA, CIVSEC 50/2/10.

<sup>2</sup> Ewart report on political agitation.

<sup>3</sup> Davies, Secret intelligence report no. 13, 11/4/27, F.O. 371/12375.

societies <sup>1</sup> - and thus to reduce the significance of the moderates who were, in fact, much more important in the long term. We have seen that the White Flag League was estimated in June 1924 to have one hundred and fifty members. While they were not the "rabble of nobodies led by shady characters and followed by naughty little boys" that the Ewart report said they were, they were for the most part young and of no economic or social significance. Most of the disturbances occurred in the three towns. The provinces remained, with few exceptions, serenely quiet. Browne, then governor of Kassala, wrote in September that things had been "extraordinarily quiet" in that province, though a few White Flag League members were present in the army and administration. <sup>2</sup> The district commissioner at Kamlin on the White Nile, Mr. (later Sir) James Robertson, reported no White Flag League presence in that province, and no trouble in 1924. <sup>3</sup> Likewise there was no trouble at Medani, and the

<sup>1</sup> There were occasional references to several other societies, even the existence of which as separate entities was (and is) uncertain. Among them were the "League of National Defence" (SIR, September 1924, F.O. 371/10039); the "Society of the Ulema' in the Sudan", the "Vengeance Branch of the League of Sudan Union", the "Committee of Songs", which produced a "national tune" (SIR, October 1924, F.O. 371/10039); and the "Workman's League" (Ewart report on political agitation, appendix 7). Davies claimed that other societies had been "spawned" by the White Flag League (Davies to More, 20/8/24, F.O. 800/218), but there is little if any evidence of the independent existence of many of these groups; it is likelier that they were the names of cells, or were simply used to confuse the authorities.

<sup>2</sup> Browne to More, 9/9/24, F.O. 800/218. Browne referred to the White Flag League members as "among the unbalanced degenerates with whom we somehow succeed in peopling the Government offices."

<sup>3</sup> Interview with Sir James Robertson, 18/6/76.

various outbreaks in Khartoum came as a complete surprise to officials in the Blue Nile Province.<sup>1</sup> In the southern Sudan, as we shall see, there were minor outbreaks among the garrisons, but no involvement at all of the local populations. The same applies to the western Sudan, where demands for union with Egypt would doubtless have been met with incredulity or worse. Thus it is important to remember that the White Flag League and its shadowy counterparts were very limited in membership, scope and appeal, and as time went on this became more and more obvious to the government. With the support of those leaders who commanded the loyalty of the people the government could, in late 1924, take definite action against this small band.

While the importance of the 1924 events should not, therefore, be exaggerated, neither should they be dismissed as merely the work of deluded or irresponsible amateur politicians. The Ewart report, while insisting that "Egyptian instigation and manipulation were directly responsible for all that happened", nonetheless warned that "it would be entirely misleading to suppose that, with the removal of the occasion and the opportunity for Egyptian instigation, the Sudan will revert to complete political apathy".<sup>2</sup> The report went on to caution that

It must be recognised that there is now in the Sudan a class, small but vocal, and inevitably possessing influence out of all proportion to its numbers, which has ideas and aspirations, whose growth has been 'forced' so that they are now at a stage, the attainment of which would have taken a generation or more of normal growth.... The educated classes, who have now acquired definite conceptions as regards rights and national development, are in a frame of mind which will make them readily responsive to the promptings,

<sup>1</sup> Interview with Sir Shuldham Redfern, 8/10/76.

<sup>2</sup> Ewart report on political agitation.

subversive or otherwise, of anyone who will show them a way to the realisation of their desires. They will undoubtedly be keen critics of Government policy in the future, and their attitude will be guided by the measure in which such policy tends to meet their aspirations.<sup>1</sup>

This judgement, together with the indictment of many minor officials for "the manner in which [they] abused their positions"<sup>2</sup> was a strong endorsement, in the minds of some, of the efficacy of Indirect Rule. For while the 1924 troubles could be called "elementary in organisation and technique",<sup>3</sup> it would, said the Ewart report, "be futile to suppose that there will be no 'next time'.... The best use to which the present period can be put is in sabotaging the machinery of future seditious movements, and making the ground unfavourable for their growth."<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately conditions and predispositions led the government to seek prevention of a "next time" not by conciliating the opposition but by attempting to make it irrelevant through Indirect Rule.

The main result of the 1924 disturbances should therefore be noted. The troubles marked the emergence, and defeat, of the first secular opposition to the government expressed specifically in secular terms. This was important not only in itself but also in destroying many of the assumptions upon which the Sudan Government had rested. Try as they might to blame everything on the Egyptians, the government recognised that it would be opposed by Sudanese on rational political

<sup>1</sup> Ewart report on political agitation.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

grounds. This in its way was profoundly depressing because of the "ingratitude" it implied and the rejection of British paternalism which it embodied. Thus the British attitude changed as well: having bitten the hand that fed them, the "effendia" would be cast out. But upon whom were the British then to rely? The drift toward disillusionment that culminated in 1924 had been hastened in 1921 at Nyala: from that time resurgent Mahdism had been seen, on balance, as a serious danger. Now, in 1924, the newly-educated class had shown itself too dangerous to be trusted. The solution, for these and other reasons, lay in an acceleration of the movement toward Indirect rule.

Chapter III: The Sudan In Anglo-Egyptian Relations

The eight years of Stack's governor-generalship were among the most eventful in the history of Anglo-Egyptian relations. The period witnessed the explosion of Egyptian nationalism, a series of abortive negotiations leading to the nominal independence of Egypt in 1922, further fruitless talks and finally, in November 1924, the British ultimatum to Egypt which attempted a unilateral solution of what had become "the Sudan question". As this series of events unfolded, the Sudan Government assumed an increasingly independent position. Beginning with only tentative representations and pleas for consultation in 1919, by 1924 the Sudan Government acted with great independence and self-interest in pressing its views.

The Sudan question emerged as an issue only with the rapid movement toward Egyptian independence after the World War. So long as Britain occupied Egypt, none of the problems arising from the Sudan's essentially improvised status was too difficult to solve. At the conclusion of the war, however, the anomalies of the status not only of the Sudan but of Egypt<sup>1</sup> could no longer be ignored in the face of the rising tide of Egyptian nationalism. Recognition that Britain intended to retain the protectorate brought that discontent, exacerbated by the serious and jus-

<sup>1</sup> Neither the occupation nor the declaration of protectorate in 1914 had changed Egypt's status in international law. Until Turkey's ratification of the Lausanne treaty in August 1923, Egypt remained a Turkish possession. (See A.J. Toynbee, Survey of international affairs, vol. I, The Islamic world, London, 1927, pp. 197-198.) Nor had any of the Anglo-Egyptian arrangements altered the technically similar status of the Sudan. Thus Egyptian nationalists could (and did) argue that they sought not a gradual movement toward self-government but reversion to their pre-occupation status of a de facto independent nation. (See the report of the special mission to Egypt, 1921, Cmd. 1131.)

tified grievances of the war period, rushing to the surface. <sup>1</sup>

On 13 November 1918, two days after the armistice, Wingate received at the Residency Sa'ad Zaghlul, 'Abd al-'Aziz Fahmī, and 'Alī Sharāwi, three leading members of the Wafd. <sup>2</sup> They put forward the demand for the total independence of Egypt and said they would proceed to London to put their case to the British government. <sup>3</sup> Wingate advised the foreign office to enter into discussions with the nationalists, but was rebuffed. <sup>4</sup> Rushdī Pasha, the Egyptian prime minister, who had cooperated unflinchingly throughout the war, then proposed that he and a colleague, 'Adlī Pasha, should go to London for talks, but this proposal too was rejected. There would be no Egyptian representation at Paris because no issues affecting Egypt were to be discussed there, "excepting that of establishment of British Protectorate". <sup>5</sup> In early January Wingate was called to London for "consultations". At the same time, an invitation was extended to Rushdī to come for discussions, but he insisted that Zaghlul

<sup>1</sup> See Ronald Graham, "Note on the unrest in Egypt", 9/4/14, F.O. 371/3715, in which the conduct of both Wingate and Allenby is severely criticized; "Memorandum, giving the opinion of a very friendly and reliable Egyptian on the situation today", 4/3/19, F.O. 371/3714, with minutes by A.T. Loyd and Wingate; H.W.V. Temperley, A history of the Paris Peace Conference, vol. VI, London, 1924, p. 196; and PD, HC, vol. 76, 8/12/15, 1367-1368; vol. 80, 15/3/16, 2057; vol. 83, 22/6/16, 289; vol. 115, 15/5/19, 1834-1836, 1840.

<sup>2</sup> The Wafd (delegation) was organised toward the end of the war. For its origins see J.M. Landau, Parliaments and parties in Egypt, Tel Aviv, 1953, p. 151.

<sup>3</sup> Wingate to Hardinge, 14/11/18, F.O. 371/3722. See also Elie Kedourie, "Sa'ad Zaghlul and the British", St. Antony's papers, no. 11, Middle Eastern affairs, no. 2, 1961, pp. 139-160.

<sup>4</sup> F.O. to Wingate, 28/11/18, F.O. 371/3722.

<sup>5</sup> F.O. to Wingate, 11/12/18, F.O. 371/3722.



should be included since the latter's enormous prestige made success unlikely without him. Once again the foreign office rejected the proposal since, in Curzon's words, the British government could not allow the nationalists to "hold a pistol to our head".<sup>1</sup> On 1 March Rushdī resigned, and on the 9th Zaghāl and some of his colleagues were arrested and deported.<sup>2</sup> By the middle of March a state of insurrection existed throughout Egypt. On the 17th General Bulfin<sup>3</sup> arrived in Cairo and took charge of the situation, and by the end of the month the violence had subsided. Meanwhile Allenby had been appointed "Special High Commissioner for Egypt and the Sudan", and reached Cairo on the 25th.<sup>4</sup> Zaghāl and his associates were released in early April and proceeded to Paris where they strove, unsuccessfully, to present the Egyptian case.

The restoration of order was clearly the occasion to re-examine the Egyptian question, even though the positions of the British government and the nationalists were poles apart. It was in these circumstances that the Milner mission was constituted. The failure of the foreign office to understand the depth of nationalist sentiment was reflected in the mission's terms of reference, which were "To enquire into the causes of the late disorders, and to report ... on the form of Constitution which, under the Protectorate, will be best calculated to promote its peace and prosperity, the progressive development of self-governing

<sup>1</sup> Wingate, "Note on the departure from Egypt and arrival in Paris and London of Sir R. Wingate", n.d., F.O. 371/3722.

<sup>2</sup> A.F.R. Wiggin, "Egypt; 1918-1925", 15/5/26, F.O. 371/11582.

<sup>3</sup> General Sir Edward Bulfin (1862-1939) was a former corps commander under Allenby in Palestine. (DNB, 1931-1940, pp. 123-124.)

<sup>4</sup> Wiggin, "Egypt: 1918-1925".

institutions, and the protection of foreign interests".<sup>1</sup>

There was no reference to the Sudan. But in November 1919, shortly before the mission finally left for Egypt, Balfour, at the time Lord President of the Council, said in the Commons that

in our view the question of Egypt, the question of the Sudan, and the question of the Canal, form an organic and indissoluble whole and that neither in Egypt nor in the Sudan, nor in connection with Egypt, is England going to give up any of her responsibilities. British supremacy exists, British supremacy is going to be maintained.<sup>2</sup>

That uncompromising attitude was inevitable in the light of British interests in the Nile valley, a fact that overshadowed the Milner mission's investigations and Anglo-Egyptian relations generally. Despite the relatively brief treatment in the final report, a good deal of attention was paid the Sudan by the mission, especially, it seems, by Milner himself. On its third day in Egypt the mission met to discuss procedural and other matters, and, in Milner's words,

the most important of these was the question of the Sudan and its relations to Egypt. We came to the conclusion that this was a vital part of our enquiry and that our reference must be taken to cover it. More information was, however, felt to be necessary, especially on (i) the financial position as between Egypt and the Sudan. Is the latter now financially independent of Egypt and able to pay its own way? And, if so, can it really be expected to repay what Egypt has advanced to it since 1898? The Army. Is it desirable to have ... one army for Egypt and the Sudan? Would not two local Armies, or gendarmeries, be preferable? Is it a good arrangement that the office of Governor-General of the Sudan should be combined with that of Sirdar of the Egyptian Army? In

<sup>1</sup> Report of the special mission. The members of the mission in addition to Milner were Sir Rennell Rodd (later Lord Rennell), who had acted as agent and consul-general under Cromer; General Sir John Maxwell, who had commanded brigades at Atbara and Karari, and was commander of British forces in Egypt, 1908-1912, 1914-1915; Sir Cecil Hurst, legal adviser to the foreign office, 1918-1929; Sir Owen Thomas and Mr. J.A. Spender.

<sup>2</sup> PD, H.C., vol. 121, 17/11/19, 771. A similar statement was made to the Lords by Curzon on 25 November. (PD, H.L., vol. 37, 25/11/19, 339-349.)

connection with the question of the Sudan, it was pointed out that we had claimed to exclude the French from it on the ground that it was legally Egyptian territory. It would, therefore, be difficult for us to sever it from Egypt.... The question of the Sudan is evidently one which calls for a good deal of consideration.<sup>1</sup>

The Sudan's new-found significance resulted from the uncertainty of Egypt's future constitutional status. Milner was determined to "save" the Sudan from the fate of Egypt which he saw as ultimately the product of a disaffected official class. It will be recalled that Milner wrote of the increasing importance of "strengthening our hold on the Sudan" as, inevitably, Britain withdrew from the "'administrative occupation'" of Egypt (see above, p. 191). To stop the spread of Egyptian nationalism to the Sudan was vital, and "for this reason", he wrote, it was a "paramount object of policy to separate the Govt. of the Sudan as much as possible from that of Egypt - and to differentiate the two countries by every means in our power".<sup>2</sup> He noted how this could be achieved:

The influences, through which it is most likely that Egyptian Nationalism will spread to the Sudan, are the Army and the officials of Egyptian race in the Civil Service.... It would be most desirable ... that all Egyptian regiments should be brought back to Egypt, and that mamurs should be either British or Sudanese. The same applies to other Civil officials.... The chief obstacle to the policy of making the Sudan independent of Egypt is a financial one.... The only satisfactory arrangement would be the complete separation of the Sudanese and Egyptian Armies. But in that case how is the Sudanese Army to be paid for? It would be probably impossible to induce the British Treasury to foot the bill.... it is very necessary to consider the means by

<sup>1</sup> Milner, diary of conversations while chairman of the mission, 9/12/19, DEP MILNER 165.

<sup>2</sup> Milner, Notes on the Sudan, n.d. (Jan. 1920), DEP MILNER 163. The foreign office agreed. John Murray and J. de V. Loder wrote that "though no occasion might arise to render expedient a revision of the present theory of an Anglo-Egyptian condominium, the general trend of our policy should be to strengthen our connection with the Sudan while relaxing that with Egypt". ("Memorandum on the future of Egypt", 23/1/20, F.O. 371/3722.) For note on Murray see page 251.

which the Sudan can as soon as possible be rendered capable of bearing the burden of its own military defence. <sup>1</sup>

It is striking that Milner neither explained nor even mentioned that the official British position in the Sudan was as a partner in the Condominium. As has been noted, "Egyptian national feeling in regard to the Sudan was further irritated by the habit into which Englishmen, even in high places, had fallen of thinking, speaking, and acting as though the Sudan ... were an integral part of the British Empire". <sup>2</sup> Indeed, in a private letter to Wingate in May 1920 Stack wrote that if Egyptian influence were to be eliminated, the Egyptian units of the army must "go at once", the ma'mūrs and sub-ma'mūrs would follow, and the clerical and technical employees "would disappear in course of time." Like Milner, Stack's first inclination was towards a British subsidy to finance an all-Sudanese army, and British assumption of the Sudan's capital debt liabilities to Egypt. The only alternative, Stack thought, was that Egypt, "in view of the benefits accruing for all time from a secured frontier and a guaranteed water supply should cancel the debt". <sup>3</sup>

This was not the first reference made to the "benefits" to Egypt of British occupation of the Sudan. In February Allenby, on a visit to Khartoum, wrote that one of the essential points in defining the future status of the Sudan was an Anglo-Egyptian agreement by which "Great Britain would guarantee to secure Egypt's water supply and Soudan

<sup>1</sup> Milner, Notes on the Sudan.

<sup>2</sup> Toynbee, Survey, p. 242.

<sup>3</sup> Stack to Wingate, 10/5/20, SAD 237/5.

frontier, on condition that internal control of Soudan be left entirely to Great Britain".<sup>1</sup> The casualness with which these sentiments were voiced is surprising, for implicit in them was the British ability (and even willingness) in the absence of Egyptian agreement or for any other reason, to interfere with the Nile flow. It is an understatement that "the secure possession of a sufficient supply of Nile water was as important for Egypt as security of transit through ... the Suez Canal was for the British Empire".<sup>2</sup> Indeed, "the idea that the security of Egypt depended upon the defence of the Upper Nile was as old as the pyramids".<sup>3</sup> It was this concern that had brought Britain into the Sudan, and it was this that demanded she stay. To both the British and the Egyptians, therefore, control of the Sudan became a key, indeed the vital, issue as Egyptian independence drew nigh. This was to cause a difference of opinion that split the British camp: whereas the Sudan Government wanted to get rid of the Egyptians for reasons of its own, the Residency

<sup>1</sup> Cheetham to Curzon, 10/2/20, quoting Allenby from Khartoum, n.d., 371/4983.

<sup>2</sup> Toynbee, Survey, p. 234.

<sup>3</sup> R. Robinson and J. Gallagher, Africa and the Victorians, London, 1961, p. 283. In a remarkable memorandum, Kennedy Pasha (see above, p. 27n.) wrote that Kitchener had realised that Britain eventually would lose Egypt and "it would be necessary to hold either the military whip-hand or the 'Nile Control' whip-hand over her". The latter could "flick the lash immediately. It would bring Egypt to her knees, within a few weeks, screaming for mercy". (M.R. Kennedy, "Memorandum on the political aspect of the Egyptian Irrigation Scandals", n.d., F.O. 371/3710.) Compare this with remarks recorded on page 273n. In 1920 Kennedy was convicted of libelling Sir Murdoch MacDonald in connection with the Gezira Scheme. (Hill, BD, p. 198.) Wingate wrote in 1924 that British investment in the Sudan was the best way to ensure that a British government never let the country go to the Egyptians. "This possibility", he wrote, "was in mind when I first started the Gezira scheme and I based it on the fact that it was the pressure of the bondholders that first took us to Egypt in 1882". (Wingate to MacMichael, 17/3/24, MECOX.)

and foreign office were, as ever, primarily concerned to use the Sudan as a trump card in negotiations with Egypt. It was because of increasing concern that through the Gezira scheme Britain was "robbing Egypt of water" <sup>1</sup> that Allenby had to assure the Egyptian government in February 1920 that no more than 300,000 feddans would be irrigated (see appendix I).

To obtain first-hand information the Milner mission sent Keown-Boyd to Khartoum. In a letter covering his report he stated that

From a Sudan point of view, the ideal solution would be an immediate clean cut from Egypt.... Lord Milner's report would ... point out the absurdity of claims made by Egyptians and that Egypt's only legitimate interests in the Sudan are the safeguarding of her water supply and the protection of her frontiers from external aggression. For these His Majesty's Government would assume full responsibility, and ... take full charge of the Sudan which she would develop on lines of Sudanese Nationalism under British guidance, training and cultivating her native institutions and watching over the interests of her people. <sup>2</sup>

Keown-Boyd's voluminous "Report in 3 parts" (i.e. army, civil, and "decentralisation") reflected the attitudes of the Sudan Government of which he had been a part. It provided a detailed plan for eliminating Egyptian influence from the army and government departments. The Egyptian ma'mūr was singled out as "the visible sign of Egyptian rule" and therefore of necessity the first to go. This, as noted above (p. 227) was a stimulus for promoting Sudanese but also for the debate over the advisability of continuing the ma'mūr system itself. The report's "decentralisation" section recommended separation of the posts of sirdar and governor-general, and noted that "tribal sheikhs of standing" were already being "encouraged in an increasing degree to administer their

<sup>1</sup> Milner to Lloyd George, 25/2/20, DEP MILNER 163.

<sup>2</sup> Keown-Boyd to Allenby, 14/3/20, DEP MILNER 163.

own people". He also noted that the government was trying to keep the southern Sudan free from "Mohammedan influences" and said that "the possibility of the Southern (black) portion of the Soudan being ... linked up with some central African system is borne in mind".<sup>1</sup>

The Milner mission concluded its investigations in Egypt in March and returned to London. Though the future of the Sudan had occupied the mission, that issue was not, in 1920, the major bone of contention between Britain and Egypt. The status of Egypt itself, the army of occupation there, and future arrangements regarding the canal and imperial communications were all of more immediate concern to the foreign office and the Egyptians, nationalists and government alike. But having witnessed the power of the nationalist appeal in Egypt, Milner was convinced that the participation of Zaghlūl had to be solicited before any settlement could be reached. As a framework for settlement the idea of a treaty between the two countries, embodying arrangements to secure British interests, had steadily gained favour with the mission, though when he first mentioned it to Curzon Milner still envisaged the retention of the protectorate.<sup>2</sup> Whatever the formula arrived at, Milner hoped that after his departure from Egypt the nationalists, including Zaghlūl, would agree to discussions if invited to London,<sup>3</sup> and in June these were in fact arranged.

<sup>1</sup> Keown-Boyd, "Report in 3 parts". Such a reorganisation would take place, he later wrote, "in time, of course". ("Sudan", 25/2/20, DEP MILNER 161.)

<sup>2</sup> Milner to Curzon, 10/12/19, DEP MILNER 162.

<sup>3</sup> Milner to Curzon, 17/2/20, DEP MILNER 162. See also Milner to Curzon, 18/12/19 and 26/1/20, DEP MILNER 162.

While the British agreed among themselves that the elimination of Egyptian personnel from the Sudan was desirable, only the Sudan Government viewed this as essential. From the time of the Milner mission the Sudan Government was to press for what, after all, was the logical continuation of Wingate's policy, the elimination of Egyptian officers, army units, and ma'mūrs, and to influence London in order to reach a favourable financial arrangement with Egypt.

#### The Milner-Zaghlūl talks

The still relative unimportance of the Sudan question is brought out by its lack of prominence in the negotiations between Zaghlūl (and Adlī) and the mission. Milner reported in June that the Egyptians were still balking at the word "protectorate", but that "under the guise of a 'Treaty'" they were "prepared to give us almost everything". But "my only doubt", Milner wrote, "is about the Sudan, which has not yet been mentioned".<sup>1</sup> In July a draft agreement regarding the Sudan was drawn up by Sirrī Pasha. It called for the control of irrigation by the Egyptian ministry of public works; a permanent commission "pour assurer un équitabile partage des eaux du Nil entre l'Égypte et le Soudan", the president of which would be an Egyptian; reference to the League of Nations of disputes which could not otherwise be settled; and the retention of part of the Egyptian army in the Sudan.<sup>2</sup> Nothing seems to have come of this draft, which would anyway have been unacceptable to the British and nationalists alike. In late August Allenby wrote that "the

<sup>1</sup> Milner to Maxwell, 24/6/20, DEP MILNER 163.

<sup>2</sup> "Traité entre Grande Bretagne et l'Égypte", n.d., enclosed in Ingram to Milner, 21/7/20, DEP MILNER 163.



Sudan question has not been seriously discussed; and it seems that the present dual control is to endure on Egypt receiving a guarantee that she gets her Nile water. Here is, I fear, likely to be trouble." <sup>1</sup> But in mid-August Milner considered that progress had been made, and he submitted a memorandum embodying a settlement proposal.

That proposal detailed a treaty covering outstanding points except for the Sudan, of which there was no mention. Indeed, the mission's report was to state that

the scheme embodied in the memorandum deals only with Egypt. It has no application to the Sudan, a country entirely distinct from Egypt ... the status of which is not, like that of Egypt, still indeterminate, but has been clearly defined by the Anglo-Egyptian Convention of 19th January, 1899. For that reason the subject of the Sudan was deliberately excluded from all our discussions with the delegates. <sup>2</sup>

Zaghlūl insisted that the memorandum should be tested by Egyptian public opinion. <sup>3</sup> Whatever the results of that canvass, some opposition did emerge in Egypt. It was reported that a party "of extremists and idealists who want complete evacuation of Egypt, including Sudan" had inscribed on their banner: "'Free Egypt from the sources to the mouth of the Nile.'" <sup>4</sup> But members of the legislative assembly reacted favourably, only three voting against the proposals, and only one of those three citing "the absence of any provision for handing the Soudan back to

<sup>1</sup> Allenby to "a friend", 27/8/20, quoted in Viscount Wavell, Allenby in Egypt, London, 1943, p. 63n.

