

In Egyptian Service:
the Role of British Officials in Egypt, 1911-1936

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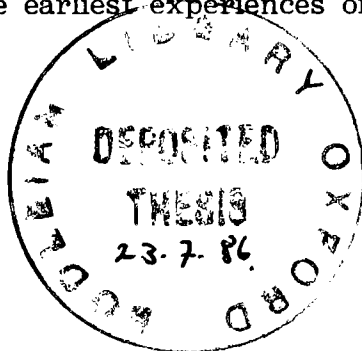
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In 1919 the number of British officials employed by the Egyptian Government reached a peak of over 1,600, a substantial figure in relation to a colonial administration like the Indian Civil Service. However, due to the anomalous nature of Britain's occupation of Egypt, the workings of British administration there were left deliberately ambiguous. Thus although we have an extensive knowledge of imperial policy with regard to Egypt, we have little understanding of how British rule there actually functioned, certainly nothing to compare with numerous local studies of the Raj or Colonial Service at work.

By studying the British administrators of the Egyptian Government, this thesis casts new light on Britain's middle years in Egypt, which saw formal imperial control succeeded by informal hegemony.

We begin by analysing the Anglo-Egyptian administrative structure as a product of its historical development. We examine how well this muted style of administrative control suited conditions in Egypt and Britain's requirements there, considering the fact that by 1919 the British officials had become a major source of nationalist grievance. This loss of reputation caused the Milner Mission to select the British administration as a principal scapegoat in its proposed concessions. Moreover, it was the belief of certain leading officials that Britain's responsibility for Egyptian administration was no longer viable which finally helped precipitate the 1922 declaration of independence.

The Egyptian Government now took actual rather than nominal control of its foreign bureaucrats, yet even in 1936, over 500 British officials were still employed in finance, security, and in technical and educational capacities. The changing role of these officials within an evolving mechanism of British control illuminates one of the earliest experiences of transfer of power this century.



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This study of the British officials of the Egyptian Government between 1911 and 1936 grew from a feeling of dissatisfied unease: a sense that in all the scholarly work on the British period in Egypt, there remained a shadowy, uncharted area to be explored. There existed numerous accounts of British policy towards Egypt in the genre of 'imperial history', complemented by considerable analysis of the Egyptian nationalist response. Yet these conveyed little understanding of what British administration meant in the Egyptian context. With a very few exceptions, historians appeared to confine the British officials employed in the Egyptian Government to the anecdote and the passing reference.

This was puzzling, considering that in the cases of India and Africa, the historiography of imperialism passed long ago from broad imperial policy to local studies, assessing the actual workings and impact of colonial rule.

On reflection, it seemed that this imbalance in the Egyptian literature could be traced to certain characteristics of the relevant sources, characteristics themselves reflective of the distinctive way in which British rule evolved in Egypt. In fact, understanding how these historical and historiographical factors have affected our understanding of the administrative aspects of British control in Egypt itself turned into a methodological imperative as I pursued my investigation. Accordingly, the thesis begins by tracing the historical development of Egyptian administration under the Occupation and the impact of this development on the documentary evidence.

Chief among the factors influencing the development of British administration in Egypt was the original perception of the Occupation as temporary. Britain's invasion of Egypt was not expected to entail long-term, colonial-style administration of the country. Moreover, Britain's very presence there was under attack, at home and abroad. Gradually the Occupation prolonged itself indefinitely, in tandem with a deepening British involvement in Egypt's internal administration. However, the organisation of that administrative involvement was scarcely altered from its earliest form, which had been moulded by considerations of a necessarily temporary, inconspicuous presence.

Thus British administrators remained confined to an advisory status within the existing apparatus of Egyptian administration, their loyalties directed to the Egyptian Government rather than to the British Crown. Their activities fell under the purview of foreign, not colonial affairs, inasmuch as they were monitored in London at all. Whether details of Egyptian administration reached the Foreign Office depended on Britain's diplomatic representative in Cairo, and usually, therefore, on the

political or international significance of the information concerned. Apart from a digest of administrative achievements contained in the Consul-General's Annual Report, historians have thus had sparse documentary evidence from which to construct an understanding of the unique mechanism of British administrative influence in Egypt. This, I would suggest, largely explains the historiographical lacuna where Anglo-Egyptian administration is concerned.

More than this, historians have perhaps been influenced by the emphasis and format of the early apologias for British rule in Egypt. Although the first of these, England in Egypt, was written by Milner from the vantage point of a former British official, with considerable emphasis on the complexities and peculiarities of administration in Egypt, the work which really laid the foundations for all subsequent writing on the subject was Cromer's Modern Egypt of 1908. Numerous accounts have followed Cromer in writing from the point of view of Britain's Consul-General (or later High Commissioner). Due perhaps to Cromer's dominant personality and longevity of office, British rule in Egypt has invariably been personified by this figure. Gorst and Kitchener both died before they could set down their memoirs, whilst Wingate and Allenby declined to justify their reputations in public. This permitted Lloyd, in Egypt Since Cromer, to continue where Cromer had broken off, with an account which places the British Residency squarely at stage centre of the Anglo-Egyptian drama. Most historians have followed in this tradition of political and diplomatic emphasis.

By contrast, Egyptian nationalism clearly regarded British rule in rather wider dimensions. Although the nationalist press, for example, certainly condemned British policy towards Egypt as exemplified by the High Commissioner, the existence of a British-dominated administration drew equally vehement feeling, and lay conspicuously at the root of many of the grievances articulated in 1919.

Did this suggest, I wondered, that Anglo-Egyptian administration was more significant in its own right than the passing references of the textbooks implied? Both Vatikiotis¹ and Richmond² merely allude to the administration as it related to British policy in Egypt; likewise Mansfield³ and Marlowe⁴ relegate British officialdom to a minor role overall.

Tignor was the first to supplement the official records with the recollections of certain British officials. His Modernisation and British Colonial Rule in Egypt, 1882-1914 (Princeton, 1966), was a valuable first study of the evolution of British administration in terms of philosophy and policy. Nevertheless, those Egyptian Government officials to whom we are introduced never fully emerge from the shadow of the first proconsul, and tend to be associated, misleadingly, with other non-officials like Boyle, in keeping with a tendency to neglect the unique characteristics of Anglo-Egyptian officialdom.

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1. P. Vatikiotis, The Modern History of Egypt (London, 1976).
 2. J. Richmond, Egypt, 1798-1952 (London, 1977).
 3. P. Mansfield, The British in Egypt (London, 1971).
 4. J. Marlowe, Anglo-Egyptian Relations, 1800-1956 (London, 1954).

Welch is one scholar who has captured some of the ambiguities of the subject in his thesis 'British Attitudes to the Administration of Egypt under Lord Cromer, 1892-1907', (D.Phil. Oxford 1978). This much-needed study examines the evolution of Britain's administrative machinery through to the increasing institutionalisation of the early 1900s, but terminates with Cromer's departure and the suggestion that the administration was already afflicted by deep-seated demoralisation.

Thus the few detailed studies which relate to the British officials confine themselves almost exclusively to the early Occupation, years which have traditionally been regarded as the heyday of pioneering reform under men like Scott-Moncrieff and Willcocks. Yet if the Cromer years were the golden era for the British administration, the years which followed were perhaps more significant in terms of the role played by the British officials - often indirectly and behind-the-scenes - in affecting the course of events. It was especially after Cromer's departure that the number of British officials mushroomed: we know that between 1898 and 1906 the total had grown from 455 to 662, but had reached 1,671 by 1919. These were the years when young Englishmen increasingly monopolised government posts to the exclusion of Egyptians. Moreover, with Cromer's retirement, British officials were no longer subject to an authoritarian Consul-General who tightly grasped the reins of Egyptian government; in any case, the widening scope of the administration now tended to preclude this kind of personal control.

For all these reasons, British officials could now be perceived as a significant element in Egyptian affairs, rather than merely an extension of the Consul-General's personal secretariat. Consequently they came to constitute in Egyptian eyes one particularly tangible manifestation of Britain's presence and domination in Egypt. Indeed, grievances directed specifically against the British administration represented a major force in the nationalist explosion of 1919. These events have, of course, received extensive scholarly investigation, but because of the prevailing tendency to neglect the British officials, the particular significance of the latter to the events of 1919 has been widely underestimated, and thus one important line of interpretation lost.

The first major section of the following study leads to this point. By analysing the unique functioning of British administrative influence in Egypt, and by focussing particularly on the ways in which, by the Kitchener years, the mechanism was increasingly deviating from the Cromerian ideals of advice and inspection, we are able to understand how British rule came to lose Egyptian acquiescence and cooperation in one crucial area - that of internal administration and security.

To achieve this new angle of approach, it has been necessary to assemble information from widely scattered references in the official correspondence, supplemented by an important corpus of memoirs, letters and diaries which have never been systematically analysed for this precise purpose, and some of which were quite newly discovered. Similarly, the Milner Papers, although well combed in other respects, offer extensive information on how the administration functioned prior to 1919 which has not, to my knowledge, been exploited as it might hitherto. Finally, although I was beginning my study at least ten years too late to glean the oral recollections of more than a handful of surviving officials, my conversations with a few charming veterans of the period

contributed valuable background material, as well as confirming the conviction that here was a 'service' much neglected by the historian.

I readily confess to an Anglo-centric emphasis in the sources, and thus in the study as a whole, since the internal Egyptian Government records remained beyond my reach, linguistically and logistically. The forthcoming study by Dr 'Abd al-Wahhab Bakr should provide a valuable Egyptian perspective on the subject.

The arbitrary survival of the documentary evidence discounted the viability of an exhaustive administrative history covering a limited time-span, pointing instead to a longer perspective. A focus of 25 years, covering different phases of the Occupation, makes it possible to try and evaluate the British officials in Egypt in terms of their historical significance. This, simply put, is what the thesis sets out to achieve.

There is evidence that the role played by certain senior British officials within the Anglo-Egyptian drama of 1919-1922 was, in fact, considerable. These officials realised, as did Milner, how unpopular British administration had become in Egypt, within the general unacceptability of the Protectorate. Milner perceived the sacrifice of the majority of British officials to be a means of recapturing Egyptian allegiance to a modified form of British hegemony. However, when Milner's proposals failed to materialise, a nucleus of British advisers to the Egyptian Government took up the campaign in even more radical terms. They argued that unless Britain withdrew from her self-imposed responsibility for Egypt's internal administration, she could soon find herself confronting widespread nationalist resistance, deprived of essential local assistance in the government apparatus. These warnings of imminent non-cooperation actually played a major part in precipitating the declaration of Egyptian independence in 1922 - a fact which, the thesis suggests, casts the British officials in an unusual historical light.

Even more than the period preceding 1922, the post-Protectorate years have tended to be examined by English historians in political and diplomatic rather than administrative terms. We know a good deal about Britain's struggle to get her four reserved areas of control recognised and ratified by a bilateral treaty; similarly, the complex political mutations of the period have been extensively documented.

Yet what has been largely ignored is the fact that in the administrative sphere, Egypt experienced one of the first transfers of colonial-style power this century. By following the role of the British officials who remained in Egypt through this process of 'proto-decolonisation', we are able to trace an early discovery of what self-government would mean in practice. Britain's loss of administrative influence in Egypt came about in ways and at a speed which few seem to have anticipated, relegating the majority of remaining British officials to a technical or educational capacity. We examine how the Residency attempted to evolve alternative mechanisms of management in Egypt, in which certain senior British officials acquired a quasi-political function for some years more.

Here, once again, but in a new form, was the contradiction which had always dogged British officials in Egypt: was their primary loyalty to the British or the Egyptian Government? For those

individuals who could unreservedly claim the latter, the situation was simpler; it was from this category that a large number of officials were invited to remain in Egyptian service, some until after the Second World War. However, for those with split loyalties, the position frequently proved untenable. It could be argued, perhaps, that it was the British administrators who exemplified most clearly the vagaries and contradictions of the Britain's policy towards Egypt. Yet it is for precisely this reason that a study of the British officials casts valuable light on the British period in Egypt.

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Preface

This study aims to cast new light on the era of British hegemony in Egypt by focussing on a group of hitherto-neglected participants in the saga: the British officials of the Egyptian Government. The presence, policies and personalities of these officials suggest a new angle of approaching the dynamics of the Anglo-Egyptian relationship. However, for particular historical reasons discussed in the thesis, the significance of these officials was always shadowy and behind-the-scenes. Because of this, and especially because of the consequent evasiveness of the sources, it was more appropriate to trace the role of the officials over a relatively extended period than to attempt an exhaustive study of a few years only. This perspective seeks to restore the frequently-forgotten British officials to their rightful recognition as essential supporting actors on the Anglo-Egyptian stage.

The thesis narrative commences where most studies of British administration in Egypt have terminated, after the Consulships of Cromer and Gorst. Following the officials through the following quarter-century allows us to examine the workings of British administration in two different guises: the years of "formal" control before 1922, and the period of "informal" domination which followed. The changes which overtook British officialdom after the Treaty of Alliance make 1936 a natural terminating date. However, the thesis makes no pretence of dissecting the treaty itself; as with other well-trodden political and diplomatic aspects of the period, this was thought superfluous to a study of the role of British administrators.

Acknowledgements

As this thesis has followed its author to three continents over the last few years, it has received the assistance of more and more friends. After the early advice of Miss Elizabeth Monroe, Mr Albert Hourani and Mr Anthony Kirk-Greene came long-term help from numerous library staff, including those of the Sudan Archive, Durham; Pembroke College and the University Library, Cambridge; the Kent Public Records Office; the Public Records Office at Kew; and the Bodleian.

Yet it was the privilege of talking with actual participants in the story which brought the documents to life, and here the author thinks affectionately of the late Miss Mary Rowlatt and the late Professor Herbert Addison, and of Sir Laurence Grafftey-Smith and Mr Noel Treavett, and a number of other interviewees listed in the bibliography.

Mr Barry Carman of the British Broadcasting Corporation made available a thrilling new documentary source in the McPherson Papers, and to him and also Mr David Steedes of Aberystwyth University go very sincere thanks. At St Antony's Middle East Centre, Dr Derek Hopwood and Ms. Gill Grant have been loyal friends of the thesis; here I would also thank the Centre Librarian, a gallant proof-reader, along with Mrs Jean Wright and Dr Robin Mowat. To Mrs Sheila Venkatachalam must surely go the accolade of the swiftest typist in Lagos.

Finally, there are those without whom the thesis could not have been completed: in terms of financial under-girding, the Department of Education and Science and the Clothworkers' Company; for sustained, patient support, Dr Roger Owen; for their continual love, my parents, and John, my husband, word-processing instructor and dearest friend.

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Abbreviations

CAB	Cabinet Papers
FO	Foreign Office Correspondence
GP	Gorst Papers
GRP	Grey Papers
LP	Lampson Diaries
McP	McPherson Papers
MP	Milner Papers
MM Report	Milner Mission Report
PP	Parliamentary Papers
SP	Storrs Papers
WP	Wingate Papers
YP	Young Papers

Glossary

al-Azhar	:renowned mosque and university, Cairo
Bey	:Turkish rank, inferior to Pasha
Bimbashi	:Major
<u>Caisse de la</u> <u>Dette Publique</u>	:Public Debt Commission
<u>Corvee</u>	:forced labour
<u>Dahabiya</u>	:riverboat with cabin
<u>Daira Saniya</u>	:administration of royal estates
<u>Effendi</u>	:mister, an educated man
<u>Feddan</u>	:land area unit, equal to 1.038 acres
Fellah (fellaheen)	:peasant(s)
<u>Firman</u>	:decree of Turkish Sultan
<u>Ghafir</u>	:watchman
<u>Halaka</u>	:cotton weighing device
'Izba, <u>Ezba</u>	:country dwelling
Kantar	:unit of cotton weight, :equal to c.44kg
Khedive	:Egyptian ruler
<u>Kurbaj, Curbash</u>	:hippopotamus-hide whip
<u>Kuttab</u>	:school
L.E.	:Egyptian Pound, equal to £1-0-6d
<u>Ma'mur</u>	:official in charge of a district
<u>Ma'mur Zapt</u>	:head of political security
<u>Markaz</u>	:district
<u>Mudir</u>	:provincial governor
<u>Mudiriya</u>	:province, provincial headquarters
<u>Mufattish</u>	:inspector
Nizam	:police
Pasha	:Turkish rank, often associated with an office
Porte	:the Turkish Government
P.T.	:piastre; P.T.100 to L.E.1
Qasr al-Dubbara	:quarter of Cairo, synonymous with the British Agency/Residency, located there.
<u>Sarraf</u>	:village finance clerk
Shaikh	:learned or holy person
Sharia	:street
<u>Shari'a</u>	:Muslim law
Sirdar	:Commander in Chief, Egyptian Army
Tanzim	:department supervising municipal concerns, Cairo.
<u>Tarboosh</u>	:red fez worn by Egyptian Government servants
<u>Tawkilat</u>	:petitions

cont'd

Glossary, cont'd

' <u>Ulama</u> '	:leading shaikhs
' <u>Umda</u> , <u>omda</u> , <u>omdeh</u>	:village mayor
Umma	:'nation'; political party of that name
Wafd	:'delegation'; political party of that name
Waqfs	:religious endowments
<u>Zar</u>	:ritual exorcism

Notes on Foreign Terms and Arabic Transliteration

1. Terms which are regularly anglicised or which appear in the Oxford English Dictionary are not treated as foreign, and thus are not underlined.
2. For the purposes of consistency in Arabic transliteration, I have followed the system used in J.Berque, Imperialism and Revolution (London, 1972).
3. Quotations have been left in their original transliteration, as have authors' names.

Dramatis Personae

Prominent British Officials of the Egyptian Government

(Generally showing most senior post attained)

Addison, Herbert	Professor of Engineering, Egyptian University.
Amos, Sir Maurice	Judge, Native Court of Appeal; Director, Khedivial Law School, 1913-5; Judicial Adviser, 1917-25.
Anthony, Henry	Controller, Government Lands, 1906; Director-General, State Domains, 1916-32.
Blakeney, Brig.-Gen. Robert	(Deputy) General Manager, Egyptian Railways, (1906) 1919-23.
Booth, Sir G	Judge, Mixed Tribunal, 1918; Judicial Adviser, 1928-37.
Brunyate, Sir William	Judicial Adviser, 1916-19; Acting Financial Adviser, 1917-19.
Campbell, Cecil	Legal Secretary, Finance Ministry, 1920s.
Cecil, Lord Edward	Financial Adviser, 1912-18.
Clayton, Brig.-Gen Gilbert	Interior Adviser, 1919-22.
Dowson, Sir Ernest	Director-General, Survey, 1909-19; Financial Adviser, 1920-23.
Dunlop, Douglas	Educational Adviser, 1907-1919.
Graham, Sir Ronald	Interior Adviser, 1910-16; (Assistant Under-Secretary, Foreign Office, 1916-19).
Haines, James	Under-Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, 1913-16; Interior Adviser, 1916-19.
Harvey, Sir Paul	Financial Adviser, 1907-12 and 1919-20.

cont'd

Dramatis Personae cont'd

Hayter, Sir William	Khedivial Counsellor, 1913; Acting Judicial and Financial Advisers, 1919; Legal Adviser to Egyptian Government and Residency, 1918-24.
Holden, Andrew	Ministry of Finance, 1907-52, latterly Controller, Land Tax Assessment.
Jarvis, Major C	Governor, Sinai Peninsula, 1923-36.
Keown-Boyd, Sir Alexander	Director-General, European Department 1923-37.
MacDonald, Sir Murdoch	Under-Secretary, Ministry of Public Works, 1916-21.
McIlwraith, Sir Malcolm	Judicial Adviser, 1898-1916.
McPherson, Joseph	Ministry of Public Instruction, 1901-14; Head of Political Security, Interior Ministry, 1917-24.
Patterson, Sir Reginald	Educational Adviser, 1919-23; Financial Adviser, 1923-7.
Percival, Sir John	Judge, Native Court of Appeal; Judicial Adviser, 1925-8.
Russell, Sir Thomas	Assistant Commandant, Alexandria Police, 1911-13; (Assistant) Commandant, Cairo Police, (1913) 1918-1946.
Tottenham, P	Under-Secretary, Ministry of Public Works, 1919-25; Chief Inspecting Engineer, London, 1925-37.
Watson, Sir Frank	Ministry of Public Works; Financial Adviser, 1927-37.

Chapter One

Introducing Egyptian Paradoxes ¹

In the summer of 1882 the British Army occupied Egypt. Thus began a period of British hegemony in Egypt which was to continue in a variety of manifestations - military, political and administrative - for the next 70 years. This thesis concerns itself with 25 years of that period, from 1911 to 1936, years which saw a transition between three phases of British control: firstly, occupation and veiled protectorate to 1914; then a Protectorate to 1922; and after 1922, a measure of internal independence, but continued British hegemony.

It is specifically with the administrative manifestation of British control in Egypt that this study is concerned. The political and military aspects of British domination are already well documented. The thesis makes its focus those civil servants of British nationality who were employed by the Egyptian Government in its administration during this period. In particular, it follows these British officials through the transfer of administrative control from British to Egyptian hands after 1922.

The kind of British administration which existed in Egypt until 1922 was perhaps unique for its time amongst foreign-dominated territories, whether formal colonies or informal dependencies. As elsewhere, it had proved simpler not to try and import a foreign model of government, but rather to maintain the existing structure and work through the existing indigenous officials. However, in most

1. The British invariably echoed Herodotus in their descriptions of Egypt as the 'land of paradox'; e.g, A. Milner, England in Egypt (London, 1893), Ch.1.

overseas dominions, although the colonial power might make use of the local system of government, there would be no doubt as to where ultimate control lay. In Egypt, by contrast, the peculiar circumstances of Britain's occupation made the overt exercise of colonial-style control not only impracticable but highly undesirable. The diplomatic embarrassment surrounding Britain's presence in Egypt made it politic to maintain, outwardly at least, a façade of indigenous control. Such administrative control as Britain possessed, therefore, was exercised under the aegis of the Khedive, his Prime Minister and the Egyptian Government. The instruments of that influence were the British officials employed throughout the civil service. Yet unlike their apparent counterparts in the Colonial Service or the Indian Civil Service, this large body of administrators was never a 'service', accredited to the Crown, but rather individual members of the Egyptian bureaucracy, the servants of the Khedive. This chapter begins with a survey of the historical background to our period, with a view to explaining the peculiarly anomalous development of British administration in Egypt.

