

Egypt on the Eve of a New Crisis.

By A m.

The few weeks that have elapsed since the death of Zaghoul have witnessed a number of important changes in the inner-political structure of Egypt. In the first place there has been a consolidation of the position of the King of Egypt, since the Wafd leaders have entered into closer touch with him. In the same measure in which the Wafd has acquired leading political positions in the country, there has been an increasing political degeneration among its leaders. Though even during the lifetime of Zaghoul the Wafd had undoubtedly the bulk of the population behind it, it was in itself no party of the

masses in the strict sense of the word. The heads of the Wafd and its party apparatus, representing the Egyptian bourgeoisie, feel fairly comfortable in their present positions; they therefore deviate more and more from the masses, and have arrived at a "modus vivendi" with the Royal court on the one hand and the British imperialists on the other.

The negotiations which are being carried on with Great Britain are intended to provide a more stable basis for this civil peace. They are anything but favourable to the Egyptian claims to independence or to the broad masses of the Egyptian people; indeed, so far as is known, the proposals which Chamberlain submitted to the Egyptian Prime Minister Sarvat Pasha exclude all discussion of the Sudan problem, which means that the continuation of the undisputed rule of Great Britain in the Sudan is confirmed, to the greatest disadvantage of Egypt. The British troops are possibly to be evacuated from the interior of Egypt, but are to be placed in strategic positions, presumably close to the Suez Canal. A treaty of alliance is to be concluded between Egypt and Great Britain, which the latter will be able to cancel quite easily and the former not at all.

The British, however, know very well, why they can now confront the Egyptian Government with such presumptuous demands, which still fall short of the suggestions made three years ago and even, in many details, of the recently concluded agreement between Great Britain and Iraq. They are deftly manoeuvring among the various Egyptian parties, each of which would be glad to undertake the execution of the agreement. In the first place this naturally applies to the Ittehadists, the party in closest touch with the Court, but it is also true of the Liberal-Constitutionalists, represented by the present Prime Minister, Sarvat Pasha, and, last not least, of the Wafd itself. The longer the "bidding" for the agreement with the British Government lasts, the more favourable the situation will be for the British policy.

Before all, the British policy can reckon on the increasing friction within the coalition formed by the Liberals and the Wafd. The Liberal-Constitutional Party is in itself very weak and has only undertaken the lead in the Government because it acts as intermediary between the Wafd and Great Britain. If, however, the Wafd succeeds (as its leaders and in particular its new President, Mustapha Nehas, aim to do) in arriving, parallel with the official negotiations, at an understanding with the King and also with the British Resident, the Liberal-Constitutionalists can be eliminated and the Wafd will assume power alone.

To anticipate this elimination, Sarvat Pasha is endeavouring to accelerate the outbreak of differences between his own party and the Wafd. If he succeeds in this purpose, he will be safe. For then the Wafd would again be obliged to accept his conditions of coalition, by which he would take care to safeguard his own interests more than hitherto. The pressure on the part of Great Britain at the negotiations, the efforts of the Wafd to seize the authority, and the counter-manoevres of Sarvat Pasha, are the main reasons of the Cabinet crisis at present threatening Egypt.

Both the Liberal-Constitutionalists and the Wafd leaders, however, are hampered in the liberty of their movements by a considerable pressure from below. Thus just at the moment when the Liberals began to oppose the Wafd, Mohammed Pasha Mahmoud, a representative of the Liberal-Constitutional Party in the Sarvat Cabinet, published a declaration of solidarity with the Wafd in the press of that party, which is looked upon as a signal for the formation of a Left wing among the Liberal-Constitutionalists.

A yet more serious matter is the crisis within the Wafd. Here the more radically inclined members (apart from those who occupy good positions in the service of the party) are wholly dissatisfied with the compromising policy of their leaders, and in the students' clubs the prospects of a split are openly discussed. The radical wing is beginning to rally round the National (Vatanist) Party, which, despite of a weakness of numbers, is now alone in its opposition to an agreement, to say nothing of an alliance, with Great Britain. In this party, too, there are vacillations as regards orientation, towards the "intellectuals" or the peasants and workers but in most questions the radical tendency has the upper hand.

In general the internal changes in the grouping of the parties ensue rapidly enough, and the apparent "peace" and "harmony" of the Coalition in Egypt are likely to be of short duration.