<sup>2</sup> Report of the special mission.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. The memorandum "presently came to be known as the 'Milner-Zaghlul Agreement', but ... was not an agreement, but merely an outline of the bases on which an agreement might subsequently be framed."

<sup>4</sup> Frank Fox to the Morning Post, 9/9/20, intercepted by censor, enclosed in Scott to Curzon, 28/9/20, F.O. 371/4980. Fox said the delegation was in "the position of a man who asks a thousand pounds for a camel, expecting to get two hundred, and is offered nine hundred."

Egypt" as the basis for objection.<sup>1</sup> In any event, Zaghlūl insisted on major revisions and the discussions with Milner came to an abrupt end.<sup>2</sup> Stack, in England on leave, told Wingate that the impending Milner mission report would recommend separation of the Sudan from Egypt. "I go away feeling happier", he wrote.<sup>3</sup>

Despite the breakdown of the Milner-Zaghlūl negotiations, the vehicle of a treaty still promised the best chance for a settlement. In October 1920 Curzon, the foreign secretary, wrote a memorandum in which he claimed that the Sudan question could not be omitted from such a treaty because the Egyptians would insist on it and because it was "equally to our interest to settle its future by agreement with the Egyptian Government". As had so many others before him, Curzon then came to the problem of how to finance an all-Sudanese army. His solution should be noted:

The answer, I suppose, will be that Egypt must continue to pay for the water that she enjoys, having, of course, a seat on the permanent Board of Control, and that a part of the price which she must pay for the withdrawal of the British garrison from Egypt is the withdrawal of the Egyptian garrison from the Soudan. The complete political and military independence of the Soudan is in any case the ulterior object which British interests demand.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Scott to Curzon, 19/9/20, F.O. 371/4980. See also A.F.H. Wiggin, Note on the Egyptian press, n.d., enclosed in Scott's letter to Curzon.

<sup>2</sup> Wiggin, "Egypt: 1918-1925".

<sup>3</sup> Stack to Wingate, 18/10/20, SAD 251/7. It will be recalled that in August Ḥusayn Sharif had published his four articles favouring the "Sudan for the Sudanese" and that pro-Egyptian activity in the Sudan was increasing. Stack expected the religious notables to feel "alarmed at no mention of the Sudan and definition of their position" in the Milner report, but believed he could allay their fears.

<sup>4</sup> Curzon, confidential memorandum, October 1920, F.O. 371/4980.

This encapsulates the British attitude in ensuing negotiations. Not only was Egypt to have no greater participation in the administration of the Sudan, she should have none at all, yet continue to finance the Sudan Government. The spectre of the hand on the Nile tap was all too evident.

The Milner mission's report stressed that Egypt and the Sudan should remain separate, but that Egypt's "vital interests in the waters of the Nile" should be safeguarded. The Sudan was "capable of and entitled to independent development in accordance with its own character and requirements." The 1899 agreement was pronounced adequate as, in any case, it was "much too early to attempt to determine" the Sudan's "ultimate political status". The separation of the offices of sirdar and governor-general was also recommended. <sup>1</sup>

#### The 'Adlī-Curzon negotiations

In February 1921 the British government reluctantly accepted Allenby's advice to announce its intention of replacing the protectorate with a treaty. <sup>2</sup> The way was then open for the 'Adlī government, which took office in March, to form an official delegation for treaty negotiations in London. Zaghlūl returned to Egypt in April, however, and it proved impossible to reach an agreement on the composition of the delegation. <sup>3</sup> 'Adlī insisted that as prime minister he should head

<sup>1</sup> Report of the special mission. Milner resigned from the cabinet on 14 February 1921, but insisted that this was unconnected with Egyptian affairs, although he admitted "a good deal of criticism" of his report. (Milner to 'Adlī, 25/1/21, DEP MILNER 163.)

<sup>2</sup> PD, H.C., vol. 138, 3/3/21, 2045. See also John Marlowe, Anglo-Egyptian relations, 1800-1953, London, 1954, p. 244.

<sup>3</sup> Allenby to Curzon, 27/4/21, F.O. 407/189.

the delegation but Zaghāl argued that 'Adlī's negotiating with the British would be the equivalent of "'King George V negotiating with King George V'".<sup>1</sup> 'Adlī therefore formed a delegation without Zaghāl, and left for London in July.<sup>2</sup>

Meanwhile, in the spring and summer of 1921, the Sudan question gained more prominence. On 8 April Zaghāl stated that "'the people demand, and I must follow their wishes, that Soudan shall be beyond doubt Egyptian territory'".<sup>3</sup> The Sudan Intelligence Report for April noted that some of the "younger Sudani Effendia" had attempted "to raise the cry 'Egypt and the Sudan are one'".<sup>4</sup> The Report for June noted that

The Egyptian vernacular press began to give greatly increased emphasis to the cry of 'Complete Independence for Egypt and the Sudan'. The arguments employed are based on what purport to be facts of history from the Pharaohs to the Mahdist Rebellion, on the harm which Egypt is said to be going to suffer from the use of the Nile water in the Sudan, on the necessity for Egypt for a country in which her excess population can settle, on the alleged exploitation of the natives of the Sudan by British companies, and on the community of religion between the two countries.<sup>5</sup>

The Report for August noted the "considerable stress" laid on the Sudan question in the Egyptian press, prominence being given to Egypt's financial assistance; the comparatively junior appointments of Egyptian of-

<sup>1</sup> Allenby to Curzon, 27/4/21, F.O. 407/189.

<sup>2</sup> Wiggin, "Egypt: 1918-1925".

<sup>3</sup> Interview of Zaghāl by Egyptian Gazette, reported in Allenby to Curzon, 8/4/21, F.O. 371/6294.

<sup>4</sup> SIR, April 1921, F.O. 371/6325.

<sup>5</sup> SIR, June 1921, F.O. 371/6325.

ficers; the Gezira Scheme and allegations that the British would exploit the Sudanese and "starve Egypt of water".<sup>1</sup> Little was done to counteract these expressions. When Allenby advised in May the immediate establishment of a permanent commission for regulating the Nile, Curzon rejected the idea because the appointment of such a commission was "probably the only concession to Egyptian sentiment with regard to the Sudan" that Britain would offer, "and a premature announcement on the subject would obviously detract considerably from the value of the offer." <sup>2</sup>

Conversations went on intermittently, however, throughout the summer. On 10 November Curzon presented a draft treaty which, in addition to dealing with purely Egyptian matters, stated:

The peaceful development of the Soudan being essential to the security of Egypt and for the maintenance of her water supply, Egypt undertakes to continue to afford the Soudan Government the same military assistance as in the past, or, in lieu thereof, to provide the Soudan Government with financial assistance to an extent to be agreed upon between the two Governments.

All Egyptian forces in the Soudan shall be under the orders of the Governor-General.

Great Britain further undertakes to secure for Egypt her fair share in the waters of the Nile, and to this end it is agreed that no new irrigation works on the Nile or its tributaries south of Wadi Halfa shall be undertaken without the concurrence of a Board of three conservators representing Egypt, the Soudan and Uganda respectively.<sup>3</sup>

There was certainly nothing concessionary about these proposals. There was, however, a good deal of the implausible about them, especially in the matter of a Nile board which, as proposed, would have an inbuilt

<sup>1</sup> SIR, August 1921, F.O. 371/6325.

<sup>2</sup> Curzon to Allenby, 10/5/21, F.O. 407/189.

<sup>3</sup> "Memorandum of Clauses of suggested convention between Great Britain and Egypt, handed by the Marquess Curzon of Kedleston to Adly Yeghen Pasha on November 10, 1921", Cmd. 1555 (1921).

British majority and simply ratify the de facto position. The Curzon draft was in fact the diplomatic phrasing of the October 1920 memorandum in which he had foreseen a solution in Egypt's continuing "to pay for the water that she enjoys" and, in return, being given a token seat on a board controlled by Britain. 'Adlī complained that the draft "reproduces the text and the formulae which were presented to us at the beginning of the negotiations", which had been unacceptable then as now. He was explicit in his rejection of the Sudan clauses: "With regard to the question of the Soudan, which has not yet been discussed, we feel bound to point out that it has been made the subject of provisions which we cannot accept, and which do not guarantee to Egypt the exercise of her indisputable right of sovereignty over the country and of control of the waters of the Nile." Whether these words were used to impress the nationalists at home or merely rhetorically, clearly no delegation could accept the proposed draft, which was, in 'Adlī's words, a mere "deed of guardianship".<sup>1</sup> By failing to accommodate moderate Egyptian opinion the foreign office had, as in 1919, played into the hands of Zaghlūl.

After the breakdown of negotiations 'Adlī resigned and it proved impossible to form a new ministry. On 23 December Zaghlūl was arrested again and on the 29th was deported to the Seychelles.<sup>2</sup> Allenby deter-

<sup>1</sup> "Reply of the Egyptian delegation to the proposals of His Majesty's Government ...", 15/11/21, Cmd. 1555 (1921). In May 1922 the Morning Post reported that 'Adlī had "prepared a draft convention concerning the Soudan" which was to have been submitted for consideration if the negotiations went well. This convention called for Egyptian sovereignty in the Sudan and the appointment of an assistant governor-general, who must be an Egyptian. (Morning Post, 13/5/22, in F.O. 371/7734.) Curzon later compared the delegation with tourists at Giza: "they had claimed to be transported by aeroplane straight to the summits instead of mounting by laborious stages [but since they] could not get there straight away, preferred to remain stationery at the base." (Curzon to Allenby, 19/11/21, F.O. 407/191.)

<sup>2</sup> Wiggin, "Egypt: 1918-1925".

mined that in light of the rapidly deteriorating situation <sup>1</sup> the British government must unilaterally abolish the protectorate but should, in the absence of treaty guarantees, reserve those matters of interest to it, i.e. what came to be called the "reserved points". After much wringing of hands and Allenby's threatened resignation, <sup>2</sup> the British government issued its declaration of Egyptian independence on 28 February 1922. <sup>3</sup> Egypt was declared to be "an independent sovereign state", but four matters "were absolutely reserved to the discretion of His Majesty's Government" pending agreement between the two sides. These were the security of imperial communications; Egyptian defence; protection of foreign interests; and the Sudan. "Pending the conclusion of such agreements the status quo in these matters shall remain intact". <sup>4</sup>

The British declaration was in fact the grant of extensive autonomy in the conduct of internal affairs. But while it indicated the British government's desire to enter into a more positive relationship with Egypt, the detritus of the protectorate remained. <sup>5</sup> Nevertheless,

<sup>1</sup> See Wavell, Allenby, pp. 66-67.

<sup>2</sup> Allenby to Curzon, 25/1/22, F.O. 407/192.

<sup>3</sup> For an account of the policy debates in London see Wavell, Allenby, pp. 69-80.

<sup>4</sup> Declaration to Egypt, 28/2/22, Cmd. 1592 (1922).

<sup>5</sup> Lloyd George told the Commons that "the British Empire ... will ... always maintain as an essential British interest the special relations between itself and Egypt.... we of course accept the protection of foreign interests and minorities in Egypt as a responsibility inseparable from the special position which we claim in the country." Regarding the Sudan, Britain would never allow "the progress which has already been made" to be jeopardised, nor could Britain allow "any change in the status of that country which would in the slightest degree diminish the security for the many millions of British capital which are already invested in its development." (PD, H.C., vol. 151, 28/2/22, 272-274.) See Wingate's comment, above, p. 239n.)

a new phase in Anglo-Egyptian relations began, in which the Sudan was to have a dominant role. As Milner had said, with the withdrawal from "administrative occupation" of Egypt, Britain's hold on the Sudan became more important. As the British recognised this, so did the Egyptian nationalists and the educated element in the Sudan. That he who controls the Nile controls Egypt was no less true after 28 February 1922 than it had been before.

### The sovereignty issue

One of the first tasks of independent Egypt was the drafting of a constitution. On 3 April a commission was appointed for this purpose. On 8 May Allenby told the foreign office that the commission "intended to add a clause to the effect that Egypt and Soudan are one and the same country also that the King of Egypt is sovereign of the Soudan...." Allenby's immediate rejection of this <sup>1</sup> and his reiteration, during a visit to Khartoum, of Lloyd George's February speech <sup>2</sup> seem to have frightened the Egyptians regarding Britain's plans. The Wafd protested that Britain had no intention of negotiating the Sudan's status. <sup>3</sup> The Egyptian prime minister, Tharwat (who had formed a government on 1 March) announced at the end of May that he had assurances from Allenby that the status of the Sudan would not be altered before negotiations

<sup>1</sup> Allenby to foreign office, 8/5/22, F.O. 371/7733.

<sup>2</sup> "Report on general situation in Egypt, 4 May - 10 May 1922", enclosed in Allenby to Curzon, 13/5/22, F.O. 371/7742. See also SIR, May 1922, F.O. 371/7746.

<sup>3</sup> "Report on general situation ...". In November the Wafd submitted a memorandum to the Lausanne conference, demanding recognition of the complete independence of the Nile valley, and the evacuation from it of all British troops. (Landau, Parliaments, p. 166.) See also Oriente Moderno, 2, 8, 15/1/23, pp. 498-502.



"had been undertaken and completed",<sup>1</sup> a remark indicative of Egyptian fears that Britain might unilaterally redefine the Sudan's position.

This concern was not without reason. Current events in the Sudan were giving pause to British authorities in London as well as in Khartoum. The trial of 'Alī 'Abd al-Latīf took place in June 1922. It should also be noted that the crucial round in the London talks regarding the re-funding of the Gezira Scheme was taking place in early 1922 (see Appendix I). Indeed, at a meeting of the committee considering the Gezira financing, in March 1922, Stack said that if Egypt refused to cooperate, "Great Britain must then take unilateral action".<sup>2</sup> Murray,<sup>3</sup> the foreign office representative on the committee, told Lord Balfour in July that events "ultimately ... would come to definitely including the Sudan in the British Empire and severing its connection with Egypt". The restraint, as always, was financial: Murray estimated a "breach with Egypt" to cost between one and a half and two million pounds a year. Annexation was the best policy "if the Treasury can be persuaded to see that the political importance of strengthening our position there outweighs the financial drawbacks involved in annexing the sole liability for that country". He added ominously that "if the annexation of the Sudan should ever become a matter of practical poli-

<sup>1</sup> Summary of interview for al-Ahrām of the prime minister of Egypt in "Report on the general situation ...", enclosed in Allenby to Curzon, 28/5/22, F.O. 371/7742.

<sup>2</sup> "Minutes of inter-departmental committee to consider present position of Gezira Irrigation Scheme", 31/3/22, F.O. 407/192.

<sup>3</sup> John Murray (1883-1937) served in the Egyptian civil service from 1905 to 1919. He became head of the Egyptian section of the Eastern department of the foreign office in 1919, and was promoted to counsellor in 1924. He was counsellor at the British embassy in Rome from 1931 to 1934, and was minister in Mexico City from 1935 to 1937. (WWW, 1929-1940, p. 986.)

tics the adoption of such a drastic course will have to be justified by some intolerable action on the part of the Egyptians".<sup>1</sup>

The Times on 23 October reported the recommendations of the constitutional commission. There were two references to the Sudan: that the king was to be titled "'King of Egypt and the Sudan'" and that "'Although the Sudan belongs to the Egyptian Kingdom the Constitution does not apply to it and a special administration will be provided.'"<sup>2</sup> These provocative statements forced Tharwat to resign on 29 November, and a government was formed by Nassim Pasha on 1 December.<sup>3</sup> In mid-January Allenby made the surprising suggestion that Britain should allow constitutional reference to King Fu'ād as "Sovereign of the Soudan" and to the constitution itself as "applicable in all Egyptian territory with the exception of Soudan".<sup>4</sup> After insisting that abolition of the protectorate was requisite for progress, Allenby evidently felt the need to produce a settlement. But as the foreign office rightly observed, his proposal would "be regarded generally as indicative that His Majesty's Government are unable or unwilling to resist Egyptian pretensions" in the Sudan. A compromise was suggested that would refer to Fu'ād's and Egypt's positions "without prejudice to any rights" they might enjoy in the Sudan. If the Egyptians insisted, however, on their present formula, Britain would be forced to inform them that their constitution was "an attempt to nullify the declaration of February 28th,

<sup>1</sup> J. Murray, memorandum, 5/7/22, F.O. 371/7734.

<sup>2</sup> The Times, 23/10/22. The Times correspondent felt that if Egypt did not cooperate in the matter of filling vacancies in the army with British officers, the Sudan Government would be forced to take over the Arab and Sudanese battalions "to form the nucleus of its own independent army." (A. Merton to The Times, 6/11/22, Times archive, London.)

<sup>3</sup> Wiggin, "Egypt: 1918-1925".

<sup>4</sup> Allenby to foreign office, 14/1/23, F.O. 371/8959.

1922" and an attempt either to repudiate or modify unilaterally the convention of 1899. Britain would therefore give notice that if Egypt took any action "inconsistent with the status quo in the Sudan", His Majesty's Government would "consider themselves free to disregard the said convention and ... resume complete liberty of action in regard to that country".<sup>1</sup>

The Egyptian position, complicated by internal political pressures, was put to Allenby by King Fu'ād. The khedive, he said, "had always been recognised as ruler of the Soudan which had been reconquered in his name". The condominium had been devised simply to avoid the capitulations, and the ruler of Egypt remained the nominal ruler of the Sudan. If he conceded the point to the British he "would be rightly regarded ... as a traitor since it would inevitably be represented that Soudan was to be definitely severed from Egypt".<sup>2</sup> The problem, essentially one of prestige, was the same for both Egypt and Britain: reference to Egyptian sovereignty would appear to be a British concession; omission of a reference would indicate Egyptian abandonment of her claims. The foreign office historical adviser, J.W. Headlam-Morley,<sup>3</sup> provided the unsatisfactory (for the British) opinion that "if the question ... were referred to any neutral and impartial arbitrator or court, it is almost inconceivable that the verdict would not be in favour of the Egyptian Government". Nor would an Egyptian statement of sovereignty constitute an "overt violation" of the 1899 convention.

<sup>1</sup> Foreign office to Allenby, 18/1/23, F.O. 371/8959.

<sup>2</sup> Telegram, Allenby to foreign office, 17/1/23, F.O. 371/8959.

<sup>3</sup> Sir James Headlam-Morley (1863-1929), historical adviser to the foreign office, 1920-1929. (WWW, 1929-1940, pp. 615-616.)

Headlam-Morley advised reliance on the status quo stipulation in the 1922 declaration.<sup>1</sup> On 3 February, however, King Fu'ād yielded to Residency pressure over the constitution.<sup>2</sup> On 5 February Nassīm resigned and on 15 March a new government was formed by Yahiyā Pasha.<sup>3</sup> On 19 April a constitution was promulgated establishing Egypt as a constitutional monarchy.<sup>4</sup> On 5 July martial law was at last abolished. Zaghlūl, who had been in exile since December 1921, was allowed to return, and he arrived in Egypt on 18 December.<sup>5</sup>

The Sudan Government, watching developments in Egypt and contending with disturbances in its own jurisdiction, was becoming increasingly frustrated with the anomalies of its situation. In October 1923 Stack pointed out the intolerable nature of his own position, which had worsened since the Milner mission report drew attention to it: as sirdar he was answerable to the Egyptian ministry of war; as governor-general and a servant of the British government he could hardly take orders from the Egyptians which contradicted British policy; he could not resign as sirdar because the Egyptians would doubtless appoint to succeed him an Egyptian who would then be in command of all the troops in the Sudan. Stack suggested a solution as confused as the entire British

<sup>1</sup> Headlam-Morley to Murray, 24/1/23, F.O. 371/8959. For an argument more favourable to the British position, see a note by Sir Maurice Amos, enclosed in Allenby to Curzon, 26/2/23, F.O. 371/8960.

<sup>2</sup> Wiggin, "Egypt: 1918-1925"; Wavell, Allenby, p. 95. The matter of Fu'ād's title came up again in 1924 when it was discovered that his ambassadors' letters of credence referred to him as "King of Egypt and Sovereign of the Sudan". The foreign office ignored this. (Kerr to Curzon, 19/1/24, F.O. 371/10049.)

<sup>3</sup> Wiggin, "Egypt: 1918-1925".

<sup>4</sup> Landau, Parliaments, pp. 61-62. The Wafd opposed the constitution on the grounds that it made no reference to Egypt's boundaries or to the unity of the Nile valley. (Ibid., p. 166.)

<sup>5</sup> Wavell, Allenby, pp. 98-99.

position: since the Sudan was a reserved point, he could resign if the British government was willing to insist that replacement by other than a British officer would be an alteration of the status quo. <sup>1</sup>

Murray concluded that

The dominant facts of the situation are that the Sudan is even more essential to Great Britain than is Egypt, and that the British Treasury has already guaranteed Sudan loans to an amount of ten millions and is about to guarantee a further three or four millions sterling. In these circumstances there can be no going back, and if Egyptian folly and obstinacy should render the annexation of the Sudan [necessary] that step will have to be taken.... the knowledge that a rupture over the Sudan will rob Egypt of all hope of repayment for past advances and of any say in the control of the Nile will act as a powerful brake on the exuberance of even the most nationalist and irresponsible of governments. <sup>2</sup>

In Khartoum a "rupture" was exactly what was wanted, but still the question persisted of how to finance the Sudan Government, and as the foreign office was reminded, the Treasury "would not regard any solution of the question as satisfactory which involved a charge upon the British Exchequer for the civil or military administration of the Soudan". <sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Stack to Curzon, 11/10/23, F.O. 371/8991.

<sup>2</sup> Murray, memorandum covering Stack's of 11/10/23, F.O. 371/8991. In parliament during the 1921-1923 period most discussions of the Sudan were prompted by concern over the guaranteed loans and cotton production. After the announcement that the Sudan was to be a reserved point, a member asked, "In that case will the hon. Gentleman take care not to give any of the British taxpayers' money to a country which may pass partially out of our power?" (PD, H.C., vol. 154, 24/5/22, 16.)

<sup>3</sup> Treasury to foreign office, 12/12/23, F.O. 371/8991.

The 1924 negotiations

In the first election to the chamber of deputies in January 1924 the Wafd won a stunning 188 of the 215 seats. Zaghlūl, having campaigned almost solely on the issue of "complete independence",<sup>1</sup> formed a ministry at the end of January. The first session of parliament was opened by King Fu'ād on 15 March, and much of its business concerned the Sudan. Indeed, the Watanist party, weak but vocal, was to be bitterly critical of Zaghlūl's position on the Sudan issue.<sup>2</sup>

Meanwhile, elections in Britain had returned the first Labour government under Ramsay MacDonald, who acted also as foreign secretary. A feeling of optimism was injected into Anglo-Egyptian relations as it was thought that Labour would be sympathetic to Egyptian demands, a feeling strengthened by MacDonald's invitation, read out at the opening of the Egyptian parliament in March, to Zaghlūl to negotiate the outstanding issues.<sup>3</sup>

Britain's negotiating position was hammered out over the summer. In April Allenby suggested that the "irreducible requirements" were confined to "effective military control of Suez Canal" and "maintenance of a predominant political and administrative control of Soudan". But he suggested that the British might "assent to slightly more effective participation by Egypt in administration of Soudan".

<sup>1</sup> Landau, Parliaments, p. 64.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 134.

<sup>3</sup> Wingate commented that he could "only hope ... that H.M.G. has some definite counterproposals and plans of action to counteract all this hot air from these fledglings from the Egyptian schools - the fact that the British public has ... some thirteen millions ... invested in the Sudan will be the best safeguard against unsympathetic government giving away the country". (Wingate to MacMichael, 17/3/24, MECOX.)

He stressed, as he had to Curzon in 1921, that a "Nile Water Board, upon which Egypt, Soudan and British Equatorial Africa should be represented" should be established immediately. The creation of a board "would much facilitate solution of difficulty in regard to acreage to be brought under cultivation at Gezira".<sup>1</sup>

The foreign office agreed that the British garrison in Egypt and the status of the Sudan must be the "two main questions which call for solution". But in the Sudan, because "Mahdism is far from dead", and "there is much inflammable material which a spark might easily ignite",

The farthest limit to which His Majesty's Government can safely go to meet Egyptian demands, which are essentially imperialistic, consists in a reaffirmation of the Anglo-Egyptian condominium.... In other words, a reaffirmation of the actual de jure position.

Once that was settled, "the minor problems of water rights and financial claims" could be considered, but it would be "a fruitless waste of time" to discuss those issues before "the major political problem" had been solved.<sup>2</sup>

Clearly Allenby and the foreign office disagreed over the extent of possible concessions in the Sudan. Whereas the foreign office could foresee none at all beyond maintenance of the status quo (hardly a "concession" in any case) Allenby was willing to entertain "more effective participation by Egypt" in the Sudan's administration. The Sudan Government, ever fearful of being "sold out"<sup>3</sup> to placate Egypt, reacted by adopting a totally uncompromising stand.