A tradition of employing European advisers in the Egyptian Government went back at least to the early 19th century. A succession of Egyptian viceroys had aimed at enhancing Egypt's position as an autonomous province of the Ottoman Empire, militarily, economically and culturally. Egypt's proximity to Europe, and the experience of brief spells of French and British occupation from 1798 naturally turned the eyes of modernising rulers to the technical expertise which the West had to offer. For Muhammad 'Ali (ruled 1805-1848), whose main objective was military

expansion, this meant importing French military and naval advisers, and a French doctor like Clot Bey to establish a medical school. Feverish reform resumed under Isma'il (1863-1873), a Khedive obsessed with transforming Egypt into a European-style nation and achieving greater independence from Constantinople. Partly as a result of Isma'il's quest for European assistance in pursuing these objectives there were about 23,000 English and French in Egypt by the early 1870s. ¹

Yet rapid progress in the fields of education, irrigation and commerce was only achieved at the cost of insatiable borrowing from European financiers. Egypt's hopeless ability to service such a debt ended in Isma'il's bankruptcy in 1876.² The Khedive had no alternative but to hand over Egyptian finances to an international debt commission, the Caisse de la Dette Publique, a major step towards bringing Egyptian administration under the supervision of Europeans. In addition to the Dual Control of a British and a French Financial Controller, the State Railways, Telegraphs and Alexandria Harbour were brought under the control of international boards, to provide guaranteed revenues for service of the debt.

Yet by 1878, due to an overestimation of Egypt's productive capacity, this settlement was not providing sufficient funds for the bondholders' requirements, and yet more rigorous financial supervision was demanded. Isma'il now went so far as to bring British and French financial representatives into a reshuffled Cabinet, as Ministers of Finance and Public Works. As part of a continuing policy of strict retrenchment, the royal estates were also brought under international administration, as the security on

1. Ministry of the Interior, Statistique de l'Egypte (Cairo, 1873), p.19.

2. For an eye-witness account of the aftermath of bankruptcy, see Lord Cromer, Modern Egypt (London, 1908), i. 11ff.

a loan to meet Egypt's immediate financial needs. The number of highly-paid European officials grew, (with 30 British officers being appointed to the Land Survey department alone), and with this, Egyptian resentment, both against foreign control and khedivial power. Isma'il was able to oust his European ministers in May 1879, but was himself deposed a month later, and replaced by Taufiq, the Anglo-French candidate. The Powers now opted to revert to international controllers rather than ministers; even so, Baring and de Blignières, the eventual European appointments, retained the right to be present at Cabinet meetings, to give advice, and to appoint inspectors in the ministries and provinces.

Although the 1880 Law of Liquidation represented a more practical settlement of Egypt's obligations to the bondholders, the financial stringency which the re-established Dual Control imposed on Egypt continued to be resented. Its policies of rigorous retrenchment acted as a catalyst in bringing the Egyptian Army officers, the large landowners and the village shaikhs - three groups who had suffered from these policies - into a coalition of opposition to the Khedive. This was joined in turn by Muslim traditionalists, resentful of increasing western cultural influences in the press, legal system and education. The actual objectives of these disparate elements remained inchoate; their common discontent with the effects of Dual Control perhaps represented their greatest source of unity. Thus from the late 1870s the existence of a European-dominated administration began to exert an important effect on the course of events in Egypt, a trend which was to continue after the British Occupation.

The sequence of events which ultimately drew Britain into occupying Egypt in 1882 has been the subject of extensive

historiographical debate, and it would be superfluous to cover the same ground here.¹ It is enough to say that by the early 1880s the continuation of Dual Control seemed threatened, particularly by the increasingly blatant opposition to the Khedive from the army under 'Urabi. The picture of anarchy and military despotism presented to the Foreign Office by representatives of these 'men on the spot' finally succeeded in pushing a reluctant but divided British Cabinet into bolstering the Khedive against 'Urabi's revolt. In this Gladstone's government acted from the fear that if Britain did not intervene, France would, thereby upsetting the traditional Anglo-French parity of influence in the strategically-sensitive Eastern Mediterranean. Yet when the bombardment of Alexandria failed to intimidate the nationalists, the threat posed by 'Urabi's 'military despotism' now seemed so great that Gladstone, abandoning his usual repugnance for armed intervention, resorted to military occupation. By September 1882 British forces were in possession of Cairo and the Khedive had been restored; by the following year the first British officials were arriving from India to initiate administrative reforms under Britain's Agent and Consul-General, Baring, later Lord Cromer.

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1. For the theory that Gladstone's government was influenced into aggression against Egypt by the lobby of financial interests, see W.S. Blunt, A Secret History of the British Occupation (London, 1907) and J.A. Hobson, Imperialism, A Study (London, 1902). Later interpretations reject the significance of bondholder influence, and instead view the Occupation as a reluctant and intentionally temporary measure to restore the position of the Khedive, and thereby protect the Suez Canal. For this 'strategic' school of thought, see R. Robinson and J. Gallagher, Africa and the Victorians (London, 1961). The recent work of A. Schölch casts doubt on a purely 'strategic' explanation of the Occupation, and points to the role played by the men on the spot. See his article, 'The Men on the Spot and the English Occupation of Egypt', Historical Journal, 19, 3, (1976), and Egypt for the Egyptians! (London, 1981).

The particular circumstances surrounding this act of occupation were to have a vital effect on the anomalous development of British administration in Egypt. First and foremost, the mere fact of a Liberal government using military force against the Egyptians suggested a huge departure from declared Gladstonian foreign policy of supporting 'subject' peoples, and upholding the integrity of the Ottoman Empire. Such an action is partly explained by the deep divisions in the Cabinet over Ireland.¹ Yet if occupation in Egypt appeased the Whigs in the party, who favoured a forward policy, it left the government perpetually on the defensive against criticism in parliament and the press. Egypt was to remain a highly sensitive issue in British politics for a matter of decades.²

The 'Egyptian question' was not confined to Britain, however; London was if anything more sensitive to criticism coming from abroad, particularly from France. In French eyes, not only had Britain unilaterally occupied Egypt, but she had gone on to abolish Dual Control as well, replacing the former Anglo-French administration of Egyptian finances with a single British Financial Adviser. Suspicious that she was being ousted from her traditional parity of influence with Britain in Cairo, France maintained a consistently hostile and uncooperative stance over the Occupation until at least 1904. This policy of pique was aided and abetted by Bismarck, in the belief that Anglo-French conflict over Egypt could only assist his twin foreign policy aims of Franco-German rapprochement and the diplomatic isolation of Britain.

In view of such extensive opposition to the Occupation, successive British governments were anxious to emphasise that it was a strictly temporary, 'stabilise and withdraw' measure. Between

1. See Robinson and Gallagher, Africa and the Victorians, 100ff.
2. For a picture of the anti-Occupation lobby, see W.S. Blunt, My Diaries (London, 1920), ii.

1882 and 1907 Britain made nearly 120 declarations and pledges of her intention to evacuate Egypt.¹ Yet in order to explain why these promises were not fulfilled, a succession of justifications also became necessary.² The first of these was the unforeseen eruption of the Mahdi rebellion, threatening Egypt's security on its Sudanese frontier. Meanwhile in Egypt itself, it soon became clear that 'stabilisation' would not be achieved overnight. A policy of stabilisation implied a measure of reform, particularly of the revenue-producing departments. Yet reforms required finance, with which the Egyptian Government was poorly endowed; indeed the major tenet of any stabilisation policy had to be severe retrenchment to prevent Egypt going bankrupt again and thereby provoking a reassertion of international control. Yet such was the state of the Egyptian Treasury that retrenchment alone would not be enough to make ends meet. As Cobdenite philosophy precluded an increase in the tax burden, this left the long-term promotion of Egyptian prosperity, to be achieved by an audacious programme of remunerative public works.

Before realising what was happening, Britain found herself trapped in a vicious circle: stabilisation requiring reform, requiring in turn finance and therefore more reform. These constraints made a nonsense of the promises of early evacuation which probably reflected the true desire of the British Government. In fact, although it was rarely admitted, the whole basis of British policy in Egypt, as set out in Dufferin's report of late 1882, was founded upon this unresolved conflict between staying and leaving. It was for this reason, more than anything, that British administration in Egypt developed along such undefined lines.

1. A. Lutfi al-Sayyid, Egypt and Cromer (London, 1968), p.xi.
2. See, e.g, Milner, England in Egypt, pp.26 and 85ff.

Various technical experts like Edgar Vincent, (Finance), Scott-Moncrieff, (Public Works), and Benson Maxwell, (Justice) were summoned to Egypt soon after the Occupation. Instead of being made ministers, they were given posts apparently subordinate to the existing Egyptian ministers: Vincent was made Financial Adviser, Scott-Moncrieff, Under-Secretary (later Adviser) in the Ministry of Public Works, while Maxwell became Procureur General. And this was to be the pattern followed thereafter in gaining control over the Egyptian administration: infiltration of the existing system, as opposed to its overt takeover.

The initial reason for this approach was undoubtedly the belief that the Occupation would not last long; there was thought to be no point in introducing an alien system, using outside personnel, if this was only to collapse once those personnel were withdrawn. C.E. Coles, who came from India to join the Egyptian police in 1883, made this observation of the 'infiltration' technique:

'what it really amounts to is an unofficial government running parallel with the recognised administration. The only advantage that I can see for this form of control is that if the Occupation were to cease tomorrow and the English element were to disappear, the government of the country would be in no way dislocated.'¹

Besides, Egypt already possessed a remarkably sophisticated system of government. To attempt its takeover could only attract undesirable attention in Egypt and at home. Predominant British influence was infinitely preferable to British government. Sir Eldon Gorst, looking back when he succeeded Lord Cromer in 1907, thought that Cromer's plan had been

'to maintain, without any very material alterations, the administrative system which he found here, and to endeavour to obtain better results from it by introducing a British element into the background....The Government offices have retained their Egyptian character, under native ministers;

1. C.E. Coles, Recollections and Reflections (London, 1918), p.170; (Recollections).

but the latter are assisted by British Advisers and Heads of Department, who, when necessary, can pull the strings discreetly from behind the scenes.' ¹

Advice and inspection, then, were the twin pillars of Cromer's system of 'English heads and Egyptian hands'. Neither technique was precisely defined, certainly not in writing. To Ronald Storrs, an official of the early 1900s, it was a system which lay somewhere between

'the Hukum Hai (It's an order) of direct Indian administration and the almost Byzantine technique which European Governments found necessary.....at the Sublime Porte. (In Egypt) we deprecated the Imperative, preferring the Subjunctive, even the wistful Optative mood...'

As such, it was a technique 'capable of infinite gradation in either direction.' ² Moreover, if British control of the administration could not be proved, it was less likely to draw attack.

The nearest that the principle of British control over Egyptian ministers came to being defined was in 1884 when, to ensure that the Egyptian Government abandoned its ambition of reconquering the Sudan, Granville declared that,

'it should be made clear to the Egyptian Ministers and Governors of Provinces that the responsibility which for the time rests on England obliges Her Majesty's Government to insist on the adoption of the policy which they recommend, and that it will be necessary that those Ministers and Governors who do not follow this course should cease to hold their offices.' ³

Thus the Granville Declaration laid down the principle of Egyptian subservience to the wishes of the British Agency, backed ultimately by the presence of the British Army. Yet the extent and manner of control over the day-to-day workings of Egyptian administration were never defined in the same way. Such was the confusion in the early

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1. Gorst's speech to British officials at the Agency, 2 November 1907, Gorst Papers, St Antony's College. (GP).
 2. R. Storrs, Orientations (London, 1937), p.223.
 3. Granville to Baring, 4 January 1884, Parliamentary Papers 1884, lxxxviii (3844), p.176. (PP).

years of the Occupation that, in 1884, Lord Salisbury requested

'some touchstone or test...by which we could know where Egyptian responsibility commences and where English responsibility ends. What is the Egyptian Government? Is it independent or does it act according to the wishes of the English Government? Are we responsible for what it does or are we not?' ¹

Initially this ambiguity stemmed from the commitment to early evacuation which implied the temporary takeover of just a few key ministries, namely Finance and Public Works. However, even when Britain had in fact become enmeshed in a maze of long-term reform commitments, officially it remained politic to retain the uncertainty and ambiguity of the early months: the precise role and function of the British official continued undefined. Storrs observed that in comparison to the 'stately printed protocols of Calcutta or of Simla,' the British administration in Egypt relied on 'the haphazard hand-to-mouth methods of a rule which [was] almost ostentatiously provisional and which had committed hardly anything to paper...' ²

This tendency was exacerbated by the increasingly autocratic, personal methods of the architect of the system, Cromer. Coles remembered Cromer boasting that when he retired, his Annual Reports would be the only indication of his system to his successor. ³ This is confirmed by Cromer's deputy at the Agency between 1894 and 1901, Sir James Rennell Rodd:

'Cromer had all the threads in his hands; his methods were largely personal, and there was little to be gleaned from the consultation of records.' ⁴

If the official records say anything about the source of initiative and control in the Egyptian administration, they usually refer to the 'Egyptian Government', making no distinction between its Egyptian or foreign employees. For an ambitious young official

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1. Lord Salisbury, Lords, 5 December 1884, ccxciv, 841.
 2. Storrs, Orientalisms, p.223.
 3. Coles, Recollections, p.170.
 4. Sir James Rennell Rodd, Social and Diplomatic Memories (London, 1923), ii. 29. (Memories).

like Gorst, keen to make his mark as the first Adviser to the Interior, the judicious language of Cromer's Annual Reports on the 'Condition of Egypt' could be hard to take. In his private Autobiographical Notes, for example, Gorst reminded himself that the reforms in Muslim law described in the Report of 1896 had been

'in reality, devised and carried through by me, though for political reasons it was desirable to give the whole credit and place the whole responsibility upon the native ministers.'¹

When, by 1907, Gorst had himself become Agent and Consul-General, he had come to appreciate the merits of Cromer's façade of Egyptian rule, and yet still acknowledged the frustrations attendant upon this system.

'We have...to resign ourselves to doing without a cut and dried organisation, such as exists in most civilised countries, which defines everybody's functions and keeps each one in his proper place.'²

The absence of any 'cut and dried' organisation in the British administration reflected its ad hoc development. The first years of occupation brought a fairly thorough takeover of the Ministries of War, Finance and Public Works, using relatively small numbers of officials, seconded from India. The infiltration of the Ministries of Interior and Justice took longer, due largely to the uncertainties of British policy. In the words of Lord Lloyd:

'was the Occupying Power to assume a full control of these departments also, and to force upon the people by executive action new standards of behaviour and new habits of life? This would have been entirely incompatible with the policy of early evacuation and of holding as far as possible a merely advisory position which the British Government had...proclaimed to the world.'³

Initially the Foreign Office obstructed those officials who would have turned their reforming zeal to the Interior Ministry, and

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1. Autobiographical Notes, ii. 50, GP.
 2. Gorst's speech, 2 November 1907, GP.
 3. Lord Lloyd, Egypt Since Cromer (London, 1933), i. 15.

so, with the exception of a British Inspector-General of Police, the Interior remained a jealously-guarded preserve of Egyptian officials until 1894. Only then was a British Adviser to the Interior instituted, followed, on Gorst's initiative, by Interior inspectors in the provinces. This latter development implied a significant departure from the hesitancy of the early years, as Rodd observed:

'the system, once initiated, involved further development and the obligation to impose a more efficient provincial administration which, however desirable in itself, had not been one of the aims originally contemplated by the Occupation.' ¹

Each such advance into a department of the Egyptian Government usually occasioned a clash with the indigenous ministry, as in the case of Sir John Scott's appointment as the first Judicial Adviser in 1890, which led finally to Riaz Pasha's resignation as Prime Minister. Often the British officials themselves supplied the initiative in extending the scope of Britain's administrative involvement, although in the early decades, their schemes frequently met with what Rodd called 'the Everlasting No' from the Agency:

'Heads of Department would be received to plead for the reforms which they had most at heart...only too often to be disappointed; ...Cromer required to be profoundly convinced of the necessity before he would consent to the addition of one more British Official...' ²

In 1903 Cromer publicly warned William Willcocks, the proponent of an extensive Nile Control scheme, that he would

'steadily oppose the execution of any such projects until, after consultation with the most competent and trustworthy authorities on the subject, I am convinced both of their necessity and of their feasibility.' ³

Yet for all the restraints which Cromer apparently imposed on his officials, the British administration of Egypt had nevertheless undergone a subtle transformation by the early 1900s. Firstly, the notion that advisers were preparing Egyptians to reassume

1. Rodd, Memories, ii. 41.

2. Ibid, p.55.

3. PP 1904, cxi (1951), p.70. (Report 1903).

responsibility for their government had been tacitly dropped. Arguing that Egyptian character lacked the 'moral courage' to take official responsibility, British officials quietly assumed control themselves, reducing their Egyptian colleagues to the position of cyphers, or 'dummies' as Gorst called them. Officials like Portal might scornfully dismiss the Council of Ministers as a 'collection of supine non-entities and doddering old pantaloons,'¹ but in reality the very existence of British 'experts' hampered the growth in Egyptian character and experience which the British themselves demanded. Percival Elgood, an Interior Inspector in 1905, had no doubt as to the reality of Britain's promise of self-government:

'...of all whimsical ideas, commend me to that which protests that our raison d'être in Egypt is to teach the Egyptians to govern themselves. Perhaps some wise person invented that phrase in order to avoid awkward questions concerning the continuous occupation of Egypt. I can't think of any other possible reason...'²

Secondly, however, in addition to this qualitative change in the relationship between British and Egyptian officials, there took place in the early 1900s a marked growth in the number of British civil servants in both executive and subordinate positions. In retrospect, Major Jarvis of the Frontier Districts Administration, perceived this expansion as a self-generating process: the product of a compulsive pursuit of administrative improvements which derived, in turn, from a 'national characteristic of striving always for perfection.'³ Whether by chance or design, the widening scope and increasing complexity of Egyptian government certainly drew in large numbers of foreign technical experts. The Public Works, for example, needed surveyors of contracts, who eventually joined the department's permanent staff. Then, as the grants for higher

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1. Portal to Barrington, 23 July 1891, quoted in Lutfi al-Sayyid, Egypt and Cromer, p.78.
 2. Elgood to Wingate, 30 December 1905, Wingate Papers, Durham. (WP).
 3. C.S. Jarvis, Desert and Delta (London, 1938), p.73.

education were increased, the demand for teachers of English and mathematics grew. Ronald Storrs, who had evidently been recruited with this general expansion of work in mind, could at first find nothing to do in Cairo, but was finally made Secretary of the newly-formed Department of Mines.¹ The perception of British administration in Egypt as a self-generating activity evidently had some substance.

The corollary of this growing sense of permanence was some measure of institutionalisation of British officialdom. This took the form of regularizing the previously haphazard system of recruiting officials to the Egyptian Government. Since the Occupation, men had been coming into the service by a variety of channels. The earliest, as we have seen, were seconded from corresponding Indian departments. The Diplomatic Service provided another source of personnel: Gorst, for example, was seconded from the Agency in 1890 to become Controller of Taxes. Many more came as officers of the British Army, often while serving in the Sudan or attached to the Egyptian Army: both Elgood and Lord Edward Cecil joined the Egyptian Government in this way in 1903. On the other hand, Ernest Dowson, who was later to become Financial Adviser, began his Egyptian career as an engineer in the Delta Light Railways Company. However, the great majority of early officials reached Egypt as teachers for the Ministry of Public Instruction. Many came initially from Board Schools, but as time went on, a good Oxbridge degree was usually required. Joseph McPherson, who had taken a first at Christ Church and who later became head of Secret Police in Cairo, described the delightfully random way in which many early officials were recruited to the 'Public Instruction'. It was through a friend that McPherson heard that

1. See Storrs' correspondence with his mother, 1904-5, Storrs Papers, Pembroke College, Cambridge. (SP).

'a Mr Houston was now in England for the Egyptian Government collecting a few Oxford men...but he was not to be found at the London address given...and the time was almost quite up. His sister however kindly told me that he was interested in one of the St.Ledger runners, and was not likely to miss Doncaster... I posthasted thither, ran him down on the course...and [was] instantly fixed up with a post with practically no written or verbal particulars except to whom and at what date I should present myself.'¹

In the absence of any more organised system of recruitment, many Egyptian departments filled their vacancies from the ranks of British teachers; the Public Instruction supplied at least one future Interior Adviser (Haines), one Financial Adviser (Patterson), as well as several Under-Secretaries and Directors-General.

However, with the increasing complexity of Egyptian government, and with the added need after 1899 of administrators for the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, it became, according to Cromer, increasingly difficult to select men of calibre from the numerous applicants. With Cromer's approval, Wingate and Gorst undertook a revision of entrance requirements and procedure for British officials. Their regularised system of selection for the 'European Civil Service in Egypt and the Soudan' came into operation in 1903: a recruitment panel of senior officials home on leave appointed eight graduates, five from Cambridge and three from Oxford, subject to their passing an Arabic examination after a year's university course at their own expense.²

Whether the difficulty of choosing between candidates was the only reason for this reform, we may question. As the new system still involved no competitive examination, the task of selection became little easier after 1903. The interviewing board of 1907 saw over one hundred candidates, and even 'after seeding out all those who were neither Firsts, Blues nor Perfect Characters, there still

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1. Joseph McPherson Papers, Vol.26, British Broadcasting Corporation. (McP).
 2. Browne Scrapbook, E.G. Browne Papers, Cambridge University Library and Oxford University Appointments Committee Minute Book to year 1912, O.U.A.C.

remained over a score to be yet further reduced.' The matter was only resolved, Storrs recalls in whimsical vein, by asking the candidates their preference in cigarettes. ¹ The 1903 reform only makes sense if it is viewed not just in terms of regularising selection procedures, but as part of a wider bid to establish the British position in Egypt on a more permanent footing. No longer was Egypt to be looked upon by men like Milner as a stepping stone to grander things,² but rather as a career in itself.

The reform should also be seen in the context of the negotiations leading to the Anglo-French Entente of 1904. French acceptance of Britain's position in Egypt finally removed a lingering insecurity amongst British officials. Humphrey Bowman, a young schoolmaster in Cairo, recorded news of the agreement in his diary:

'that whereas the British occupation of Egypt had been formerly temporary only, it was now to continue indefinitely. This means probably that Britain will never go - a fact which was practically known before, though never publicly announced.'³

There were signs that Cromer now intended to reinforce this mentality of permanence in the British administration: in 1905 he commissioned Boyle, his Oriental Secretary, to write

'a confidential memorandum for the guidance of our English officials when they come out in the Egyptian service; why we are here, what our aims are, what our line of thought and action should be...'⁴

Boyle's draft memorandum, as Welch⁵ rightly points out, was part of an attempt to define the philosophy of British rule in Egypt and then to imbue this credo in a new generation of officials who had not lived through the formative years after 1882. Setting the

1. Storrs, Orientalisms, p.232.

2. See J. Marlowe, Milner (London, 1976).

3. Humphrey Bowman Diaries, 12 April 1904, St Antony's College.

4. Boyle to his mother, 5 November 1905, Boyle Papers, St Antony's College.

5. W.M. Welch, 'British Attitudes to the Administration of Egypt, 1892-1907' (Oxford D.Phil. 1978), Ch.6.

Occupation in the context of Egypt's long history of foreign rule, the memorandum depicted the young recruit as the noble precursor of western civilisation in Egypt. The object of the Occupation, it was explained, was

'to confer upon a people whose past is one of the most deplorable ever recorded in history, those benefits and privileges which they have never enjoyed at the hands of the numerous alien races who have hitherto held sway over them.'¹

It was hoped that these benefits would not only convince Egyptians of benevolent motives behind the Occupation, but would demonstrate, as much to European critics, some acceptable justification for Britain's continued presence. From the 1880s Baring had deliberately invoked his rural reforms in defence of Britain's overall Egyptian policy, a campaign which Milner's England in Egypt was designed to propagate amongst the home public.² In the process, Britain's 'obligations' in Egypt turned from being a justification into, seemingly, a central tenet of policy, which further reinforced the notion of permanence.

