

The Watch on the Suez.

The Anglo-Egyptian Draft Treaty — a War Preparation Document.

By J. B., Jerusalem.

With grand gestures and many phrases the Labour Party is endeavouring to represent the project of the treaty, which Mohammed Mahmoud, the Egyptian dictator by the grace of Britain, and Henderson have worked out together, as a "friendly solution" of the Anglo-Egyptian conflicts. This "leftward" gesture is all the more suspicious, because in other important matters, such as the question of unemployment and the Indian question, nothing is happening which could be regarded as a deviation from conservative traditions. On closer inspection, however, it is evident that in the Egyptian policy too, the Mahmoud-Henderson project is by no means so revolutionary as, to judge by the advertisement in the "Daily Herald" and from the first glance, it might appear.

In the first place, there is the "evacuation of Egypt by the British troops". Even the last State crisis, which broke out in conjunction with the establishing of the Mahmoud dictatorship in Egypt, (July 1928), proved that the presence of British troops in the Nile Valley is quite without object: the English troops did not even appear on the streets; it was sufficient that they could be transported to Cairo in a few hours to paralyse any revolutionary action. It is true that the troops are to leave their stations near Cairo and Alexandria, but — and this time with the voluntary assent of the Egyptian Government — they are to be concentrated close to the Suez Canal and still on Egyptian territory and at places which are hardly more than a two-hours' motor drive from Cairo; the number of troops is to remain the same (Executive supplement to the treaty project). What remains of the evacuation? Nothing but a removal of the British troops — at the expense of the Egyptian Government — from their present station to others in Egyptian territory, which in many respects are strategically still more favourable for the English than are the present positions.

The second question in dispute, the Sudan question, is to be "magnanimously" settled by a return to the state of affairs existing prior to the infamous Allenby ultimatum in the year 1924, i. e. formal condominium of Egypt and England in the Sudan. Not, however, in all parts, for the 300,000 feddan of cotton growing territory has in the meanwhile been swallowed

up by the Cotton Growing Association, and, although the Labour members of parliament previously protested vehemently against this robber-clause, they are making no effort to annul it, just as they are doing nothing to upset the Nile Agreement, extorted by the conservative government, whereby the Egyptian water sources are subjected to British control. The basic demand of Egypt and its nationalists — evacuation of the Sudan and its union with Egypt — remains unfulfilled.

The case is the same with the other questions: formal "concessions" and simultaneous maintenance of the de facto situation created by the conservatives. The High Commissioner will now be called "ambassador", but will assume an exceptional position, which will permit him to carry out the functions of a High Commissioner; the military control will be rechristened "advisory military commission", but this will scarcely diminish its authority; on the basis of the "alliance" between England and Egypt the English officials will retain their posts until further notice...; and, finally, several points mention how in case of war "His Egyptian Majesty" will immediately put at the disposition of "His British Majesty" all strategic points, harbours, air stations, railways, etc., in addition to maximum military assistance of other kinds.

These points are the most important of the whole treaty, and it is here that the pacifist, magnanimous gentleman and socialist, Henderson, shows his cloven hoof. The Anglo-Egyptian treaty is in essence, tendency and content a part of the **British war preparation in the Near East**, camouflaged with pacifist phrases, and is executed on a sector of the imperialistic front, where only a "left-wing", a Labour government could set about the execution of a manoeuvre for which the conservative government under the strong influence of the Diehards was much too inelastic.

In order to "guess" the direction of the war preparation, it needs to be mentioned that the **breaking** off of negotiations between Henderson and Dovgalevsky synchronised with the **completion** of the Anglo-Egyptian treaty project. While Henderson considered it necessary to impede the resumption of diplomatic relations with the proletarian power by putting reactionary "preliminary conditions" in the way, he quickly worked out a project concerning an offensive and defensive military war alliance with the Egyptian pashas, landowners, bankers and capitalists.

The Labour Party does not for a single moment make a secret of the fact that it designs to capture with its project not only the representative of the big landowners and bankers, Mohammed Mahmoud, not only the degenerate royal court and its hangers on, but also the national reformists, the bourgeois Wafd and, if possible, a portion of its petty-bourgeois supporters. The Suez Canal is the most sensitive artery of the British Empire, and it is therefore necessary that in case of war all the exploiting classes in Egypt, the whole of the Egyptian State and party apparatus should be at the service of Britain; it is therefore necessary to operate, as the Labour Party is now doing, with the semblance of "independence" and with evacuation phrases, in order to give the Egyptian ruling class the possibility of forming a block with the imperialist oppressors.

It must be said that the tricky manoeuvre of the social imperialists, the first attempt at an official, cynically open block between imperialism and national reformism, suffers from many inherent contradictions: it will be a difficult matter for the Wafd to justify to the masses its open betrayal of the anti-imperialist fight (up to the present it has only substituted reformist methods for revolutionary methods, but it must now openly renounce the achievement of its objective). The formation of such a block will greatly aggravate the class conflicts between Fellaah and landowner, worker and capitalist. The attempt to abolish the capitulation privileges (especially the privileges of foreigners in Egypt) will reawaken the antagonism between the individual imperialist States (England-Italy, England-America). Finally, when the provisions of the treaty come to be actually carried out, the clash of interests between the colonial and imperialist bourgeoisie in certain questions (tariff questions, etc.) will again break out.

It is therefore by no means certain that the social-imperialist manoeuvre will be successful. But even now the important lesson can be learned that Henderson is losing no opportunity of preparing in his own way for the coming war.