<sup>1</sup> Telegram, Allenby to MacDonald, 6/4/24, F.O. 407/198. See Appendix I.

<sup>2</sup> Murray, memorandum on Anglo-Egyptian negotiations, 7/4/24, F.O. 407/198.

<sup>3</sup> An officer of the Sudan irrigation service told Selby in the foreign office in April that "There is certainly great nervousness that some compromise will be offered the Egyptians ... which will seriously af-

In his important "Memorandum on the future status of the Sudan", dated 25 May, Stack set down his government's independent position. "No compromise", he wrote in a covering letter, "however innocuous in form, would fail to be interpreted by the people as a prelude to gradual withdrawal of British control from the Sudan." This would endanger "not only the progress but the security of the country".<sup>1</sup> He recognised that the Egyptians would "not willingly accept" his "uncompromising solution", but

in the present state of public opinion in Egypt any arrangement which provides for the retention of British control will be equally unsatisfactory to them. This factor is in itself a strong argument against half-measures....

Any settlement must "admit no doubt" that British control was complete, and even without a settlement, "a clear declaration must be made that the British Government will accept no other policy".<sup>2</sup>

Stack detailed his proposals: abolition of the condominium as a form was unnecessary; the Sudan debt to Egypt and conditions for its repayment should be fixed; the Financial Regulations should be replaced by an Anglo-Egyptian commission for financial supervision; Egypt's southern frontier should be guaranteed; Egypt's existing water rights should be guaranteed, and the Sudan's rights should be settled on a

fect the British Government's prestige in the Sudan.... There is a strong feeling that England's case in the Sudan and that of the Sudanese, may be given away in Cairo, because it will be considered as the minor and less important question". (W.D. Roberts to Selby, 15/4/24, F.O. 800/218.) Sir Walford Selby (1881-1965) was first secretary at the Residency in Cairo, 1919-22, and private secretary to the secretary of state for foreign affairs, 1924-32. (WWW, 1961-1970, p. 1017.)

<sup>1</sup> Stack to Allenby, 25/5/24, enclosed in Allenby to MacDonald, 1/6/24, F.O. 371/10049.

<sup>2</sup> Stack, "Memorandum on the future status of the Sudan", 25/5/24, enclosed in Allenby to MacDonald, 1/6/24, F.O. 371/10049.



"'water consumption' basis", with area restrictions (i.e. the 300,000 feddan limit) being removed; Egyptian units of the army should be withdrawn, "and the Sudanese battalions disbanded", after which Egypt should contribute £E500,000 annually to the cost of a Sudan defence force; Egypt would be allowed maintenance of a small garrison "in the same way as is done now by His Majesty's Government".<sup>1</sup>

The MacDonald-Zaghlūl "conversations"

Stack and Schuster, the financial secretary, proceeded to London to represent Sudan Government interests. They conducted an adroit campaign, managed by Schuster, to win over the prime minister to their uncompromising position. Violent disturbances in the Sudan, the second arrest of 'Alī Abd al-Latīf, the Atbara and cadets' mutinies seemed to lend support to that position. Whereas the activists in Khartoum and Omdurman may have assumed that the more vociferous their opposition the stronger would be Zaghlūl's hand in the impending London talks, exactly the opposite effect was created. Each incident, no matter how trivial, strengthened the resolve of Stack and Schuster and enhanced the persuasiveness of their arguments. On 25 June Lord Parmoor, speaking for the British government, told the Lords that Britain would never

<sup>1</sup> Stack, "Memorandum on the future status of the Sudan". To the memorandum were appended provincial governors' replies to questions as to what effects "any extension of Egyptian influence or authority" would have in their provinces. The answers offer no surprises: "the people loathe ... the Egyptians and their methods" (governor, Nuba Mts. Province to civil secretary, 10/5/24); the Sudanese "know the Egyptians well, and despise them as being corrupt and untrustworthy" (governor, Halfa, to civil secretary, 22/5/24); "Mahdism, which is at present quiescent, would receive a great impetus" (governor, Kordofan, to civil secretary, 18/5/24); etc.

abandon her position in the Sudan, a statement reinforced by MacDonald in July.<sup>1</sup> Zaghālū left Egypt on 25 July for Paris.<sup>2</sup>

On 11 August Stack reiterated to MacDonald his May proposals, and warned that

the Egyptians are already taking active steps to undermine British authority and particularly to stir up disaffection in the Army.... I must make my opinion quite clear that unless a definite policy is effectively adopted in the immediate future ... which will enable me to have the garrison of the Sudan under my sole control and freed from Egyptian influences, I cannot guarantee the maintenance of order.... if no agreement is arrived at ... His Majesty's Government must be ready to take unilateral action....<sup>3</sup>

This appreciation, received by MacDonald as the dust settled on the Atbara and cadets' mutinies, was a clear exaggeration. But by now Schuster had charted the Sudan Government's course. From the time of his return to England his concern had been "to prevent a Labour Government making dangerous concessions". He was advised, he later wrote to More, the Sudan agent in Cairo,

that the most useful bit of work which could be done would be to get at the left wing of the Labour party so that the P.M. could be certain of not being attacked from that quarter. So I met George Lansbury and ... Tom Johnston.... I think we can say we definitely got them to believe in the honesty of the Sudan Government and to thoroughly distrust the Egyptians.

The next step was when the Sudan question came up for debate in the House of Commons. It was very important that the Conservatives ... should not provoke the Labour people into hostilities.... I got hold of Baldwin and told him to give the word to his young men.... The result was quite a useful discussion and an almost unique unanimity. It was pleasing to hear Tom Johnston quoting from the books on the history of Egyptian rule in the Sudan which I had lent to him....

<sup>1</sup> PD, H.L., vol. 57, 25/6/24, 986; H.C., vol. 175, 10/7/24, 2529-2533. Allenby later told MacDonald that "the Egyptians had merely laughed at Lord Parmoor's statement". ("Record of a conference held in the room of the secretary of state at the Foreign Office on August 13th at 11 a.m.", SGA, PALACE 4/9/44.)

<sup>2</sup> Wiggin, "Egypt: 1918-1925".

<sup>3</sup> Stack to MacDonald, 11/8/24, SGA, PALACE 4/9/44.

The next stage was to endeavour to get the P.M. to take the much more difficult course of taking the drastic action necessary to really clear up the Sudan position. We took the line ... that nothing short of kicking out the Egyptian units and the Egyptian officers ... would really permanently put the position on a healthy footing, but the difficulty was to find sufficient reason to justify such high-handed action. We made the utmost possible use of the Atbara incident, but that was not enough for our purpose. <sup>1</sup>

On 14 August MacDonald warned the Egyptian government that Britain was "responsible for the maintenance of order in the Sudan" and would take any steps necessary to preserve public security. He further disclosed that the British garrison was being reinforced. <sup>2</sup> On 6 September Zaghlūl wrote to MacDonlad disclaiming Egyptian responsibility for events in the Sudan. But "the contemplated negotiations" could not now take place, although "to dissipate this thick fog" which hampered their relations he would be available for "conversations". <sup>3</sup> MacDonald replied that he too was available at any time. <sup>4</sup> At a hastily convened

<sup>1</sup> Schuster to More, 23/10/24, MECOX. George Lansbury (1859-1940), leader of the Labour party, 1931-35. (DNB, 1931-1940, pp. 524-26.) Thomas Johnston (1881-1965), parliamentary under-secretary for Scotland, 1941-45. (WWW, 1961-1970, p. 603.) The parliamentary debate referred to took place on 10 July. In his "pleasing" speech, Johnston said that "everything I have read about the subject shows me that ... the record of the old Egyptian Government in the Sudan was a record of slave trading, of oppression and theft very difficult to match in modern history.... They come along and say, 'We must have the Sudan handed over to us'. The historical record does not give us any justification for agreeing to do that. If ... Gessi ... is correct in saying that in a comparatively short period of time no fewer than 400,000 slaves were taken out of the Sudan by Egyptians ... and if it is correct that, after the Dervish movement was put down, it was found that the population had been decimated from somewhere about 10,000,000 people to 1,500,000, these historical facts would certainly not justify anybody on this side of the House in wishing to return the Sudanese people to the sole dominance of the Government of Egypt". (PD, H.C., vol. 175, 10/7/24, 2521-2524.)

<sup>2</sup> Foreign office to Egyptian government, 14/8/24, SGA, PALACE 4/9/44.

<sup>3</sup> Zaghlūl to MacDonald, 6/9/24, SGA, PALACE 4/9/44.

<sup>4</sup> MacDonald to Zaghlūl, 6/9/24, SGA, PALACE 4/9/44.

meeting (of MacDonald, Stack, Lord Thomson, <sup>1</sup> Tyrrell, Murray and Schuster) on 8 September, MacDonald, "thinking aloud", said he feared Zaghlūl might "'play the part of Samson' and bring down the whole Egyptian fabric on the heads of himself, of us, and all the foreign interests". Schuster intervened "to point out that any hope based on ... 'waiting and seeing'" the results of talks with Zaghlūl "was the most dangerous illusion". <sup>2</sup> After this meeting Scuster drafted a letter for Stack to send to MacDonald "demanding that unless Zaghlul publicly recants all the outrageous claims which he has made during the last three months, HMG must [confront] them ... with the accomplished decision to rid the Sudan of all Egyptians military and civil". Schuster complained to MacMichael of

the accursed delay till Zaghlul comes ... and there is still the danger that he may bamboozle the PM and wriggle out of the dilemma in which he ought mercilessly to be placed. But I hope not. It is a dangerous game in any case but it seems the only possible one to play.... In the meanwhile I may have to restart some of my left wing Labour propaganda.... <sup>3</sup>

Stack sent the letter drafted by Schuster to MacDonald on 16 September. In it he insisted that no matter what the result of the talks, action on the army question must be taken. The foreign office endorsed this position. <sup>4</sup> On 22 September Stack wrote to Sterry, who was acting

<sup>1</sup> Christopher Birdwood Thomson, 1st Baron Thomson (1875-1930), secretary of state for Air, 1924. (WWW, 1929-1940, p. 1343.)

<sup>2</sup> Schuster to MacMichael, 12/9/24, SAD// s 469.

<sup>3</sup> Schuster to MacMichael, n.d. (Oct. 1924), MECOX.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. In this note Stack said that the British forces in the Sudan were inadequate to contain a widespread mutiny, "even if the restless and fanatical tribesmen were to remain quiet". Such a rising, he said with embarrassed periphrasis, would have "the almost inevitable consequence of what would be practically tantamount to a campaign for the reconquest of the Sudan". (Stack to MacDonald, 16/9/24, F.O. 371/10053.)

governor-general, that "our difficulty is to find excuse for drastic action" and that when the conversations with Zaghlūl "showed agreement to be impossible", the time would be right.<sup>1</sup> On 23 September another meeting was held which Schuster considered "depressing ... because it gave us the impression that the P.M. was going to back out of doing anything".<sup>2</sup> On the 24th Stack had a private interview with MacDonald which lasted an hour, in order to press "the urgency of drastic action".<sup>3</sup>

This is where matters stood when Zaghlūl arrived. The Sudan Government had succeeded, if not certainly in obtaining recourse to "drastic action", at least in ensuring that the talks would fail unless Zaghlūl abandoned his position and publicly recanted, a course of events all knew to be impossible. To Stack and Schuster the talks were a mere formality, the completion of which would clear the way for "drastic action". Indeed, from their point of view, the greatest danger was that the talks might succeed in reaching a compromise.

The first conference was held on 25 September. Present were MacDonald, Zaghlūl, and two experts on each side (Selby and Murray for the British). MacDonald at once raised the Sudan question, but Zaghlūl insisted that it was the British who had deviated from the status quo by encouraging "any movement in favour of Great Britain" and by punishing Sudanese loyal to Egypt. MacDonald reiterated the position that Britain had responsibility for maintaining order, to which Zaghlūl replied that Britain

<sup>1</sup> Telegram, Stack to Hakimam, 22/9/24, SGA, PALACE 4/9/45.

<sup>2</sup> Schuster to MacMichael, n.d. (Oct. 1924), MECOX. See "Record of conference held at 10, Downing Street, on Tuesday, September 23, at 10 a.m.", F.O. 407/199.

<sup>3</sup> Schuster to MacMichael, n.d. (Oct. 1924), MECOX.

was inclined to act independently. Since when had she the right to do so? The status quo implied co-operation, but the British Government had arrogated to themselves the right to act alone.... A man who cries out for Fuad is punished, but if anyone cries out for Great Britain, nothing is done. <sup>1</sup>

The meeting then degenerated into repartee and accusations. Nothing was accomplished.

The second conference was held on 29 September with the same participants. Zaghlūl said that "they should follow the natural order of things and commence by talking about Egypt and deal with the Sudan afterwards". To this view, after initial protest, MacDonald deferred. Zaghlūl wanted "every vestige of British control to disappear", but he said he hoped a treaty relationship could be arranged. That shred of hope was apparently enough for the meeting to end on an optimistic note. <sup>2</sup> This worried Schuster, who wondered if he should "tell H.E. [Stack] that he must hand in his resignation and follow suit" with his own. <sup>3</sup>

The third and final Zaghlūl-MacDonald conference took place on 3 October. Zaghlūl insisted that an alliance should satisfy Britain, MacDonald insisting that British troops must guard the canal. The minutes reveal the crux of the problem: "In the event of war, Egypt might not be on the British side", MacDonald noted, and it was "no use discussing the point whether the British were going to leave the Canal." The Sudan question was not even taken up. A communique stated that the

<sup>1</sup> "Record of a conference held at 10, Downing Street, on September 25, 1924, at 10:30 a.m.", F.O. 407/199. Schuster described the meeting as "preliminary sparring". (Schuster to MacMichael, n.d. (Oct. 1924), MECOX.)

<sup>2</sup> "Record of second conference...", F.O. 407/199.

<sup>3</sup> Schuster to MacMichael, 30/9/24, MECOX.

conversations had concluded and that Zaghlūl was returning to Egypt because of "inclement weather" and the reconvening of the Egyptian parliament in November. <sup>1</sup>

On the evening of this last conference Tyrrell, Murray and Schuster met and considered a statement prepared by Murray which concluded that Britain should assume "sole control" in the Sudan. <sup>2</sup> At another meeting the next day, with Allenby and Sir Eyre Crowe <sup>3</sup> in attendance, Schuster again stressed the need for "drastic action" but Allenby opposed this. It was agreed, however, that a despatch should be sent to the Egyptian government embodying Murray's statement. In Schuster's words,

Eyre Crowe and Tyrrell both took the line 'Don't ask for too much or you will scare the Prime Minister off altogether and he will not even send the despatch. On the other hand if he does send the despatch, Stack can then go to him and say "Your policy is unworkable unless I kick out the Egyptian units and convert the rest into a Sudan defence force" and then will be the time for him to play his final card of saying he cannot carry on unless this is done'. <sup>4</sup>

At this stage the situation was complicated by the imminent dissolution of parliament over the Campbell crisis. On 6 October "the old gang met once more at No. 10 with Allenby included". MacDonald announced that he would seek a dissolution on the 8th. "Therefore having only two days ... how could he commit the country to a course which might mean serious trouble and bloodshed in Egypt?" Schuster argued but MacDonald

<sup>1</sup> "Record of a third conference...", F.O. 407/199.

<sup>2</sup> Schuster to MacMichael, n.d. (Oct. 1924), MECOX.

<sup>3</sup> Sir Eyre Crowe (1864-1925) was asst. under-secretary of state for foreign affairs, 1912-20, and permanent under-secretary from 1920 until his death in 1925. (DNB, 1922-1930, pp. 219-221.)

<sup>4</sup> Schuster to MacMichael, n.d. (Oct. 1924), MECOX.

was adamant that he "could not under any circumstances now agree to carrying out a coup d'état on the Army or issuing an ultimatum".<sup>1</sup> There was, as Schuster observed, "not much use pointing a pistol at the head of a man who knows he is going to die in two days anyhow".<sup>2</sup> Thus Stack did not submit his resignation, and Schuster felt that "the handling of the next stage of the situation passed to Allenby and Stack", but he was confident that Allenby would prove cooperative, and in any case,

fortune is again on our side. We have succeeded in getting the Labour Party to commit itself and the British Government to a strong policy ... and the probability is that we shall now get a Conservative Government in power to put this policy into effect.... In the meanwhile we have Allenby in Cairo who is exactly the right man for this act of the drama.<sup>3</sup>

Writing to More, Schuster was even more explicit:

I feel very strongly that we must take the offensive now and get the Egyptians 'on the run'.... There are many other points on which we should also resume the offensive, notably the waters question and the 300,000 feddan limit, though these are of minor importance compared with the Army question.<sup>4</sup>

MacDonald had addressed the despatch to Allenby, reiterating in stronger terms Britain's intention to take action if the status quo were not observed,<sup>5</sup> and Allenby and Stack arranged to have discussions in Cairo to settle their course of action. "The best thing", Schuster remarked, "will be if Stack can get through all his part there in a week and then push on to Khartoum".<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Schuster to MacMichael, n.d. (Oct. 1924), MECOX.

<sup>2</sup> Schuster to More, 23/10/24, MECOX.

<sup>3</sup> Schuster to MacMichael, n.d. (Oct. 1924), MECOX.

<sup>4</sup> Schuster to More, 23/10/24, MECOX.

<sup>5</sup> MacDonald to Allenby, 7/10/24, Cmd. 2269 (1924).

<sup>6</sup> Schuster to More, 23/10/24, MECOX.



The crisis of November 1924

Stack and Allenby both arrived in Cairo at the end of October. On the 29th the Conservatives were returned to power in Britain; Baldwin's government took office on 6 November, with Austen Chamberlain as the new foreign secretary. It soon became clear that Schuster's expectations of a Conservative ministry had been correct. On 10 November the foreign office told Allenby that

Once His Majesty's Government have taken up the Egyptian challenge on all or any of the points on which the British position has been assailed.... it will be essential to pursue the matter until the Egyptian government have given us full satisfaction. This may involve the use of coercion and it is therefore necessary to select as the subject of our representations one which public opinion ... will recognise as an essential imperial interest. <sup>1</sup>

It was thereafter agreed that the Egyptian Army should be that subject, <sup>2</sup> and Allenby proposed that a British "communication" to Egypt should include the splitting of the sirdarate into Egyptian and Sudanese halves, and, if that were rejected, evacuation of all Egyptian troops from the Sudan. Stack said that any "situation arising" out of the latter eventuality could be dealt with. <sup>3</sup>

On 19 November at 1:30 p.m. Stack, accompanied only by his aide-de-camp, Captain Campbell, and his chauffeur, Alfred Marsh, left the War Office to drive to the Sirdaria, his official Cairo residence, for lunch. A few minutes later, as the car slowed in traffic, shots were fired at them by a group of Egyptians standing on the kerb. All three

<sup>1</sup> Foreign office to Allenby, 10/11/24, F.O. 371/10043.

<sup>2</sup> Chamberlain to Allenby, 10/11/24, F.O. 371/10043.

<sup>3</sup> Allenby to foreign office, 15/11/24, F.O. 371/10043.

occupants of the car were wounded, but the driver managed to proceed to the Residency.<sup>1</sup> Stack had suffered three wounds, one serious.<sup>2</sup> He was taken to the Anglo-American hospital and underwent surgery. He showed some improvement until about noon on the next day. His condition thereafter deteriorated rapidly,<sup>3</sup> and he died at 11:45 p.m. on 20 November.<sup>4</sup>

Just two months earlier Stack had said that "our difficulty is to find excuse for drastic action". Now, through exquisite irony that excuse had been provided. The convenience of Stack's death, from the point of view of British policy, has almost alone provided fodder for wild conspiratorial theories.<sup>5</sup> Leaving aside innuendo, however, the inadequacy

<sup>1</sup> European department, ministry of interior, Egyptian government, "The Sirdar murder trial", n.d., p. 39, MECOX. Upon being shot Stack exclaimed, "I am hit, go to the Residency". (W.D. Kenny, "The murder of the Sirdar", n.d., SGA, PALACE 4/11/53.)

<sup>2</sup> "The Sirdar murder trial", testimony of Dr. Sydney Smith. For an interesting account of the investigation, see Sir Sydney Smith, Mostly murder, London, 1959, chapter 7, "The murder of the Sirdar".

<sup>3</sup> Dr. F.C. Madden, "Medical report on the condition of His Excellency the Sirdar ...", 20/11/24, F.O. 371/10072. Marsh and Campbell both survived.

<sup>4</sup> Medical bulletin, 21/11/24, SGA, PALACE 4/11/53.

<sup>5</sup> About Stack's assassination one modern writer has said: "Was it a case of provocation, as has been suggested? Was it the work of extremists, beyond Zaghlul's control? At the end of 1924 a French visitor ... was told in confidence by Field-Marshal Allenby that the ultimatum had been lying in his desk-drawer several days before the assassination. The Sirdar had been favourable towards Egyptian claims, and had been kept back in Cairo for three days beyond the appointed time.... This delay had given rise to comment." (Jacques Berque, Egypt, imperialism and revolution, London, 1972, pp. 388-389.) The French visitor was Maurice Pernot, author of travelogues, who claimed in his book Sur la route de l'Inde, Paris, 1927, p. 25, that the information about the ultimatum came from Šidqī Pasha, not Allenby. According to Pernot, Allenby told Šidqī he had the ultimatum before the murder, and simply modified it, making it more severe. But to consider that the ultimatum was already prepared is to ignore the intense controversy that

of British security must be noted. Murderous attacks on British officials and civilians in Cairo were not uncommon, and had been the subject of Residency representations to the Egyptian government. On 18 November - the day before Stack was shot - Bardsley, his private secretary, had cabled Khartoum warning of rumours abroad of a secret society, in Khartoum, "with the object of ousting very prominent officials - including the most prominent", and "though the matter may be wind it is advisable to take no risks".<sup>1</sup> Further, at the trial of Stack's assassins,<sup>2</sup> his A.D.C. testified that he had seen one of them loitering along Stack's customary route and had "noticed that the young man was observing us closely".<sup>3</sup> Despite all this, and the added danger of the already tense political climate, Stack had no escort, his movements were habitual, and his A.D.C. was not even armed.<sup>4</sup>

Even as Stack lay dying, Allenby cabled the foreign office with a list of demands he proposed to make of the Egyptian government. These

ensued between Allenby and the foreign office as to its terms. To say that Stack was "favourable toward Egyptian claims" is ridiculous. His delay in leaving is almost certainly irrelevant; he had already been in Cairo for three weeks; no one could have "kept him back". It is possible that Stack had in fact stayed on to discuss specifically the evacuation of the Egyptian Army from the Sudan. On the 10th Chamberlain had told Allenby that the "War Office are anxious that advantage should be taken of Sir Lee Stack's presence ... for his proposals to be discussed...." (Chamberlain to Allenby, 10/11/24, F.O. 371/10043.)

<sup>1</sup> Bardsley to Springfield, 18/11/24, SGA, PALACE 4/11/53. E.O. Springfield (1892- ) was asst. private secretary, 1924-25, and private secretary, 1926-27. (MacMichael, SPS, p. 42.)

<sup>2</sup> On 7 June 1925 eight Egyptians were sentenced to death for the murder of Sir Lee Stack. ("The Sirdar murder trial", p. 103.) One was later reprieved.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., testimony of Captain Campbell.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. Special protection for the governor-general while in Egypt was begun only after Stack's death. (Keown-Boyd, "Note to the minister of the interior", 28/2/25, F.O. 407/200.)

were an apology, apprehension and punishment of Stack's assailants, and payment of a large fine, "say quarter of a million", and "immediate application of scheme suggested in my telegram No. 352" (of 15 November, proposing evacuation of Egyptian troops from the Sudan).<sup>1</sup> In the meantime Allenby received a cable from the foreign office, despatched before the attack on Stack, suggesting Egyptian appointment of a member to a commission "to examine possibility of extending 300,000 feddan area in Gezira...".<sup>2</sup> Then, on the 20th, Allenby wired London with "modifications and additions" to his proposals, including a demand that "Egyptian government shall consent to increase as need may arise of land to be irrigated" in the Gezira.<sup>3</sup> It therefore seems probable that the controversial Gezira clause was an Allenby afterthought originating in a foreign office suggestion which he seized upon as a convenient way of dealing with a problem he had himself created in 1922. (See Appendix I.) Even before Stack's death the ultimatum was becoming a catch-all for every irritant to British interests in Egypt and the Sudan.

On the 20th Chamberlain instructed Allenby to include in his demands the appointment of an Egyptian member to a proposed Nile commission to examine the increase in Gezira irrigation.<sup>4</sup> Clearly the Residency and foreign office were suffering from delays in communication.

<sup>1</sup> Allenby to foreign office, 19/11/24, F.O. 371/10043.