From an early date, therefore, British officials were playing a significant role in Britain's overall perception of her position in Egypt. Boyle's memorandum laid particular stress on the qualities of 'unswerving integrity' required of the official in his unique task.³ Nowhere, however, does the memorandum offer the slightest explanation as to how British rule in Egypt actually worked. In other words, although the British administration in Egypt had by now developed a code of its own, and some measure of organisation, and although the Occupation was no longer under international attack, it was still thought prudent to leave the actual workings of British control undefined and unpublicised.

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1. C. Boyle, Boyle of Cairo (Kendal, 1965), p.49.
 2. See H.S. Deighton, 'The Impact of Egypt on Britain', in P.M. Holt (ed), Political and Social Change in Modern Egypt (London, 1968), pp.246-8.
 3. Boyle, op.cit, p.51.

Under the surface, moreover, the system of dual government remained as vague as ever; the ambiguities of the early years had merely fossilised, as 'provisional and extemporised expedients gradually hardened into established institutions.'¹ No conscious provision had ever been made for equipping the administration to cope with the developments in Egyptian society which British rule was likely to effect. Cromer himself admitted that the problem

'of adapting the whole machine of government to meet the wants of a society which is almost bewildering in the variety of its component parts, becomes daily more complex.'²

There were few Egyptian departments which kept systematic records, for example.³ Cromer's Annual Report provided the only opportunity for outside scrutiny of Egypt's internal government; with the exception of matters of external concern, Cromer gave the Foreign Office no other information about developments in Egypt. In effect, the administration of Egypt's ten million people continued to be supervised by a British Agency designed for the requirements of nineteenth century diplomacy. Far from being a mere Consulate-General, the Agency was, as Storrs observed,

'the de facto equivalent of the Secretariat and government House of a Crown Colony, issuing to the Ministries and Departments financial and administrative instructions.'⁴

British officials of the Egyptian government bemoaned the inefficiency of their Foreign Office compatriots, but then Chancery staff were ill-accustomed to such administrative demands. For its part, the Agency accused London of indecisiveness, a recurrent complaint throughout our period. Did Britain intend to remain in

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1. PP 1921, xlii (1131), p.8. (Milner Mission Report, hereafter MM Report).
 2. Report 1903, p.1.
 3. Coles, Recollections, p.171.
 4. Storrs, Orientalisms, p.167. Note: the British Agency in Cairo became the 'Residency' with the proclamation of the Protectorate in 1914; at the same time, the 'Agent and Consul-General' became known as the 'High Commissioner'. In 1936 this title changed again, to 'Ambassador', whereupon the 'Residency' became the 'British Embassy'.

Egypt, or not? The frustrations and uncertainties caused by a persistent policy of drift evoked frequent demands from both diplomats and officials in Cairo, that Britain should either evacuate Egypt, or annex it altogether.

On a number of occasions, Cromer himself veered towards the take-over option as a means of dealing with Egyptian obstructiveness, only to be overruled from London. In 1893, for example, in his rising confrontation with Abbas, Cromer evidently contemplated some kind of British take-over of the administration when he asked London for 'two thousand men and power to settle matters between the English and Egyptian governments...'¹ The desire for a more clearcut position in Egypt was perhaps even stronger amongst British officials. The awakening of nationalist opposition in the early 1900s caused a number to favour outright British rule. Storrs felt Britain needed to admit that she was in Egypt for her 'own advantage (as well as the glory of the Trinity) and intend[ed] to annex or protect.'² Bowman was another who felt 'very strongly that what we want here is a firmer rule,' something which could 'only be procured by obtaining full suzerainty over the country.'³

Yet although a certain element of British officialdom continued to hanker after outright annexation throughout our period, Britain was never to depart from the contradictory compromise of the early years: a commitment, on the one hand, to Egyptian reform, and on the other, to eventual self-government. As Gorst admitted when he came to office, these two aims were awkward to reconcile:

'It is not always easy to insist upon a high standard of administration, and at the same time to foster a development of the native element. Still, that is our business here...to endeavour to steer a middle course between the Scylla of administrative inefficiency and the Charybdis of Anglicisation.'⁴

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1. Cromer, Modern Egypt, ii. 359.
 2. Storrs to 'Nina', 13 November 1910, SP.
 3. Bowman Diaries, 27 September 1906.
 4. Gorst's speech, 2 November 1907, GP.

The unique characteristics of British administration in Egypt outlined in this chapter have a direct bearing on the nature of this study. The historian of the British officials in Egypt is confronted with certain problems of definition and methodology which do not arise in most studies of imperial ¹ rule. Indeed, I would suggest that the ambivalence of the subject and the difficulties inherent in the sources may be one reason why so few historians have dealt with this theme, as distinct from British policy towards Egypt in general.

To illustrate the difficulties of defining the subject, let us take the question of nomenclature. In no source is there evidence that the corps of British officials in Egypt ever had a title as such. This immediately raises problems not confronted by the student of the Indian Civil Service or the Sudan Political Service, for example. There always seems to have been some difficulty in deciding what the British functionary in Egypt should actually be called. Annual Reports of the 1900s referred to members of the 'Egyptian and Soudanese Civil Service'; the Milner Report talked of 'British officials in the Egyptian Service'; while Lord Edward Cecil's memoirs come down to us as The Leisure of an Egyptian Official. Certainly in the Egyptian context there was never any question of a neat acronym like 'I.C.S.' Some historians, frustrated perhaps by this ill-defined nomenclature, have retrospectively christened our officials 'Anglo-Egyptians', even going so far as to refer to the 'Anglo-Egyptian Service'.² While the sources do make references to 'Anglo-Egyptian officials', ³ my conversations with veterans of the period confirm that the title 'Anglo-Egyptian Service' was

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1. The adjectives 'imperial' and 'colonial' must be cautiously used in the Egyptian context, since Egypt was only a British Protectorate between 1914 and 1922.
 2. e.g, P. Mansfield, The British in Egypt (London, 1973), p.173.
 3. See, e.g, Mervyn Herbert's Diaries, 11 November 1916, St Antony's College. Note: this term did not have the mixed race connotation of 'Anglo-Indian'.

never used by their contemporaries.¹ If there was any usage employed at the time, it was simply the 'British officials'. Colloquial epithets seem to have been more commonly used, however, at the departmental level, as in Butcher of 'the Irrigation', Anthony of 'the Domains', Mellor of 'the Finance', and perhaps most common of all, although certainly ranking lowest in the British official hierarchy, the members of the 'P.I.' or the Department of Public Instruction.

If this use of terminology infers that British officials regarded themselves more as members of a particular department than of a 'service' as such, this raises the interesting question of how much esprit de corps existed among them. Not nearly so much, it seems clear, as in the Sudan Service, for example, where a much smaller number of officials administered a more primitive population, in harsher, more isolated conditions, and evolved over a longer period of existence a reputation as the corps d'élite of colonial administrators. In a different way, the sheer magnitude of the task of ruling India over a period of 90 years, created in the I.C.S. not merely esprit de corps, but virtually a sub-culture, with its own highly-developed patois, hierarchy and life-style.

The British official in Egypt, by comparison, had much less to set him apart from the population at large. More or less his only distinguishing feature was the tarboosh, the compulsory headwear of civil servants in Egypt and Sudan. Perhaps the other main symbol of the life of the British official, in Cairo at least, was the Turf Club in Sharia Maghrabi. Membership was not exclusively confined to the official cadre; the Club was often frequented by journalists like Parker and Tweedy. Yet more than any other institution, the

1. Interviews with Noel Treavett, 23 June 1982, and Sir Laurence Grafftey-Smith, 27 June 1982.

Turf Club was equated with British officialdom, ¹ as opposed to the rather plusher Muhammad 'Ali Club, the haunt of Residency diplomats like Storrs, or the Gazira Sporting Club, which served the British community as a whole.

However, these indications of esprit de corps have to be teased out of the sources; they are not otherwise conspicuous. We are told by Thomas Russell of the Cairo Police that British officials in Egypt did not regard themselves as a corps, but first and foremost as individual servants of the Egyptian Government.² Even though Russell was undoubtedly an individualist who found it difficult to work with his fellow officials, there is good reason to believe him. After all, due to Britain's vulnerable international position with regard to Egypt, the Foreign Office never encouraged officials there to think of themselves as a service; an imperial connotation was the last thing that London wanted. It is clear from the official correspondence, particularly prior to 1914, that the Foreign Office scrupulously avoided having anything to do with British officialdom in Egypt. They are scarcely mentioned in its correspondence with the Agency in Cairo. All those making enquiries about employment in Egyptian service were curtly referred to the Ministry of Finance in Egypt.

It would seem that so long as the British officials were kept rigidly in their place, to all intents and purposes the servants of the Egyptian Government, they could fulfil their most useful function: giving substance to the notion that Britain brought Egypt the benefits of just and enlightened rule. On the other hand, any visible links between the Foreign Office and the civil servants

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1. So we have references to 'Turf Club jokes' - about the lowly status of the 'P.I', for instance; or alternatively to 'Turf Club plots', as perceived by the Residency - for example in 1927, when Lloyd's policy was attacked by the officials.
 2. R. Seth, Russell Pasha (London, 1966), p.11.

of a foreign government would suggest a subservience to the dictates of British policy which it was desirable to avoid.

Consequently, the historian who tries to evaluate the role of British administrators in the apparatus of British rule in Egypt has to build up a picture from many scattered references in sources which are often difficult to use. The Foreign Office correspondence and the papers of the British Agency/Residency in Cairo (now located in the Public Record Office) contain only passing references to the internal administration in Egypt, being more concerned with matters of political or international interest. The Foreign Office had little time for administrative concerns and after a while preferred to leave the mysteries of Egyptian government to Cromer. With the declaration of the Protectorate in 1914, however, the Foreign Office found itself responsible to Parliament for Egyptian affairs, but without adequate information. As Balfour told Wingate,

'large questions of internal Administration are constantly arising with which it is found increasingly difficult to cope efficiently within the limits of our existing diplomatic machinery.' ¹

The appointment of Ronald Graham, a former Interior Adviser, as Assistant Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office in 1916, followed, in 1918, by the creation of an Egyptian Department which employed other British officials like Jack Murray, enabled London for the first time to understand Egyptian affairs from the inside. From this point on, there is greater, though by no means comprehensive coverage of Egyptian administration in these sources. From 1922 onwards, Britain was no longer officially responsible for Egypt's internal government, but in practice a certain amount of information continued to reach the Foreign Office, even if in the form of private letters from British officials to Murray.

1. Balfour to Wingate, 4 September 1918, Public Records Office, Foreign Office Papers, series 371, volume 3203, file 152260. (Hereafter FO371/3203/152260 etc).

However, because internal administration was officially carried out under the ægis of the Egyptian Government, the information transmitted home could be highly selective. Such comprehensive documentation as still exists is to be found in the archives of the Egyptian Government in Cairo. Problems of language and accessibility have prevented me from consulting this material. The consequent Anglo-centric emphasis of this study requires perspective from detailed work on the non-European sources, to supply a picture of the Egyptian side of the relationship.¹ However, although the Egyptian records will give a more complete understanding of the workings of departments under British direction,² some aspects of the mechanism of Anglo-Egyptian administrative control will always remain hazy. For one thing, any direction which British officials received from the Agency/Residency was usually imparted during off-the-record conversations,³ or by telephone. Then such documentary evidence as did exist, in the archives of the advisers' offices, for example, was deliberately destroyed with the adviserships themselves, in 1936-7.⁴

Fortunately, in view of the evasiveness of the official sources, we do possess a range of other material which illumines the role of the British official. The papers of the Milner Mission, contained in the Milner Collection, include about the only methodical study of British administration in Egypt ever undertaken. Furthermore, from the officials themselves we possess an extensive number of published memoirs and collections of papers, which have never been systematically analysed to elucidate the role of British

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1. The reader is directed to the forthcoming study of Anglo-Egyptian administration by Dr 'Abd al-Wahhab Bakr of Zagazig University.
 2. The departmental records which survive in FO series 141 are highly selective.
 3. Which usually remained undocumented, except, for example, in the Lampson Diaries.
 4. Watson to Chancery, 25 August 1936, FO141/455/850.

officials during our period, ¹ and some of which are quite newly discovered.² These may be supplemented by the judicious use of material derived from interviews given both in Egypt and this country.

It remains to define what is actually meant by 'officials of the Egyptian Government', and as always, there is no simple answer, rather a host of anomalies. We need pay little attention to the large number of foreign officials of other nationalities, mainly French and Italian. By our period, these were no longer in a position to obstruct a British administration as they had been earlier in the Occupation, but were largely relegated to humble posts in departments like the railways, or to specialist fields like Antiquities. Nevertheless, they remained something of an embarrassment to the British authorities, and fresh European appointments were always discouraged.

In a rather different category, however, fall the European Judges of the Native and Mixed Courts, including a small number of British nationals. The Judges of the Native Courts were one group of officials who came into particularly direct contact with Egyptians, and who were generally well regarded for their sympathetic attitude. A few British Judges, like Cator, Holmes and Kershaw, emerge as having played some role in the overall British design. However, being to a large degree Alexandria-based, and servants of the European community more than the Egyptian authorities, they remain something of a group apart, while the paucity of judicial sources tends to keep them rather shadowy figures.

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1. Most notably amongst the Private Papers, Middle East Centre, St Antony's College.
 2. One of the most interesting discoveries being the 26 volumes of letters sent home by Joseph McPherson, and now in the custody of the British Broadcasting Corporation. A selection of the letters has subsequently been published: B. Carman and J. McPherson (eds), Bimbashi McPherson, A Life in Egypt (London, 1983).

Another sizeable group who technically counted as employees of the Egyptian Government were the British officers of the Egyptian Army; yet even more than the judges, the military seem to have inhabited another world. In social terms, no doubt, their temporary postings made them birds of passage compared to the permanent officials of the administration. Moreover, departmentally, the British military command brooked no interference from the Residency.¹ The main interest in these officials where this study is concerned is to assess the value of a British-run Egyptian Army to Britain's security purposes in Egypt. Of course, the presence in Egypt of the British Army was even more crucial in this regard; so we will also consider the British garrison as an integral although hidden aspect of British administrative power. We will include, finally, the officers of the Frontier Districts Administration who, as semi-permanent personnel, played an administrative role more akin to mainstream British officials.

To delimit the task in hand, and to chart a course through all these conflicting jurisdictions and sub-administrations, I intend to apply a fairly strict definition of a British official, namely, those British officials covered by the terms of Law No.28 of 1923 - the retirement provisions which brought the permanent British civil service in Egypt to an end. In line with Law No.28, I intend in general to exclude from my definition of 'British officials': employees of the Mixed Courts (but not of the Native Courts); employees of the Caisse, the Municipalities and the Quarantine Service; officers of the Armed Forces; and officials on contracts of less than five years. In addition, I do not propose to include those officials of the Egyptian Government who served primarily in the Sudan. In other words, the study will focus primarily on those

1. Sir Laurence Grafftey-Smith, Bright Levant (London, 1970), p.242

Britons employed in the Ministries of Finance, Interior, Public Works, Education, Communications, Agriculture and Foreign Affairs, and in the central administration and Native Tribunals of the Ministry of Justice; namely, those whom, in 1923, the Egyptian Government perceived as 'British officials'.

Chapter Two

The Civil Army of Occupation ¹

Our survey of the evolution of British administration in Egypt to the early 1900s has revealed two prominent countervailing themes: on the one hand, the ambiguities of Anglo-Egyptian administration; and on the other, a strong animus to resolve these ambiguities, by making permanent the temporary, and by moving from the limited and the undefined to the thorough and clear-cut. By the opening of our period,² the latter trend had apparently prevailed, inasmuch as British administration in Egypt had vastly expanded since the early Occupation, and seemed established to endure. Nevertheless, a persistent vagueness surrounding the nature of administrative control in Egypt suggested that British rule had still not resolved the tension at its inner core.

This chapter aims to analyse and depict Britain's internal administration of Egypt during the years of its maximum development, before 1922.

We start by examining why such a uniquely amorphous brand of outside rule was retained throughout the period preceding the declaration of independence, despite the constant attractions of a more straightforward outright British takeover. By these later years, the external considerations which had suggested the desirability of the 'veiled' system during the post-1882 era had

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1. i.e, British officialdom; the twin foundations of British power in Egypt were the 'Military and Civil Armies of Occupation', according to Ernest Dowson, Memorandum on the Financial Adviser, November 1923, Sir Bertram Hornsby Papers, St Antony's College.
 2. The thesis begins its narrative in 1911 (see Ch.3). However, the descriptive analysis of British administration contained in this chapter inevitably draws upon material from earlier years also, due to the scattered nature of the available evidence.

long become obsolete. The need to keep British rule inconspicuous to minimise international criticism had faded with the years; moreover, since Britain was patently no longer on the verge of withdrawal, the original rationale for maintaining a parallel Egyptian administration had evaporated. In fact, the clues to the tenacious survival of this 'never-quite-colonial' administration are to be found through an examination of the polity and society which Britain confronted in Egypt.

In few of its newly-acquired territories, certainly on the African continent, did Britain encounter an existing system of government so sophisticated in an apparently Western sense as in Egypt. At the head of the executive, responsible for all decrees and legislation, stood the Khedive. Despite their continuing subservience ¹ to the firmans and tribute demands of the Sultan, as well as to Ottoman restrictions on their military strength and representation overseas, the Muhammad 'Ali dynasty were regarded by the British as rulers to be reckoned with, however alien their 'Oriental despotism' appeared. It was the Khedive who, (before the Occupation, at least) appointed governments, comprising ministers of Foreign Affairs, Finance, Justice, War, Public Works, Interior, Education and Waqfs. From the palace, through the Council of Ministers and an indigenous bureaucracy (which, by 1914, numbered about 57,000), ² there emanated a machinery of government effective enough to ensure, for example, the tax collection crucial for Egypt's debt repayments. To the Legislative Council belonged only limited control over the passage of legislation and the budget; similarly, the 91 members of the Legislative Assembly could only

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1. Britain's declaration of a Protectorate in 1914 ended Turkish suzerainty over Egypt.
 2. P. Elgood, The Transit of Egypt (London, 1928), p.303n. (Transit)

delay rather than obstruct the decisions of the Council of Ministers.¹ Over local government there presided a system of Provincial Councils, Mixed Municipalities and Local Commissions.

In any mode of imperial control, domination by an alien power is only practicable insofar as it can be 'translated into terms of indigenous political economy.'² In other words, the foreign power is dependent on the cooperation of local supporters - or, to use Robinson's term, collaborators³ - influential indigenous figures who have been convinced of the personal advantages, in terms of power, profits or perquisites, of assisting the foreign ruler, or alternatively, of the dangers of doing otherwise. These local leaders are able to supply the financial and administrative assistance from within the territory which alone makes outside rule practicable and worthwhile. Moreover, so long as they retain authority over their own local supporters, they have the ability to maintain security and acquiescence in their overlord's control. Therefore both the collaborators and their backers must ensure that the former's local credibility is not compromised by excessive subservience to a foreign master. In recognition of their mutual interdependence, the alien power establishes with its clients a particular 'concordat of co-existence.'⁴

The British characteristically selected their local intermediaries from existing ruling bodies, whose traditional or established authority invested them with appropriate legitimacy. It was perhaps to be expected that in Egypt the British would incline

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1. Cromer, Modern Egypt, ii. 271-3.
 2. R. Robinson, 'Non-European Foundations of European Imperialism', in W. Louis (ed), Imperialism, the Robinson and Gallagher Controversy (New York, 1976), p.130.
 3. Due to the pejorative associations of the word 'collaborators', 'clients' or 'intermediaries' may be more helpful terms.
 4. J. Lonsdale in A. Kirk-Greene (ed), Africa in the Colonial Period: the Transfer of Power (Oxford, 1979), p.161.

to the existing structure of authority commanded by the Khedive and his government. After all, well before the Occupation ¹ the familiarity to Western eyes of this style of government had made it the obvious on-the-spot machinery for European financial interests in Egypt.

However, there were numerous British territories where the prior existence of a developed, centralised system of government did not prevent outright colonial annexation. Rather, by associating themselves with the unchallenged local potentate, the British frequently sought a derived legitimacy for their own undisguised supreme control.² The question remains, therefore, why in Egypt the British consistently refrained from grafting some overtly colonial arrangement on to the existing nexus of political authority.

We must remember, in this regard, that Britain had already suffered once from an over-extension of the collaborative mechanism in Egypt. It could be said that it was the discrediting pressures exerted on the Khedive by the bondholder lobby which had led to the Occupation, by threatening the very survival of Europe's local auxiliary. The purpose of invasion, Gladstone's government emphasised, was to 'bolster the Khedive.' The collaborative mechanism had now to be rebuilt along lines of guaranteed deference to local sensibilities, for a recurrence to be prevented. The haunting memory of the Egyptian crisis of 1881-2 explains, I would

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1. A. Hourani discusses the well-established role of notables as political intermediaries in Egypt in 'Ottoman Reform and the Politics of Notables', in W. Polk and R. Chambers (eds), Beginnings of Modernisation in the Middle East (Chicago, 1968), pp.41-68.
 2. In Buganda, for example, British rule depended heavily on the entrenched authority of the Kabaka.

suggest, Britain's determination to minimise the institution-
alisation of her administrative control. The tortuous system of
Anglo-Egyptian administration was regularly explained in terms of
that well-worn phrase, Egyptian amour propre. Advisory rather than
executive control was the only way, according to the veteran
adviser, Sir William Brunyate, to ensure reasonable administrative
efficiency without wounding delicate Egyptian sensibilities. ¹

An alternative to such delicate deference might have been
for Britain to substitute a greater measure of force in her
control. This was always regarded as unthinkable in Egypt for the
simple reason that Egypt was Muslim. This single fact mesmerised
British policy-makers throughout our period.² Since the trauma of
the Indian Mutiny Britain had dreaded local - and particularly
communal - opposition in her overseas possessions. Perhaps because
few of her overseas possessions were predominantly Muslim, Britain
was particularly sensitive to the vulnerability of a client
government in Egypt, whose endorsement by the local religious
leadership could easily be destroyed through offensive blunders by
that government's Christian masters.