<sup>2</sup> Foreign office to Allenby, 19/11/24, F.O. 371/10043. Murray's minute to Allenby's no. 352 stated that the Gezira was "a question of first class economic importance to the Sudan which will have to be taken up fairly soon with the Egyptian Gov't."

<sup>3</sup> Allenby to foreign office, 20/11/24, F.O. 371/10043.

<sup>4</sup> Chamberlain to Allenby, 20/11/24, F.O. 371/10043.

Allenby wanted the demands to be made before Zaghlūl could resign, thus giving "a signal proof of his incapacity and failure to conduct the affairs of his country".<sup>1</sup> Chamberlain, however, insisted that the Cabinet must approve any ultimatum before it was delivered,<sup>2</sup> and rejected the idea of a fine, since that "would be regarded abroad as vindictive ... whereas payment of annuity to Sudan government ... is amply justified."<sup>3</sup>

At about five p.m. on the 22nd Allenby, after cabling the foreign office that although its authority had not yet reached him he must act before Zaghlūl resigned,<sup>4</sup> delivered an ultimatum to him. The demands were prefaced by a statement that Stack's murder was the "natural outcome of a campaign of hostility to British rights and British subjects in Egypt and the Sudan". Britain therefore required that the Egyptian government should apologize for the crime; bring the criminals to justice; pay a fine of £500,000; "order within twenty-four hours the withdrawal from the Sudan of all Egyptian officers, and the purely Egyptian units of the Egyptian Army"; "notify the competent Department that the Sudan Government will increase the area to be irrigated at Gezira from 300,000 feddans to an unlimited figure as need may arise"; withdraw objections to British wishes regarding foreign interests in Egypt; and suppress political demonstrations. "Failing immediate compliance with these demands", it concluded, "His Majesty's Government will at once take appropriate action to safeguard their interests in Egypt and the

<sup>1</sup> Allenby to foreign office, 20/11/24, F.O. 371/10043.

<sup>2</sup> Chamberlain to Allenby, 21/11/24, F.O. 371/10043.

<sup>3</sup> Chamberlain to Allenby, 22/11/24, F.O. 371/10044.

<sup>4</sup> Allenby to foreign office, 22/11/24, F.O. 371/10044.

Sudan". A second communication specified that "the purely Sudanese element in the Egyptian Army" was "to be formed into a Sudan Defence Force under British command and responsible to the Sudan Government only."<sup>1</sup> Despite their apparent irrelevance to the assassination, the substantive demands were, as we have seen, the result of years of largely fruitless Anglo-Egyptian negotiations: Stack's death was not the cause of the ultimatum, but only affected its timing and exact contents.

The British cabinet had little choice but to support the ultimatum and, not surprisingly, Zaghlūl had no choice but to reject it. He agreed to an apology, fine, and prosecution of the murderers, but of the Sudan demands he ironically observed that "the new arrangement proposed for the Egyptian army ... constitutes a modification of the status quo which the British government had declared its desire to maintain".<sup>2</sup> Zaghlūl resigned on 24 November. Allenby told London that "foreign opinion expects us to do something striking", and proposed, among other measures, that "hostages should be taken if another Englishman or foreigner is murdered and ... be shot if murders continue".<sup>3</sup> This was evidently too much for Chamberlain, who despatched Neville Henderson to

<sup>1</sup> Allenby to foreign office, 22/11/24, F.O. 371/10044. The ultimatum approved by the Cabinet was similar, but omitted the fine, demanded instead an annuity of £E1,000,000 for the Sudan, called for such changes in the Gezira irrigation limits as could be made without detriment to Egypt, and demanded appointment of a member to a commission to decide these changes. (Foreign office to Allenby, 22/11/24, F.O. 371/10044.)

<sup>2</sup> Allenby to foreign office, 23/11/24, F.O. 371/10044. The bulk of the fine was used to set up the Sir Lee Stack Indemnity Fund, which financed medical projects, mostly in the southern Sudan. Between £E7,000 and £E8,000 was used to construct the tower of the Anglican cathedral in Khartoum. (SGA, PALACE 4/2/7.)

<sup>3</sup> Allenby to foreign office, 24/11/24, F.O. 371/10044.

Cairo with instructions about "the objects at which His Majesty's Government are aiming and the difficulties which they wish to avoid".<sup>1</sup> This Allenby naturally took as an expression of lack of confidence, which it was, and it led directly to his resignation in 1925. The despatch of Henderson publicized London's disapproval of Allenby without modifying the ultimatum responsible for that disapproval.<sup>2</sup> Chamberlain's principal concern was public opinion, which had seen the Gezira demand as a threat to starve Egypt of water,<sup>3</sup> and the ultimatum as a whole as "political exploitation of a favourable situation",<sup>4</sup> a fair enough assessment.

<sup>1</sup> Chamberlain to Allenby, 24/11/24, F.O. 371/10044. Sir Nevile Henderson (1882-1942) was later to become ambassador in Berlin, 1937-39. (DNB, 1941-1950, pp. 376-378.) Henderson, after reviewing the situation, supported Allenby's wording of the Gezira demand. (Henderson to Selby, 6/12/24, F.O. 800/264.)

<sup>2</sup> Henderson himself wrote that it was "absolutely undeniable" that his appointment had created "an unfortunate impression and effect" in Egypt. "Talk about the cook's hair in the consomme", he wrote privately to Selby, "if she had moulted entirely into the soup it would scarcely have been as unwelcome as my arrival in Cairo.... I always expected to be received at first as a Foreign Office spy but I did not anticipate much more than that...." (Henderson to Selby, 6/12/24, F.O. 800/264.)

<sup>3</sup> A British soldier in Cairo wrote that "the best part" of the ultimatum was "the clause about irrigation which practically means we shut off their water if they don't behave". (E.J. Montgomery to his parents, 23/11/24, Imperial War Museum, PP/MCR/21.) Sir Bertram Hornsby, a British resident in Egypt, thought the Sudan should be annexed, so that "we could always threaten to cut off Egyptian water.... there would never be any need to put the threat into execution - the Egyptians would accept anything we cared to impose on them rather than let things go to that point." (Note by Sir Bertram Hornsby, 21/11/24, MECOX.)

<sup>4</sup> See Sir Ronald Graham, Rome, to foreign office, 27/11/24, F.O. 371/10073.

"Drastic action"

The evacuation of the Egyptian units had for long been thoroughly planned by the military authorities in Khartoum. The scheme effected in November 1924 was the work of Colonel Huddleston and the ubiquitous Schuster, and was code-named, appropriately, "Plan 'E'".<sup>1</sup> In May Huddleston had prepared a memorandum detailing plans for reorganising the army and excluding Egyptians from it, for the reasons of political security commonly cited, but also for economic and administrative reasons.<sup>2</sup> It is important to note that "the possibility of the evacuation ... had been envisaged for some months ... by officers in the army".<sup>3</sup>

At 7:11 p.m. on 23 November, Zaghlūl having rejected the ultimatum, Khartoum was instructed to proceed with the evacuation.<sup>4</sup> Allenby had stipulated that the Egyptian troops would be allowed to retain arms but not ammunition, which, in Huddleston's words, changed the evacuation "from one approximating an act of war" into the mere "movement of troops under very abnormal conditions".<sup>5</sup> Five special troop trains had been prepared, and the plans at first went smoothly, but the third battalion and artillery, stationed at Khartoum North, refused to move without orders from King Fu'ād, and said they would meet force with force. Allenby

<sup>1</sup> Interview with Sir George Schuster, 19/5/76. As early as 1920 Keown-Boyd had submitted an evacuation plan. ("Report in 3 parts".)

<sup>2</sup> Huddleston, "Note on the future of the Egyptian Army", 17/5/24, DEP MILNER 165.

<sup>3</sup> Ewart report on political agitation, appendix 11.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Huddleston, "Report on the evacuation of Egyptian Units and officers from the Sudan", 26/12/24, F.O. 371/10879.



arranged for the war minister to send a message to the recalcitrant troops.<sup>1</sup> This letter arrived only on the 27th. The departure of the Egyptians was interrupted by news that the 11th Sudanese battalion had mutinied.

As has been noted, Stack told MacDonald in August that he could not guarantee order if his army proposals were not put into effect. There had been ample warning throughout the summer of disaffection in the army, but no apparent attempt to combat it. Willis wrote in July that "the most important recent addition to the classes whose political activities are under suspicion is that of the Sudanese officers on the active list."<sup>2</sup> Another report noted that the White Flag League "had gained about 20 from among the N.C.O.s and men of the XIth Btltn."<sup>3</sup> The arrest of 'Alī 'Abd al-Laṭīf and the cadets' mutiny added to the concern. Incidents of insubordination, involving both Egyptian and Sudanese soldiers, occurred at Wau in August and at Malakal in September. Enquiries into the former found that the "influences at work in the army" were doubts as to future prospects; the oath of allegiance to King Fu'ād; "unsatisfied conceit"; and "ill-considered nationalist aspirations".<sup>4</sup> The second of these, the oath, assumed great significance in the November mutiny at Khartoum. The first, concern over future prospects, had been continuous.

Huddleston had noted in May that Sudanese officers' pay was "excessive" and that "the native officer system is an extremely extrava-

<sup>1</sup> Allenby to foreign office, 25/11/24, F.O. 371/10044.

<sup>2</sup> Willis to private secretary, 1/7/24, F.O. 371/10905.

<sup>3</sup> Willis to private secretary and others, 3/7/24, SGA, PALACE 4/10/49.

<sup>4</sup> Ewart report on political agitation.

gant one". Most of the officers "might be absorbed in Civil Departments ... but it is open to question whether an entire cessation from granting commissions to natives would lead to considerable discontent in view of the fact that it is a well established custom and that many better class natives have been encouraged to look forward to their sons becoming officers." <sup>1</sup> In discussing the summer disturbances we have seen that the tiny intelligentsia felt justifiable unease about their future. This fear was shared by the Sudanese officer class. Indeed, the cadets' mutiny had been precipitated by the poor treatment of Sudanese candidates for the officer corps. 'Alī 'Abd al-Laṭīf was later to say that "the Egyptians had always told the Sudanese that the Sudanese officer would lose his status if the Egyptians disappeared and would be no more than a warrant officer". <sup>2</sup> As early as 1920 General Maxwell had written that "economy is everything for the future of the Sudan: any extravagance she indulges in should be in the direction of British personnel, not troops.... Writing as a soldier, it will, I know be difficult to get soldiers to agree to their own elimination...." <sup>3</sup> Keown-Boyd shared this view when he wrote for the Milner mission that it was "a debateable question whether the necessity for a Sudan Army exists, and whether public security cannot be fully maintained by a well-organised police force, on a gendarmerie basis, officered mainly by British". <sup>4</sup> Stack's

<sup>1</sup> Huddleston, "Note on the future of the Egyptian Army".

<sup>2</sup> Baily, journal entry, 30/11/24. In July Willis noted that the officers "appear to have been promised unlimited promotion in the Egyptian Army purged of British influence, whilst they see little hope of promotion or distinction in a Sudan Gendarmerie". (Willis to private secretary, 1/7/24, SGA, PALACE 4/10/49.)

<sup>3</sup> Maxwell to Milner, 3/5/20, DEP MILNER 161.

<sup>4</sup> Keown-Boyd, "Sudan 1920", n.d. (March 1920), DEP MILNER 161.

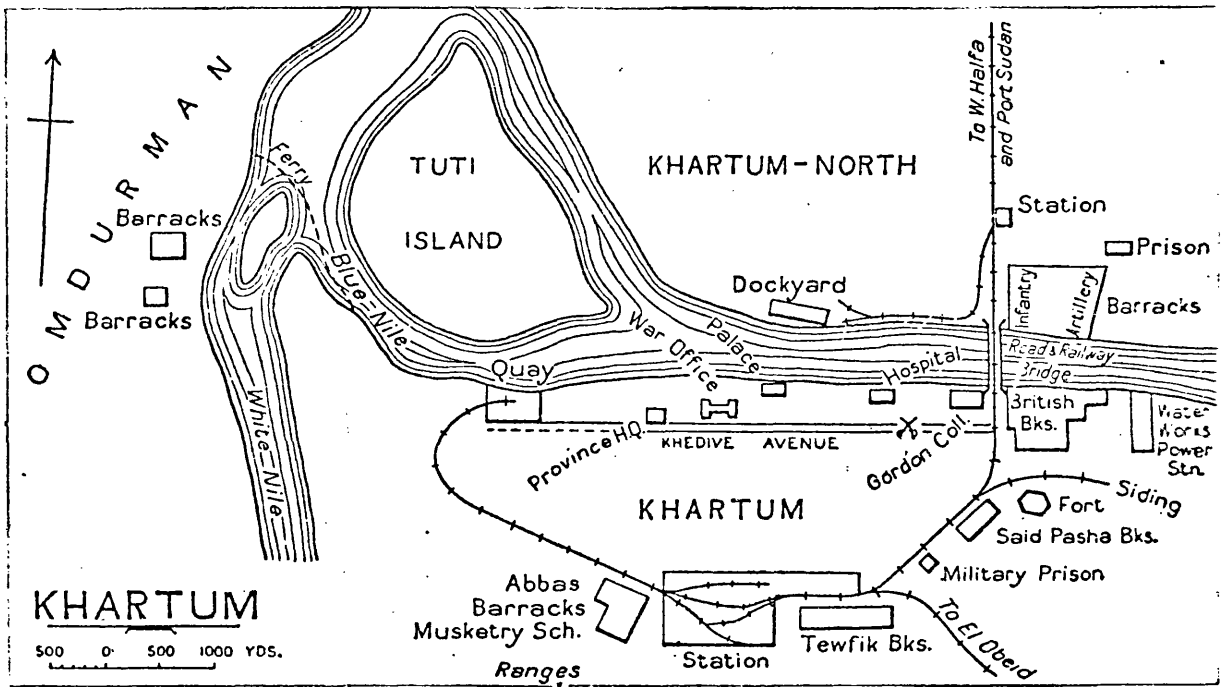
own memorandum of 25 May 1924 actually called for the disbandment of the Sudanese battalions. As Sudanese officials reacted against an apprehended diminution of their standing, so too perhaps did Sudanese officers react to the possibility of their being left, not only without hope of promotion - the unsatisfied conceit of the Ewart report - but without any positions at all. The government did nothing to ease these fears.

Reports on the mutiny of the 11th Sudanese on 27-28 November consistently blamed Egyptian officers for its instigation. According to the Ewart report, a meeting was held on the 25th among the Egyptian officers in Khartoum North, and they elected Ahmad Rif<sup>c</sup>at Bey of the artillery as sirdar. <sup>1</sup> Sudanese officers were then incited to demonstrate and were promised that "the moment the first shot was fired, the Egyptian artillery would support them by shelling the fort, the palace, the British barracks, and other important places". The Sudanese "ringleaders" were reported to be two officers of the 11th. They led their men in a march to the Musketry School where they were joined by other Sudanese officers and where they forced open the magazines and collected guns and ammunition. <sup>2</sup> Baily, the acting governor of Khartoum, considered, however, that there was no intention of violence on the part of the Sudanese. This was demonstrated by their actions: "the mutineers had numerous opportunities of offering violence to British officers, officials and others, of none of which did they take advantage". Indeed, when they approached the War Office, "nothing could have prevented them from entering the building and killing the whole General Staff ...

<sup>1</sup> Ewart report on political agitation, appendix 11.

<sup>2</sup> "Report by director of intelligence", 22/12/24, enclosed in Allenby to Chamberlain, 13/1/25, F.O. 371/10879.

Map of Khartoum



Source: Gwynn, Imperial policing.

had they desired to do so." <sup>1</sup> In fact the objective of the mutineers was to join the Egyptian units in Khartoum North. <sup>2</sup> (See map.)

As they headed toward the Blue Nile bridge the marchers were met by Col. McCowan, the officer-commanding Khartoum district, who ordered them to halt and asked where they were going. They said:

'To join our brothers of the 3rd Battalion in Khartoum North'. He did his utmost to turn them back, warning them that they would be fired upon if they tried to advance, and would have succeeded had the men been alone; but the officers counteracted his efforts and threatened him with their revolvers.... <sup>3</sup>

Huddleston, as acting sirdar, determined to attempt exerting his personal influence on the men, who had halted on Khedive Avenue, somewhat to the west of Gordon College. His own account of the ensuing events is as follows:

By the time we arrived at the platoons it was almost dark.... so as to give the mutineers every opportunity I went forward myself. I halted about 80 yards from them and called out very loudly 'I am the Sirdar'. I got no response. I went about 20 yards closer and called out 'I am Huddleston Pasha'. Someone answered me in very clear Arabic who I think was an officer but could not see 'We do not know Huddleston Pasha, we know only Rifat Pasha'. I repeated my name and he repeated his answer. I then said 'Will you take my orders?' He said 'No! I will only take Rifat Pasha's orders'. I left him, returned to the Argylls and ordered Major Couper to open Vickers fire. It was almost 18:30 hours. <sup>4</sup>

The first shots of the mutiny were thus fired by British troops under the direct orders of the acting sirdar.

<sup>1</sup> Ewart report on political agitation, appendix 11.

<sup>2</sup> Baily, journal entry, 27/11/24.

<sup>3</sup> "Report of director of intelligence", 22/12/24.

<sup>4</sup> Huddleston to Spinks, 28/11/24, SGA, PALACE 4/11/55.

Events then unfolded swiftly. After the firing began the Sudanese troops rushed into the nearby military hospital compound (see map) where they killed one British and two Syrian doctors and three Egyptians.<sup>1</sup> A cordon of British troops was drawn up around the buildings, but during the night "parties of mutineers" managed to escape. Some of these, Baily remarked, "were hunted down next day and killed or captured by the police, but the majority made their way back to barracks in Omdurman".<sup>2</sup> In the morning, after "repeated attempts to dislodge them with machine gun fire and bombing", a howitzer was brought in and fired at point-blank range on the building in which the mutineers had taken cover. An attempt to rush them failed. "It was only after four hours continuous slow shellfire, bombing, machine gun and rifle fire that all fire ceased and the house was occupied without further casualties. There were no survivors...."<sup>3</sup> So ended the mutiny of the 11th Sudanese. Four officers were tried and sentenced to death for their parts in the rising. Three were executed on 5 December and one officer's sentence was commuted by Huddleston to fifteen years in prison.<sup>4</sup>

What had happened? The evidence indicates that the mutineers were in fact conducting what they felt was a political demonstration:

<sup>1</sup> Baily, journal entry, 27/11/24. Willis said that "this invasion of the hospital and its compound was the immediate result of the opening of fire on the mutineers". (Willis, "Report of director of intelligence".)

<sup>2</sup> Ewart report on political agitation, appendix 11.

<sup>3</sup> Huddleston to Spinks, 28/11/24, SGA, PALACE 4/11/55. Willis said the shelling lasted seven hours. ("Report of director of intelligence on mutiny of November 27-28," 22/12/24, enclosed in Allenby to Chamberlain, 13/1/25, F.O. 371/10879.)

<sup>4</sup> Sterry to Allenby, 7/12/24, SGA, PALACE 4/11/55. An interesting account of the rising is in Gwynn, Imperial policing, pp. 150-180.

in this sense the events of 27 November fall into the pattern established during the summer. The troops had

proceeded down Khedivial Avenue, and even while they deployed to face the cordon of British troops ... British officials, accompanied by their wives and children, passed among them, all unsuspecting of anything more than a precautionary practice parade. ... Not a house was entered; not a person was molested. These and similar instances prove that there was no spirit of fanaticism, or even of lawlessness, behind the movement....<sup>1</sup>

Despite the conclusions of the Ewart report, there was little solid evidence of Egyptian "complicity".<sup>2</sup> A more persuasive argument for the cause of the rising was given by Willis: the confusion of the Sudanese troops as to where their loyalty lay. Their "reputation as officers and gentlemen" was at stake and they looked to the government "to show them the way out...."<sup>3</sup> The Ewart report, hardly sympathetic to dissidents, described the officers' position as "impossible", and said that "there is no getting away from the fact that the higher the mental capacity of the native officer, the more reason he had, latterly, for doubt as to where his allegiance lay".<sup>4</sup> Nor was this realisation the result of the Ewart report. In September Davies had written a remarkable (for him) report of an interview with a Sudanese officer:

<sup>1</sup> Ewart report on political agitation.

<sup>2</sup> Baily, "Memorandum on Egyptian complicity in the mutiny of the 27th and 28th November 1924", 21/12/24, SGA, PALACE 4/11/55.

<sup>3</sup> Willis to C.S.O. & A.G. (Huddleston), 27/11/24, SGA, PALACE 4/11/55.

<sup>4</sup> Ewart report on political agitation. Huddleston had said in September that anti-British officers "cannot be called disloyal as they are loyal to King Fuad to whom they have taken oath. They are in fact his officers and not ours.... Even if final settlement perpetuates Anglo-Egyptian Sudan its army must be Anglo only." (Huddleston to Stack, 3/9/24, quoted in Stack to MacDonald, 16/9/24, F.O. 371/10053.)

I found him intelligent and well-mannered. He expressed his views quietly, with an air of sincerity and, clearly, spoke with a considerable sense of responsibility.

He observed that the oath of allegiance he had taken to the person of King Fuad ... was much more formidable than that taken to his predecessors.... he ... had done his best to evade it. The oath was imposed on him by his British superior officers. He was, he said, of those who take their religion seriously, and he therefore felt himself to be completely bound by his oath.... I formed the opinion that this officer and his like would certainly refuse to obey any order which was quite obviously designed to break the tie between themselves and King Fuad which their oath constitutes. It seems to me, further, that they might obey, in those circumstances, a counter-order emanating directly from the Egyptian Minister of War. <sup>1</sup>

This was written to Huddleston two months before the mutiny.

When the Egyptian units in Khartoum North refused to entrain, an order was obtained from the war minister, which they obeyed. Why was this procedure not followed with the Sudanese troops? Would it have been too embarrassing politically to be seen to be negotiating with the troops? Was the 11th Sudanese treated as an example in order to prevent a general rising? In any case a trigger-happy attitude seemed to prevail. At the Palace, where British residents had been collected, "all the civilian men were given guns (rifles) and put on guard and they seemed to thoroughly enjoy it", <sup>2</sup> waiting for an attack that never came and no doubt daydreaming a reenactment of the Gordon passion. C.G. Dupuis, <sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Davies to C.S.O. & A.G. (Huddleston), 15/9/24, SGA, PALACE 4/9/44. In October Huddleston himself wrote that in the Malakal disturbance officers had cried "'Long live Fuad King of Egypt and the Sudan'.... They feel secure in their use of it as its use cannot be termed mutinous or seditious". Huddleston suggested an order forbidding the cry to "show that incitement to mutiny ... would be vigorously dealt with in future". (Huddleston to Stack, 13/10/24, SGA, PALACE 4/9/47.)

<sup>2</sup> Mrs. Gladys Leak to her mother, 30/11/24, Rhodes House, Oxford, MSS. Afr. S416.

<sup>3</sup> Charles George Dupuis (1886-1940) served in Khartoum, 1909, 1914-17; Sennar, 1910-13; Kordofan, 1917-22; Darfur, 1922-26; as governor of Fung, 1927-28; and as governor of Darfur, 1928-35. (MacMichael, SPS, p. 21.)



"leaning out of the window of the Governor's Office while [the bombardment of the military hospital] was going on mistook a warder for an enemy and shot him dead". That "tragic mistake", Baily said, "might have happened to anyone. The respective uniforms were almost identical."<sup>1</sup> While the shelling went on, Huddleston composed a letter to a British official "who had complained of the noise made by a gramophone" at the hospital: "'I am now bombarding the building'", wrote Huddleston, "'and I hope that the nuisance you referred to will be abated.'"<sup>2</sup> When a Sudanese officer, who had been Stack's aide-de-camp, later suggested that the mutineers might have been allowed to join the Egyptians or that Rif'at Bey should have been brought to reason with them, Huddleston wrote that "if an officer like Okeil, an intelligent and high-class Arab who has spent all his service in close contact with British officers, holds these opinions, what can one expect from the low-class and more stupid black officer".<sup>3</sup> It seems fair to conclude that the situation might have been managed without bloodshed.<sup>4</sup> But if Huddleston

<sup>1</sup> Baily, journal entry, 28/11/24. With only two platoons of one battalion resisting authority, how could an "enemy" be identified by his uniform?

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Huddleston to Spinks, 1/12/24, SGA, PALACE 4/11/55.

<sup>4</sup> In contrast to the hospital siege, Baily and two others went to the barracks of the Hamla Battalion (a Sudanese unit). "To our unfeigned relief", he wrote, "a party of unarmed men issued from the barracks. .... we shook hands and said 'We have come to talk over a misunderstanding, not to make war'. We then walked into the barracks. The guard saluted us...." The commander of the Sudanese Mounted Infantry, named Adair, "a natural leader of 'native' troops and officers", explained the situation to the men. "We then left everybody smiling and with confidence in the Govt.", wrote Baily, and they returned to the governor's office for champagne. (Baily, journal entry, 28/11/24.)

overreacted or showed disregard or a lack of understanding of the nuances of the problem he (and the Sudanese officers) were facing, there is no indication that his handling of the rising was ever officially questioned.<sup>1</sup>

Other less serious disturbances occurred as a result of the evacuation. At Talodi, Egyptian officers refused to hand over their weapons and were supported by their Sudanese colleagues. The entire 10th Sudanese battalion eventually became involved, shots were fired, but there were no casualties and calm was restored with the arrival of a British force and an order from the Egyptian war minister to the resisting officers.<sup>2</sup>

A minor but widely publicized disturbance occurred at the Khartoum North central prison where, among others, the mutinous cadets and political prisoners were interned. The Ewart report was highly critical of the laughably inadequate prison regime. Some political prisoners, like 'Alī 'Abd al-Laṭīf, had the run of the prison; the wardens were retired soldiers: their senior n.c.o. was "an infirm and senile veteran of 90"; "sing-songs and political discussions took place", involving prisoners, visitors and staff alike. This friendly atmosphere was troubled on 11 November when thirty-four of the cadets were sentenced to eight years' imprisonment. On the 18th a dispute began over food, and on the

<sup>1</sup> Schuster later wrote that the "real right time for [Huddleston to take] precautions was before the incidents happened. It only bore out exactly what I had expected from his own telegrams." ("Rough notes by Col. Schuster", 3/12/24, F.O. 371/10883.) Henderson later observed that "there would appear to have been more ignorance and childishness than real malice and disloyalty to the British" behind the mutiny. ("Notes on a visit to the Sudan, January 10-25, 1925", 5/2/25, F.O. 800/264.)

<sup>2</sup> Ewart report on political agitation.

24th the political prisoners took over the entire prison. Contact was made with the Egyptian troops of the 3rd battalion and artillery, from whom the prisoners expected assistance. <sup>1</sup> Muḥammad al-Mahdī (above, p. 205) and 'Ubayd Ḥājj al-Amīn (above, p. 195 et passim) were named as the prime movers in the trouble and were later sentenced to seven and six years respectively. <sup>2</sup> On 1 December the rioters were told that further hostility would result in their being shot, and they surrendered. <sup>3</sup> The prison riot, or "mutiny", was of no long-term significance. Involving as it did political prisoners it thereby took on a political aspect. Sound security would have prevented the disturbance altogether. Its beginning the day before the attack on Stack was a coincidence. The riot belongs to the catalogue of demonstrations of the summer of 1924, of which it was the last.

The evacuation of the Egyptian units and officers went on, over twenty-six hundred men leaving on special trains by 4 December. On 28 December Huddleston reported that except for a few officers, details in the Baḥr al-Ghazāl and personnel of the Medical and Mechanical Transport corps, the evacuation was complete. <sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Proceedings of a magisterial inquiry as to events in the Central Prison Khartoum North", 5/12/24, SGA, PALACE 4/10/51.

<sup>2</sup> "Prison riot trial", n.d., SGA, PALACE 4/10/51.

<sup>3</sup> Ewart report on political agitation, appendix 10. See also "Report by director of prisons on mutiny in Central Prison, Khartoum North", 6/12/24, F.O. 371/10879.

<sup>4</sup> Huddleston, "Report on the evacuation of Egyptian units and officers from the Sudan".

Aftermath: the Condominium retained

The pressure to take "drastic action" did not cease with the delivery of the British ultimatum to Egypt. On 21 November Sterry, the acting governor-general, demanded of Allenby that the Egyptian flag should be hauled down,<sup>1</sup> and while the ultimatum seemed to mollify him, the disturbances in Khartoum reopened the question. On 29 November the governor-general's council met and were unanimous that "abolition of condominium is more imperative than ever". Allenby, however, failed to see that "events of last few days or previous events justify abolition of condominium".<sup>2</sup>

Allenby's moderation is understandable. It was he, after all, who would be responsible for steering Anglo-Egyptian relations back to a workable position, and as Henderson later put it, "the maintenance of the Egyptian flag ... remains as a lever with which ... to exert pressure on Egypt in the future and in the nature of a reminder to her to exercise caution lest the cut with the Sudan become complete".<sup>3</sup> But at the foreign office there was a fear that Allenby was "getting on, or believes he is getting on, so well with Zivar's government [which had taken office on 24 November] that he is naturally anxious not to ask for anything which would endanger the conclusion of an agreement which he is inclined to consider satisfactory".<sup>4</sup> Even though things had "gone

<sup>1</sup> Baily, journal entry, 21/11/24.

<sup>2</sup> Telegram, Allenby to foreign office, 30/11/24, F.O. 371/10045.

<sup>3</sup> Henderson, "Notes on a visit to the Sudan".

<sup>4</sup> Murray, note dated December 1924, F.O. 371/10047. Lord Derby (war minister, 1922-24) told Chamberlain to "keep a watch on Allenby. He has got rather a knack of doing the strong thing and then whittling

incredibly well", Schuster wrote, the Residency were "back at their old game of trying to negotiate for a friendly settlement.... We haven't nearly finished our fight with Egypt...." <sup>1</sup>

This new phase of Anglo-Egyptian negotiations centred on a bargain whereby Egypt would pay an annuity to the Sudan Government in exchange for insurance of her water rights. Chamberlain warned that if the Egyptians did not come to terms, they "should be prepared for the consequences", <sup>2</sup> and when there was haggling over the manner in which the annuity should be paid, he observed that the Egyptians seemed to be forgetting that "the maintenance of the condominium is very much more in their interest than it is in ours". Barring a settlement, he noted ominously, the Egyptians would have to rely on the "goodwill of His Majesty's Government which they have done nothing to deserve". <sup>3</sup>

A commission was duly established, and an Egyptian annuity agreed upon. But the refusal to strike the Egyptian flag "knocked the heart out" of the British in Khartoum:

it down afterwards...." (Derby to Chamberlain, 26/11/24, F.O. 800/256.) Allenby admitted as much: he told the foreign office that he had deliberately made the demands on Zaghlūl excessive to frighten the Egyptians and to make it easy for a new Egyptian government to settle for reduced demands. (Allenby to foreign office, 27/11/24, F.O. 371/10045.)

<sup>1</sup> "Rough notes by Col. Schuster".

<sup>2</sup> Chamberlain to Allenby, 15/12/24, F.O. 371/10046.

<sup>3</sup> Chamberlain to Allenby, 31/12/24, F.O. 371/10046.

How can we carry on? [wrote Baily] We have held the name of Egypt up to scorn and contempt. We and the Sudanese have rejoiced in at last being able to join together in a common execration. We unceremoniously boot them out. Yet we keep their flag.... The F.O. are saying in diplomatic language that they want just one more murder before allowing us to haul down the flag. <sup>1</sup>

It was up to the Treasury to settle the matter. Egypt should not be relieved "at the expense of the British taxpayer" of costs she had until November borne. The greatest possible Egyptian financial contribution should be accepted, "whether military or otherwise". <sup>2</sup> The Egyptian government, of course, was more than willing to pay, since a subvention would allow some influence, no matter how vestigial, to be exerted in the Sudan. Henderson went to Khartoum and emphasised the "necessity of doing nothing to hinder the present [Egyptian] Government in its difficult but essential task of crushing Saad Zaghlul and his party". <sup>3</sup> Thus the Sudan question had reverted to the position of one issue in the larger context of Anglo-Egyptian relations, a position it had, briefly in 1924, escaped.

The declaration of 1922, despite its professed intention, was in fact a device to prolong the status quo. This is did successfully in Egypt, where Britain was unwilling to make any concessions and was invulnerable to pressure. It was no doubt hoped that this would be the case in the Sudan as well. Indeed, even by declaring the Sudan as "absolutely reserved" to their discretion the British had stolen a march on the Egyptians. The declaration strengthened the British case legally, just as the propagandized Sudanese loathing of Egypt had been used to

<sup>1</sup> Baily, journal entry, 7/12/24.

<sup>2</sup> Niemeyer (Treasury) to foreign office, 4/2/25, F.O. 371/10883.

<sup>3</sup> Henderson, "Notes on a visit to the Sudan".

strengthen it morally. But the outbursts of 1924 threatened to destroy that case unless and until they could be blamed entirely on treacherous Egyptian influence. Thus the status quo became unacceptable to London, interpreted and coloured as it was by the indefatigable Schuster and a heavily dramatized account of Sudanese events. Zaghlūl, for his part, would not be reconciled, but would not reach an agreement because no agreement signed by Britain could even approach his oft-proclaimed goals, and for the moment agitation in the Sudan was producing British discomfiture. What he had not bargained for, and on this most contemporaries agreed, was the action of the uncontrolled (and uncontrollable) fringe of Egyptian nationalism. The assassination of Stack revived the force of Britain's waning moral arguments and invested the political demands of the ultimatum with an aura of righteous wrath.

The role of the Sudan Government in moving Britain from a policy of maintaining the status quo, from which neither the dilatory Balfour nor the imperious Curzon had publicly deviated, to a policy of "drastic action" was decisive. That the Sudan should have been able to influence the debate to this extent is remarkable: it would have been inconceivable for Wingate to have been in such a position in the days when Cromer, Kitchener, or even Gorst were British Agents in Cairo. But since the end of the war and especially after 1922 the Sudan assumed much greater economic and political importance, as the Gezira Scheme neared completion and as Egypt won nominal independence. Stack and Schuster also had the advantage, exploited so well by Wingate before them, of having a monopoly of information from the Sudan. Thus when Stack warned of having to reconquer the Sudan again, the home government had to listen, no matter how nonsensical the claim. The Sudan Government wanted the Egyptians out, and any settlement falling short of that goal was unacceptable. Insofar, therefore, as Zaghlūl has been portrayed as

the intransigent obstacle to accord in 1924, the popular view of him, as of the ultimatum, has been purposefully misleading.

The assassination of Sir Lee Stack and the troubles that preceded and followed it were to have long-term effects, some of which will be discussed in the next chapter. It might be apposite here to make a few observations as to those events. Whether or not one ascribes blame for the manner in which the mutiny of the 11th Sudanese was put down, the attitude contributory to it, that denied Sudan Government responsibility for events in the Sudan, should be noted. Whatever the role of Egyptian propaganda, there were real and obvious Sudanese grievances behind the 1924 troubles. And as one Residency official pointed out:

It is not to be believed ... that if you could cut out Egyptian influences everything would be comfortable again. It is no doubt a true generalisation ... that the Sudanese don't like the Egyptians, but it doesn't follow that they do like us - a supposition which, though it seems to be frequent, is not reasonable. Why in the world should they...? <sup>1</sup>

Simply put, the Sudan Government had much too high an opinion of itself, the result of the self-congratulatory ethos of the Wingate era, its own propaganda, and its isolation from outside scrutiny and criticism. The depiction of the Egyptians as villains immunized the government from blame, just criticism, and even legitimate argument.

The matter of competence may be raised in connection with the Sudan Government's preparation for and reaction to the 1924 trouble. We have seen that warnings of disaffection in the ranks were apparently ignored or discounted; that the central prison, packed to overflowing with political prisoners was nonetheless hopelessly insecure; etc. In his September letter to Selby, Furness doubted "whether those who know about money" in the Sudan Government were "sufficiently counterpoised

<sup>1</sup> R.A. Furness to Selby, 27/9/24, F.O. 800/218.



by those who know about discontent".<sup>1</sup> If dire events were anticipated, as the government kept indicating all summer, why were most senior officials on leave?<sup>2</sup> Intelligence was inadequate, and while Stack arranged in the summer for Ewart to conduct his enquiries, this was too little too late. Injected into the triangular Anglo-Egyptian conflict in 1924 was a personal element, not of decisive but of contributory importance. Since forcing the 1922 declaration and even before, Allenby had not been admired in the foreign office, nor in the Sudan where mistrust of high commissioners was endemic. Allenby and Chamberlain fell out over the despatch of Henderson, and Allenby despised Zaghlūl, a fact not to be ignored in assessing the former's timing of the ultimatum.

Allenby and Chamberlain agreed, however, as to the role of the Sudan in Anglo-Egyptian relations. When the bargaining over the Egyptian annuity was going on and the Sudan Government demanded that the payments be earmarked for "general" rather than "military" purposes, Chamberlain observed that the Sudan Government's position implied "an independence of Egypt which the Sudan does not possess", a Cromeresque phrase guaranteed to alarm the Sudan Government. Despite his difference with Allenby, Chamberlain wrote that he did

not want to destroy the condominium and still less to make the position of a friendly Egyptian government more difficult.... Sudan administration seems to me to be thinking exclusively of its own difficulties. They must take account also of yours and of the broader aspects of our whole position.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Furness to Selby, 27/9/24, F.O. 800/218.

<sup>2</sup> Henderson later noted that in 1924 the civil, legal and financial secretaries had all served as acting governor-general. In 1923, incredibly, the post had also been occupied by the chief justice and by the general manager of the Sudan Railways. (Henderson, "Notes on a visit to the Sudan".)

<sup>3</sup> Chamberlain to Allenby, 23/12/24, F.O. 371/10047.

Thus the Sudan Government had forcefully to be reminded that the Sudan was still essentially an issue in Anglo-Egyptian relations. The British "coup d'état" against the Egyptians had not altered that fundamental fact. What it had done, however, was to give the Sudan Government a much freer hand in internal administration and, by humiliating the Egyptians through forced evacuation, to make a strong impression on the Sudanese.

Chapter IV: The Beginnings Of Indirect Rule

Almost without exception the memoirs and histories written by British officials of the Sudan Government in the 1920s state that Indirect Rule came to the Sudan as the result of two unrelated events: the dissemination of Lord Lugard's The dual mandate in British tropical Africa (1922) and the arrival of Sir John Maffey as governor-general in 1926. Whether one accepts this or not depends largely upon the definition of Indirect Rule employed. In 1918 C.L. Temple, in Native races and their rulers, defined it as a system "which leaves in existence the administrative machinery which had been created by the natives themselves.... by which European influence is brought to bear on the native indirectly, through his chiefs, and not directly through European officers...." <sup>1</sup> But in 1934 Margery Perham stressed a more progressive aspect of the concept by defining Indirect Rule as

a system by which the tutelary power recognizes existing African societies, and assists them to adapt themselves to the functions of local government. This recognition is a legal one.... The system gives to native institutions the fixity and status that only detailed statutory recognition can give.... <sup>2</sup>

There have been, of course, other definitions, but all shared the idea of employing traditional authority rather than relying on an unadulterated European conception of administration. The apparent liberality of this attitude was always an attractive aspect of Indirect Rule and one not overlooked by its proponents in the Sudan. Indeed, they would have

<sup>1</sup> C.L. Temple, Native races and their rulers, Cape Town, 1918, p. 30. Charles Lindsay Temple (1871-1929) was chief secretary, Northern Nigeria, 1910-13, and lt. governor, Protectorate of Nigeria, 1914-17. (WWV, 1929-1940, p. 1332.)

<sup>2</sup> Margery Perham, "Some problems of Indirect Rule in Africa", Journal of the Royal African Society, XXXIV, supplement to April number (with separate pagination), p. 4. Cf. I.F. Nicolson, The administration of Nigeria 1900-1960, Oxford, 1969, pp. 124-179.

accepted Margery Perham's definition because it gave to a backward-looking idea a liberal veneer and the sophistication of a sound theoretical foundation which, in fact, it lacked.

If the Lugardian practice in Northern Nigeria is used for purposes of definition, Indirect Rule came late to the Sudan, though even then not so late as 1927. But the relative lateness of the system's formal theoretical adoption does not mean that the Sudan had been before then subject to "direct rule" or, in fact, to any clearly definable and systematically enforced method of administration. Indirect Rule itself meant different things simultaneously in the Sudan. Its lack of a concise definition was convenient, since the resulting vagueness allowed a multiplicity of interpretations geared both to local conditions and the preferences of local officials. Indeed, as we have seen, the theoretically direct rule of the Wingate years was an ideal rather than the reality, descriptive rather of a theory than of a working system, but nonetheless productive of slow, steady results and increasing centralisation. Direct rule in practice, however, placed an intolerable burden on the few British inspectors. From the outset that burden was shared with Sudanese traditional authority.

The impulse of the early Condominium was to continue the centralising policies of the Turco-Egyptian and Mahdist regimes. Tribal policy was to be, in Kitchener's words, "to seek out the better class of native, through whom we may hope to influence the whole population".<sup>1</sup> Shaykhs were perceived not as natural leaders to be left alone, but as the logical (in fact the only possible) agents of the government among the population. They comprised a pliable class who could be told what

<sup>1</sup> Kitchener, "Memorandum to Mudirs", enclosed in Cromer to Salisbury, 17/3/99, F.O. 78/5022.

to do and replaced if they proved uncooperative or ineffective. The power of tribal leaders was thus dissipated, as its exercise was considered by the government, and judged by the people, to be by leave of the inspector and the Khartoum regime behind him.<sup>1</sup> This deterioration of tribal authority was a logical result of government interference, which was consequent to a lack of commitment to the professed aim of associating shaykhs in the real business of administration.

There were exceptions to the rule of degenerating tribal authority: the chief impetus toward Indirect Rule came from the provinces where it retained considerable vigour. These were the provinces with a largely nomadic population, where the problems of finance and personnel were acute. Despite Khartoum's advocacy of direct rule, and the theoretical chain of responsibility, in practice local arrangements were made by local officials. In western and northern Kordofan, for instance, inspectors "had surreptitiously given a great deal of power to the shaykhs.... the inspector was supposed to do everything but he just couldn't".<sup>2</sup> There simply was not the staff or money to maintain any but the lightest supervision of nomadic tribes. A lackadaisical approach was common even in provincial centres. As late as 1923 the governor of Bahr al-Ghazāl told Sterry, the legal secretary, of a system of chiefs' courts (lukikos) that had been instituted there. Sterry remarked that

This I think is the first I have heard of the Organisation of Chiefs Courts. I have no objection to raise and in any case I imagine it is only putting a system which has always existed on a rather more regular basis; but it would be convenient if I could be informed fully of such arrangements if only for the purpose of having a

<sup>1</sup> See Warburg, The Sudan under Wingate, pp. 142-147.

<sup>2</sup> Interview with Sir Angus Gillan, 24/5/76. See also Warburg, The Sudan under Wingate, pp. 142-147.

complete record ... of what the actual system of administration of justice is in all parts of the Sudan....<sup>1</sup>

So far, therefore, as any generalisation at all can be applied to the Sudan administration before the end of World War I, it might be said to have followed two different lines: one, in compliance with the letter and spirit of official policy, and backed by the convictions of many administrators, that increasingly imposed direct rule and diminished already shaky tribal authority, especially in the riverain areas of the north; the other, responding rather to necessity than to theory and again consonant with the preference of local officials, had few pretensions beyond maintaining law and order, collecting taxes and correcting what were seen as serious abuses of tribal authority. Davies, a central figure in the ensuing debate between the two schools, having been inspector in Kordofan (1912-20) wrote for example that until 1913 'Alī al-Tūm's authority had been absolute: "Everyone knew in a vague way that somewhere in the background was El Hukuma, the Government, but none of its myrmidons had ever lived in Dar Kababish".<sup>2</sup>

The close of the war occasioned several changes which have been detailed above: the spectacular rise of Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān and the uncertainty attached to his motives and ends; the attempt to accelerate the removal of Egyptians from civil and military positions; and the beginnings of a secular opposition. All of these, together with the financial situation, necessitated (or so it seemed) a rethinking of the government's position in relation to the various religious and tribal institutions, and a judgement as to what form of administration should be

<sup>1</sup> Sterry to governor, Bah̄r al-Ghazāl, 25/8/23, SGA, CIVSEC 1/9/31.

<sup>2</sup> Davies, The camel's back, p. 64. 'Alī al-Tūm's image as the archetypal tribal ruler assumed majestic proportions in Davies's (and other) memoirs. See also Warburg, The Sudan under Wingate, p. 145.

adopted to reflect the changed circumstances. The end of the war also saw the appointment as assistant civil secretary of MacMichael, whose views on matters of administration were to prove decisive. From the role of Willis in policy towards Mahdism it can be appreciated how one man could dominate a field and, indeed, the government itself as MacMichael came to do. Regarding administration he was to write in later years that "the native"

has his chief, secular or religious, and expects to have to obey him and to see authority upheld. To tell him that in the eyes of that curious phenomenon, the Law, all men are equal, is merely to condemn the Law as an ass.... A sense of homage is natural to him. It is a good and sensible instinct, and it must be given scope. <sup>1</sup>

On the practical side, MacMichael held that

It is of vital importance that we get the best men to be Sheikhs if we are to expect them to exercise any authority and so gradually relieve the administrative staff of the Government of a proportion of its work.... the average Sheikh in many provinces is little better than a local scallywag deputed by the villagers to do such things as the Government require Sheikhs to do. <sup>2</sup>

#### The remuneration of shaykhs

To ensure that shaykhs were the "best men" it was important that the position be made an attractive one. Despite universal recognition not only of the services they rendered but also of their meagre compensation, the position of the tribal shaykh, with some notable exceptions like 'Alī al-Tūm, had generally deteriorated throughout the Wingate

<sup>1</sup> MacMichael, The Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, p. 240. This quotation paraphrases "The Sudan Historical Survey", 1924, SGA, PALACE 1/3/63.

<sup>2</sup> MacMichael to financial secretary, 29/3/22, SGA, CIVSEC 20/21/97.

years.<sup>1</sup> Attempts to alleviate the financial plight of umdas and shaykhs during Stack's governor-generalship were frustrated by Bernard, the financial secretary until 1922. Though reforms of the system of shaykhs' remuneration were constantly demanded, as indeed they had been during Wingate's tenure, the power of the financial secretary to interfere in political matters through his control of the purse was not broken (but in fact increased) even with Bernard's dismissal.

The issue of remuneration was raised at the Governors' Meeting of 1918, which unanimously agreed that the present system was inadequate in view of the shaykhs' "multifarious and continuous duties and loyal services", which were "continually increasing".<sup>2</sup> The current rates (1% of the date tax collected; 1½% of the land tax; 5% of the animal tax; 2½% of the ushur; and 10% of the tribute)<sup>3</sup> while perhaps seemingly generous, were in fact exceedingly low. The governors recommended payment at the rate of 10% in all categories. That shaykhs' duties were "continually increasing" was evidence of the conception of tribal leaders as merely another level of bureaucracy, whose role would be the greater as, in Feilden's words, "the Government administers the country more closely".<sup>4</sup>

Bernard complained that the increase suggested would cost about £E21,000 a year, that a higher rate would tempt shaykhs "to limit their efforts", and that in any case "the financial situation does not ...

<sup>1</sup> Warburg, The Sudan under Wingate, pp. 146-147.

<sup>2</sup> Extracts from Governors' Meeting, 1918, enclosed in Feilden to financial secretary, 12/8/18, SGA, CIVSEC 20/21/97.

<sup>3</sup> "Remuneration of Omdas and Sheikhs for collection of taxes", n.d., SGA, CIVSEC 20/21/97.

<sup>4</sup> Feilden to financial secretary, 12/8/18, SGA, CIVSEC 20/21/97.



permit of such a large sum being found".<sup>1</sup> There then began a long process of procrastination about which Feilden and MacMichael could do nothing. In May 1919 Feilden suggested an increase of the rate to 5% of land and date taxes and ushur, and 10% of animal tax and tribute.<sup>2</sup> The financial secretary's office promised that, while it was too late to act upon the request that year, it would be included in the estimates for 1920.<sup>3</sup> MacMichael insisted that the "loyal cooperation" of shaykhs and umdas had "been given to us almost gratis for twenty years", and that cooperation would be endangered if the rise were "shelved".<sup>4</sup> When the Governors' Meeting of 1920 again recommended an increase to 10%, the financial secretary again opined that "the financial situation does not permit of any further increase" but that the matter would be considered "in connection with the Budget Estimates for 1921".<sup>5</sup> In 1921 the governors proposed increasing the travelling allowance for members of ushur assessment boards to 10 P.T. per day.<sup>6</sup> The acting financial secretary, however, "regretted that the financial situation at present does not admit of the proposal being favourably considered."<sup>7</sup> This argument became increasingly bitter as time went on, and only ended when Bernard

<sup>1</sup> Financial secretary to civil secretary, 9/1/19, SGA, CIVSEC 20/21/97.

<sup>2</sup> Feilden to financial secretary, 29/5/19, SGA, CIVSEC 20/21/97.

<sup>3</sup> Acting financial secretary to civil secretary, 18/6/19, SGA, CIVSEC 20/21/97.

<sup>4</sup> MacMichael to private secretary, 30/6/19, SGA, CIVSEC 20/21/97.

<sup>5</sup> Financial secretary to civil secretary, 1/9/20, SGA, CIVSEC 20/21/97.

<sup>6</sup> Extract from Northern Governors' Meeting, 1921, n.d., SGA, CIVSEC 20/21/97.