Particularly after the Tabah crisis of 1906, Egyptian
nationalism began to be equated with Pan-Islam; Cromer started
painting nationalist opposition to Britain in terms of a struggle
between Islam and Christianity. A horrifying new fear had taken
hold, which would constrain Britain's behaviour in Egypt throughout
our period: that 'fanatical Mohammedan' antagonism to Britain in
Egypt could disturb the entire Muslim population of the Empire.³

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1. Brunyate to Milner Mission, 1 March 1920, Milner Papers, Bodleian Library, deposit 447, p.28. (Hereafter MP447 etc).
 2. D. Steele describes the genesis of this preoccupation in 'Britain and Egypt, 1882-1914: Containment of Islamic Nationalism', in K. Wilson (ed), Imperialism and Nationalism in the Middle East (London, 1982), pp.7 and 10.
 3. Ibid, p.2.

The risk of losing her Egyptian intermediaries by destroying their legitimacy explains why Britain continued to dissociate herself from the influence which in reality she exerted over Egypt's internal affairs. Gorst put it this way:

'....all government is very difficult, and it becomes doubly difficult when it is a question of people of one race and religion endeavouring to rule those of another.....the rulers of a country, in their relation to the ruled, have to do many disagreeable things to them. They collect taxes from them; they punish them when they break the law.....It is clearly wise...that these unpleasant operations should be practised upon the Egyptian by his fellow-countrymen, and that the foreigner should, as far as possible, appear...as a beneficent, and not an avenging, angel.'¹

How this indirect form of control functioned, and with what success, it is our task to unravel.

What was unique about Egypt, observed Sidney Low in 1914, was that it had 'one set of persons that carry on the government, and another set of persons who tell them how to do it.'² An Egyptian minister described it thus:

""Theoretically, Egyptian Ministers governed with English advice. Practically Lord Cromer and ten or a dozen Englishmen did all the important work, with thousands of Egyptians standing by to advise them!""³

The most conspicuous figures in this system were a handful of British advisers. At the lower levels, their supervisory work was carried through by a corps of British inspectors. In between, British officials served the Egyptian Government as Under-Secretaries, Directors-General and Heads of Department. This chapter describes what influence these officials were able to exert, and how they did so; how far they were supported by the British Agency, and in what ways their work furthered British interests in Egypt.

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1. Gorst's speech, 2 November 1907, GP.
 2. S. Low, Egypt in Transition (London, 1914), p.196.
 3. Quoted by Sir William Hayter, Recent Constitutional Developments in Egypt (Cambridge, 1924), p.15. (Constitutional Developments).

By 1911 there were British advisers attached to the Ministries of Finance, Justice, Public Works, Education and the Interior. They possessed few of the trappings of government office, merely modest rooms in their ministerial buildings. The desired image was that of the discreet functionary, 'a silent policeman who did not show himself or thrust himself forward except when absolutely necessary.'¹ Brunyate saw this inconspicuous, non-executive role as a means of not 'unduly circumscribing the power proper to be entrusted to a Minister.'²

The advisers might have attained this image of detached neutrality had their actual function been confined to offering advice. Usually, however, their advice carried the assumption of implementation. Elgood explains how officials in an advisory designation were able to make this assumption:

'The powers of the British adviser were never precisely defined. In theory he exercised no executive authority, in practice he controlled all business. Each was supreme in his own circle. In the conflict of wills that followed, the Minister invariably went to the wall. As a rule, he bore the indignity with good humour, though in fact he enjoyed no other choice. Protest was useless as the Adviser took his cue from the Agency, and opposition terminated in the ministry being called upon to resign.'³

Normally, however, ministers and advisers came to a working arrangement, 'with a certain balance of advantage in favour of the Englishman by reason of his nationality,' according to Brunyate.⁴ In this regard, much could depend on the temperament of the minister concerned, and for the adviser, on the degree of support forthcoming from the Agency at that particular moment. When Sa'd Zaghlul was appointed Minister of Education in 1907, his adviser, Douglas Dunlop encountered 'for the first time in recent Egyptian history.....

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1. Walrond to Milner, 5 January 1919, MP449, p.238.
 2. Brunyate to Milner Mission, 1 March 1920, MP447, p.28.
 3. Elgood, Transit, pp.127-8.
 4. Brunyate, memorandum, 13 July 1917, MP444, p.169.

a Minister determined to go his own way.'¹ His advice frequently ignored, Dunlop had no choice but to permit educational measures he deemed imprudent. Nor was there any support from the new Consul-General, Gorst, set on a policy of minimising British intervention in Egypt.

Yet Cromer too had limited the diplomatic support available to officials, preferring them, he explained,

'to rely mainly on their individual judgement and force of character. The British Consul-General can occasionally give advice. He may, when talking to the Egyptian Minister, advocate the views of the reformer. But he cannot step seriously upon the scene unless there is some knot to be untied which is worthy of a serious effort....The work done by the Anglo-Egyptian official is, therefore, mainly the outcome of his own resource....If he is adroit, he can make the fact that the soldiers of his nation are in occupation of the country felt without flaunting their presence..before the eyes of his Egyptian superior.'²

Thus diplomatic backing constituted only one component in the administrative influence of a British official. This is not to say that a close relationship did not exist between senior British officialdom and the Agency at Qasr al-Dubbara, however. We know that Cromer instituted daily morning interviews for the Financial Adviser to report to him on 'the progress made in Ministerial Councils with the most recent schemes of development.'³ Sir Malcolm McIlwraith, Judicial Adviser from 1898-1914, tells us that Britain's Representative in Egypt always worked with 'the advice and assistance' of the advisers.⁴ The Agency had a particular interest in the work of officials in the ministries when it came to compiling the Representative's Annual Report, offering a yearly opportunity to vindicate Britain's presence in Egypt in administrative terms.

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1. H. Bowman, Middle East Window (London, 1942), p.75.
 2. Cromer, Modern Egypt, ii. 282-3.
 3. Rodd, Memories, ii. 55.
 4. Sir Malcolm McIlwraith, 'Three Egyptian Proconsuls', Fortnightly Review (1919), 572-3.

However, Cromer's practice of holding conferences of advisers was discontinued by Gorst due to the impression this gave of an English council of ministers acting in parallel to the Egyptian cabinet. ¹ Nevertheless, according to Cyril Goodman of the Public Health Department, some kind of 'quite unofficial and informal' body of senior British officialdom continued to function in exactly such a shadow capacity to the Council of Ministers.

'The amount of influence possessed by each of these two bodies depend[ed] upon the policy in force at the moment; at times the decisions of one body [were] simply sent to the other to be registered and promulgated officially, at times the official Council of Ministers [was] allowed practically a free hand. In case of difference of opinion...a sort of diplomatic negotiation [took] place, the final decision resting with the High Commissioner.' ²

It was from these senior officials, furthermore, that most new legislation emanated. ³

It must be said that any relationship between Britain's diplomatic representative and the British officials of the Egyptian Government only existed at the top administrative levels. There is little evidence that the majority of officials had any communication with the Agency other than indirectly via the advisers. Nor do the majority of officials appear to have regarded themselves as agents of British policy within the Egyptian government. Thus to portray them as such, or perhaps even to refer to 'British rule' in Egypt at all, is an error of over-simplification. The most that 'British rule' meant in Egypt was that the mere presence of British officials within the government machine might be expected to cover certain administrative desiderata, by virtue of the fact that political and administrative interests in efficiency would usually correspond.

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1. Murray, minute, 10 May 1920, FO371/5006/E4363.
 2. Goodman, Note on the Government of Egypt, September 1919, MP447, p.172.
 3. Judge Cator to Curzon, 7 July 1923, FO371/8989/E7449.

A British presence in the Egyptian administration helped achieve two particular objectives of the Occupation: the maintenance of both Egyptian solvency and stability. Financial equilibrium remained a constant mainstay of British policy. Even once bankruptcy had been averted in the mid-1880s, it was thought imperative to safeguard Egypt's debt repayments to preclude any rival powers intervening on behalf of their bondholders. Thus through the Financial Adviser, responsible for framing the budget and for supervising general financial policy, and through officials in departments like State Audit, Direct Taxes and Customs, responsible for 'checkings and incalculable counter-checkings,'¹ Britain's desire for sound financial management could be furthered.

By what authority could officials exercise this control? For the Financial Adviser, there was nothing more than the preamble to a Khedivial decree of 1883, which allowed him to attend Council meetings and offer his opinion on financial matters. Yet in practice, Egyptian finance was a 'branch of government in which British authority [was] absolute and undisputed.'² Moreover, the Financial Adviser possessed almost prime ministerial powers, extending far beyond the realms of finance: Gorst, while Financial Adviser, claimed that he 'practically [ran] the internal government of the country.'³

The source of this considerable power lay, according to Dowson, a later Adviser, primarily in Britain's military occupation. It was this which led to 'the practical advisability of the Egyptian Government obtaining the Financial Adviser's concurrence to important decisions.' The fact that many pivotal government posts were

1. Storrs, Orientations, p.45.

2. Milner Mission, Sketch Report, 12 February 1920, MP451, p.121.

3. Gorst, Autobiographical Notes, ii. 69, GP.

held by Englishmen

'in turn extended and strengthened the power of the Financial Adviser by permeating the administration with agents of his own nationality upon whom he could rely both to supply him with information and give effect to his decisions.' ¹

Furthermore, the Financial Adviser's permanent membership of the Cabinet gave him a means of monitoring policy and, through the requirement of his signature on all ministerial decisions, of controlling it. ² Yet we have no record of a Financial Adviser ever exercising his veto at a Council meeting, probably because

'nothing was ever put up to that body that was in danger of being vetoed....The fact that he had this veto and that neither side wished it to be exercised...led to his approval being asked for everything before it reached its final stage.' ³

Brunyate confirms that the opportunities for liaison with ministers came during informal talks more often than in Council meetings. ⁴

The Financial Adviser also exerted a decisive influence as Vice-President of the Financial Committee, the body which finalised every budgetary provision, as well as examining all proposals of a financial character. Given the limited revenues of the Egyptian Government, the Financial Adviser's role in apportioning those revenues guaranteed his influence within the entire administration, both as effective Minister of Finance and as virtual Mayor of the Palace.

There were, nevertheless, constraints on the independent action of this most influential of British officials. Fragmentation of authority had been a feature of Egyptian government well before the Occupation. The fact of a large, diverse foreign community and of

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1. Dowson, Note on the Financial Commissioner, 26 July 1922, FO371/7737/E10770.
 2. See Lord Edward Cecil's satire, The Leisure of an Egyptian Official (London, 1929 edition), Ch.2. (Leisure).
 3. Patterson to Wiggin, 22 May 1924, FO141/429/5308.
 4. Brunyate to Wingate, 14 January 1919, MP447, pp.4-5.

external indebtedness had long laid Egypt open to the outside supervision of any number of international boards, commissions and administrations, and a plural legal and judicial system besides. By the early 1900s, these international controls had been significantly weakened through Cromer's efforts to bring the administration under a single Anglo-Egyptian ægis. The Anglo-French agreement of 1904 had ended the jurisdiction of the Caisse de la Dette Publique over Egypt's Reserve Funds and Non-Assigned Revenues, thus depriving it of its main source of leverage over the administration. The Entente had also terminated control of the railways, telegraphs and the port of Alexandria by Mixed (or international) Administrations. The running of royal estates known as the Daira Saniya and the Domains had been under similar jurisdictions; but by 1908 the Daira lands had been profitably sold off,¹ whilst in 1906 those estates remaining acquired a British Controller, Henry Anthony.

The significance of this consolidation of British administrative influence lay in the revenue-raising potential of the departments concerned. For in one crucial respect, Egyptian administration remained in the grip of a tenacious external control, namely the Capitulations. These guaranteed tax exemption,² as well as inviolability of domicile and immunity from the Egyptian courts to the resident nationals of fifteen countries. The fiscal autonomy of one of the most productive sectors of the population severely limited the Egyptian Government's revenue-increasing capacity: beyond the possibility of higher yields from departments like the Railways, Post Office and State Lands, the Finance Ministry was forced to rely on a long-term policy of promoting Egypt's

1. Cromer, Modern Egypt, ii. 314.

2. The foreign community were exempt from all but the land tax and customs duties.

prosperity. The twin tenets of this policy comprised, on the one hand, fiscal relief for the fellaheen, and on the other, developing the productivity of the land through irrigation, reclamation and drainage.

There were successive attempts, in the meantime, to abolish the Capitulations. However, European vested interest lay in the defence not only of tax freedoms, but also of a separate judicial system, in the shape of the Mixed Courts and the Consular Courts, as distinct from the local Native Tribunals and Shari'a Courts.¹ In addition, the Mixed Courts effectively provided foreign residents with their own law-making authority. Britain's abortive struggle against the combined obstructiveness of fourteen foreign governments would continue until 1937.

Yet although British administration in Egypt suffered certain restrictions like this absence of financial independence, there is no question that, by about 1911, its principal exponents, the advisers, were wielding powers which far exceeded their supposed advisory status. Theoretically, the presence of an outside 'expert' was not supposed to diminish the authority of the Egyptian official he assisted. However, as 'Ozzy' Walrond, an astute observer of Egyptian affairs later remarked, far from being the 'silent policemen' of Cromer's design, the advisers now interfered to such a degree as to '[emasculate] the energies and brains of [the] Ministers...making the Advisers the mainspring and the real Ministers.'²

Not that the other advisers shared the wide-ranging influence of their colleague at 'the Finance'. The Judicial and

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1. These complexities are described by Besly, 'A Survey of the Judicial System of Egypt', Judge Besly Papers, St Antony's College.
 2. Walrond to Milner, 5 January 1919, MP449, p.237.

Interior Advisers merely expected to be consulted by their ministers on all important issues, and would usually have to endorse any major policy decisions. Both these figures, as well as the Sirdar, or British Commander-in-Chief of the Egyptian Army, might be summoned to expound their opinions before the Council of Ministers. ¹ The Education and Public Works adviserships had always been more or less honorary titles, carrying no more authority than that established by the individual incumbent.

Even so, Walrond was correct in his estimation that the advisers had effectively abandoned their consultative designation. Their substitution of control for cooperation threatened the ideal of Anglo-Egyptian administration at its very core. Sir Eldon Gorst evidently sensed this danger when he became Consul-General in 1907. Reaffirming that Britain was in Egypt 'not to rule the Egyptians, but to teach them to rule themselves,' ² Gorst embarked on a two-pronged 'Egypt for the Egyptians' campaign. At the administrative level, British officials were warned that the training of Egyptians must replace the automatic recruitment of fresh outside personnel. Furthermore, Englishmen must be 'content to remain in the background' and would then encounter less resistance to their proposals. ³ Gorst underlined his intentions by denying the post of Financial Adviser to Lord Edward Cecil, who admitted to a belief in 'fairly strict English control' for 'many years to come.' ⁴ At the political level, Gorst replaced the somewhat faceless ministry of Mustafa Fahmi with Butrus Ghali, whom it was hoped would give Britain a stronger rapport with both opinion in the country,

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1. Allenby to Curzon, 7 July 1921, FO371/5006/E8314 and E5244; Brunyate to Wingate, 4 January 1919, MP447, p.4.
 2. Gorst's speech, 2 November 1907, GP.
 3. Ibid.
 4. K. Rose, The Later Cecils (London, 1975), p.208.

and the Khedive, whom Gorst felt had been particularly eclipsed by the 'anti-native' tendencies of recent British policy.

Gorst's campaign, which also encouraged the responsible participation of Egypt's legislative institutions, is usually portrayed in contrast to the prevailing trend of the period, as a short-lived bid for Egyptian home rule. In fact, just like his predecessor, Gorst perceived the importance of deference and restraint to Britain's particular mode of administrative control in Egypt. In re-affirming a respect for Britain's political and administrative auxiliaries, he was attempting to revive their collaborative credibility. His Autobiographical Notes explain:

'[I wanted] to render our rule more sympathetic to the Egyptians in general and to the Muhammadans in particular by restoring good feeling between the Anglo-Egyptian officials and the natives of the country and preventing the British element riding roughshod over the Egyptians...'¹

The emphasis on the Khedive as a collaborative choice might be a new element; yet being a far-from-liberal choice, Gorst was effectively shoring up the Anglo-Egyptian cooperative relationship, rather than abolishing British rule overnight.

Although an attempt to avert the danger to 'cooperative control' posed by excessive British domination, Gorst's policies had the effect of increasing Egyptian assertiveness, which threatened 'cooperative control' in a different way. In retrospect, Zaghlul's appointment as Minister of Education proved the first sign of the Council of Ministers evolving from a 'body of nullities'² into an effective Council of State. With this transition Britain found that she had an additional element to draw into the cooperative relationship; previously, the government of Egypt had effectively meant the Khedive and the Prime Minister. Now, ministers began

1. Gorst, Autobiographical Notes, p. 119.
2. Amos to Headlam-Morley, 26 January 1927, FO371/12378/J219.

holding private policy discussions, without, as Cecil sardonically remarked, the 'interfering presence of a brutal and stupid foreigner.'¹ Ministers began to acquire increasing confidence and ability in departmental matters² to the extent that some advisers by the First World War saw themselves in a position of equal responsibility with their ministers.³

Theoretically, this process could have strengthened the foundations of Britain's cooperative mechanism, by discouraging the exercise of overt British control. In practice, however, Gorst's policy of developing Egypt's legislative institutions brought yet another element into the equation of collaboration. Increasingly, ministers would have to account for their compliance with British requirements before a critical body of elected representatives. These pressures could prove too much for Britain's ministerial clients, as Gorst discovered during the Suez Canal concession episode. There was a risk in submitting the issue of extending this concession to the Assembly, considering that Egyptians had long been effectively debarred from the operations and profits of the Canal. The Assembly rejected the measure as an attempt by English officials to sell an Egyptian birthright for the financial benefit of Sudanese railways. This unprecedented defiance, and even more the assassination at this time of Butrus Ghali, represented a repudiation of Britain's indirect methods and, equally, of her chosen instruments. Gorst was forced to acknowledge the 'unreliability' of Egyptian representative institutions: he concluded that because the Egyptian ministers had failed to construct a nucleus of members who would

1. Cecil, Leisure, p.59.

2. e.g, see below, p.103ff.

3. e.g, Amos, Memorandum on the Office of Judicial Adviser, 14 November 1922, FO371/8959/E1107.

cooperate with British requirements, these institutions were 'liable to be used as an instrument of agitation against the occupation.'¹

Gorst's only response to the chorus of criticism in the nationalist press which marked his last months in Cairo, and likewise to the sensitive Butrus Ghali assassination trial, was to revert to the kind of heavy-handed British control he had previously opposed. Press controls and anti-subversive measures were swiftly produced, which diminished Britain's vulnerability for the time being.² The Anglo-Egyptian brand of cooperative control was, it seemed, remarkably hard to achieve and sustain.

When we turn to examine how British administration functioned at the local level, we observe many of the same difficulties in maintaining a credible Egyptian ruling agency. Provincial government in Egypt was organised around fourteen mudiriyyas or provinces, each under an Egyptian governor or mudir, with responsibility to the Interior Ministry for local administration and public security. Below the mudir, at markaz or district level, stood the ma'mur, with a force of police. Then in each village the Interior was represented by the 'umda, an unpaid official with responsibility for taxation and conscription, and vested with certain judicial authority.

The first British officials to be interposed in this hierarchy after 1883 were a few resident inspectors of police. However, their role of mediating between the police and mudirs both undermined and antagonised the latter, and so in 1894 they were withdrawn and replaced by British Interior inspectors.

1. Gorst, memorandum, 22 May 1910, FO371/890/19674.
2. See, e.g., Cheetham's correspondence with Gorst, July-August 1910, Sir Milne Cheetham Papers, St Antony's College.

The mufattish or inspector was instructed to collect information and investigate local disputes on behalf of his ministry, as well as to ensure the efficiency of the district police, and generally supervise the indigenous provincial officials. The Interior inspectors, like their fellow Financial and Public Works inspectors, were based in Cairo, but spent about three weeks of each month touring their two mudiriyas. Thomas Russell, working as an inspector between 1902 and 1911, concluded that his chief duty was to know the 'umdas of the area thoroughly by personal acquaintance. ¹ The 'umda was the lynchpin of sound village administration. The inspector must therefore monitor all misdemeanours, and be able to make informed recommendations to the appointments commission on which he served. Using his influence, it was usually possible for an inspector 'to secure the return of a candidate whom he considered likely to carry out his duties successfully.' ²

Like other inspectors, Russell found that he had to combine the functions of mentor and father confessor with those of headmaster, policeman and detective. Each year there would be confidential reports on local officials and police officers to write. Above all, the inspector was to be constantly available for advice or assistance. Prior to the advent of the motor car, he was in constant contact with fellaheen on the roads and in the fields. Through hours spent over compulsory coffee, tea and sherbets with each 'umda, and evenings examining voluminous petitions, the inspector could acquire a considerable grasp of local affairs.

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1. T. Russell, Egyptian Service (London, 1949), p.46.
 2. Milner Mission, Note on the Interior, 13 May 1920, MP450, p.38. (Note on Interior).

Francis Edwards, in the parallel Finance inspectorate, found himself regarded more than anything as an arbiter between the individual and authority:

'All would be obsessed by one idea - that I should write a letter to someone in authority. Ahmad Bey whose half-witted son had failed twice in the Primary Education Examination was sure that a word from 'genabak' (your excellency) would secure his son a Government post. Hanna Effendi would have his pay raised, and Second Lieutenant Mustafa would put up another star....if only I would write to someone!' ¹

In a variety of ways, the very role of the inspector tended to build up his standing as a British official at the expense of his Egyptian counterparts. The fact that a British inspector enjoyed detachment from local kinship and patronage networks invested him with an independence and elevation which reinforced his authority as an intermediary. Moreover, the British official generally took greater interest in tours of the provinces than did his Egyptian colleagues, who tended to regard the fellah and his concerns with contempt. The British official, indeed, was positively encouraged to see himself as a guardian interposed between the poor and the powerful of Egypt. The Indian experience had already imbued imperial administrators with an empathy for peasants, and a corresponding dislike of local officials and large landowners. Cromer and his lieutenants had been nurtured in this school of imperial management, which regarded peasants as the ideal allies of British rule and thus a key element in the strategy to maintain stability. Peasants, unlike ambitious, educated townsmen, were less likely to feel excluded by the foreign domination of power, but were easier, by contrast, to persuade of the advantages of Britain's presence. According to this philosophy, urban nationalists would command little following amongst a contented rural population.

1. F. Edwards, 'On Marur', Francis Edwards Papers, St Antony's College.

The irrigation expert, Willcocks, expressed this belief in its Egyptian context: 'the keystone of the British Occupation was the fact that the fellaheen were for it.' 1

The function of the provincial British administrator, therefore, was to portray the human face of British rule to the fellaheen. So it was essential that officials be favourably pre-disposed to their wards. Boyle warned new recruits to the inspectorate that 'the man to whose eyes the Egyptian fellah appears to be nothing more than a "rather dark and dirty type of backward humanity"...would never make a successful administrative career in Egypt.'² Evidently there were some officials who shared Judge Marshall's assessment of the fellah as ignorant, vain, obstinate, childish, cunning, savage and superstitious.³ However, most inspectors warmed naturally to the Egyptian peasant, finding him, to quote Edward Hogg of the Finance inspectorate, 'a good fellow in the main;'⁴ as so often in the Empire, the British got on far better with peasants (and princes) than with educated élites.⁵

Officials were certainly not encouraged to esteem the prominent figures in rural Egyptian society. The literature of the Occupation invariably portrayed 'umdas as 'unscrupulous' and 'rapacious,' Azharite shaikhs as adherents of 'narrow-minded dogma and fanaticism,' whilst the pasha class were usually 'rack-renting' and 'past masters in the art of intriguing.'⁶ In reality, it must

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1. Willcocks, memorandum, 4 March 1919, MP444, p.246.
 2. Boyle, Boyle of Cairo, pp.50-1.
 3. J. Marshall, The Egyptian Enigma (London, 1928), p.186. (Enigma).
 4. Hogg to Phelps, 13 May 1907, Phelps Papers, Oriel College.
 5. Philip Mason suggests that the latter relationship involved the threat of greater equality between ruler and ruled, whilst the peasant offered no challenge to the assumption of European superiority; P. Mason, Prospero's Magic (London, 1962), p.22.
 6. Marshall, 'Note on the Psychological Aspects of Egypt', 1919, MP452, pp.105-8.

be said, inspectors remarked on the hospitality of local notables at least as often as their perceived deficiencies.

Nevertheless, the entire rationale of the inspector's role conspired to enhance the prestige of the British official. Even more markedly than the relationship between the adviser and his minister, the inspector-mudir relationship held seeds of destruction for any mechanism of constructive collaboration. As with the former inspectors of police, the mere fact that the inspector existed to report on local officials, with the implied aim, furthermore, of capturing the allegiance of the rural population, tended, as Cromer himself admitted, 'to weaken the authority and to diminish the sense of responsibility of the Moudirs.'¹ Almost by definition, a successful inspector's standing would begin to equal or even surpass that of his mudir, since

'the slighted subordinate, the oppressed widow, the waterless irrigator addressed their petition not to the Egyptian Mudir or Engineer but to the British Inspector, who reported direct and unchecked to his Adviser.'²

Russell describes the mechanism - Nubar's "la dualité dans les provinces" - whereby the inspector oversaw his mudir, although technically his subordinate:

'As Inspector, one's dealings in the Ministry in Cairo were almost entirely with the Adviser, [and] the English Director-General of Public Security.... Except for introduction on appointment, one was never brought into contact with the Minister.... In his province, however, the Inspector was in daily contact with the Mudir, to whom he made his suggestions on the conduct of affairs in the province and, if unsuccessful, reported to his Adviser in Cairo who, if he thought fit, took a similar line with the Minister. In extreme cases of disagreement the matter was taken still further, reaching its final instance when Lord Cromer... had to mention the matter to the Khedive.'³

This indirect access to the mudir's highest departmental authority

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1. Cromer, Modern Egypt, ii. 489.
 2. Storrs, Orientalism, p.79.
 3. Russell, Egyptian Service, pp.28-9.

allowed the inspector's 'advice' to become fact, in the form of a humiliating reprimand or counter-order from the minister's desk.

Admittedly, many inspectors were aware that the ultimate effectiveness of their work demanded tact and self-effacement with their Egyptian colleagues. For young men not long down from university - Russell was a full inspector by the age of 25 - to advise senior mudirs clearly demanded sensitive discretion. Young of the Interior recalled that if inspectors exercised tact, 'the arrangement as a rule worked well, but even before the war it was not always a success.' Younger inspectors were sometimes inclined 'to make too much of their unique position.' ¹ Much would depend on the mudir himself. There might be the elderly 'spineless' type, (to quote Russell), who would only too gladly leave decision-making to an English inspector. However, as time went on, greater ability and heightened nationalist awareness amongst mudirs was likely to reduce their receptivity to foreign supervision. ²

Realising the way that the inspectorate system undermined Egyptian responsibility, Gorst had focused on the Interior to implement his policy of restoring Egyptian authority. He offered to cut back the number of Interior inspectors, provided there was an improvement in the quality of mudirs. The four inspectors who survived this purge found themselves with vast circuits to cover, as Russell told his father:

'I shall now have two more provinces besides Assuit and Girga, namely Qena and Asswan. In fact, my southern boundary is now the Sudan.'³

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1. J. Young, 'A Little to the East', Ch.14, pp.2-3, J.W.A. Young Papers, St Antony's College. ('East', YP).
 2. Note on Interior, MP450, p.39.
 3. Russell to his father, January 1908, quoted in Seth, Russell Pasha, p.75.

Yet this reduction in the inspectorate did not, to British eyes at least, bring any improvement in the calibre of mudirs. The result, according to Elgood, was inevitable:

'within a few months there was a noticeable decline in the old standards of administration, and ministers, alarmed lest Gorst should withdraw his concessions, sought a substitute for the British inspectorate....It was discovered that as much as provincial authority disliked the presence of roving Englishmen, it resented still more that of Egyptians.' ¹

Before long, the Interior inspectorate was quietly revived, although senior men tended to be replaced by younger, less experienced officials. In fact, the Gorst episode had imperceptibly set in motion a change in the relationship between inspectors and their mudirs. With the Interior Ministry now encouraging them to bypass their inspectors, mudirs now acted with greater independence. Russell found it

'very hard to preserve one's dignity or position before Mudirs and Mamurs when one's reports on administrative matters in one's own districts are handed to native inspectors for investigation.' ²

It was the dilemma inherent in 'cooperative control' once again: over-control at the expense of cooperation, or over-deference at the expense of efficiency. Significantly, Cromer had concluded that in fact it was 'impossible to avoid altogether the disadvantages of over-interference, without incurring the evils which would result from total non-interference.' ³

In other respects too, the inspector could not attain quite the demi-god status he may have aspired to. Problems of comprehension were always a constraint. Admittedly, British officials in the inspectorate, as in the police, acquired a greater proficiency in vernacular Arabic than their compatriots in most other departments:

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1. Elgood, Transit, pp.189-90.
 2. Russell to Chitty, 7 October 1909, quoted by Seth, Russell Pasha, p.77.
 3. Cromer, Modern Egypt, ii. 489.

overall, only a minority of British officials ever attained the desired mastery of spoken and written Arabic,¹ although no official ever seems to have been dismissed on this count. Yet even the able linguist still faced the challenge of penetrating an alien culture, often in situations of crime and subterfuge. Moreover, when we consider that there were between a hundred and three hundred villages in each markaz (district) alone, whilst inspectors were responsible for at least two provinces, we are bound to wonder quite what impact these solitary figures were able to exert over local affairs.

There were indeed discrepancies between the avowed credo of British rule, of which the inspector was supposedly the exponent, and the realisation of that philosophy in the Egypt of his acquaintance. We remember that the early goal of British administration had been a programme of symbolic reforms, aimed at bettering the material conditions of the fellaheen. Material improvements offered an ideal means of attaching the Egyptian masses to British rule in the absence of other natural affinities. Measures like the abolition of the corvée and the kurbaj, the campaigns against narcotics and gambling, and the introduction of fiscal relief, had the additional advantage of conforming to an Englishman's notions of proper social behaviour, and thus promised to legitimise his presence in Egypt both to himself and to the Occupation's detractors at home.

Lifting the fellah's material burdens British administrators perceived as merely the first step towards a transformation of Egyptian society. Isma'il's excesses of extortion and despotism might have been suppressed, but Englishmen were still

1. Grafftey-Smith, Bright Levant, p.54.

troubled by the prevalence of crime, corruption, indebtedness, and the general absence of a civic sense. Cromerian philosophy at its height was marked by a confidence in Britain's ability to develop the Egyptian character as a necessary corollary of structural reform: only the virtues of self-reliance and public-spiritedness could pave the way to democratic institutions and ultimately, home-rule.

The British had encountered relatively little difficulty in the initial phase of 'material' reform, ¹ and further measures were envisaged to strengthen the position of a proprietary peasant class in relation to the large landowners and European land companies. Unnerved by the prospect of a growing landless peasantry, it was British policy to maintain small proprietors in the possession of their holdings through continued fiscal relief, the promotion of Post Office Savings, and the Agricultural Bank, and through the sale of small plots of state lands. ² A stable rural base was regarded as imperative for secure British rule.

However, there proved to be a considerable difference between initiating land tax adjustments at the turn of the century when Egypt's representative institutions were still weak, ³ and grappling with land redistribution in later years. Despite official optimism that the small proprietor was 'holding his own in the land,' ⁴ levels of fragmentation and indebtedness in fact continued to rise. ⁵ No British administration was in a position to do anything but tinker with prevailing trends in land ownership, beyond limited sales of Domain lands. For one thing, the official was governed by his own essentially conservative notions of the

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1. See, e.g, PP 1902, cxxx (1012), pp.50-1. (Report 1901)
 2. e.g, Report 1903, p.15.
 3. See W. Willcocks, Sixty Years in the East (London, 1935), p.161. (Sixty Years).
 4. Report 1903, p.15.
 5. See Edwards, 'The Egyptian Rural Problem', Edwards Papers.

sanctity of property. He was therefore unlikely to oppose the large landowning interests represented by the members of any Egyptian government, even if it had been prudent to try. Colonial-style collaboration would bring with it ever-greater policy constraints as the expression of local opinion became more vocal. This was quite obvious to British officials in 1921, when the Foreign Office suggested trying to regain the sympathy of the fellaheen for Britain through a campaign against land hunger. Such a policy was quite impracticable, replied one of the advisers, since it would be 'impossible...to find ministers, a legislature or even the necessary Egyptian officials, to put it into effect.' ¹

If Egypt's material progress posed problems, then its corollary, moral progress, was more elusive. Even Cromer's apologists had come to admit that the 'defects' of Muslim society would 'not be set right in one generation.' ² The grafting of Western virtues on to the Egyptian character came to be seen as a long-term, evolutionary product of indefinite British trusteeship. Crime, for example, which officials took as a prime indicator of the success of Britain's 'regenerative' work, appeared to be continually on the increase during our period. 'Crime,' observed one disenchanted British judge, 'can never be said to be on the decrease in Egypt, and where there is any apparent decrease, it is entirely due to [a] lack of supervision...' ³

The causes of the crime phenomenon were variously identified: inadequate arms restrictions, ⁴ apathetic mudirs, ⁵ insufficient police and ghafirs (watchmen), and the effects of

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1. Amos, draft memorandum, 23 March 1921, FO141/484/278.
 2. Boyle, Boyle of Cairo, p.54.
 3. Marshall, Enigma, p.148.
 4. *Ibid*, p.132.
 5. e.g, PP 1914, ci (7358), p.43. (Report 1913).

increased prosperity. ¹ Most Annual Reports, however otherwise sanguine as to Britain's achievements in Egypt, included a reference to the increase in crime as the one 'most unsatisfactory feature in the whole Egyptian situation.' ²

The only comfort officials could draw from this apparent failure was the idea that 'unregenerate' Egyptian character was to blame. Public morality derived from 'sound home-training,' something which was 'almost entirely lacking in Egypt.' ³ This in turn was ascribed to the negated and 'degraded' role of women, which officials regarded as a characteristic of Muslim society. Could British reforms, such as the encouragement of education for girls, succeed in eliminating these 'unhealthy' influences? There were many, like Gorst, who doubted 'whether these efforts to instil a public spirit in the hearts of a subject race [would] in the long run prove successful.' Nevertheless, the experiment was worth trying, 'if only from the point of view of fulfilling our duty to those under our rule.' ⁴

Others, less sceptical, found in the daunting challenges of Egypt's development only a greater justification for their presence. Moreover, it was precisely this kind of work in the inspectorates, and not the desk-bound life of the Cairo ministries, that many officials later recalled as the most satisfying aspect of their Egyptian service. Young remembers the time he spent supervising the cadastral survey as the happiest of his 25 years in Egypt: 'life in the provinces for a British Inspector who was suited to it was very agreeable.' ⁵ It is noticeable that some of the most vivid

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1. Note on Interior, MP450, p.35.
 2. PP 1907, c (3394), p.85. (Report 1906).
 3. Marshall, Enigma, p.134.
 4. J. Gorst, 'The Oriental Character', Anglo-Saxon Review, ii. (1899), 138.
 5. 'East', Ch.4, p.1, YP.

accounts we have of the life of officials in Egypt were written by former inspectors - Russell, Willcocks, Edwards, Young and Holden. By comparison, there is little to match Cecil's description of the life of a Financial Adviser.

The inspectors, in common with District Officers in India or Africa, usually felt privileged to have experienced a unique lifestyle, of variety, responsibility and romance. Whilst out in the provinces, they would stay in government rest-houses, or in a dahabiya on the Nile. Harsh physical conditions were mitigated by the possibility of hunting and desert exploration readily at hand.

'We kept fit and well; never having heard of bilharzia we bathed in the river every day, ate cucumbers and melons from the fields when we were thirsty, rode hard and worked hard.' ¹

It was also, of course, a role invested with a certain glamour; Wyndham Deedes confessed that he rather enjoyed being treated 'en prince.' ²

For officials in the parallel Finance and Public Works inspectorates, there were also concrete technical functions to fulfil. The Finance inspectors had a role more akin to the Indian Settlement Officer: the investigation of land claims, tax valuations and property rights. Jointly with Egyptian colleagues, Finance inspectors ensured the efficient collection of taxes. The Milner Mission was told that out of an annual collection of L.E.8 million, only L.E.11,000 had been embezzled by sarrafs (local tax-gatherers) over nine years.³ If revenues got into arrears, then the inspector might play a more direct role in getting the money in. In the opening months of the Great War, Young was called back to his old

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1. Russell, Egyptian Service, p.48.
 2. Deedes to his mother, 21 December 1919, Wyndham Deedes Papers, St Antony's College.
 3. Milner Mission, Note on the Ministry of Finance, 5 May 1920, MP450, p.52.

provinces of Daqahliya and Minufiya, to urge the villagers to pay their instalments, or face seizure of their lands. The most effective method, he discovered, was to station ghafirs at the entrance to the 'umda's courtyard, and make an on-the-spot collection. 1

The Interior inspector had practical functions with an economic rationale also. In the course of his horseback tours he could find himself supervising measures against plague or cotton worm or locusts, innoculating cattle, or bank-watching during the Nile flood. Russell explained to his father:

'I'm quite an expert now on the diseases and pests to which the cotton plant is liable....today for example I...asked the mamur whether any cotton worm had been found. Oh no never! they hunted every day most carefully. I therefore took a horse and went for a ride.....You have to turn the leaves over to find the cluster of eggs. I soon found one cluster...The owner of the field expressed great surprise and tomorrow will have to turn out some 20 persons to clean his crop thoroughly.' 2

In other words, because Egyptian prosperity depended so exclusively on the cotton crop, the British administration reckoned to modify its laissez faire principles when government intervention was imperative to maintain yields.

The irrigation inspector, likewise, had considerable powers in his field, although it was a role undergoing a certain evolution by our period. In Scott-Moncrieff's days of basin inundation (in Middle Egypt), the inspector, riding conspicuously along the basin ridge, was in direct contact with the cultivator. Now, an Egyptian engineer manned sluices controlling a network of government canals, whilst the inspector, responsible for two provinces, had to 'exercise his control from some strategic centre quite out of contact with the

1. 'East', Ch.8, p.2, YP.

2. Russell to his father, 27 June 1905, Thomas Russell Papers, St Antony's College.

isolated village whose water supply [might] be causing its inhabitants anxiety...'¹ Similarly, the Interior inspector was abandoning his horse for motor vehicle touring over this period. The process of mechanisation, as we shall see, was to prove a major factor in removing the British official from village life, thereby diminishing one crucial channel of British administrative influence.

The function of the British inspectorate, then, was to monitor the standards of provincial Egyptian government. Beyond the Interior inspector's indirect responsibility for the provincial police, Britain had no control over security outside the cities, except through the British Army in an emergency. The maintenance of rural law and order had been ceded to Egyptian hands after 1894, when the British position of Inspector-General of Police was replaced by an Interior Adviser. From this point on, the Egyptian police developed into two separate branches: an Egyptian-commanded police force in the provinces, and mixed forces of Egyptian and European personnel under British commandants in the city governorates. (See Tables One and Two). We now turn to examining the police officers as a third significant group of British officials.

British police officers in Egypt were involved in the whole gamut of police activities, from traffic duties to narcotics investigations and political surveillance. Taken together with the British presence in the Justice Ministry,² there were undoubtedly occasions when the participation of European police officers in a criminal investigation proved advantageous to British interests.

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1. Murray, minute, 23 June, 1921, FO371/6298/E7157.
 2. Under the Code Napoléon, criminal offences in Egypt were investigated and prosecuted by a Prosecution Department of the Ministry of Justice known as the Parquet.

Table One

Nationality of Police Officers in Egypt, 1919

	<u>European</u>	<u>Egyptian</u>
<u>Mudiriyas</u>	-	303
Governorates	61	127

Source:

Howall-Stuart to Deedes, 23 November 1919, MP453, p.93.

Table Two

Nationality of Constables in Three Governorates, 1920

	<u>Cairo</u>	<u>Alexandria</u>	<u>Port Said</u>
Egyptian constables	2147	1400	221
European constables	133	186	29

Source:

PP 1921, xlii (1487), p.82. (Report 1920)

For example, during the flurry of nationalist activity between 1910 and 1911, the Cairo police were closely involved in the suppression of 'seditious' publications, attacking the Khedive and government. Then it was on the counsel of the Judicial and Interior Advisers, at a meeting held to discuss the issue at the Agency, that two prime suspects in the case, Shaikh Shawish and al-Ghayati, were charged with incitement to sedition. ¹ The outcome of the subsequent trial lay beyond British control, with three Egyptian judges. The Agency resisted a temptation to try and influence the Bench, yet a 'satisfactory' verdict was recorded nonetheless. ²

The protection of Egypt's European and Christian minorities was always given as a major reason for keeping the city police British-controlled. And certainly, in a town like Port Said which experienced frequent riots, trouble was 'normally contained within the native quarter by the British-commanded police force.' Consequently, recalls a one-time British Consul of the town, 'the European population was...hardly affected and suffered no feeling of insecurity.' ³

However, the loyalty of the Egyptian police rank and file in a crisis was never regarded as very certain. Once again, it was a question of how far the collaborative relationship could be pushed, without collapsing. Once again, moreover, the main restraining consideration was thought to be Islam. An appraisal of Cairo's Defence Scheme in 1911, for example, found the potential loyalty of the Egyptian police hard to forecast.

'In the case of merely local political disturbance they might be relied on to keep order, but if religious questions entered into the causes of disturbance it would probably be necessary to disarm them or draft them away.'

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1. Cheetham to Gorst, 11 July 1910, Cheetham Papers.
 2. Cheetham to Gorst, 25 July and 8 August 1910, *ibid.*
 3. T. Rapp, 'Memoirs', p.22, Sir Thomas Rapp Papers, St Antony's College. (Rapp Memoirs).

It is to be feared that the nationalist party can count on many adherents among the more junior native officers.'

The same considerations were thought to apply to the reliability of the Egyptian Army, especially in view of the fact that it was 'hardly possible that serious unrest [could] occur in Egypt without the question of religion making itself felt.' 1

Here was the underlying weakness of Britain's system of collaborative control: that the indigenous Egyptian Government, upon whose cooperation British officials would always depend, could not, it was felt, be trusted for Britain's security requirements in Egypt. Hence the vital importance of the British Army garrison. Whilst the Egyptian Government remained technically responsible for the maintenance of order, Britain felt that, by virtue of her paramountcy in Egypt, she would be 'held responsible by the foreign powers for the safety of the lives and property of their subjects..' The Committee of Imperial Defence had therefore agreed that the British Army in Egypt was 'maintained solely for the purposes of securing internal order.'² Thus, upon one regiment of cavalry, one battery of Royal Horse Artillery, one mounted battery, one field company of Royal Engineers, and three infantry battalions, ultimately rested Britain's entire administration of Egypt.

Deference to Egypt's Muslim majority in the context of Egypt's overall stability, permeated British policy in Egypt in numerous ways. In accord with the post-Mutiny decision not to tamper with 'native' institutions, Egypt's religious authorities, and particularly the mosque and university of al-Azhar, had been left judiciously alone ever since the Occupation, notwithstanding Cromer's conviction that 'degenerate' Islam required radical

1. Memorandum on Cairo Defence Scheme, 25 May 1911, FO371/1113/20275.
2. Ibid.

transformation before Egypt could hope to embark on the road of progress. Similarly, officials had to resist their instinct for reform and reorganisation in respect of the notoriously inept Ministry of Waqfs. As nationalist fervour grew, this non-intervention policy brought with it considerable frustrations for British Interior officials, trying to monitor seditious sermons and literature emanating from mosques like al-Azhar and Abul Abbas. British police officers maintained a network of Egyptian spies or 'sleuths' for intelligence work like this, yet ultimately the authorities remained powerless to affect what went on within the mosque's inviolable sanctuary. ¹

This deference to the dominant forces in Egyptian society left British administration in an awkward position in relation to the local Christian community, who instinctively looked to British officials for protection from the Muslim majority, just as the missionary lobby expected support from the Agency in its endeavours. Cromerian philosophy might have hoped to substitute Christian for Muslim social morality, but it had never contemplated the possibility of converting the Egyptian population. The establishment of an Anglican bishopric in Cairo was therefore refused as being unnecessarily provocative; missionaries, similarly, were rarely encouraged by British officials. ²

The Copts, as a relatively prosperous and well-educated community, had come to hold a somewhat privileged position in Egyptian society under the Occupation.³ Egyptian nationalism did

1. See below, p.145

2. Jarvis, Desert and Delta, p.239.

3. For example, see evidence for Coptic representation in higher education in D. Reid, 'Educational and Career Choices of Egyptian Students, 1882-1922', International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies, 8 (1977), p.362. (Reid, 'Educational Choices').

not command wide appeal amongst the Copts, perhaps due to its tendency to invoke Muslim fanaticism against the infidel invader. In the years before 1919, at least, the Copts seem to have feared that a victory for Egyptian nationalism might threaten their special position, and looked instead to continued British rule for support.

There is no doubt that British administration could and did fulfil some protective role of this kind: for example, officials had strict instructions to report any repression of the Copts.¹ There was a sense in which the British recognised the importance of securing the cooperation of the Copts as a relatively progressive element in Egyptian society, in comparison with the obsolescent Ottoman ruling élite, and the hostile nationalists. The Turco-Circassian cabinets of this period always included one representative of the Coptic community. Gorst's appointment of Butrus Ghali, a Christian, as prime minister, has been interpreted as an attempt to detach the Copts from anti-British activity.