<sup>7</sup> Acting financial secretary to civil secretary, 26/9/21, SGA, CIVSEC 20/21/97.

was dismissed in 1922. MacMichael had argued for increases by noting that "It is because we never pay them decently that in many Districts decent men will not serve, consequently we have to fall back on an intensive system of administration needing an ever increasing staff of officials, instead of allowing the natives to manage their own affairs."<sup>1</sup>

In May 1922 the governor of the Red Sea Province went so far as to say that the present scale of remuneration was "a form of 'forced labour'", and told Bernard that the increase in travelling allowance "would really not help matters at all; except as regards yourself", as Bernard "would be able to point out that their position had been improved".<sup>2</sup> Finally in October 1922 governors were given permission to raise the travelling allowance from 2 P.T. to 5 P.T. "in all cases where the current rate of donkey hire is P.T. 5 per diem or more".<sup>3</sup> This argument had gone on for two years even though the financial department estimated that the increase would involve an added expenditure of only £E2,106.<sup>4</sup> To be fair to Bernard, it should be remembered that the crisis caused by the Gezira cost overruns dominated the financial situation. He was, as he once said, "always retrenching" (see Appendix I) even before the pressure to do so became intense. Moreover, Bernard's replacement by Schuster did not mean an immediate accession to the

<sup>1</sup> MacMichael to financial secretary, 30/5/21, SGA, CIVSEC 20/21/97.

<sup>2</sup> Governor, Red Sea Province to financial secretary, 3/5/22, SGA, CIVSEC 20/21/97.

<sup>3</sup> Asst. financial secretary to governors, 26/10/22, SGA, CIVSEC 20/21/97.

<sup>4</sup> "Excess Expenditure involved by the increase of the allowance paid to Omdas and Sheikhs for donkey hire from P.T. 2 to P.T. 5 per night", enclosed in acting financial secretary to civil secretary, 12/10/22, SGA, CIVSEC 20/21/97. While the authorised rate was raised to 5 P.T., four provinces reported that donkey hire already exceeded that amount.

governors' demands: at their meeting in 1924 the northern governors again proposed "a universal increase from 5% to 10% in the remuneration granted to sheikhs on land tax, date tax and ushur."<sup>1</sup> The effect of all this controversy over remuneration was to make the positions of 'umda and shaykh all the more unattractive and less prestigious.

The Powers of Nomad Sheikhs Ordinance, 1922

At the Northern Governors' Meeting in 1920, Browne, the governor of Berber, submitted proposals for the future course of administration. In addition to having in mind "what has occurred in India and Egypt", he claimed that "one of the principle reasons" for his recommendations was to "counteract the preponderating influence of religious leaders". To do this it was necessary "to strengthen the solid elements in the country, sheikhs, merchants, etc., before the irresponsible body of half-educated officials, students and town riff-raff takes control of the public mind". The governors suggested that "town committees" might be formed to discuss "budgets and municipal matters". They also recommended that "where tribal organisation exists the Government should endeavour to foster" it. Governors should hold annual meetings of the important secular leaders, and municipal councils should be established in large towns.<sup>2</sup> Thus the dual policy of extending authority to both shaykhs and the educated class was affirmed.

One result of the governors' initiative was "The Khartoum, Khartoum North and Omdurman Municipal Council Proclamation" of 1921. This established a "consultative and advisory" council to make recom-

<sup>1</sup> Minutes of Northern Governors' Meeting, 1924, n.d., SGA, CIVSEC 21/5/24.

<sup>2</sup> Minutes of Northern Governors' Meeting, 1920, n.d., SGA, CIVSEC 1/9/30.

mendations regarding the local services budget, administration of various ordinances applicable to municipal affairs, and other matters to be referred by the governor. Its ex officio members were to be the governor of Khartoum (as president); the inspectors of the three towns and the sub-inspector of Khartoum, and the ma'mūr of Omdurman; four other officials to be named by the governor-general; four members to be named by the Sudan Chamber of Commerce; also not more than sixteen or less than ten additional members, "half of whom must be natives of the Sudan" to be appointed by the governor-general "from among the notables and merchants of the Municipal area".<sup>1</sup> Notable by their absence were members of the Sudanese official class.

A more important result of the 1920 Governors' Meeting was that Feilden canvassed the governors' views on extending the powers of shaykhs.<sup>2</sup> Contrary to what must have been expected after approval of the concept at their conference, almost all the governors responded pessimistically. Browne, of course, was enthusiastic.<sup>3</sup> But the governor of Khartoum wrote simply that he did not think "any tribal organisation exists which can usefully be fostered".<sup>4</sup> The governor of Sennar said that "the Arabs of this Province are so very mixed that little or no tribal organization or recognised codes of tribal rite and custom exist among them".<sup>5</sup> Lyall, then governor of Kassala, said that "tribal orga-

<sup>1</sup> "The Khartoum, Khartoum North and Omdurman Municipal Council Proclamation 1921", Sudan Gazette, no. 375, 15/5/21. A similar council was established in Port Sudan. (Muddathir 'Abd al-Rahīm, Imperialism and nationalism in the Sudan, Oxford, 1969, p. 64.)

<sup>2</sup> Civil secretary to governors, 14/4/20, SGA, CIVSEC 1/9/30.

<sup>3</sup> Governor, Berber to civil secretary, 9/9/20, SGA, CIVSEC 1/9/30.

<sup>4</sup> Governor, Khartoum to civil secretary, 19/4/20, SGA, CIVSEC 1/9/30.

<sup>5</sup> Governor, Sennar to civil secretary, 25/8/20, SGA, CIVSEC 1/9/30.

nization" was "conspicuous by its absence" in that province, and he added that "to revive in any way such despotic powers as were formally exercised by Nazirs would be a reactionay step". He recommended, however, that nāzirs and shaykhs be given many of the duties of district staff such as road maintenance, tending irrigation works, etc. He believed that "the most important means ... of satisfying the political instincts of the natives ... is by associating them more closely in the government ... and this can only be done ... by attracting into Government service the representatives of the 'sheikhly' class".<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand Sagar, the governor of Kordofan, reported that extensive powers were already wielded by shaykhs and that the people had appreciated the conferring of a third-class magistrate's powers on certain shaykhs.<sup>2</sup> He added that "When the time comes to establish Native Petty Courts, it will to my mind be greatly preferable to have them presided over by prominent natives of standing with some experience in Courts than by young and half educated lawyers".<sup>3</sup> The governor of Darfur, Savile, under whom MacMichael had served as sub-governor, reported that when he had first arrived in Darfur in 1917, "owing to lack of staff it was essential that Nazirs and Chiefs should be empowered to deal with minor offences as had been done for some years in parts of Kordofan" (where MacMichael, Gillan and Davies had all served). Because there had been abuses of power, however, it had early been decided to withdraw the power of a nāzir to try offences by himself, and

<sup>1</sup> Governor, Kassala to civil secretary, 31/5/20, SGA, CIVSEC 1/9/30.

<sup>2</sup> Third-class magistrate status was that of a ma'mūr. See Warburg, The Sudan under Wingate, pp. 133-136 for details of the tribal administration of justice.

<sup>3</sup> Governor, Kordofan to civil secretary, 26/5/20, SGA, CIVSEC 1/9/30.

to substitute nāzirs' courts, each consisting of a nāzir and two shaykhs. <sup>1</sup> The governor of the Red Sea Province, for his part, thought that shaykhs should be given more powers, since the stronger they were, "the stronger will be the force to counteract the activities of the Sudan equivalent of the present day Egyptian students, etc., when they begin ... to indulge in the at present popular pastime of so-called National politics". <sup>2</sup>

The southern governors' replies were unenthusiastic. In the Baḥr al-Ghazāl, courts of chiefs (lukikos) had been dealing with certain cases, notably of cattle inheritance, in a satisfactory way. But the acting governor did "not consider any more advanced form of Administration should be placed in the hands of the Chiefs, until such time as schools have been established, and a knowledge of reading and writing obtained". <sup>3</sup> The governors of the Upper Nile and Nuba Mountains provinces had no positive proposals to make. <sup>4</sup> The governor of Mongalla reported a lukiko dealing with petty offences and a council with "some

<sup>1</sup> Governor, Darfur to civil secretary, 11/5/20, SGA, CIVSEC 1/9/30.

<sup>2</sup> Governor, Red Sea Province to civil secretary, 10/5/21 (1920?), SGA, CIVSEC 1/9/30.

<sup>3</sup> Acting governor, Baḥr al-Ghazāl to civil secretary, 5/6/20, SGA, CIVSEC 1/9/30.

<sup>4</sup> Bakheit, British administration, p. 49. In 1927 Willis, then governor of the Upper Nile, commented on "the weakness or lack of tribal organization" but said that "the prospects of successful development are extremely good". (Willis to civil secretary, 4/3/27, SGA, CIVSEC 1/9/33.) Gillan, acting governor of the Nuba Mts. in 1927, reported that "considerable progress" had been made in devolving powers, but that "the direct administration fetish" had contributed to the difficulties in this regard. ("Personal note by Mr. J.A. Gillan, Deputy Gov.", enclosed in governor, Nuba Mts. to civil secretary, 13/3/27, SGA, CIVSEC 1/9/33.)

executive but no judicial powers", as two experiments inspired by Ugandan example. <sup>1</sup>

The civil secretary's office asserted that it, not the governors, determined policy. The governor of the Blue Nile Province wrote that "it would not be possible to delegate any powers even to Nomad Sheikhs in Abu Deleig ... and in no other part of the Province is there any suggestion of it...." <sup>2</sup> To this the civil secretary replied:

It is inconceivable that the Nomad Sheikhs in Abu Deleig have no powers at all.... In any case it is definitely the policy of the Government to foster tribal organization.... I shall be glad to hear from you what powers the nomad sheikhs in Abu Deleig at present have and to what extent you propose to regularize them, modify them, or extend them. <sup>3</sup>

The governor responded with a few half-hearted suggestions, <sup>4</sup> but the point was made: Khartoum had decided to "foster tribal organization"; it was up to the governors to find it. Indeed, the annual Report for 1921 stated that where tribal organisation "has ceased to exist it may still be possible to recreate it". <sup>5</sup> Describing a 1926 visit to the

<sup>1</sup> Bakheit, British administration, pp. 49-50.

<sup>2</sup> Governor, Blue Nile to civil secretary, 2/4/21, SGA, CIVSEC 1/9/30. In 1927 the then governor, Arthur Huddleston, said much the same thing: "There is very little tribal authority", he wrote, and what there was had been based on personality, not "inherent tradition". Yet he did "see signs of old traditional authority which may have been merely dormant owing to our bureaucratic system of Government". (Huddleston to civil secretary, 11/3/27, SGA, CIVSEC 1/9/30.)

<sup>3</sup> Civil secretary to governor, Blue Nile, 8/4/21, SGA, CIVSEC 1/9/30.

<sup>4</sup> Governor, Blue Nile to civil secretary, 11/5/21, SGA, CIVSEC 1/9/30.

<sup>5</sup> Annual Report for 1921, Cmd. 1837 (1923).

Sudan, Sir James Currie<sup>1</sup> remarked that "the spectacle could be beheld of young administrators diligently searching for lost tribes and vanished chiefs, and trying to resurrect a social system that had passed away for ever".<sup>2</sup> It was in the immediate post-war period, not after the death of Stack, that this procedure began. MacMichael's arch-rival, Willis, took up a lonely position against the trend.<sup>3</sup>

Thus by 1921 it had become clear that there were two opposing views as to the method, and indeed, the aims of future administration. But there were many reasons for supporting one or the other. In the west the need was felt to combat Mahdism by strengthening tribal authority; in the east, in the Red Sea Province, the intelligentsia was already a concern of the governor. Everywhere a shortage of staff and funds was felt. But in the riverain provinces, where a century of more or less centralised rule had blurred tribal distinctions and diluted traditional authority, a shift of emphasis away from a bureaucratic administration was strongly disapproved.

It was in the midst of this internal debate that Keown-Boyd made his visit on behalf of the Milner mission. The present system, he found,

leaves great scope for necessary differences of administration to suit the various tribal organisations. Thus, while among the big nomad tribes of Kordofan, tribal sheikhs of standing exercise punitive powers and are encouraged in an increasing degree to administer their own people, and while in the Eastern Sudan the Hamitic tribes under their own headmen enjoy a similar measure

<sup>1</sup> Sir James Currie (1868-1937), joined the Egyptian education service in 1899, and was sent to the Sudan as first director of education in 1900. He retired in 1914. He became a director of the Empire Cotton Growing Association in 1922. (DNB, 1931-1940, pp. 206-207.)

<sup>2</sup> Currie, "The educational experiment in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, 1900-1933", Journal of the African Society, vol. XXXIII, 1934, pp. 361-371; Journal of the Royal African Society, XXXIV, 1935, pp. 41-59; p. 49.

<sup>3</sup> Willis described Sagar's policy in Kordofan as an intention "to develop a feudal system". (Willis to civil secretary, 2/2/21, SGA CIVSEC 1/9/30.)



of freedom, such a system is impossible in the riverain provinces, e.g., Berber, or the White Nile, where the tribal organisations are not big enough and the local Sheikh is only the head of a village unknown a few miles away. <sup>1</sup>

Keown-Boyd approved the synthetic view, shared by Stack, that each province or area should be administered according to the social system obtaining. Rather than suggesting an innovative plan for administration, Keown-Boyd (and hence the Milner report) merely ratified ideas being discussed in Khartoum to which Milner himself, as we have seen (pp. 191-192) was predisposed, especially if they meant neutralizing Egyptian influence. Thus the Milner report recommended that the administration "should be left, as far as possible, in the hands of the native authorities, wherever they exist, under British supervision". It warned that the system of education should avoid creating "an overgrown body of aspirants to Government employment". <sup>2</sup> In other words, the intervening class of Egyptian officials should be removed, to be replaced by a closer contact between the British official and the Sudanese tribal authority, thereby rendering superfluous a large Sudanese official class. Even though these were not original ideas, the legitimacy given them by the Milner report would be exploited in arguments favouring the reactionary attitudes then taking hold.

The first step in regularising tribal authority was the Powers of Nomad Sheikhs Ordinance. In a letter to the civil secretary in 1921 Browne submitted proposals for conferring criminal jurisdiction on nomad shaykhs. He argued that

<sup>1</sup> Keown-Boyd, "Report in 3 parts".

<sup>2</sup> Report of the special mission.

The powers specified to a large extent coincide with those actually being exercised in the more remote tribes, and I think it is highly desirable that these should be recognised by the Government. The chief departure from present practice is that the president will be the Omda or Sheikh instead of ... a fiki or local 'Kadi'. The fiki will continue to be a useful adjunct as a member of the Meglis, but I consider it most important, with a view to increasing tribal discipline and raising the prestige of the Sheikh, that the latter should be the mouthpiece of the decision. ... at present neither are the majority of the Sheikhs personally fit to hold autocratic powers nor have they the moral prestige to enforce autocratic judgements.<sup>1</sup>

Browne's plan was the precursor of the Powers of Nomad Sheikhs Ordinance of 1922 which for the first time<sup>2</sup> regularised what had, in practice but informally, been happening for years.

Implicit in the ordinance's preamble was an admission of the failure of purely direct rule: "it has from time immemorial been customary for sheikhs of nomad tribes to exercise powers of punishment upon their tribesmen and of deciding disputes among them and ... it is expedient that the exercise of these powers should be regularized".<sup>3</sup> The tribal shaykh, sitting either alone or in a "Council ('meglis') of the tribal elders", was to have authority over cases dealing with a number of criminal offences.<sup>4</sup> No punishment other than a fine was authorised.

<sup>1</sup> Governor, Berber to civil secretary, 24/3/21, SGA, CIVSEC 1/9/30.

<sup>2</sup> The Courts Ordinance of 1907 had stipulated that there was no hindrance to a governor's recognition of "the jurisdiction of a Tribal Chief or Council of Elders or village Headman ... over the members of their tribe or village", or the exercise of customary authority. (Courts Ordinance, section 10, 1907, SGA, CIVSEC 1/9/31.)

<sup>3</sup> "The Powers of Nomad Sheikhs Ordinance 1922", Sudan Gazette, no. 396, 15/6/22.

<sup>4</sup> These were "assault, hurt, mischief, house trespass, trespass on cultivation areas or grazing grounds, adultery, rape, sexual connection with a virgin, theft, receiving stolen property, disobedience to a reasonable order, abuse, desecration, insult, threatening, affray, wrongful restraint, defiling water supply, act of indecency in public, wilful damage to property [and] removing or damaging boundary mark, other than those erected by Government." (Ibid.)

The maximum fine was to be £E25. The government reserved the right to overrule any judgement, whether appealed or not, and retained jurisdiction over capital crimes such as murder and rebellion.<sup>1</sup> But appeals were few, and the district commissioner was relieved, for the first time statutorily, of a great number of routine and time-consuming cases.<sup>2</sup> The annual Report for 1921 noted that one hundred and thirty-five notables had already been granted "magisterial powers".<sup>3</sup> The 1923 Report recorded that "some 300" shaykhs had been granted such powers.<sup>4</sup>

#### The Dar Masalit "experiment"

The annual Report for 1922 noted that "Dar Masalit ... provided virgin ground for the trial of a policy of retaining, so far as is consistent with the removal of abuses and the maintenance of a reasonable standard of efficiency, the existing administrative machinery and method".<sup>5</sup> This was rather a grand way of describing what was essentially an expedient. Davies was appointed the first "Resident" in the Dar and he "set off westwards from Nahud with my caravan of camels and ponies in the early part of 1920, armed with Lord Lugard's The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa and Sir Percy Girouard's Political Memoranda,

<sup>1</sup> "The Powers of Nomad Sheikhs Ordinance 1922"

<sup>2</sup> Interview with Mr. Martin Parr, 3/6/76. Some tribes were only "'deemed' to be 'nomad'.... The Hamar were certainly not nomads", but were included under the ordinance anyway. See also Warburg, The Sudan under Wingate, p. 165.

<sup>3</sup> Annual Report for 1921.

<sup>4</sup> Annual Report for 1923, Cmd. 2281 (1924-25).

<sup>5</sup> Annual Report for 1922, Cmd. 1950 (1923).

which was, I had been told, the Bible of the political officers in Northern Nigeria."<sup>1</sup>

The administration of Dar Masalit was supposed to be the first comprehensive experiment in Indirect Rule along Lugardian lines. In practice this meant, however, simply allowing the pre-existing system to function with a British overseer. The sultan, Muḥammad Baḥr al-Dīn, usually called Endoka, and Davies worked out a system of assessment by which the villages around Geneina would contribute building materials or labour or grain as tax. Davies defended this primitive system because there was little or no money in circulation.<sup>2</sup> Justice was dispensed by the sultan himself who would if he wished consult the qāḍī. "Contrary to Nigerian precept", Davies wrote, Starry's approval was won for a "senior court" on which Davies, the sultan and the qāḍī sat, which was "the most effective court" on which Davies ever sat.<sup>3</sup> Effective it may have been, but it could hardly have been designed to maintain the sultan's personal prestige.

Redfern, the assistant resident under Davies, thought that "the sultan had a pretty good administration, he had a vizier, etc. so we left him alone", except for cases of serious crime. Abuses were checked, such as the qāḍī's custom of accepting a fee from the winner of each case. The "system" worked smoothly: "We got the sultan an old Ford car which he was delighted with.... we were there as observers.... We employed slaves to build our house - the sultan let us have fifty

<sup>1</sup> Davies, *The camel's back*, p. 145. Davies's memory was at fault: *The Dual Mandate* was published in 1922. The term "Resident" was of course taken from Nigeria.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 145.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 160-161.

slaves...." <sup>1</sup> Indeed, one wonders why they were there at all.

An important result of Davies's experience in Dar Masalit was his trip to Northern Nigeria in 1923 to see for himself the model of Indirect Rule and to report on "the comparative conditions of administration there" and in the Sudan. <sup>2</sup>

Administrative developments, 1922-1925

The Northern Governors' Meeting of 1922 recommended that "muawens of Arabs" (officers assigned to nomad tribes) should be done away with; that the (Egyptian) accountancy staff should be reduced, as should the number of ma'mūrs; that the post of sub-inspector should be abolished; that the number of district commissioners should be increased; and that an ordinance should be drafted enabling the extension of powers to sedentary tribes similar to those already conferred on nomad shaykhs, <sup>3</sup> a proposal that finally saw fruition in the Powers of Sheikhs Ordinance in 1927. Commenting on these proposals, Stack endorsed the principle of decentralisation but warned that "decentralization without a decrease in expenditure on administrative charges in personnel does not carry us much further in economy". <sup>4</sup> Stack's concern was well-founded: the governors' proposals meant the devolution of routine matters on to shaykhs and elimination of the Egyptian subordinate officials, but also an increase in British supervisory staff. Indeed, "absurd as it might look,

<sup>1</sup> Interview with Sir Shuldham Redfern, 8/10/76.

<sup>2</sup> Davies to MacMichael, 10/10/22, SGA, CIVSEC 69/6/19.

<sup>3</sup> Minutes of Northern Governors' Meeting, 1922, n.d., SGA, CIVSEC 32/1/3.

<sup>4</sup> Asst. private secretary to civil secretary, 21/2/22, SGA, CIVSEC 32/1/3.

British officers used tribal agents in order to get more British officers to supervise them and called for decentralization only in order to achieve deconcentration, which in effect was simply a device of centralization." <sup>1</sup>

The Southern Governors' Meeting of 1922 made proposals similar to those moved at the northern conference. Administration, it was noted, should be left "as far as possible in the hands of native authorities, wherever they exist, under British supervision" (a quotation from the Milner report). Where tribal organisation had ceased to exist, "it may still be possible to re-create it". The aims of the government were to eliminate Egyptian officials; to post a British commissioner and assistant commissioner in every district and to keep them there long enough to know it well and become known to the inhabitants; to post Sudanese district officers to assist the commissioner; to staff the offices with Sudanese clerks, "some of whom could perhaps in time ... be drawn from among the local inhabitants"; and to substitute English for Arabic as the official language. <sup>2</sup>

This desire to insulate the southern provinces from the political winds of the north was expressed in The Passports and Permits Ordinance of 1922. This provided for the classification of any area as a "closed district", from which anyone could be barred without a government permit. In October 1922 Stack ordered that Darfur, Baḥr al-Ghazāl, Mongalla,

<sup>1</sup> G.M.A. Bakheit, "The Condominium and Indirect Rule", in J. Howell (ed.) Local government and politics in the Sudan, Khartoum, 1974, p.27.

<sup>2</sup> "General statement of policy in the Southern Sudan with regards to administration, religion and education", 14/3/22, SGA, CIVSEC 1/9/31. Some of the theoretical content of this "general statement" was taken directly from the policy of Sir Charles Brooke, rajah of Sarawak, as described in 1871. See MacMichael, "Indirect Rule for pagan communities", n.d., SAD G// s 469.

most of the Nuba Mountains and Upper Nile Provinces, and several other districts were to be "closed districts to the extent that no person other than a native of the Sudan shall enter or remain therein unless he is the holder of a permit ... to be obtained from the Civil Secretary or from the Governor of the province ... and that any native of the Sudan may be forbidden to enter or remain in the said districts by the Civil Secretary or the Governor of such provinces".<sup>1</sup>

As we have seen, mistrust of Egyptian officials had quickly come to embrace also the Sudanese intelligentsia. Pawson's memorandum of October 1924 was explicit in its denunciation of Sudanese ma'mūrs and sub-ma'mūrs who "inherit the Egyptian love of personal power and the Egyptian dislike of the powerful Nazir or Omda...." They were all opposed to "granting any independent power to the Omdas and Sheikhs in their districts" and "by an alteration in their dress and mode of life, they raised a barrier between themselves and their own people". In the Sudan, he wrote, with the whole structure of rule by native chiefs still to be built up, the danger from a powerful native official class" was "very real."<sup>2</sup> MacMichael agreed:

In the future the administration of native affairs must, subject to British rule and supervision, tend to be left more and more to the authority of the native chiefs.... The eventual aim cannot be in doubt.... it is the aristocracy rather than the subordinate bureaucracy whose claims to our consideration are paramount.<sup>3</sup>

In claiming the future for the "aristocracy", MacMichael was disregarding the spirit, if not the letter, of the governor-general's own

<sup>1</sup> Sudan Gazette, no. 402, 15/10/22.

<sup>2</sup> Pawson, "Note on the native mamur and sub-mamur".