Yet special treatment for the Copts was likely to create more problems than it solved, and it is more probable that Butrus Ghali was merely selected as an adaptable agent for Gorst's policy of liberalisation. British administration still prevented Copts being appointed as mudirs and ma'murs, positions demanding authority over a Muslim majority. If anything, the British seem to have regarded the Coptic community with a certain nervous suspicion; as Boyle condescendingly expressed it, the Copt suffered from the 'same moral disadvantages as the Egyptian Moslem, but he possesses also in a much higher degree the art of concealing these defects.'²

In education, as in religion, British administrators never regarded themselves as agents for radical change in Egyptian

1. Cheetham to Mallet, 28 August 1911, Cheetham Papers.
2. Boyle, Boyle of Cairo, p. 57.

society; rather, they feared the destructive effects of hasty modernisation, and consequently directed their attention to limited improvements for lower social groups, rather than for the educated élite. The Adviser to the Public Instruction Ministry, Douglas Dunlop, subscribed to the view that extensive educational opportunities tended to create, in Cromer's words, 'a disappointed and disaffected class of half-educated youths,'¹ who would

'probably be far happier and far more useful citizens if, instead of endeavouring to rise in the social scale...they had remained in the ranks of the society in which they were born, and had devoted themselves to some useful and honourable trade.'²

Dunlop's resulting policy of allocating the greater part of a small education budget to elementary schools at the expense of secondary education, and in the same way, to institutions for technical instruction but not to a national university, would have, as we shall see, more damaging consequences for the reputation of British rule than almost any other administrative policy Britain pursued in Egypt.

Egypt's economic development was another field where Britain's involvement was widely regarded as inimical to progress. Under the influence of contemporary notions concerning the proper role of government intervention, British officials accepted the duty of government to provide the infrastructure that individual enterprise could not supply; and that in a society like Egypt, with a tradition of strong central government, this would mean taking responsibility for vital services like irrigation. Wherever possible, however, free rein would be given to the workings of private enterprise. Government certainly saw no role for itself in encouraging local industry in order to reduce dependence on cotton; nascent Egyptian

1. PP 1906, cxxxvii (2817), p.83. (Report 1905).
2. PP 1901, xci (441), p.50. (Report 1900).

industry was therefore denied fiscal protection.¹ Similarly, there was a tendency to regard 'agricultural policy' largely in terms of improved irrigation, whilst the regulation of seed supply and over-cropping was left to the private Khedivial Agricultural Society for much of the earlier part of our period. The reputation for technical expertise acquired by several British officials in the Agriculture Ministry is more usually associated with later years.

From this overview of the Egyptian administration, we have surveyed the principal positions held by British officials; we have gained some idea of the functions attached to these positions and the nature of the official's authority; and we have examined Anglo-Egyptian administrative philosophy in both theory and reality.

Finally, how many British officials were there in Egypt in about 1911? The fact that the Egyptian Government kept no separate statistics of its foreign employees makes it impossible to be accurate. We have only the figures given in the Annual Reports for 1898, (455), and for 1906, (662).² We also know that by 1919 this figure had more than doubled, to 1546.³

It seems likely that much of this growth had taken place before 1914, as several hundred British officials actually left Egypt during the war.⁴ Since Cromer's last years a growing number of graduates had been appointed to more subordinate positions like sub-inspector and surveyor of contracts. According to Boyle this was because:

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1. See R. Owen, 'Attitudes of British Officials to the Development of the Egyptian Economy, 1882-1922', in M. Cook, Studies in the Economic History of the Middle East, (London, 1970).
 2. Report 1898, p.47, and Report 1906, 36ff.
 3. Egyptian Government Statistics, MP453, p.72.
 4. See below, p.103.

'experience showed that the native official...had not yet reached either the stage of intellectual development which would enable him to carry out...instructions with efficiency, or of moral courage enough to face the terrors of unsupported responsibility.' ¹

Grafftey-Smith, a later Oriental Secretary, had the impression that there were 'rather a lot of people doing jobs normally within the range of the indigenous graduate: a slight impression of finding a job for George.' ² This pre-war increase in junior British officials, apparently at the expense of other European personnel, is illustrated in Table Three. However, as Table Four shows, it was actually in the higher echelons of government that British officials came to dominate, not in sheer numbers, but in the proportion of top administrative posts which they held.

These statistics of growth are of central importance to the undergirding argument of this chapter. The indirect system of administrative control which the British evolved in Egypt was meant to have the major advantage of disassociating the Christian power-behind-the-scenes from the influence it actually exerted. There was also a major disadvantage, however: that in working through the agency of the Egyptian Government, this system relied on a successful collaborative relationship to a much greater extent than any system of direct control. By our period, moreover, that collaborative relationship was already crumbling at the foundations. The first line of attack came through the growth of the British component. More British officials resulted from more complex government, from more departments freed from international jurisdiction, from less international criticism and less precarious finances, and from ever greater pressures for efficiency, internally-generated.

1. Boyle, Boyle of Cairo, pp.48-9.
2. Grafftey-Smith to the writer, 1982.

Table Three

Changes in Distribution of Junior Egyptian Government Posts,
(Salary L.E.288-799), 1905-1920

	<u>% Egyptians</u>	<u>% British</u>	<u>% Others</u>
1905	48.4	29.1	22.5
1910	49.0	32.7	18.3
1914	50.3	33.3	16.4
1920	55.0	31.7	13.3

Table Four

Changes in Distribution of Senior Egyptian Government Posts,
(Salary L.E.800-2999), 1905-1920

	<u>% Egyptians</u>	<u>% British</u>	<u>% Others</u>
1905	27.7	42.2	30.1
1910	25.4	44.1	30.5
1914	25.8	49.0	25.2
1920	23.1	59.3	17.6

Note:

Ministries of War and Waqfs excluded.

British and Egyptian officials did not share the same salary scale, a fact concealed by these statistics.

Source:

Egyptian Government Statistics, MP453, p.82.

With growth came new attitudes and new methods, particularly a mentality of permanence and a tendency to act rather than to advise; and with all these, the chances of maintaining a credible, legitimate Egyptian Government became slimmer. Britain could no longer be said to be behind the Egyptian Government; Britain was the Egyptian Government.

There were nevertheless signs that Egyptian ministers would assert their rights as intermediaries to maintain their local authority. Not every British desire would automatically be followed, even less as the voice of Egyptian criticism spoke louder. Advisory control could not hope to outweigh the influence of representative institutions, encouraged by Britain as preparing Egyptians for eventual political responsibility. Increasingly, the ruling power would have to compromise in deference to the client government's vulnerability. Advisory control, which at best only offered incomplete control over Egyptian affairs, could become so impotent as to be worthless, and yet could still have irremediably compromised the standing of any Egyptian intermediary in the process.

Indirect manipulation did eventually collapse as an effective means of directing Egypt's internal affairs, and in the meantime suffered a number of crises, of which Gorst's dilemma was the first. From a structural analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of Anglo-Egyptian administration, we now take up the narrative of how that administration coped with evolving stresses and demands after Gorst's death.

Chapter Three

British Officials and Kitchener: the System Under Stress

In 1911 Kitchener was appointed British Agent in Cairo after Gorst's sudden death. Gorst's attempt to restore the balance of cooperative control, by reviving the Egyptian role in the partnership, was now scorned for its apparent failure. In the Commons debate on Egypt in June 1910, Balfour reported a general opinion that 'the position in Egypt is now eminently unsatisfactory...because the authority of...the dominant race...has been undermined.'¹ Nowhere was this low morale more evident than amongst the British official community. From the Irrigation department, Fox wrote to his college mentor in 1910:

'the Englishman's position...is certainly much below what it was three and a half years ago...and it doesn't improve.'²

Gorst's measures had in fact merely exacerbated a loss of confidence which dated from earlier confrontations with Egyptian nationalism. Early in the 1900s officials were discovering that not all Egyptians appreciated the benefits of British rule. Then the Dinshawai episode,³ with the intense emotional reaction it provoked both in Egypt and in liberal circles at home, dealt a grievous blow to Anglo-Egyptian self-assurance, and gave rise to a marked hardening in racial attitudes. Russell wrote to his father in the aftermath of Dinshawai, with evident satisfaction:

'we in the districts have always disbelieved the theory of the "dear native" and now Cromer and everyone have woken up to the fact that they're a lot of savages and fanatics at that...'⁴

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1. Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 5th series, (1910), xvii, 1144-6.
 2. Fox to Phelps, 9 January 1910, Phelps Papers.
 3. Described, e.g., in Lutfi al-Sayyid, Egypt and Cromer, 169ff.
 4. Russell to his father, 7 July 1906, Russell Papers.

The harsh words sprang, in many cases, from feelings of rejection and hurt pride; 'after all we've done for them,' Moseley summed it up, 'they will be glad to see the back of us.' ¹

Amongst the general disillusion, there was a faction of officials who bitterly denounced Gorst. The pro-Egyptian Member of Parliament, Robertson, claimed that it was these officials, who 'aimed at having an Egyptian bureaucracy...and...resented the introduction of Egyptians,' ² who orchestrated the campaign for Gorst's policy to be reversed. In the home government there was certainly a feeling that officials in Egypt should have a sense of Britain's backing, ³ and that Kitchener's appointment would serve to restore the necessary British prestige.

As part of the desired fresh beginning, Kitchener was advised to channel Egyptian energies away from nationalist agitation through constructive reform and an emphasis on administration rather than politics. The resulting tone of Kitchener's Consulship guaranteed a crucial role, once more, for British officialdom. The Agency always depended on the officials for those acts it wished carried out in the name of British rule, but particularly so when large administrative schemes required practical and financial cooperation from the Egyptian Government. Initially, many officials were revitalised by their renewed role, as Fox told Phelps in 1912:

'We have had a very good year under Ld.K. He has been extremely successful in keeping the natives quiet politically and active administratively. His own activity is astonishing...A tired official said to me the other day, "we used to suffer from neglect, now we suffer from too much attention..."' ⁴

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1. S. Moseley, With Kitchener in Cairo, (London, 1917), p.177. The discouragement prevailing amongst officials was addressed in Annual Reports on a number of occasions; see, e.g, Report 1906, p.100.
 2. Robertson, Commons, 27 July 1911, from cuttings in GP.
 3. Balfour, Debates, 5th series, (1910), xvii. 1144.
 4. Fox to Phelps, 19 May 1912, Phelps Papers.

The role of the British officials under Kitchener is not conspicuous, however, from most conventional accounts of the period. It is the personality of the Proconsul himself which usually dominates, autocratic, dynamic, charismatic. This is probably because Kitchener carefully established his own historiographical legend from the outset, and there have been few alternative sources to challenge the Kitchener-centred account accepted by most historians. In May 1912, Kitchener's A.D.C., Major Fitzgerald, sent home an approved text for an article on 'Lord Kitchener and Egypt' which was published in the Fortnightly Review two months later. This text describes the 'state of neglect' encountered by Kitchener on his arrival, but continues,

'Lord Kitchener at once started to turn the thoughts of the rulers and the Fellaheen from politics, at which they are so bad and unsuited by their characteristics, to agriculture at which they are so good...' ¹

Historians have invariably taken up the tale in similar vein, describing Kitchener's programme of rural reforms:² the establishment of a Ministry of Agriculture; the passing of the Five Feddan Law, to protect small peasants from eviction for the non-payment of debts; the creation of village savings banks, 'cantonal' courts, and government halakas for weighing cotton; the construction of roads and light railways - all in parallel to a gigantic scheme for improvements in irrigation, drainage and reclamation. Behind all these measures, runs the standard narrative, there lay 'a very real and profound desire to ameliorate the lot of the "fellaheen"...for whom Kitchener undoubtedly entertained a genuine admiration and affection.' ³ In the classic mould of

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1. Major Fitzgerald to Sir G. Arthur, 4 May 1912, Kitchener Papers, PRO30/57/42. Sir G. Arthur subsequently published the article in Fortnightly Review.
 2. See, e.g., P. Magnus, Kitchener (London, 1961 edition), p.257.
 3. McIlwraith, 'Three Egyptian Proconsuls', Fortnightly Review, (1919), 573.

British policy, these reforms were directed to the creation of a secure, conservative tenant class, at the expense of those whom Kitchener regarded as the vultures of Egyptian society, the usurers and lawyers. Above all, such projects furthered Kitchener's ultimate dream of adding an Egyptian viceroyalty to the British Empire, by affording ample scope for the demonstration of British beneficence. 'Never,' McIlwraith observed of Kitchener's viceregal tours of the provinces, had Egypt 'so active and peripatetic a Governor.'¹

There is no reason to deny the dominance of Kitchener suggested by the legend. Cromer certainly recognised that the British Consul-General was now playing a far more central role in Egyptian internal government than had been the case for some years. From retirement, he wrote to Kitchener in 1913: '...we have now gone back to a system of personal government, probably in a more accentuated form than was the case in my day.'² This is clear simply from Kitchener's restoration of direct access to the Agency for the hearing of petitions, a practice which Gorst had felt obliged to discontinue.

However, the Agency-inspired version of 1911-14 tends to conceal the fact that Kitchener was only able to play the role of the benevolent despot, as in hearing petitions, because he had access to an alternative official hierarchy, which apparently commanded greater public respect than the indigenous government machine. Grafftey-Smith describes how, as Oriental Secretary, he dealt with several thousand petitions to the Agency each year, by passing them

'with a compliments-slip "for such attention as you may think it deserves" to the competent British adviser, who sent it spiralling down the chain of British officialdom

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1. McIlwraith, 'Three Egyptian Proconsuls', op.cit, p.576.
 2. Cromer to Kitchener, 30 July 1913, Kitchener Papers, PRO30/57/44.

until it reached the inspector able to investigate and report, and to act. If, in fact, the pasha had installed too large a pump and was leaving those at the tail of the canal without water for their fields, Eric Parker read the riot act. If the Omda really had asked for a bribe, Dick Wellesley had him sacked.'¹

Similarly, the Consul-General's gigantic schemes for land drainage and reclamation required technical approval from the Ministry of Public Works and considerable assistance from the Ministry of Finance. To secure approval for such a project from the Egyptian Council of Ministers was the function of the relevant British advisers. Cooperation of this nature between officials and the Agency was usually a foregone conclusion. However, it was in the nature of 'cooperative control' that British officials should be primarily the servants of the Egyptian Government and not, overtly at least, the tools of British policy. Sir Paul Harvey and Charles Dupuis, respectively Finance and Public Works Advisers, now reminded Kitchener of this law of effective collaboration, in opposing the Consul's proposed measures on technical grounds. Harvey, who had rescued the Egyptian budget from dangerous straits over the preceding five years,² now represented the objections of the bondholders to what they regarded as the reckless extravagance of Kitchener's scheme. Dupuis, in the words of one of Kitchener's fiercest critics, 'dared...to hold opinions of his own on the way public works should be managed.'³ Both advisers were asked to resign.

With this deed, the system of collaborative control suffered a further blow to its legitimacy, and thus, ultimately, to its effectiveness. If British officials were prevented from acting as the disinterested advisers of their host government, but rather were

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1. Grafftey-Smith, Bright Levant, p.94.
 2. Lloyd, Egypt Since Cromer, i. 79-80.
 3. Moseley, With Kitchener in Cairo, p.174.

seen to be marshalled to an Agency cue, gone would be all appearance of Egyptian Government independence.

This trend was sustained, moreover, by Kitchener's choice of successor advisers, and by his treatment of British officials in general. Dupuis was replaced by Sir Murdoch McDonald who, as Moseley bitingly put it, 'for the agility with which he moved on a string, was awarded a C.M.G.'¹ The new Financial Adviser was Lord Edward Cecil, hitherto Under-Secretary in that Ministry, and Kitchener's trusted staff officer through Sudanese and South African campaigns. As Cecil had no proven financial skills, some found it a puzzling appointment. The only rationale for Cecil's selection seems to have lain in his personal allegiance to Kitchener. As Wingate later recalled in a confidential memorandum of 1919,

'In Lord Cromer's time, Cecil had gained influence with Cromer but the latter had emphatically stated Cecil should never be Financial Adviser...Kitchener made Cecil the Financial Adviser but it was a sort of compromise - Kitchener was to get what he wanted for his big schemes and would not interfere with the system which Cecil represented...'²

This impression is confirmed by Percival Elgood, a perceptive observer of the Egyptian scene. He thought that Kitchener 'divided officials into two classes: those who were useful to his plans, and those who were not.'³ As a result, any deficiencies Cecil might have had as Financial Adviser were of little moment; his value was that of a meticulous staff officer.

However, the effect of the promotion was to bring into the ascendancy the 'forward' school of Anglo-Egyptian administration, which both Cromer and Gorst had feared from Cecil. The new Financial Adviser was not one to doubt the rightness of Britain's continued

1. Moseley, With Kitchener in Cairo, p.174.
2. Wingate, memorandum, October 1919, WP162/4.
3. Elgood, Transit, p.200.

presence in Egypt, nor to apologise for the exercise of British control. Yet there was little sympathy or understanding to temper Cecil's view of the path of duty. His contempt and dislike for the Egyptians, above all for the 'oily, snake-like manner' of the townsman, was scarcely disguised,¹ his regard for their administrative abilities, minimal.

The combined effect of Cecil's unashamed belief in the automatic supremacy of the adviser, and Kitchener's perception of British officials as his personal instruments, was to upset further the Anglo-Egyptian balance of 'cooperative control.' The increasingly obvious existence of two parallel governments created a situation which, as Goodman observed,

'lack[ed] uniformity, at one time emphasising British control and rendering its application as galling as possible, [while] at another...it render[ed] impossible all real cooperation between British and Egyptian officials, preventing important public matters being thrashed out as between man and man and so giving rise to continued misunderstanding; it encourag[ed] obstruction, persistent opposition in any quarter generally sufficing to kill any measure not pressed from the highest quarters; it deaden[ed] all sense of responsibility both among British and Egyptians...'²

One significant aspect of this process was the developing influence over Egyptian affairs exerted by the Financial Adviser, not only as the keeper of the national purse strings, but increasingly as a go-between for the Agency, the British officials and the Egyptian ministry. Cecil's correspondence for 1911, for example, includes a series of summons to Qasr al-Dubbara: Kitchener

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1. Cecil, Leisure, p.103. Evidence of Cecil's aloof, contemptuous handling of Egyptian ministers recurs throughout the series of sketches he wrote, published after his death by his wife under the collective title, The Leisure of an Egyptian Official. The intentionally private nature of the sketches makes the book a revealing source; however, its publication was an extraordinarily tactless blunder on the part of Violet, now Lady Milner, in view of her new husband's involvement in Egyptian affairs.
 2. Goodman, note, 1919, MP447, pp.172-3.

desires Cecil to come and discuss a problem concerning the Khedive, or an undesirable candidate for the Governorship of Cairo, or yet again, the contract of a certain British official. ¹ Now

'Ministers went less to the Agency than before, their Under-Secretaries hardly at all. The Financial Adviser interpreted Lord Kitchener's wishes to the civil service, and the latter submissively accepted the new conditions.' ²

The arbitrary methods of the Kitchener-Cecil duumvirate affected not only the status of Egyptian ministers, but perhaps more surprisingly, the morale of British officials too. Kitchener's high-handedness had made him unpopular with the British community even when he was Inspector-General of Police in the 1890s.³ Now, as Consul-General, some officials regarded him as 'liable to be deceived by inefficiency and dishonesty provided that it displayed a sufficient agreement with his own views.'⁴ His strong and sometimes ill-informed opinions on most facets of administration formed the basis of his policies, regardless of contrary professional advice. Indeed, McIlwraith recalled, 'he not infrequently totally disregarded the Adviser concerned, and sometimes derived his inspirations from obscure and totally irresponsible sources.'⁵ His enthusiasms for particular projects tended to be selective. Coles Pasha, the Inspector-General of Prisons, complained of his lack of interest in matters of public security; in fact Coles experienced 'the greatest difficulty in getting Lord Kitchener inside a prison, and then he did not take the slightest interest in what he saw.'⁶ In common with other officials, Coles began to pursue a departmental policy quite

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1. Cecil-Maxse Papers, C728/2-6, Kent Public Records Office.
 2. Elgood, Transit, p. 201.
 3. Magnus, Kitchener, p.84.
 4. Lloyd, Egypt Since Cromer, i. 179.
 5. McIlwraith, 'Three Egyptian Proconsuls', p.573.
 6. Coles, Recollections, p.125.

independent of the Agency:

'When I found that I was not likely to get any support from his Lordship on prison matters, I thought it best to let well alone...as long as I kept quiet...I should not, in all probability, be interfered with...' ¹

Other officials, feeling their work to be in vain under Kitchener's directives, were tempted to resign. ²

Moreover, there were disturbing signs that Kitchener's individualistic approach to the requirements of Egyptian government was having a deleterious effect on the overall standard of administration. Brunyate later thought that Kitchener had failed to recognise on his return to Egypt that a 'higher standard of routine administration was now required than was altogether consistent with a system of benevolent personal government.'³ From a legal point of view, Brunyate particularly regretted that British heads of department had not insisted on a higher standard in the legislation passed at this time. The Five Feddan Law was a case in point. Cromer, amongst others, realised from the outset that such an attempt to protect the small landholder would be unenforceable without an army of inspectors; and in practice, the Greek money-lender did soon find alternative means of expropriating his feddans from the hapless debtor⁴ Besides inadequate legislation, there were whole areas where much-needed reform was neglected. The vigorous commitment to reform which characterised Cromer's early years seems to have given way to a distinct malaise and fatalism by the Kitchener period. The Milner Mission thought that British officials now relied on a legend of past achievements:

'...they congratulated themselves on the smooth running of an administration which had won general approval by reason

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1. Coles, Recollections, p.125.
 2. e.g, Seth, Russell Pasha, p.91.
 3. Brunyate, Note on Constitutional Reform, 18 November 1918, FO371/3199/204710.
 4. See Edwards, 'The Egyptian Rural Problem', Edwards Papers.

of the success with which a number of difficult problems had been surmounted in initial stages and which had lived on that reputation ever since.' ¹

When fresh reforms were proposed, officials were quick to point out the obstacles, particularly those represented by the Capitulations, as Sidney Moseley, then editor of the Egyptian Mail, found when he tried to expose the scandal of unregulated medical practices. His campaign met a cool response from the British authorities - 'of course, the Capitulations were blamed, as they generally are in such instances' ² - and Moseley concluded that a smug official complacency now reigned supreme. Similarly, over the question of hashish smuggling, Kitchener concluded that Britain's policy of total prevention was impractical and therefore misguided: the more realistic alternative, he argued, was to tolerate a certain level of drug trafficking. ³

In fact, the British authorities were far less trammelled by international fetters now than they had been during the early years of vigorous reform. It was more a case that British officials had lost - or had never known - the excitement of the pioneer era: 'the interesting work of reorganising the show was finished, and the daily task was reduced to dealing with small tiresome details.' ⁴ In the process, the expanding demands of continued occupation could be neglected.

It must be said, however, that Egyptian reform by the pre-war years involved problems of collaboration which had not arisen in the 1880s. Cecil, who seems to have realised that Britain was failing to match its past achievement in Egyptian reform, went

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1. Draft Report on the Causes of Unrest, 10 May 1920, MP450, p.67.
 2. Moseley, With Kitchener in Cairo, p.153.
 3. Kitchener to Grey, 3 January 1914, FO371/1964/1262.
 4. Gorst, Autobiographical Notes, ii. 56, GP.

so far as to analyse the problem in a memorandum of 1913. The Egyptian governing classes, he observed, were the most usual source of opposition to reform schemes proposed by the British advisers. Yet under ideal circumstances, with 'the influence and advice of the British government as expressed through the British Agent and the British Advisers...pushing on these reforms,' it was still likely that 'a very large measure of improvement would be attained.' However, British influence was now being opposed by a powerful third force in the Khedive, who, as a Turkish governor, had no real concern for the welfare of his Egyptian subjects. Moreover, government ministers were, in Cecil's view, 'terrified of His Highness, and most unwilling to incur his displeasure.' Consequently, the opposition of the Khedive could effectively block any measure

'which is not supported cordially by the governing classes of the community...This renders it extremely difficult, if not impossible, under present conditions to govern the country as it should be governed and retards and diminishes the reforms we should otherwise carry through.'¹

Kitchener and Cecil repudiated Gorst's vision of the Khedive as an important element in the collaborative mechanism. In fact it seems likely from Cecil's tirade against Abbas Hilmi that he was a party to Kitchener's plan to depose the Khedive and annex Egypt as part of a new Vice-Royalty of Egypt and the Sudan. Here was the first of a series of attempts which run through our period to iron out the anomalies of dual control by bringing Egypt under direct British rule. This attempt was no more successful than those which followed, but it presaged the declaration of the Protectorate in 1914 by extending British prerogatives in several areas. Kitchener's deposition scheme, which included abolishing Turkish suzerainty,

1. Cecil, memorandum, July 1913, Sir Edward Grey Papers, FO800/48. (GRP).

replacing the Caisse with an Advisory Council and abolishing the Capitulations, went considerably further than anything Cromer would ever have contemplated, and in July 1913 the former Proconsul warned Kitchener of the dangers of nationalist reaction against unjustified British intervention. ¹ Wilfred Blunt thought that no matter how much the British disliked the Khedive, he would be allowed to remain in consideration of the advantages of governing through a Muslim prince: 'it is not any scruple of morality that prevents annexation, only a calculation of interest.' ²

Nevertheless, both Kitchener and the Foreign Office remained alert to any opportunity of removing Abbas throughout the year preceding the war³ The Agency did succeed in reducing the influence of the Abdin Palace somewhat, by removing the Waqfs from Khedivial control to the hands of an Egyptian minister, and in vetoing the presence of the Khedive in the Council of Ministers.

Yet if, by these moves, Kitchener thought he was removing one source of Egyptian opposition to British influence, he was at the same time inadvertently opening the door to another. The revised Organic and Electoral Laws of 1913, which created a new Legislative Assembly for Egypt, held considerable implications for the survival of a system of administrative control based on British advice and Egyptian acquiescence. By giving the new body greater powers to question ministers, to initiate legislation and to veto increases in taxation, Kitchener thought he was enabling 'the better elements in Egypt to take a more practical interest in their own affairs.' ⁴

It was a move calculated to conciliate the moderate Umma

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1. Cromer to Kitchener, 30 July 1913, Kitchener Papers, PRO30/57/44.
 2. Blunt, Diaries, ii. 383.
 3. In July 1914 the Foreign Office was still hoping to oust the Khedive under the cloak of Capitulatory reform; FO minutes, 27 and 30 July 1914, FO371/1964/34345.
 4. Kitchener to Grey, 2 March 1913, FO371/1635/10780.

nationalists, who could meet the new Assembly's property qualifications, and as such, was a classic instance of an attempt to broaden Britain's collaborative base by drawing the representation of 'moderate', and therefore acceptable, Egyptians.

Heedless of the lessons of Gorst's encounter with the Legislative Assembly, Kitchener planned his constitution as a tactical move, with no regard for its effect on the position of the advisers. British officials themselves were soon aware that the existence of the Assembly undermined their authority and responsibility, while increasing that of their ministers.

'Its proceedings were conducted in Arabic; the Minister could address it, while his Adviser could not; with the result that the final decision on measures to be put forward rested more and more with the Minister.'¹

During the Assembly's first session, McIlwraith, the Judicial Adviser, had been disturbed to see the excessive deference displayed by ministers towards critical deputies:

'It is difficult to understand why an Egyptian Minister...enjoying the full support of the British Occupation, should adopt this deprecating and propitiary attitude towards a purely Advisory Council, with no power whatever to turn him out of office or even, ultimately, to reject his proposals.'

He therefore wondered

'...how far the new system...[was] really compatible with the existence of a foreign Occupation in the country and the diminished responsibility which it necessarily entails.'²

William Hayter, Legal Adviser to the Khedive, also foresaw the demise of advisory control under the new constitution, since the Minister 'who has to stand up to be shot at in Parliament cannot bow to the directions of the..adviser..who never appears in public.'³

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1. Hayter, Constitutional Developments, p.16.
 2. McIlwraith, Note on the First Session of the Legislative Assembly, 28 May 1914, Kitchener Papers, PRO30/57/46.
 3. Quoted by Amos to Headlam-Morley, 26 January 1927, FO371/12378/J219.

Storrs describes one classic instance of the way in which British plans could now be thwarted by the opposition of the governing classes. To finance his programme of technical education, Kitchener had hit upon the expedient of Death Duties. However,

'since no fresh taxation could be imposed without the consent of the Legislative Council, he summoned to the Agency some twenty members who were also large landowners. For nearly two hours...the Field Marshal explained (and I translated) the supreme and unique advantages of a tax which not one of those present would ever have to pay.'

The landowners, however, held firm in their opposition to any fresh financial imposition, and the Death Duties Bill 'was never introduced or indeed mentioned again...' ¹

The significance of these developments for Britain's administrative system in Egypt were only perceived by a few prescient senior British officials before the war. The majority, safe in some bureaucratic niche, continued on the usual daily round: the Ministry at 8, afternoon golf, the Turf Club by night. These were the years of increasing social and racial segregation, as the British clustered in their self-contained cantonment on Gazira island. Between British and Egyptians, 'exchanges of visits were now almost unknown and the hundred contacts and humanities that come from knowing people "at home"... were hopelessly excluded.' ² By the First World War, both the Turf and Gazira Clubs were barred to Egyptian members.

There were however, another group of officials who invariably displayed an acute sensitivity to the viability of Britain's position in Egypt. These were the Interior officials responsible for security, who, from about 1910 on, seem to have recognised that Anglo-Egyptian administration was confronting new dimensions of

1. Storrs, Orientalism, pp.136-7.
2. Ibid, pp.92-3.

local opposition, to which British officials would have to respond on a different level. In 1912, Russell, by now Assistant Commandant of Police in Alexandria, wrote home:

'plots, secret societies, seditious pamphlets, war contraband etc. keep one busy: there has never been so much work of this sort going on and consequently there is no really organised system in the Ministry for dealing with it...The consequence is a flood of rumours, reports and information which don't get properly cross-checked. They will have to organise a central bureau for it as soon as possible.' ¹

Russell does not seem to have been aware that in the aftermath of Butrus Ghali's assassination, Graham, the Adviser to the Interior, had already established a Special Political Office of the Cairo City Police for just such a purpose. A network of Egyptian informants reported on the activities of secret political societies direct to the Ma'mur Zapt, or head of political security. Yet although this office was financed out of the police budget, its existence, in premises at a distance from police headquarters, was kept a close secret from the Egyptian Government. It issued a daily bulletin to the Interior Adviser, the Agency and to Military Intelligence, as well as sending a doctored version to the Minister of Interior and the Palace. ² In June 1912 the combined efforts of the Special Political Office and Agency intelligence succeeded in foiling an assassination attempt on Kitchener as he arrived at Cairo station. ³ Activists like Shaikh 'Abd al-'Aziz Shawish were shadowed and kept away from the provinces,⁴ while in the Delta, pressure was brought to bear on the most ardent nationalists.

In due course, the fears of political insecurity abated, to judge from the Interior Adviser's periodic reports to the Agency.

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1. Russell to his father, 1 September 1912, Russell Papers.
 2. Russell to Keown-Boyd, 18 June 1925, FO141/474/1884.
 3. Harvey, Note on the Special Political Office, C.C.P., 25 October 1915, FO141/474/1884.
 4. Graham to Cheetham, 27 April 1911, FO371/1113/17006.

Graham returned from a tour of Lower Egypt to report that the country was quiet and friendly by comparison with the stormy months of 1910. ¹ Possibly Graham might not have been so sanguine had he realised that his Ma'mur Zapt was none other than Philipides, the Levantine later convicted on major charges of corruption.

Nevertheless, any cursory assessment of this brief Consulship would conclude - as most historians have - that, with the assistance of the British officials in the Egyptian Government, Kitchener fulfilled his instructions to reassert Britain's authority with the Egyptian Government, to deflect the surge of nationalist protest and to restore a state of comparative tranquility. It is only when we examine Britain's position in Egypt in terms of a mechanism of administrative control and from the usually-neglected perspective of the British official, that we realise the cost of this reassertion of authority to Britain's long-term capacity to retain Egyptian cooperation. This would become increasingly apparent as the onset of war imposed upon Egyptian loyalties an unprecedented strain.

1. Graham to Cheetham, 24 June 1911, FO371/1114/25753.

Chapter Four

Anglo-Egyptian Administration and the Crisis of War

a) August-December 1914

Kitchener was in England, receiving an earldom, when war was declared. On the Agency's prompting, Husain Rushdi Pasha, the Egyptian Prime Minister of the hour, issued a declaration recognising the special position of Britain at war in Egypt, and forbidding all dealings between Egypt and Britain's enemies. However, as September and October drew on, there grew an awareness of the implications of war if Turkey were to come into the conflict. Under such circumstances, Britain would find herself occupying territory which technically belonged to an enemy, and with a subject population which she feared still owed considerable allegiance to that enemy, in the person of the Sultan and Caliph. Such a situation threatened to impose the very strain on Britain's Muslim collaborators which it was imperative to avoid. By early September, Graham, the Adviser to the Interior, was worried that a Turkish attack on Egypt might not only cause religious excitement, but would 'impose a severe strain on the loyalty of Moslem officials, especially in a semi-military force like the police.'¹ This was echoed by the Agency, which feared that unless a Protectorate was declared, supposedly severing Egypt's ties to Turkey, a situation would be created

'in which we could not guarantee either financial stability or internal order. If at that moment the fiction of Turkish suzerainty were maintained, Egyptians and especially

1. Graham, Note on the General Situation, 6 September 1914, FO371/1970/36711.

Egyptian officials would be placed in a position of divided allegiance which must seriously affect their cooperation with us.' ¹

It now became the primary objective of Egypt's foreign governors to maintain internal control by strengthening the position of their clients in Egypt. The task of sensing where and how this should be done lay principally with the British officials, who, particularly in the Ministry of Interior, were in a position to act as the Agency's listening posts in government departments and in the provinces.

With the outbreak of war, the usual autumn flow of gold into Egypt had ceased, threatening the purchase of the cotton crop, and thereby causing considerable panic. Cotton prices dropped substantially. Steps had already been taken to finance cotton purchases using Egyptian banknotes, but in early September both Graham and Cecil warned that the Egyptian Government might need to step in further to dispose of the crop, or face adverse security and financial implications. ²It would mean the unusual step, in terms of British rule in Egypt, of a guaranteed loan from the home government. If the fellaheen could be helped to sell at least part of their crop, Graham estimated that the country would remain quiet in the event of Turkish attack; otherwise the blame would be laid on the authorities, with only one division of territorials in the country to maintain order.

The two senior British advisers also counselled the Agency to think in terms of declaring a Protectorate if Turkey came into the war. Without a more definite connection between Egypt and Britain, it was thought unlikely that Rushdi or any other Egyptian would remain in Cabinet office. Britain would then, 'at a moment of

1. Telegram Cheetham to Grey, 10 September 1914, FO371/1970/48237.
2. Graham, note, 6 September 1914, FO371/1970/36711;
Cecil, memorandum, 7 September 1914, FO371/1969/45836.

great difficulty, have to take over the administration of the country under martial law and without the assistance of the principal Egyptian authorities.' ¹

Thus a series of measures were taken over the following weeks to reduce the domestic pressures on the 'loyal' Egyptian ministry. It was clear, for instance, that Rushdi dreaded the cross-questioning of the Legislative Assembly which was to meet in November. His anxiety to be spared the ordeal met with sympathy from the Agency, and the session was accordingly adjourned for two months. The declaration of martial law in the interim made free parliamentary debate inappropriate, and the Legislative Assembly was never reconvened. In its absence, Rushdi and his council, by way of reward for their cooperation, were permitted to exercise wider authority than for some time past. British control of the press further sheltered them from nationalist attack: newspaper editors had been warned by Graham against provocative behaviour since August, and between them, the British-run Press Bureau and Post Office aimed to suppress harmful news from home or abroad.² Overall, Elgood felt that war restored to the Egyptian ministers the authority they had acquired under Gorst:

'There was no more criticism of their acts. The legislative assembly was indefinitely adjourned, the High Commissioner and the advisers were occupied in carrying out the wishes of military authority. The press was carefully watched and news that reflected on the conduct of the Egyptian administration was summarily expunged.'³

Finally, the Egyptian ministry was no longer harassed by a censorious Khedive. The Agency had constantly been aware that the government's cooperation became hesitating as soon as it sensed

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1. Telegram, Cheetham to Grey, 10 September 1914, FO371/1970/48237.
 2. Kitchener to Cheetham, 5 August 1914, FO371/1968/37034; Cheetham to Grey, 30 November 1914, FO371/1973/81561.
 3. Elgood, Transit, p.228.

opposition from Abbas Hilmi. Therefore it took advantage of the Khedive's absence in Constantinople to implement its premeditated deposition plan, offering the throne instead to the more amenable Husain Kamil. The new Sultan, it was clear from the outset, had been selected as a prime local intermediary, and was accorded corresponding support from the British authorities. For example, as his initial reception from his subjects was uncertain, the accession parade was discreetly stage-managed by the Ministry of Interior.

Graham

'distributed most of the police in plain clothes among the crowd to prevent any undesirable remonstrations and also to stimulate popular enthusiasm by judicious shouts of "Yaisha Sultan Masri!"' ¹

Such were the advantages of having British officials at key points in the security machinery to bolster imperial objectives at moments like this.

The efficacy of this system of monitoring Egyptian affairs depended, however, on a mere handful of top British officials, and demanded a high standard of teamwork between them, and with the Agency. Yet under Kitchener, as we have seen, communication between diplomats and administrators in Cairo had come to rely to a considerable extent on the mediation of one individual, Lord Edward Cecil. Indeed, in April 1914, the Oriental Secretary had warned the Foreign Office of the existence of a secret arrangement by which, in Kitchener's absence, the management of Egyptian affairs was, in an emergency, to devolve upon Cecil.²

Cecil's papers certainly contain a sealed Foreign Office commission appointing him Deputy Agent in an emergency,³ but he

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1. Graham to Kitchener, 20 December 1914, Kitchener Papers, PRO30/57/45.
 2. Storrs, memorandum, 8 April 1914, Box II/3, SP.
 3. Cecil-Maxse MSS, U1599/013.

apparently never received the instructions to open it, and instead responsibility at the Agency devolved upon the Counsellor, Milne Cheetham. McIlwraith, the Judicial Adviser, resented the fact that Egypt's fortunes at the outbreak of war rested with a Foreign Office locum tenens, to the exclusion of the more experienced British officials. 1

This was all the more worrying in view of the prevailing lack of confidence in Cecil, the officials' habitual spokesman. Apprehension was growing in the service concerning the measures the Financial Adviser was employing to cope with Egypt's economic crisis. Storrs was the first to break professional silence and indicate to the Foreign Office the misgivings of many officials. On 20 October he told Tyrell:

'in the first place taxes are being collected in this time of stress with unexampled severity. It is rumoured, I believe with truth, that the Curbash has been applied and that women have been forced to part with their personal ornaments.' 2

It was Graham at the Interior who was most acutely aware of the implications for Britain's precarious position in Egypt, with the imminence of war against Turkey, should the rural population be unduly pressed for taxes. He too began to bombard the Foreign Office with alarming reports of the deterioration since the October land tax collection had begun. He could hardly believe that

'anything could have excited such animosity against us and have changed the existing feeling of sympathy into distrust and dislike in so short a time...a fortnight ago all the cultivators were for us, but the revulsion is extraordinary...' 3

This revulsion apparently stemmed from a resentment that the

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1. McIlwraith, 'The British Protectorate of Egypt', Fortnightly Review, 113 (March 1920), p.381.
 2. Storrs to Tyrell, 20 October 1914, Private and Confidential, GRP.
 3. Graham to Tyrell, 25 October 1914, *ibid.*

government had done nothing to assist in purchasing the cotton crop. The only solution, Graham was convinced, was to advance money on the crop at low interest rates, and to this end he begged Foreign Office backing in eliciting the Treasury guarantee. At the same time, he endeavoured to alert the Egyptian Finance Ministry to 'the danger we were running in squeezing for taxation without some corresponding effort to assist the fellaheen,' and urged that 'some compromise should be found between sound finance and political suicide.' ¹ Moreover, in company with the other advisers, Graham opposed Cecil's unilateral action in cutting the pay of officials by a third - a measure which, according to Storrs, sealed the 'complete lack of confidence' of British officialdom in the Financial Adviser. ²

However, Cecil, in mourning for the loss of his son in action, on top of a broken marriage, proved virtually unapproachable: 'he poohpoohs the whole agitation and will not realise its serious nature at such a moment.'³ The danger was that press criticism of the Ministry of Finance would dispirit Rushdi's ministry, to whom Cecil had given no explanations of his policy. Rushdi was talking of resignation if nothing was done about the cotton crop, and Graham had 'much difficulty in calming him...he is behaving so loyally that it would be a calamity to lose him.' ⁴

It was during these weeks before martial law was declared in November that Britain's position in Egypt was felt to be highly vulnerable. Graham conveys the tenseness of the moment:

'leading the life one does of being incessantly harried and of receiving all day reports of plots, spies, explosives, internal sedition and the imminence of external aggression

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1. Graham to Tyrell, 25 October 1914, GRP.
 2. Storrs to Tyrell, 20 October 1914, *ibid*.
 3. Graham to Kitchener, 24 October 1914, Kitchener Papers, PRO30/57/45.
 4. *Ibid*.

one is liable to lose one's sense of perspective. I hope I have not.' ¹

How valid these insecurities were is hard to tell. Certainly without the cover of martial law, Britain's control over internal security was not such as to give leverage over the German and Turkish agitators who may have been at work in the provinces. The Interior now had some 'hundreds of men marked down for arrest at the first signal of war' but as yet could 'get nothing against them.' ² The Interior regarded the arrest of a German spy in early November as confirmation that the agents of Constantinople were at work, playing on Egyptian resentments concerning the land tax and cotton crop.³

By mid-November, however, even though Turkey had now come into the war, the crisis was felt to have passed its worst. This was largely the result of three deviations from the norms of British management in Egypt. Firstly, as the direct result of the petitions received in the Foreign Office from Cairo, Kitchener instructed Cecil to relax the tax collection, even at the risk of future deficits, in order to make British administration 'as popular as possible.' ⁴ Half the November tax installment was accordingly postponed until December and January. Secondly, by late October, both the Foreign Office and the Ministry of Finance came to the conclusion that some scheme for cotton purchase on Britain's behalf must be implemented, although again this contravened the rules of sound finance. ⁵

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1. Graham to Tyrell, 25 October 1914, GRP.
 2. Ibid.
 3. Graham to Cheetham, 2 November 1914, FO371/1972/53455.
 4. Draft telegram, Kitchener to Cecil, 3 November 1914, GRP.
Note: Kitchener, now Minister of War in Britain, remained in touch with Egyptian affairs.
 5. Telegram Grey to Cheetham, 23 October 1914, FO371/1969/45836; Cecil, note, 26 October 1914, FO371/1969/45836.

Most effective of all, on November 2 martial law was imposed. Three days prior to its proclamation, with the authority of the General Officer Commanding (G.O.C.), Graham had instructed the provincial authorities to arrest several hundred suspected agitators. Of these, some were released with a warning, some were put under house arrest, while most were sent to the Citadel. The deportation of 49 Turks and 16 Egyptians followed, while the khedivial princes were also 'invited to leave.' All residents of enemy nationality had meanwhile been registered, removed from government service or deported. Five hundred Beduin shaikhs were summoned to Cairo to be warned against assisting the Sanusi or Turkish forces, some being required to swear loyalty on the Qur'an. Graham had the nationalist leaders summoned for a similar lecture, telling them to preach calm or face deportation. Finally, the 'ulama' had issued ordinances, urging the population to abstain from politics. ¹

Rushdi's ministry survived the imposition of martial law, and the Agency was confident that the proclamation of British responsibility for the war had been favourably received. All in all, there was a feeling that Britain had succeeded in strengthening her hand through the outbreak of war, while retaining her Egyptian supporters more or less intact. Graham felt that he could now inform the Foreign Office:

'everyone is with us and working for us; nothing could be better than the support we have had from the Ministers and officials and I have even the extreme nationalists under control..' ²

It was in the context of these improved circumstances that both officials and diplomats in Cairo opposed the desire of the Foreign Office to annex Egypt. While Maxwell and Cecil were at first

1. Graham, note, 27 December 1914, FO371/2355/4307.
2. Graham to Tyrell, 6 December 1914, GRP.

inclined towards annexation, they came to agree with Brunyate and Graham, that a Protectorate would be more in Britain's interest. ¹ Cheetham's main fear was the unsettling effect which annexation would have on Britain's local clients. In such an event he anticipated the

'resignation of Ministers and the necessity for British officials to take over Departments under the G.O.C. This [could] be carried into effect and no actual disturbances need be feared...but the support of the religious party would probably be lost....Drastic precautionary measures would have to be adopted, as nationalists and other extremists will change into open hostility. But the most serious difficulty of governing without Ministers [would] be the severance of the connexion with the religious elements...' ²

Here, re-articulated, were the orthodox arguments against direct British rule in Egypt. Cheetham emphasised that the only alternative to governing through a native administration would be a massive increase in British officials, and the formation of a British Ministry of Affairs. This was regarded as not only unrealistic at a time of acute manpower shortage, but likely to inflame Muslim feeling, that constant dread of the British authorities. Graham, strangely enough, seems to have had no qualms that Egypt could be run by Englishmen if necessary.³ Yet like Cheetham, he saw that this would imply an altogether different level of responsibility for Egyptian administration. Admittedly, the existing system of governing through native hands lacked efficiency, but, as Cheetham observed,

'it is understood here and provides an excuse for administrative shortcomings which would disappear with annexation. Annexation must involve a more direct responsibility for Great Britain for a higher standard of government and for stricter protection of foreign interests.' ⁴

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1. Graham to Tyrell, 20 November 1914, GRP.
 2. Telegram Cheetham to Grey, 18 November 1914, FO371/1970/36711.
 3. Graham to Tyrell, 6 December 1914, GRP.
 4. Telegram Cheetham to Grey, 18 November 1914, FO371/1970/36711.