<sup>3</sup> MacMichael to governors, 20/10/24, SGA, CIVSEC 50/2/10.

policy. The need to bolster the "Sudan for the Sudanese" idea had moved Stack to favour the establishment of native advisory councils. In September MacMichael told the governors that such councils, to be "purely advisory and consultative", would be set up to assist in administration on the provincial, district and municipal levels in all but the three southern provinces. A governor's council would be composed of all nāzirs, "native magistrates" and (if applicable) shaykhs of khut̄s (districts) as ex-officio members, and others to be nominated by the governor or co-opted by the ex-officio members with his approval. This council would discuss "questions of administration or development affecting the province as a whole". A district council would consist of governor's council members residing in the district, all ʿumdas, and "with the special permission of the Governor a limited number of leading men of the District", and would be akin to the governor's council but at a purely district level. A town council would consist of governor's and district councils' members living in a town, the ʿumda and shaykh of the town, and "such leading men of the town, merchants and others, as appear to the District Commissioner to be most likely to be useful".<sup>1</sup>

The idea of advisory councils died with Stack and was resurrected only in 1942.<sup>2</sup> How great was the change in tone and direction is in-

<sup>1</sup> MacMichael to governors, 9/9/24, SGA, CIVSEC 1/9/31. Reporting an interview with Sayyid Ismāʿīl al-Azhari, MacMichael wrote that the sayyid had suggested "a system of advisory and consultative native councils, both in Omdurman and in the Provinces and in the Districts. I had not suggested a word of this to him but his tentative proposals in their main features almost exactly agreed with those I drafted a week or two ago...." (MacMichael to Willis, 14/9/24, SGA, PALACE 4/9/44.)

<sup>2</sup> See Muddathir ʿAbd al-Rahīm, Imperialism, pp. 135-137. Currie wrote in 1926 that "the late Sir Lee Stack often spoke to me of his intention of instituting some system of Provincial Councils.... Something of the kind is urgently called for, and if such Councils were called in-to being supplemented by an advisory Council to the Governor-General, the actual administrative machine might be left in peace for some considerable period". (Currie to Tyrrell, 28/8/26, F.O. 371/11613.)



licated by a statement of Maffey in 1927:

Advisory Councils cropped up as a possible means to our end but the proposal was not well received.... Later on in certain intelligensia areas, when we have made the Sudan safe for autocracy, such Councils would be in keeping with the broad principle. Otherwise Advisory Councils contain the seeds of grave danger and eventually present a free platform for capture by a pushful intelligensia. <sup>1</sup>

Thus a policy which might well have had a beneficial long-term significance in the development of political institutions was shelved in the headlong rush toward tribalisation.

The evacuation of the Egyptian Army in 1924 was accompanied by the removal on many middle and lower-level Egyptian civil servants. Of forty-five Egyptian ma'mūrs, forty were evacuated. Sixteen of the vacancies thus created were filled by promoting Sudanese sub-ma'mūrs, but MacMichael reasoned that "as the number of mamurs' posts was unnecessarily high in the past - a fact chiefly due to the shortage of British staff - it will probably not be necessary to fill all these vacancies". All Egyptian sub-ma'mūrs were evacuated, and all were replaced by Sudanese. About one hundred and twenty vacancies were created "by the deportation, dismissal or imprisonment of Egyptians on account of their political activities...." Some of these posts went to foreigners (Syrians and Greeks), some to Egyptians and Sudanese, and some were left vacant. <sup>2</sup> The railways and steamers department reported that "55 European Artizans" were engaged in one three-month period due to the loss of the Egyptian Railway Battalion. <sup>3</sup> The education department suffered very serious losses,

<sup>1</sup> Maffey, "Minute by His Excellency the Governor-General", 1/1/27, SGA, CIVSEC 1/9/33.

<sup>2</sup> MacMichael to private secretary, 24/4/25, SGA, CIVSEC 50/2/7.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

all of its twenty-five Egyptian teachers being discharged.<sup>1</sup>

While the evacuation led to the promotion of some Sudanese, it also made room for a large increase in British staff, continuing a trend. In 1927 the governor of Darfur remarked that the number of British administrative officials had increased by 100% between 1908 and 1926. The government was, in his view, tending toward "ever-increasing directness".<sup>2</sup> In 1924 Schuster had warned of the financial consequences of "over-administration", noting that at El Obeid there was a governor, deputy governor, two assistant district commissioners, a sub-inspector, a district judge, a local audit inspector, a mechanical engineer, an assistant district engineer, an inspector of forests and gum gardens, and two veterinary officers.<sup>3</sup> There was a marked increase in recruitment even for the Political Service. In the four years following the evacuation the service recruited no fewer than sixty-three new members, compared with eighty-five in the years 1899-1914.<sup>4</sup>

It was essential, in MacMichael's view, that the gap in the bureaucracy created by the evacuation should not be filled by Sudanese officials. The civil secretary's office insisted that "the management of

<sup>1</sup> MacMichael to private secretary, 24/4/25, SGA, CIVSEC 50/2/7. See also Allenby to Chamberlain, 2/3/25, F.O. 371/10879. Currie later observed that to the best of his knowledge, "no Egyptian schoolmaster was guilty of disloyalty to the Government that he served". (Currie, "The educational experiment", p. 46.)

<sup>2</sup> Bence-Pembroke, "Proposals for the introduction of the policy of native administration ...", 23/1/27, SGA, CIVSEC 1/20/60. Reginald Bence-Pembroke (1884-1954) served in Khartoum, 1907, 1916-19; Kordofan, 1908-15; was governor of Mongalla, 1924-25, and governor of Darfur, 1925-27. (MacMichael, SPS, p. 18.)

<sup>3</sup> Schuster to civil secretary, 9/4/24, SGA, CIVSEC 50/15/67.

<sup>4</sup> MacMichael, SPS, passim.

tribal and village affairs" must be left to the shaykhs: "the young Sudanese and Arab officer has failed us in the Army and though the conduct of the somewhat similar class in the Sudan Government appears to have been excellent so far, we cannot afford to court risks in the future by leaving too much in their hands".<sup>1</sup>

At least one governor protested against the implication of these prejudicial remarks. Nicholls,<sup>2</sup> governor of the White Nile Province, said that if the ma'mūr had too much power, it was

entirely the fault of the District Commissioner, who, through incompetence or laziness or both, allows or compels his mamur to do his work for him.... we should weed out the incompetent D.C.'s preferably to adopting a policy of repression towards the Civilian Sub-mamurs.... If we adopt a repressive policy ... we will most certainly alienate the educated people in the country and we will only be confirming the Egyptian anti-British propaganda which endeavours to persuade the educated people of the Sudan that we are ejecting the Egyptians from the country in order to run it by ourselves for ourselves.... The two lines of development i.e. increasing the powers and the functions of the native chiefs, and giving the educated Sudanese a larger share in the Government, are not ... irreconcilable, and our soundest policy must be a judicious combination of both.<sup>3</sup>

To this reasoned restatement of the Stack policy, the civil secretary replied with scorn. After commenting on Nicholls's "unjust reflection

<sup>1</sup> MacMichael to governors, 6/12/24, SGA, CIVSEC 50/2/10. A 1926 report, almost certainly written by Davies, stated that "the educated class of the Sudan is predominantly in sympathy with the anti-British nationalism of Egypt...." If Egypt pressed her claims there would probably be "a reproduction of the reactions of 1924, the left wing of our Intelligentsia actively seditious and the moderates trying to make political capital out of the situation". (Secret intelligence report, no. 1, March 1926, F.O. 371/11613.)

<sup>2</sup> William Nicholls (1882-1970) served in Khartoum, 1907, 1911-12; Dongola, 1908-10; Kordofan, 1913-16; Darfur, 1917, 1919-22; and Sennar, 1917-18. He was governor of the White Nile Province, 1922-26, and governor of Berber, 1926-32. (MacMichael, SPS, p. 19.)

<sup>3</sup> Governor, White Nile to civil secretary, 13/1/25, SGA, CIVSEC 50/2/10.

of the Political Service" (tantamount to apostasy) he said that the government's need for the help of educated Sudanese had been "emphasised yearly in the Annual Reports" and that Nicholls's misapprehensions ... may possibly be due to the fact that [his] province has had no Egyptian administrative staff for many years and the danger anticipated may therefore be less ... than elsewhere in that experienced Egyptian Mamurs who have thoroughly established their positions are not there being succeeded by young Sudanese." <sup>1</sup>

It was at this point that Davies chose to issue his thoughts on the trip to Nigeria. He came to the conclusion that in the Sudan "there were very large regions to which the Nigerian system was applicable without very considerable modifications." Its advantages were manifest: "native administrations give rise to no 'Intelligentsia' class" since the "treasurers, scribes and the rest are the humble servants of the Native Authority" (which was all Davies considered they were fit to be), and it was "inconceivable that they should aspire to political power"; the Nigerian emirs constituted "a valuable bulwark against outbreaks of fanaticism" (such as Mahdism); and native administration was "cheaper than the bureaucratic variety". <sup>2</sup> By this time, though, Davies was preaching to the converted, as we have seen. The post-war years had thrown up or revealed problems, and by the end of Stack's governor-generalship Indirect Rule, that vague, indefinable and essentially artificial doctrine was seen as a panacea.

<sup>1</sup> Lyall to governor, White Nile, 20/1/25, SGA, CIVSEC 50/2/10.

<sup>2</sup> Davies, "Note on native administration", enclosed in Davies to civil secretary, 22/1/25, SGA, CIVSEC 1/9/32.

Conclusion: the attraction of Indirect Rule

Another factor, much more complicated, easily recognisable but difficult to evaluate, in the victory of this approach to administration over the "direct" rule of the Wingate years, was the mentality of the Sudan Political Service. No matter how strong the political and economic arguments in its favour, the fact remains that the majority of the service, from MacMichael, its spiritual and later actual head, down to the most junior district commissioner was naturally drawn to what they saw as the tenets of Indirect Rule and away from its "bureaucratic" alternative.

An article in the Manchester Guardian in 1925 referred to the Sudan as "a country as savage as a public school", and said that it was "impossible not to sympathise with this Government of athletic public school boys accustomed to hard work rather than to hard thinking".<sup>1</sup> There was, as a matter of fact, a good deal of the old school atmosphere in the service; sport was always to play an important part, and not merely as recreation. One former official has said that

We didn't make our ma'mūrs, etc. play polo, but we certainly encouraged them.... I remember reading [a personnel report] and it closed - 'and he plays a good game of polo' - and this would have helped in a borderline case.<sup>2</sup>

But their very conformity seemed to hamper the educated Sudanese. They were ridiculed for their imperfect knowledge, intellectual "conceit" and pretensions, and "alteration in their dress and mode of life" which, of course, were aspects of the status for which the government had groomed

<sup>1</sup> Arthur Ransome, "Sudan problem examined", Manchester Guardian, 5/25, quoted in F.O. 371/10880.

<sup>2</sup> Interview with Sir Gawain Bell, 2/6/76.

them. The execrations heaped upon the "effendi", and indeed, upon "modern education" became a phenomenon.

At its inception the Condominium had set out to create "a small administrative class, capable of filling many Government posts", <sup>1</sup> and had established Gordon College for that purpose. That hopeful beginning was cursed after the troubles of the early 1920s. Sir H. Jackson wrote that

Education in the Soudan was made a fetish; but it is done now, and nothing can stop the Soudan going the way of India and of Egypt. Over-education ... spells disaster; not only ... does it make people dissatisfied with their present part in life, but it adds to the number of the discontented. The people of the Soudan are but children, and they would have remained children had they been left alone. <sup>2</sup>

This is illustrative of the "change in attitude towards education among many of the higher grade English officials" which Currie noticed on his visit in 1926, a change more of temperament than of policy. "Enthusiasm for education had largely evaporated, and 'Indirect Rule' was the prevalent administrative slogan". <sup>3</sup> A Lebanese teacher at Gordon College in the mid-1920s recorded that the British staff

enjoyed the prestige of rulers. Not the dignity of schoolmasters but the aura of sovereignty surrounded their every step. They exercised a kind of military authority, and the discipline they enforced savoured strongly of the barracks.... It was a military not a human institution. <sup>4</sup>

To the exponent of Indirect Rule modern education was anathema. Bence-Pembroke diagnosed the "individualism" it fostered as the effendis'

<sup>1</sup> Annual Report for 1900, Cd. 441 (1901).

<sup>2</sup> Sir H. Jackson to Sir J.G. Maxwell, 7/2/25, enclosed in Maxwell to Baldwin, 19/2/25, F.O. 371/10879.

<sup>3</sup> Currie, "The educational experiment", pp. 47-48. Nevile Henderson said he could "conceive much harm and no utility from higher education among a people so profoundly backward as the Sudanese". ("Notes on a visit to the Sudan")

<sup>4</sup> Edward Atiyah, An Arab tells his story, London, 1946, p. 138.

most obnoxious symptom. This characteristic was "opposed to the sense of personal discipline which the 'feudalistic' training to be found in a healthy tribal organisation would ordinarily implant". Bence-Pembroke then came to the depressing point so typical of official thinking:

The youth of today assumes an irresponsible and independent outlook on affairs in general. Gone are the courtly manners of the older generation; the modern product apes the modes and fashions of the European....

Among that class of native which is known as the 'effendia' class, that is to say, junior native Government employees, is this deterioration most marked. The process of detribalisation has here become complete. The 'effendi' is done with the effete tribal customs and traditions of his forefathers....

It may be argued that the progress of education and general enlightenment is merely bringing about natural evolution, and that the present individualism is but a step or phase in the process. Such an argument is ... not only fallacious but dangerous. Tribal customs and organisations have been evolved through the ages; they have enabled tribes to survive as entities the stress of war and civil commotion; these customs and traditions are ... cherished and obeyed to a degree which is almost incredible by such tribes as remain today uncontaminated by modern progress. <sup>1</sup>

Since the 1924 troubles, Bence-Pembroke said, the intelligentsia were looking to Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān. If they managed to merge with his other followers in the west, then "the policy of 'divide et impera', the fundamental base of all African rule, may be placed in serious jeopardy". <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bence-Pembroke, "Proposals for the introduction of the policy of native administration ...". In October 1924 Sterry issued a statement reminding parents of their right and duty to beat their unruly children: "Boys", he wrote, "are apt to get conceited from new knowledge acquired at school". (Sterry, "To parents, guardians and those in authority over the young", 1/10/24, SGA, CIVSEC 1/20/60.)

<sup>2</sup> Bence-Pembroke, "Proposals for the introduction of the policy of native administration ...". A later report noted that "as was to be expected, the Sayed viewed the devolution of judicial and executive powers to the Arab chiefs with complete consternation.... where the secular power is weak, the 'Nebi Isa' cult can find suitable soil in which to take root. The establishment of native administration made the converse true." (Reid, "Note on Mahdism with special reference to the White Nile Province".)

The obvious solution was to prop up tribal authority and suppress the intelligentsia: "The system of education in force would appear to be far too advanced for the present primitive needs of the country", he observed, so "the policy of substituting native khalwas for Government kut-tabs would appear to be a step in the right direction". To this suggestion MacMichael minuted, "Yes, certainly".<sup>1</sup>

Jackson was not alone in referring to the Sudanese as "mere children". Paternalism went to the heart of the contradiction in Indirect Rule: no matter how forcefully it was argued that tribal shaykhs should have greater powers, it was a rare British administrator who trusted the shaykhs to use them well or who was willing to give up his role as "father of the people".<sup>2</sup> In his article on education, as devastating as

<sup>1</sup> Bence-Pembroke, "Proposals for the introduction of the policy of native administration ...". MacMichael later wrote that "the young modernist ... in reality ... is a minor employé on modest pay born into a primitive social group which he despises.... He invents, in compensation for a consciousness of subjection, a legend of a glorious national past and sees himself the hero of a still more glorious renaissance...." (MacMichael, The Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, p. 269.) In 1927 Arthur Huddleston wrote that "up till about four years ago the number of Government Schools scattered over the [Blue Nile] Province was steadily increasing and I cannot think that the influence of Schoolmasters was always good.... the Schoolmaster must be regarded as part of the Army of native officials who may be necessary but are also as the Governor General points out extremely dangerous". (A. Huddleston to civil secretary, 11/3/27, SGA, CIVSEC 1/9/33.) See also V.L. Griffiths, An experiment in education, London, 1953, pp. 3-8.)

<sup>2</sup> In 1926 Slatin Pasha visited the Sudan and later observed that the country was "a little bit overadministrated [sic] i.e. you have now a good many British Inspectors and I suppose many of them will try to justify their existence by 'establishing a strict rule'.... The Sudan people wish to be ruled by fathers (although they may be young) and each Inspector should be a sort of 'Patriarque'." (Slatin to MacMichael, n.d. (1927), SAD G// s 469.) Maffey commented that "a political officer's best work is often that which he leaves undone". (Note initialled J.L.M., 24/1/27, SAD 403/9.)



it was perceptive, Currie wrote that after Stack's death "the British local administration took fright". Currie's apparently unique ability to see through the intellectual posturing of Indirect Rule resulted in this sarcastic assessment:

The time has long passed when it is possible to gull the Native demanding equality of economic opportunity with patter about indirect rule, or fob him off with a social scheme in which a subsidised ruler - too frequently an obsolete antiquity - dances to the pipes of young gentlemen whose sole idea is that things shall 'stay put'. They cannot, by a hard fate, be squires in England, but to ape the part in Africa is fascinating. <sup>1</sup>

These words would seem harsh if they did not echo those of the administrators themselves. One former official (once governor of Darfur) has said that his

idea of the future of the Sudan was that it would be governed rather like eighteenth century England with a parliament ... but the actual government run by Pitts from rotten boroughs. As long as the interests of the squire were identical with the interests of the people you could have that squirearchy.... <sup>2</sup>

Another, formerly assistant civil secretary and governor of two provinces, has said that

the only sensible form of government is a benevolent dictatorship. That's what I was, a benevolent dictator, in Equatoria, and Khartoum didn't know enough to do anything about it.... I was a good D.C. in West Kordofan - I could never have been one in Surrey.... <sup>3</sup>

MacMichael himself hoped that "the lesser fry among the independent sheikhs" would "gradually be eliminated or absorbed ... and by natural processes we should arrive at a system of four to six great overlords". <sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Currie, "The educational experiment", p. 49.

<sup>2</sup> Interview with Mr. K.D.D. Henderson, 21/6/76.

<sup>3</sup> Interview with Mr. Martin Parr, 3/6/76.

<sup>4</sup> MacMichael, minute to Bence-Pembroke's "Proposals for the introduction of the policy of native administration ...".

There are many examples of such regressive political thought.

The British officials' dislike of the effendi was, of course, reflected in an admiration for the nomad of the desert. This was not a unanimous attitude but it was one held by those who, in the 1920s, came to dominate policy-making, notably Davies and MacMichael. The former's hatred for the scheming Sayyid 'Abd al-Raḥmān and the officious effendi were aspects of his rejection of the "modern" Sudan as a whole and his deep, romantic attachment to the desert Arabs. From the time he first arrived in Khartoum, which was, he thought, "a little too civilised", he was impatient to get away.<sup>1</sup> In his memoirs Davies described the nomad's self-image (and his own):

For him, the sedentary man is a toiler, eating his bread in the sweat of his brow, while he himself is a gentleman at large, living on the income from his capital.... In Khartoum, 'King's Day' ... used to be celebrated by a levee and garden party to which the Governor-General invited the more accessible of the senior tribal leaders.... On one such occasion a nomad sheikh was being taken round parts of the Governor-General's palace by an official ... who was foolish enough to ask him, 'How would you like to have a house like that?' and received the prompt answer, 'By God, my brother, if you made me a present of it I wouldn't spend a single night in it'.<sup>2</sup>

The nomads of Kordofan and Darfur were, to the like-minded administrator, the real Sudanese. The nomad shaykh was an example and was, in effect, the Sudanese equivalent to the country squire. "We were", in the words of an ex-official,

accustomed to the country.... We found ourselves in sympathy to the rural life, the tribal life, the aristocracy.... The bright young Sudanese, speaking English

<sup>1</sup> Davies, The camel's back, p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 55-57. Davies began a chapter of his book with two quotations. The first: "The town says to you - 'Bring!'; the desert says to you - 'Take!'" The second: "'God make you live in cities!' - Nomad Arab curse". (Ibid., p. 55.)

(but probably not too well), wearing European clothes, did in fact, though we would never admit it, constitute a certain threat to the establishment. <sup>1</sup>

Thus, when young, educated Sudanese expected a role in administration which they had been led to believe was theirs, they were to be put down as upstarts and pro-Egyptian agitators. It was this proprietary attitude that made Indirect Rule so contradictory, for if the district commissioner always knew best and always had to have the final say over what went on in his bailiwick, how could tribal authority be "fostered"? The fact is that the administrator of the Davies school was jealous of his position and unwilling to relinquish it. This problem was one of the first addressed by Maffey upon his arrival in the Sudan. He quoted the Milner report to lend a false air of continuity to his position, and stated that

I have watched the old generation give place to a new in India and I have seen how easily vague political unrest swept over even backward peoples simply because we had allowed the old forms to crumble away.

For a long time the British Administrative Officer in the Sudan has functioned as 'Father of the People'.... But this cannot last. The Bureaucracy must yield either to an autocratic or to a democratic movement and the dice are loaded in favour of the latter. If we desire the former, the British Officer must realise that it is his duty to lay down the role of Father of the People. In this manner the country will be parcelled out into nicely balanced compartments, protective glands against the septic germs which will inevitably be passed on from the Khartoum of the future. <sup>2</sup>

While this puts the case rather bluntly, the ideas were no shock to his subordinates. The Sudan was condemned to a period of regressive administration.

<sup>1</sup> Interview with Sir Gawain Bell, 2/6/76.

<sup>2</sup> Maffey, "Minute by His Excellency the Governor-General", 1/1/27. Among the many positions he had held in India, Maffey had served as political agent, Khyber, 1919-12, and as chief commissioner, North-West Frontier Province, 1921-24.

Events might well have unfolded differently if Stack had lived. He certainly never envisaged the developments in administration which were to follow his death. Pawson's condemnation of Sudanese ma'mūrs and sub-ma'mūrs (page 226) had been prompted by Stack's remark to the commandant of the sub-ma'mūr school that "'You must remember that in time these men may become Inspectors'" <sup>1</sup>, an unwelcome prospect as viewed by the Political Service. Stack's advocacy of native advisory councils, with their potential for growth, has already been noted, as has his prime motivation, when approving the course which had led to the Powers of Nomad Sheikhs Ordinance, of economy. Sir James Currie, who knew him well, wrote that

Sir Lee Stack's death was a great loss to the Sudan - perhaps even greater than was realised at the time. The writer is convinced that, had he lived, the permanent increase of English officials would not have taken place. Stack would have remembered the disastrous effect of a similar policy in Egypt. <sup>2</sup>

Stack was, in fact, a member of the old school of slow and cautious extension of direct administration. While his governor-generalship was in many ways a watershed, he was personally representative of the transition from the old-style military rule of the early Condominium to the new world of professional administrators and large British staffs. While he no doubt preferred the old, there is good reason to believe that he might well have proved a better manager of the new than did the brilliant but unsympathetic men who served and succeeded him. With Stack's death the way was clear for implementing a policy he would not have condoned, at least before tempering it with the "tact and common-

<sup>1</sup> Arthur Huddleston to civil secretary, 19/10/24, SGA, CIVSEC 50/2/10. The sub-ma'mūr school had been established in 1919 with a view to replacing Egyptian with Sudanese officers. See MacMichael, The Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, p. 147.)

<sup>2</sup> Currie, "The educational experiment", p.47.

sense" for which Wingate had recommended him.

The fear of Mahdism and the desire to combat what was thought the inevitable rise of a Sudanese nationalism along lines incompatible with British interests were subsidiary to a general aim of preventing the emergence of any nation-wide political organisation. While analyses written in later years often stress a government desire to foster a Sudanese democracy unaffected by external influence, there is little contemporary evidence of that concern. The very idea of "the Sudan for the Sudanese", in the words of a former official, "meant the Sudan not for the Egyptians", <sup>1</sup> and was used to indict dissenters even after it had been coined by the British. Where tribal authority was fairly strong, inexorable forces worked against it. Individual ownership of land, the appeal of extra-tribal religious organisations, secular education and the undertaking of vast irrigation projects that favoured individual initiative and extra-tribal associations and identifications of interests all contributed to this.

There are many examples of this continued breakdown, and they raise the question of whether Indirect Rule ever existed at all in a systematic, clearly-defined way. The problem hinges on the definition of Indirect Rule. As it was articulated in the Sudan in the early 1920s, Indirect Rule meant the use of already established (and also, it was hoped, of long submerged) forms of indigenous political organisation as a means of governing. It was, in practice, as in its motivations, a method of maintaining an archaic diffusion of political power, a way to postpone or prevent homogenization. The invocation of Lugard's

<sup>1</sup> Interview with Sir Gawain Bell, 2/6/76.

writings gave it an intellectual respectability it did not deserve, that obscured its pragmatic abandoning of earlier attempts to create a new, de-tribalised governing class to lead the Sudan into the modern world.

Appendix I: The Gezira Scheme financial crisis

Under the Government of the Sudan Loan Acts of 1913 and 1914, an amount of £3,000,000 was raised, with a British guarantee, for works relating to the Sudan Railways, but primarily "for the purpose of irrigating the Gezira plain".<sup>1</sup> Work on the Gezira Scheme, as funded in 1913, was estimated originally to cost £E1,000,000. This estimate was revised in 1914 to £E2,000,000. The result was to be the irrigation of 120,000 feddans for agriculture, primarily cotton. Work on canalisation and dam construction was practically halted for the duration of the war. In 1917 it was considered, owing to the increased cost of labour and materials, the delay occasioned by the war, and a decision to increase the irrigated area to 300,000 feddans, that the cost of the project would be increased to £E2,500,000. A further £E750,000 was thought necessary for minor canalisation, agricultural machinery and loans to cultivators. At the same time it was indicated that for unrelated irrigation projects at Tokar and Kassala, £E400,000 would be required, and that for railway extension the sum of £E2,160,000 was needed. The repayment of a debt to Egypt of £E740,000 incurred by the extension of railhead to El Obeid raised the total for capital expenditure to £E6,600,000.<sup>2</sup>

At a meeting at the foreign office in the summer of 1917, Bernard and Bonham-Carter argued for an increase in the British guaranteed loan, and took the position that while the amount required was greater than that provided for in the Loan Acts, the works to be undertaken were the

<sup>1</sup> "On the capital required by the Sudan Government for the Gezira Irrigation Scheme and for certain other projects", 14/5/17, F.O. 371/3201. For the history and technical aspects of the scheme, see A. Gaitskell, Gezira, a story of development in the Sudan, London, 1959.

<sup>2</sup> "On the capital required ...".

same as planned and should not be viewed as a "new proposition" which the British government would rightly wish to defer until the conclusion of the war. They suggested as a total figure the sum of £E5,080,395, which included interest on the previous loans and repayment of the El Obeid railway loan. The Sudan Government representatives also noted that

It was even more in the interest of His Majesty's Government than of the Sudan Government that no time should be lost in carrying out this scheme since the supply of cotton could never be too great to satisfy the demand and the question of obtaining this commodity would be one of the most important problems on the conclusion of peace. <sup>1</sup>

Thus the Sudan Government sought, at least for the purposes of obtaining further British support, to ally itself with Lancashire, which was enthusiastic in its backing of what was seen as the "greatest hope" for the future prosperity of the Sudan. <sup>2</sup>

From 1919 on, the Gezira Scheme became inseparably linked to the whole course of Anglo-Egyptian relations. In February 1920 Lord Allenby undertook on behalf of the Sudan Government that the area to be irrigated would not exceed 300,000 feddans. Allenby had been told by Sir Murdoch Macdonald, adviser to the Egyptian public works department, that such an undertaking was in all respects safe, since "it had never been suggested that the Sudan would require to irrigate more than 300,000 feddans as a condition for making the Gezireh scheme a paying one". <sup>3</sup>

Allenby's commitment was to the effect that "the 300,000 feddans will not be exceeded without further consideration by the Egyptian and Sou-

<sup>1</sup> "Memorandum of meeting at foreign office prepared by foreign office and sent by them privately to Sir. M. Ramsay", n.d., F.O. 371/3201.

<sup>2</sup> Keown-Boyd, "Gezira Irrigation Scheme", n.d. (1920), DEP MILNER 161.

<sup>3</sup> Allenby to Curzon, 25/4/21, F.O. 407/189.



dan Governments and the appointment of a commission on which both Egypt and the Soudan will be represented".<sup>1</sup>

In March 1921, however, Macdonald submitted a revised estimate of costs which greatly exceeded the amounts allocated in the Sudan Loan Acts. He blamed the increase on higher labour and material costs<sup>2</sup> and reported to the Sudan Government that the Gezira projects would now cost some £E8,000,000, and that "100,000 feddans of cotton, which will be the proportion of 300,000 feddans under that crop annually, will no longer constitute a reasonable return on the cost of construction." He therefore recommended that the area under cotton should be increased to 150,000 or 200,000 feddans, which would involve a "proportionate increase in the total area to be cultivated".<sup>3</sup> He estimated

that the cost of carrying out the scheme in such a way as to make 150,000 feddans available for cotton growing at £E9,500,000, and 200,000 feddans for the same purpose at £E11,000,000. According to these estimates, the Soudan Government are left with the alternative of finding either an extra £E4,500,000 or £E6,000,000 to enable them to avert a loss on a loan of £E5,000,000 already floated.<sup>4</sup>

Stack therefore asked Allenby to allow an extension in the area to be irrigated, but because of his previous undertaking to the Egyptians, Allenby was unable to do this. If the Egyptian government decided to hold rigidly to the 300,000 feddan limit, Allenby explained, "the only solution ... would be for the point to be dealt with as part of the political settlement which it is hoped to bring about".<sup>5</sup> This led ulti-

<sup>1</sup> Allenby to Curzon, 25/4/21, F.O. 407/189.

<sup>2</sup> M. Macdonald, "Further note on the increase in the estimate prepared in March 1921 ...", 30/3/21, F.O. 407/189.

<sup>3</sup> Allenby to Curzon, 25/4/21, F.O. 407/189.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

mately to the Gezira clause in the 1924 British ultimatum to Egypt.

The agreement of Egypt notwithstanding, the problem of raising additional funds now became acute. Stack reported that

In order to provide for this increased expenditure and for the payment of interest on capital and cost of raising the money, the authorised loan, which includes provision for other services, will have to be increased to £E13,648,300.... The amount yet to be raised, therefore, is estimated to be £E7,427,800.... to make the scheme a paying one it is necessary to increase the cultivated area from 300,000 feddans to 450,000 feddans in order to admit of the cultivation of an extra 50,000 feddans of cotton per annum. To provide this added area, the authorised loan must be raised to £E15,628,920, the amount yet to be raised rising to £E9,408,420. <sup>1</sup>

Even worse, Stack noted that if the works were abandoned altogether, the Sudan would still be faced with an annual interest charge of some £E239,936 until 1929, and of £E333,244 from then until 1959, with no source of revenue to meet those charges. <sup>2</sup> On the same day as this report was submitted, the Egyptian council of ministers decided to hold Allenby to his promised 300,000 feddan limit. <sup>3</sup>

A delegation composed of the financial secretary, the director of agriculture, and the director of lands accompanied Stack to London to consult the British government on the situation. <sup>4</sup> The seriousness of the matter had been aggravated when the Treasury informed the foreign office in April that "it had always been made clear that His Majesty's Government were only pledged to guarantee the sums set forth in the

<sup>1</sup> "Note on the revised estimates for Gezira development works", enclosed in Stack to Allenby, 25/5/21, F.O. 407/189.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> "Decision of 25 May 1921", F.O. 407/189. See Gaitskell, Gezira, p. 113.

<sup>4</sup> Stack to Allenby, 25/5/21, F.O. 407/189.

Loan Acts and were under no obligation to complete any specific works." <sup>1</sup>

On 24 June a conference was held at the foreign office to discuss the situation. Stack, Bernard, and Fraser, the director of lands, represented the Sudan Government; O.E. Niemeyer represented the Treasury; and Murray and Lindsay attended for the foreign office. Sir James Currie, a member of the Board of Trade, was also present. The foreign office position was akin to that of the Sudan Government, in that they considered it desirable for the irrigation works to continue in order to avoid "a danger of the old financial yoke with Egypt being reimposed upon the Sudan". The Treasury, however, "could neither lend money nor guarantee money, though otherwise sympathetically disposed toward the Sudan Government". <sup>2</sup>

At a second conference, held on 18 July without Niemeyer, an accurate picture emerged of the critical point the Sudan finances had reached. Currie observed that

the Soudan Government could not possibly borrow money without a guarantee.... Financiers would at once and inevitably draw the conclusion that the second loan was unsound and, consequently, would refuse to touch it.

His second observation related to Mr. Niemeyer's expression of opinion that the cheeseparating process in a most acute form would have to be applied to every other branch of the Soudan Government activities. Such a policy, which could only be advocated by someone without actual knowledge of the country, Sir James Curry ... could only describe as political and administrative insanity, liable rapidly to render the country ungovernable....

Sir James Currie said that in the absence of a guarantee, it would be almost impossible to take steps towards floating a loan without raising the thorny question of the financial relations of the Sudan with Egypt.

<sup>1</sup> B.P. Blockett to foreign office, 22/4/21, F.O. 407/189.

<sup>2</sup> "Minutes of an inter-departmental conference on Soudan finances", 24/6/21, F.O. 407/189. This was not a new attitude. For relations between the Treasury and the Sudan during the Wingate years, see Warburg, The Sudan under Wingate, pp. 23-25.

Mr. Lindsay admitted that the Egyptian situation was complicated. The Council of Ministers had recently decided that they were opposed in principle to the continuation of the Blue Nile dam at the present time; this, he thought, was a pro forma protest in the nature of a 'mesure conservatoire'.... Of course, what they meant was that if, as the result of negotiations in London, the Sudan were to be 'ceded' to Egypt, the Egyptian Government would stop the work....

...if the Soudan Government were to borrow on their own, they would reduce the country to a mere appendage to a huge dam. Sir Lee Stack remarked that the Soudan would be in the same position if the work stopped, in view of the interest charges on the capital already spent and the heavy compensation which would have to be paid both to the contractors and to the Soudan Plantation Syndicate.... Mr. Lindsay said that it appeared to be a case of Hobson's choice. But in either event the Soudan would be reduced to bare bones in everything except the dam....

Sir Lee Stack said that he had already made a number of enquiries, all of which were discouraging. Mr. Murray enquired whether a drastic policy of retrenchment had yet been started. Sir Lee Stack replied in the negative, and Sir Edgar Bernard added that they were always retrenching....<sup>1</sup>

A third conference was held on 22 July, with the Treasury represented again by Niemeyer. He reported that the governor of the Bank of England thought money could be raised, but only if the Egyptian question were settled before a loan was issued.<sup>2</sup> Niemeyer suggested that the Treasury might be willing to let a new loan "rank before the existing one - in other words, that its service would be a first charge on the Soudan revenues", and he recommended that "stringent economy should be effected in Soudan Government expenditure, as the whole future of the country must depend on the completion of the dam".<sup>3</sup>

The working committee (Lindsay, Murray, Currie and Niemeyer) reported on 3 August. They recommended against dropping the scheme, be-

<sup>1</sup> "Memorandum respecting second conference on Soudan irrigation project", 19/7/21, F.O. 407/190.

<sup>2</sup> "Soudan irrigation projects", 22/7/21, F.O. 407/190.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

cause of the £E3,000,000 already spent and because of the charges for interest and compensation which would result, concluding that "the credit of the Soudan for many years would be ruined by such a stoppage". They further recommended that

- a) ... the Gezireh scheme must be completed; but
- b) We think the Treasury might be asked first to invite Parliament to sanction the application of savings on the Soudan Railway and Tokar scheme to further expenditure on the Gezireh dam, and, secondly, to agree to waive its claim on the Soudan revenues in respect of interest on the existing loan.

They suggested also that "the Soudan Government should undertake to exercise the most careful administrative economy so as if possible to avoid any liability falling on His Majesty's Government".<sup>1</sup>

In the autumn of 1921 an outside expert, Mr. F.T. Hopkinson, was called in to study the commercial prospects, and to report on the methods and progress of the works.<sup>2</sup> His report, issued in February 1922, was outspokenly critical of the management of the Gezira Scheme. The Sudan Government's emphasis on increased costs as an explanation for the financial crisis (a position based on Macdonald's arguments) was discounted. Hopkinson reported that

The dam is 3,308 yards in length and 111 feet high at its deepest point.... The excavation of the canals, comprising 20,000,000 cubic yards, being one of the biggest excavation works of modern times, it called for the finest organisation and the best methods obtainable in the Empire. It has received the most inadequate and amateurish treatment conceivable with the obvious and certain results. Extravagance has run riot since the commencement of work ... and it still continues. I find it difficult to write in restrained language about most of the things which came under my observation, as I have not found a single redeeming feature.... Duplication of methods and machines involving double expen-

<sup>1</sup> "Memorandum on the Gezireh irrigation scheme", 3/8/21, F.O. 407/190.

<sup>2</sup> Treasury to foreign office, 2/9/21, F.O. 407/190.

diture is a characteristic.... The time has come [for] a responsible contractor undertaking all the responsibility for the work....<sup>1</sup>

Hopkinson noted that wages, especially for foreign workers (Italian stone-dressers, Egyptian manual labourers) were excessive, and that labour was ill-managed: he was amazed to find workers employed to lift (without machines) stones weighing up to  $1\frac{1}{2}$  tons. "This operation I have referred to as 'Roman' - it may, indeed, have been employed by the Pharaohs. It is picturesque, but in the highest degree wasteful." In 1921, 18,077 men were employed in connection with the works, but Hopkinson saw a need for no more than seven thousand. He pointed out that the works were being carried out for the Sudan Government by the Egyptian irrigation department, with the result that while the Sudan Government was responsible for financing the project, it had no voice in the control of expenditure. He suggested finally that

though late, it is not yet too late, to save the scheme by the immediate adoption of efficient construction methods.... It is inconceivable that the damage which British prestige would sustain by the abandonment of the scheme could be incurred. The work already done ... will still remain as a monument of failure....<sup>2</sup>

The problems of labour, so prominent in the Hopkinson report, had not gone unnoticed by the Sudan Government. In 1921, upon the recommendation of the Central Economic Board, a labour committee was established. It was made up of Hewins (chairman), Major E.O.A. Newcombe, Arthur Huddleston and Willis.<sup>3</sup> The committee reported that the Gezira

<sup>1</sup> "Gezirah Irrigation Scheme, Soudan. Report by Mr. F.T. Hopkinson ...", 15/2/22, enclosed in Allenby to Curzon, 2/3/22, F.O. 407/192.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. See also Warburg, The Sudan under Wingate, pp. 68-69.

<sup>3</sup> Establishment of the committee was approved by Stack on 13/1/21. SGA, INTEL 4/4/19. For labour policy and problems during the early Condominium, see Warburg, The Sudan under Wingate, pp. 178-182.

operations were so vast that "the whole problem of labour takes its colour from them". A huge grain crop in 1921, which required two months longer than usual to harvest, an excellent cotton crop at Tokar, and an abnormal demand for construction workers at Khartoum and elsewhere combined to make the labour shortage in 1921 particularly acute. Dura was very cheap - 40 P.T. per ardeb<sup>1</sup> as opposed to 260 P.T. the year before - creating "little incentive to the people to work". It was reported that in the Gezira the daily wage for a Sudanese was 10-12 P.T. which, on piece work, "to which practically all of them are put", was raised to 14-15 P.T. The reason for this "high" rate was the competition between the construction company and the Plantations Syndicate. It was noted that "people working near their villages in the Gezira would work as readily for P.T. 6 per diem as for P.T. 10-12", and that more actual work would be done at the lower rate. The committee stated that

There are very strong reasons ... for endeavouring to reach an agreement that wages on the irrigation scheme shall be based on wages current in the northern Sudan and under present conditions should not exceed P.T. 7 per diem.... a permanent conference or joint committee should be set up, including representatives of the Government, the Irrigation Department, Sudan Construction Company and Sudan Plantations Syndicate, to deal with the questions of labour and wages ... with the particular object in view of arriving at an agreement as to daily pay and the maximum rates to be paid ... for different classes of work....<sup>2</sup>

The insufficiency of local labour is borne out by statistics produced by the committee. In March 1921 the works at Makwar employed the following numbers of labourers: 4,786 local Sudanese; 611 "local Fellata"; 787 "Kordofan Fellata"; 240 Ta<sup>c</sup>āīsha; 854 Dongalawis; 868 Yemenis;

<sup>1</sup> An ardeb was equivalent in the Blue Nile to 560 lbs., and elsewhere in the Sudan to 336 lbs. (Gaitskell, Gezira, p. 36n.)

<sup>2</sup> Report of the labour committee, 1921, SGA, INTEL 4/4/19.

406 Europeans; and 9,525 Egyptians. Given the fact that imported labour was earning at least 17-18 P.T. per day, the expense of imported as against local workers, especially if the latter's rates could be artificially fixed, was very great.<sup>1</sup> But a 1922 handbook pointed out that wages were likely to remain high "until the supply of labour increases and the struggle for existence becomes more acute".<sup>2</sup>

The Hopkinson report might have been expected to destroy the prospects of further British guarantees, but in fact the opposite reaction occurred. On 31 March 1922 the standing committee met again. The Treasury representative expressed the view that "a curtain should be drawn over the mistakes of the past, that it was no use crying over spilt milk and that all were agreed that the work must continue". Stack revealed that the contractors (Messrs. Alessandrini) had been discharged and that new tenders would be invited. Niemeyer expressed renewed concern over Egypt's role in Sudan affairs, but Stack replied that if Egypt refused to cooperate, "Great Britain must then take unilateral action". In any event, the committee recommended preparation by the Sudan Government of an ordinance authorising a new loan.<sup>3</sup>

The coincidence of these conversations and the series of negotiations that led up to Britain's declaration to Egypt on 28 February 1922 was an important factor both in the support of the foreign office for continuing the Gezira works and in the general concern as to the future

<sup>1</sup> Report of the labour committee.

<sup>2</sup> A handbook of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, p. 478.

<sup>3</sup> "Minutes of inter-departmental committee to consider present position of Gezira Irrigation Scheme", 31/3/22, F.O. 407/192.



role of Egypt in Sudan affairs. It is necessary, therefore, that the decisions taken in London regarding the Gezira Scheme be seen in this larger context of Anglo-Egyptian relations and, specifically, in the context of the Sudan's uncertain future status.

A new contract was signed between the Sudan Government and Messrs. S. Pearson and Sons, stipulating completion of the dam and canal works by July 1925. The British government agreed to guarantee a loan of £3,500,000.<sup>1</sup> In 1924 a further £3,500,000 was guaranteed. Thus, by the end of 1924 the British government had guaranteed a nominal amount of £14,920,000, or sums rising to £755,200 per annum in addition to the principle of £8,540,000.<sup>2</sup>

It is likely that the pressures of Lancashire cotton interests and the Sudan Government's political arguments were finally responsible for inducing the backing of the British government. When the 1924 guaranteed loan was being debated in Parliament, a group of M.P.s met with the financial secretary to the Treasury and the parliamentary under-secretary of state and withdrew their opposition to the loan on condition (among others) that the Sudan Government be asked

- a) To obtain, if possible, an undertaking ... that all cotton produced in the Gezira should be offered for sale in the first instance in Great Britain; and
- b) To examine the possibility of fixing a maximum price at which cotton produced in the Gezira should be sold in order to prevent any attempt ... to effect a corner on long staple cotton.<sup>3</sup>

The obvious objections to this, from the points of view of politics and international trade, won the day, but the import of the Gezira Scheme to

<sup>1</sup> Gaitskell, Gezira, p. 93.

<sup>2</sup> Treasury to foreign office, 3/7/24, F.O. 371/10050.

<sup>3</sup> Ramsay MacDonald to Allenby, 28/2/24, F.O. 407/198.

Lancashire had been again made abundantly clear. The debate on the Trade Facilities Bill of 1922, which included the first of the two £3,500,000 loans, was equally instructive. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Baldwin, had noted that

There is a real fear ... that the supply of raw cotton in the world today is not sufficient for the world's trade, and, unless immediate steps are taken to increase the growing capacity ... great disaster will overcome ... the cotton trade in this country....<sup>1</sup>

Nor was this a party political issue. Indeed, Tom Shaw, a Labour M.P. and future minister, said that "the organised employers and workmen of Lancashire are at one on this matter.... We must look to our bread and butter, and we want all the development possible so far as the growing of cotton is concerned."<sup>2</sup>

The political arguments raised by the Sudan Government had taken a familiar turn, and amounted to the idea that the greater Britain's direct financial involvement in the Sudan, the stronger would be Britain's hand in negotiations with Egypt. A corollary, from the Sudan Government's point of view, was that a greater financial interest would deter the British government from making concessions to Egypt in the Sudan. Further, the tired, unproved, but apparently still effective argument was raised that refusal to guarantee the loans would so shake the faith of the Sudanese "as to engender a spirit of distrust ... and give rise to a reactionary movement with the unexpectedness characteristic of Eastern countries".<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> PD, H.C., vol. 159, 4/12/22, 1388.

<sup>2</sup> PD, H.C., vol. 159, 6/12/22, 1872.

<sup>3</sup> Memorandum by Stack concerning Gezira funding, n.d., received by Lindsay on 28/4/22, F.O. 371/7753.

Appendix II: TablesTable one: Egyptian financial contributions to the Sudan, 1899-1924

(in £Es)

	<u>Advances for Development</u>	<u>Amount to cover Deficit</u>	<u>Military Expen- diture in Sudan</u>
1899	-	444,887	-
1900	-	457,892	-
1901	121,352	417,179	-
1902	142,832	389,721	-
1903	129,110	389,721	-
1904	621,863	379,763	-
1905	750,213	379,763	-
1906	698,640	379,763	-
1907	921,598	379,763	-
1908	637,768	379,763	-
1909	645,200	335,000	-
1910	518,866	325,000	-
1911	132,510	360,000	-
1912	45,728	335,000	-
1913	43,856	-	179,481
1914*	4,989	-	44,870
1914-15	-	-	179,481
1915-16	-	-	179,481
1916-17	-	-	179,481
1917-18	-	-	422,764
1918-19	-	-	445,691
1919-20	170,000	-	329,481
1920-21	-	-	464,403
1921-22	-	-	477,947
1922-23	-	-	515,725
1923-24	-	-	not known
<u>Totals</u>	5,584,525	5,353,215	

Source: Schuster, "Note on the payments made by Egypt to the Sudan since 1899", July, 1924, F.O. 371/10068.

\* 3 month figure.

Table two: Sudan Government revenue and expenditure, 1917-1924  
(£Es)

	<u>Revenue</u>	<u>Expenditure</u>
1917	2,195,355	1,901,941
1918	2,774,689	2,336,315
1919	2,992,792	2,720,513
1920	4,425,340	3,564,848
1921	4,069,235	3,900,242
1922	3,498,595	3,496,999
1923	3,766,133	3,392,470
1924	4,298,856	3,453,273

Sources: All figures taken from the annual Report for 1927, Cmd. 3284 (1928-29) except for expenditure figure for 1924, which is taken from the Sudan almanac, 1927.

Table three: Sudan Government sources of revenue (£Es)

	<u>1913</u>	<u>1922</u>	<u>1923</u>	<u>1924</u>
<u>Direct taxes on natives</u>	295,546 (18.9%)	458,342 (13.2%)	451,259 (12.0%)	469,939 (10.9%)
<u>Irrigation receipts and royalties</u>	109,147 (7.0%)	136,336 (3.8%)	239,508 (6.4%)	299,817 (7.0%)
<u>Consumption duties; sugar monopoly</u>	186,837 (11.9%)	652,508 (18.6%)	762,213 (20.2%)	945,356 (22.0%)
<u>Gross revenue from Railways, Posts and Telegraphs; wood and commercial ventures</u>	818,829 (52.2%)	1,925,251 (55.1%)	2,008,772 (53.4%)	2,204,869 (51.3%)
<u>Miscellaneous taxes; court fees; etc.</u>	157,993 (10.0%)	326,158 (9.3%)	304,381 (8.0%)	378,875 (8.8%)
<u>Totals</u>	1,568,352 (100%)	3,498,595 (100%)	3,766,133 (100%)	4,298,856 (100%)

Source: Annual Report for 1927.

Table four: Nationality of government employees by department, 1920Education Department

British	31
Egyptian	53
Sudanese	282
Syrian	4
Other	5

Public Works Department

British	43
Egyptian	27
Sudanese	10
Syrian	2
Other	16

Central Economic Board  
and Resources Board

British	7
Sudanese	7
Syrian	1

Repression of Slavery  
Department

British	4
Egyptian	5
Sudanese	4

Finance Department

British	10
Egyptian	119
Sudanese	10
Syrian	54
Other	4

Railways and Steamers

British	148
Egyptian	444
Sudanese	142
Syrian	17
Other	40

Legal Department

British	17
Egyptian	62
Sudanese	141
Syrian	10
Other	6

Posts and Telegraphs

British	18
Egyptian	358
Sudanese	143
Syrian	2
Other	2

Medical Department

British	15
Egyptian	41
Sudanese	9
Syrian	34

Veterinary Department

British	20
Egyptian	20
Sudanese	4
Other	1

Stores Department and  
Prisons Department

British	2
Egyptian	34
Sudanese	15
Syrian	3

Agriculture and Forests Department

British	25
Egyptian	37
Sudanese	61
Other	3

Survey Department

British	13
Egyptian	14
Sudanese	53
Other	3

Customs

British	12
Egyptian	41
Sudanese	36
Syrian	6
Other	4

Source: Keown-Boyd, "Report in 3 parts", 14/3/20, DEP MILNER 161.

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