In other words, with a Protectorate, Britain's local supporters would conveniently shoulder the burdens of government and the odium of unpopular wartime measures. This assumption that Britain could somehow remain disassociated from the actions of its client government is curious. Equally it is unclear whether British officials thought that the imposition of a Protectorate would contribute anything to the realities of British control in Egypt, considering that martial law was already in force. In fact, the advantages of the Protectorate, apart from giving Britain jurisdiction over foreign affairs, were hard to see. Lloyd later complained that this continued indirect rule prevented

'the British intervention in internal administration which was necessary for the welfare of the masses, while at the same time ensuring that the responsibility for their sufferings would be laid at [our] door just as fully as if the government had been entirely in our hands.'¹

The real significance of the Protectorate lay, however, in the hopes it raised amongst Egyptians that 'a clearer definition of Great Britain's position in the country [would] accelerate progress towards self-government' once the war was over.² These hopes must help to explain the Egyptians' apparent acquiescence in the situation, an appearance which comforted the British authorities. However, Elgood perceived that this acquiescence belied the Egyptians' total indifference to the war, except as a means of defeating the British. Unfortunately, 'the more virile Englishman mistook the sentiment, and upon the back of uncomplaining Egypt he piled heavier burdens...' ³

Despite a tendency to over-optimism, British administrators were nevertheless those most sensitively attuned to the temper of Egypt,

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1. Lloyd, Egypt Since Cromer, i. 247.
 2. Declaration of the Protectorate, 18 December 1914, FO371/1971/78571.
 3. Elgood, Egypt and the Army (Oxford, 1924), p.2.

and most aware of the limitations involved in a system of dual control. Above all, they had some experience of how much pressure Egyptian intermediaries and the population at large could be expected to withstand. In the early months of war, as we have seen, they succeeded, despite Cecil's idiosyncracies, in maintaining a certain equilibrium in Egypt, by advocating realistic policies which they conceived to be in the best interests of both countries. Through the removal of the Legislative Assembly's opposition on the one hand, and a renewed regard for the vulnerability of Egyptian go-betweens on the other, advisory control was back on firmer foundations than for some years previous.

However these were the months before the influx to Cairo of the military; and if the primary objective of British officialdom was the administration of an imperial possession, the aim of the military was the winning of the war. By 1915 it was soon apparent that these two objectives were in conflict; and as the army began to dominate Egypt's civil authorities, so the priority of victory emerged supreme. These months saw important changes in the system of Egyptian administration, in the course of which British officials lost much of their former role, and with it, eventually much of their capacity to shore up the non-European foundations of British rule.

b) 1915-1916

In effect, the declaration of martial law in November 1914 had made the army the chief executive and legislative authority in Egypt, thus changing the status of the Egyptian Government at a stroke. Although Maxwell's proclamation had promised that Britain would take sole responsibility for the conduct of the war, without calling on Egyptian participation, it was obvious from the first

that the active cooperation of the Egyptian Government with the military authorities would be required. Indeed, departments were instructed to render services requested by the military authorities 'without demur or delay.'¹ Accordingly, whole departments were put at the disposal of the military, whether the railways for the transport of troops, Public Works for the construction of roads, or the Justice Ministry to provide personnel for military courts. The Interior Ministry, Graham reported, was forced to neglect public security work to meet the vastly increased demands of wartime: the registration of thousands of enemy aliens and the care of numerous refugees; the censorship of letters, telegrams and the press; the recruitment of 12,000 camel drivers and the purchase of 20,000 camels for the army; the policing of numerous military camps, and of the western frontier of cultivation from Alexandria to Minia.²

The need for strict economic management brought about a flush of regulatory boards - the War Trade and Licensing Office, the Local Resources Board and the Cotton Seed Board, to name a few. These semi-independent authorities were staffed largely by British officials and members of the commercial community. The Permanent Arbitration Board, for example, set compensation rates for military requisitions, and included Langley (Agriculture), Watson (Public Works) and Anthony (State Domains) amongst its members³. The administration of military proclamations concerning enemy trade fell to Cecil.

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1. Quoted by Cecil, to MacMahon, 16 May 1916, FO371/2672/51083.
 2. Graham to Kitchener, 5 May 1916, Kitchener Papers, PRO30/57/48; Graham, minute, 19 March 1917, FO371/2926/24699. However, the life of Interior inspectors had not changed unduly at this stage in the war from the old pattern of touring the districts; see Mervyn Herbert diary, May 1915, St Antony's College, describing leave in Mansura province. (Herbert diary).
 3. McBarnet, Report on the Permanent Arbitration Board, 1923, FO371/8992/E11712.

For activities such as these, which involved the Egyptian Government in active retaliation against the Turks, it was essential to employ British officials; to expect Egyptian assistance would be to push collaboration beyond its limits. The financing of war-time administration was another area in which ministers would face criticism that they were giving Britain active assistance against the Turks. In theory all expenditure required the approval of the Council of Ministers. There was now the further complication of apportioning liability for military expenditure between the Egyptian and British governments. However a device for circumventing both embarrassment and delay was found in the idea of a Suspense Account, to which the cost of all military expenditure would automatically be debited. The Egyptian Government would take initial responsibility for military expenses, leaving the question of liability to future adjudication. Lindsay, when Acting Financial Adviser, told Wingate that no item on the Suspense Account had ever been formally submitted to the Council of Ministers, a system which had 'received the tacit approval of the Ministers and [had] certainly spared them a good deal of embarrassment.'¹ Yet Finance officials were equally aware that this put Egypt in the position of having a dominant partner able at any moment to dip into her pocket; they saw their role, therefore, in terms of protecting the weaker party from exploitation, by urging restraint on their military colleagues.

From the beginning there were signs of strain in this relationship between the British officials and their compatriots in the military command. The civil authorities were anxious lest the drafting of military proclamations under martial law should fall exclusively into inexperienced army hands. In Wingate's view, it was

1. Lindsay to Wingate, 25 November 1917, FO371/3199/48841.

thanks only to the supervision exercised by Brunyate, Legal Adviser to the Palace and Residency, that the Mixed Courts were prepared to accept the proclamations as having the force of properly-made law. 1

Nevertheless, as long as the British military presence remained relatively small, as was so until later in 1915, and as long as it remained Cairo-based and under the command of an old Egyptian hand like Maxwell, there was at least a likelihood of communication between civil and military authorities, and a chance that military requirements could be harmonised with the interests of the population.

In fact, during 1915, relatively sparing use was made of martial law where the Egyptian population was concerned, with the exception of military control in frontier desert areas. Otherwise freedom of movement remained, except in the Canal Zone, and voluntary enlistment continued to supply the Egyptian Labour Corps with sufficient recruits for the Dardanelles theatre. By far the most important use made of martial law at this point was as a means of circumventing the Capitulations, in order to regulate the European community. Only martial law, by superceding the Consular Courts, made it possible to control firms trading with the enemy or to take over enemy property. Moreover, it was the European population who were regarded by the military as the major security risk. John de Vere Loder was working for military intelligence in Port Said when he wrote home in 1916:

'Interests and affections are so frightfully mixed that it is most difficult to get the allied portions of the population to cooperate with us. The trouble lies entirely with the Europeans; there is no bother at all with the natives.' 2

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1. Wingate to Balfour, 22 February 1917, FO371/2930/49143.
 2. Loder to his mother, 11 December 1916, John de Vere Loder Papers, St Antony's College.

Serious offences against martial law were tried by military courts summoned by the Commander-in-Chief, while local subordinates could dispense with legal formalities and deal with numerous petty cases at summary courts. Otherwise where martial law was used at this time, it was to permit the civil government to take measures considered in the interests of the Egyptian population, but impracticable under ordinary circumstances. It made possible controls on hashish smuggling and the sale of adulterated liquor; for the first time, also, the ghafir tax could be levied upon the European community.

In other words, martial law greatly strengthened the hands of the civil British officials. Wide terms of commission were granted first to Graham and then to his successor at the Interior, Haines. Similar grants of commission followed to Cecil and later, Brunyate, giving the Financial Adviser full powers to act for the G.O.C. in all matters usually handled by the Finance Ministry or the Council of Ministers. This effectively by-passed much wearisome haggling between officials and their ministers. ¹

Yet in a sense, this increase in powers served to deepen the conflict of loyalties previously implicit in the role of the British official. His position, while nominally that of an Egyptian Government servant, had always implied a tacit loyalty to British interests, to a greater or lesser degree. Now in wartime, his loyalties as a civil servant might require him to defend Egyptian interests against the military authorities, from whom he derived his increased powers. This conflict need not arise so long as the British military remained sensitive to Britain's reliance on local supporters for its position in Egypt. So officials had no qualms,

1. Brunyate, Note on Egypt during the War, n.d, MP449, p.74.

for instance, about using a Military Tribunal rather than a Native Court to deal with members of a conspiracy to assassinate the Sultan in 1915. ¹

By early 1916, however, with the evacuation from Gallipoli of the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force, the military presence in Egypt burgeoned to include 13 divisions of troops, no fewer than 117 British generals, ² and three General Headquarters (G.H.Q.): G.H.Q, Mediterranean Expeditionary Force (M.E.F.); G.H.Q, Egyptian Expeditionary Force (E.E.F.), under Murray; and G.H.Q, British Troops in Egypt, under Maxwell. Loder complained of bickering generals, conflicting orders, and a general decline in efficiency: 'there are so many departments, each of necessity independent of the other that absolute chaos prevails.' ³

The size and complexity of the new G.H.Q, E.E.F. bewildered the Egyptian Government; moreover, its 'sublime disregard of money' alarmed British officials, 'trained to regard finance as the mainspring of public life.' ⁴ Nor was the military's scarcely-concealed scorn for the civil servants' laissez faire approach to the business of winning the war conducive to civil-military cooperation. Loder's letters convey a sense of almost overt warfare between the civil and military authorities in Port Said, summed up by his own opinion of British officialdom: 'you never saw such people in your life...they don't seem to realise there is a war on and that the comfort of private individuals is no consideration at all.' ⁵

This deterioration in relations between civil and military authorities in 1916 came at just the time when in preparation for the invasion of Palestine, there occurred a significant increase

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1. Graham to MacMahon, 31 May 1916, FO371/2666/119819/106284.
 2. Loder to his mother, 26 March 1916, Loder Papers.
 3. Loder to his father, 30 January 1916, *ibid.*
 4. Elgood, Egypt and the Army, p.233.
 5. Loder to his mother, 31 January 1917, Loder Papers.

in the military demands being made upon Egypt, and a greater tendency to employ martial law as an instrument of war. To some extent the civil branch had also become mesmerised by martial law as a panacea for many Egyptian ills, in preparation for the hoped-for abolition of the Capitulations. MacMahon, who had become High Commissioner in 1914, found

'the number and complexity of problems...which Egypt as the Clapham Junction of the trade and traffic of half the globe can daily produce...[is] almost beyond belief.'

Fortunately, as he confided to Grey, there was martial law:

'we find in it in some way or other a solution of most problems and we will be sorry when peace comes and takes it away from us!'¹

There was much in MacMahon's own approach which reinforced the growing dominance of the military in Egypt's internal administration. Besides his laziness, shyness and incapacity for French or technical problems, Grafftey-Smith thought MacMahon 'never concealed a basic ignorance of things Egyptian and a real lack of interest in them,'² while Mervyn Herbert in Chancery felt the High Commissioner was increasingly losing touch with the running of things in Egypt in favour of the army:

'by never facing...his responsibilities, by always saying that any question which the military authorities touch on (however wrongly or ignorantly) is a military question...he has succeeded...in encouraging the military authorities to interfere wrongly in questions which did not concern them and of which they were entirely ignorant.'³

Thus any misgivings felt by British officials or experienced diplomats like Cheetham as to the wisdom of military exactions were unlikely to find a spokesman in the High Commissioner. MacMahon's main preoccupation concerned Hijaz affairs and the Arab Bureau; ignorant of French, he rarely met the Sultan or ministers,

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1. MacMahon to Grey, 26 August 1915, GRP.
 2. Grafftey-Smith, Bright Levant, p.20.
 3. Herbert diary, 23 September 1916.

preferring to leave matters of domestic concern to senior advisers like Cecil and Brunyate.

With a High Commissioner of diffident character, the centrality of the Financial Adviser increased still further. Herbert thought Cecil was creating so strong a position for himself that he was virtually a second High Commissioner, 'running the whole Government behind MacMahon as a screen.'¹ Even making allowances for an endemic hostility between diplomats like Herbert and the British officials, there is no doubt that Cecil had become a kind of Egyptian prime minister thanks to wide discretionary powers and unassailable family connections. When in 1916, for example, Egypt's coal reserves were hit by a rise in British prices, Lord Edward took it upon himself to purchase some 250,000 tons during a private trip to England.² Fortunately for Cecil, as coal prices doubled in the next two years, this gamble paid off rather better than some of his Ministry's other speculations in commodities at this time.

Cecil's consuming ambition - as he confessed to his father - to be at the head of Egyptian affairs,³ brought him into continued conflict with his senior British colleagues, most notably Graham at the Interior. Graham also had aspirations to the High Commissionership,⁴ but unlike Cecil, belonged to the Gorst school in his attitude to Egyptians. Cecil, who attached far less weight to Egyptian susceptibilities, chafed at what he regarded as Graham's excessive deference to Britain's local supporters:

'[Graham's] one idea was compromise, and the result was a constant struggle which very nearly ended in his giving way to the Egyptians on more than one point, and made my position intolerable.'⁵

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1. Herbert diary, 24 April 1917.
 2. Cecil, Note on the Budget, 1918, Cecil-Maxse MSS, U1599/735/1.
 3. Rose, The Later Cecils, p.225.
 4. Wingate, memorandum, 1919, WP 162/4.
 5. N.d, quoted in Rose, op.cit, p.223.

By mid-1916 this confrontation had come to a head: a concerted manoeuvre by Cecil and Kitchener forced Graham to accept premature retirement, and in October he moved instead to the Foreign Office as Assistant Under-Secretary.¹

Graham's removal from the key post of Interior Adviser had considerable implications for the direction of British rule. Without consulting the Foreign Office, Cecil appointed as the new Adviser James Haines, a Finance official with no experience of Interior administration. Meanwhile McIlwraith had also been encouraged to take early retirement, in order to give the post of Judicial Adviser to Brunyate, another member of the Cecil clique.² So when Wingate replaced MacMahon in 1917, he wrote of being 'simply astonished at the extent to which Cecil has established a sort of ascendancy over the other Advisers...'³

As we know, a respect for the vulnerability of any cooperative Egyptian government lay at the nub of Britain's mechanism of indirect rule. Since the early months of the war, when this respect had been re-affirmed by the British authorities, a combination of trends had been steadily reducing the chances of preserving this essential deference. We have seen how martial law now allowed British officials to over-rule Egyptian ministers totally, and how officials were themselves subject to a military authority which set little premium by Egyptian sensibilities. We know that the chances of protecting the Egyptian ministry were being further reduced by the growing influence of an annexationist lobby of advisers.

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1. Kitchener to Cecil, 19 August 1916, Cecil-Maxse MSS, U1599/C728/13.
 2. Marshall, Enigma, p.81.
 3. Wingate to Hardinge, 31 January 1917, MP445, p.43.

Enhancing the influence of this clique was the effect of the turnover of British personnel since 1914. On the outbreak of hostilities, the requests of many British officials to be allowed home for military service had initially been refused. The military vulnerability of Egypt in view of imminent Turkish attack made it imperative to retain all potential British manpower. In due course, however, those British officials who wished to enlist at home were granted unpaid leave for the duration, with their employment and pension rights guaranteed. In the course of the war, as Table Five shows, over 750 European employees of the Egyptian Government were released for war service.

By 1918 the Egyptian Government had lost about 600 of its former European employees, of whom over half were British. It was the loss of these British officials which had the greater impact, as many concerned were in senior posts, while those of other nationality were mostly low-ranking staff of the railways and Mixed Courts. The Ministry of Finance, for example, lost twelve of its senior British personnel to the Frontier Districts Administration, the Arab Bureau and other wartime establishments; of those that remained, six were drafted onto Brunyate's Capitulations Commission, and a further five were ordered home on sick leave due to pressure of work. ¹

There were now too few British officials to survey the entire administration. Egyptian ministers, consequently, were left to manage significant areas of government alone, and often to deal with issues considerably more complex than those arising in peacetime. One was the problem of maintaining adequate cereal supplies for the population at a time of reduced wheat imports.

1. Note on British Officials in the Ministry of Finance, 1918, FO371/3202/113806.

Table Five

Losses of European employees of Egyptian Government, 1914-1918

<u>Ministry</u>	<u>Released for military or special war service</u>	<u>Returned to duty</u>	<u>Net loss</u>
Finance	155	34	121
Interior	92	23	69
Education	79	25	54
Public Works	157	42	115
Agriculture	21	2	19
Foreign Affairs	2	-	2
Justice	127	25	102
Railways/Telegraphs	121	11	110
Total	754	162	592

Source: Enclosure, Cheetham to Wingate, 7 June 1918, MP444, ii.209.

Table Six

Egyptian Cotton Prices, 1914-1919

(Average in dollars per kantar)

1914	12.01
1915	19.28
1916	37.81
1917	38.52
1918	37.20
1919	78.85*

* Figures for the period 1 September to 30 January only.
The average price in 1919-20 reached \$87.1.

Table Seven

Area under Cotton in Egypt, 1914-1919

Feddans

1914	1,755,270
1915	1,186,004
1916	1,655,512
1917	1,677,310
1918	1,315,572
1919	1,573,662

Source: PP 1920, li (957), p.34. (Report 1914-1919).

A logical solution implied restrictions on Egypt's cotton acreages, particularly since cotton yields were declining. The first months of the war did bring some such controls, but as cotton prices recovered thereafter, so grew the demands from cultivators to be allowed unlimited acreages. (See Tables Six and Seven).

Under these conflicting pressures, the Egyptian ministry responded with an erratic series of measures. 1915 brought restrictions on cotton acreages and yet at the same time the continued export of cereals. A year later pressure from cultivators induced the government to withdraw cotton controls and to ignore food conservation, until a poor maize crop in the autumn again led to a ban on cereal export. British observers were the first to criticise the Ministry's lack of prescience, and subservience to the big landowner lobby,¹ but the reality was that Britain made no attempt to influence the Council of Ministers otherwise. In fact Britain was severely circumscribed by its dependence, on the one hand, on its Egyptian Government auxiliaries, implying as this did the inevitable priority of cultivating over consuming interests, and its desire, on the other, for reliable supplies of raw cotton for home textile production. It was the belief of His Majesty's Government that Egypt ought to be able both to feed herself and to supply Lancashire with cotton. With the Egyptian Government on the one side and London on the other, British officials were in little position to safeguard food supplies for the Egyptian population, and by 1917 the urban and rural masses were experiencing severe food shortages.²

This episode indicated that wartime circumstances were impeding British officials in their function as the listening posts

1. See Lloyd, Egypt Since Cromer, i. 243-4.

2. See Elgood, Egypt and the Army, pp.209-13 and Transit, p.227.

of British rule. The priority of the war effort discouraged loyal officials from defending Egyptian interests as they once had; and anyway, the administration was so depleted and taken up with war work in Cairo offices that its sensitivity to the murmurings of Egyptian feeling in the provinces was muted. Those officials still with eyes to see no longer had reliable channels of communication to the political and military policy-makers via independent-minded advisers or a conscientious High Commissioner. This proved disastrous as the war moved into the offensive phase of the Palestine campaign.

c) 1917 - The Armistice

As Allenby's Egyptian Expeditionary Force thrust into Palestine towards the capture of Jerusalem in December 1917, so the wartime position of Britain in Egypt was perceptibly weakened. The transfer of military operations from Sinai to Palestine involved a lengthening of supply lines which demanded a new dimension of support and transport services. In May 1917, the G.O.C. suggested to the War Office and the new High Commissioner, Wingate, that Egyptian conscription be introduced to supply the 100,000 Egyptian labourers he required, since the existing voluntary recruitment was no longer producing anything like adequate numbers.¹ In London this concept struck chords of approval, since both War Office and Foreign Office considered that the assistance being contributed by Egypt to the war effort was, in Balfour's words, 'by no means commensurate with the great advantages and prosperity she enjoys, owing to British efforts and sacrifices.'² There had, for instance, been

1. Telegram Murray to War Office, and Murray to Wingate, 24 May 1917, FO371/2932/110832.
2. Telegram Balfour to Wingate, 5 July 1917, MP444, i. 227.

complaints during 1916 that the army was not receiving the financial subsidies from the Egyptian Government, in terms of reduced tariffs, which it expected. ¹ Balfour was now prepared to revoke Britain's proclamation of 1914 which guaranteed Egypt's non-involvement in the war.

Senior British officials and the Residency were adamant, however, that to withdraw the proclamation would open the client Egyptian ministry to intolerable attack. Nor did Wingate see any possibility of conscription unless the Egyptian ministers themselves suggested that the proclamation should be cancelled. When Rushdi declined such a step, Wingate agreed with him that Egyptian loyalty to the Protectorate was not robust enough to withstand such a breach of faith. Britain could not

'risk the loss of confidence which any such feeling would engender against us. However much we may pride ourselves on having regenerated Egypt, we must not blind ourselves to the fact that we are not popular...'²

The committee of officials which advised on the question of manpower, and which included Lindsay, Haines and Brunyate, was nervous of the effect of compulsory labour on the population, when voluntary recruitment was already so unpopular. Conscription was likely to cause 'discontent of a type which would seriously complicate the difficulties of those responsible politically for the good order of the country.'³ Wingate reiterated to the Foreign Office the grave risks envisaged by the officials: that discontent would erupt into internal disorders, necessitating a considerable increase in the local garrison. ⁴

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1. Cecil to MacMahon, 16 May 1916, FO371/2672/51083.
 2. Wingate to Graham, 26 August 1917, FO371/2928/179039.
 3. Manpower Committee to Wingate, 27 May 1917, FO371/2932/110832.
 4. Telegram Wingate to Balfour, 20 August 1917, *ibid.*

It was the advisory committee of officials which proposed that, as an alternative to conscription, the Egyptian ministers, Sultan and notables should promote a campaign for voluntary enlistment. Recruitment would henceforth be removed from military control and placed under an Egyptian Government Recruiting Department. On 21 October, therefore, the Interior Ministry issued ma'murs and 'umdas with instructions to use 'all their moral influence' in encouraging volunteers to the Egyptian Labour Corps and the Camel Transport Corps.¹

At first sight it appears that the British authorities succeeded in their tightrope task of manning the Labour and Transport Corps without losing the support of the local ministry. Only closer scrutiny suggests that in fact the cooperation of indigenous authorities could be as much a liability as an asset, and that 'collaboration' could easily degenerate into dependence on a machinery of government which rested upon very different methods and ethics to those of the 'ruling' power. The decision to rely on the mediation of the Interior authorities, as is well known, opened what was intended to be a voluntary system of recruitment to the abuses of forced labour common in Egypt before the Occupation. For the fellaheen of Lower Egypt,² by instinct agriculturalists rather than navvies, the prospect of months³ of hard labour far from home, could be used as an effective means of blackmail or revenge. The evidence later submitted to the Milner Mission contained many instances of malpractice by Egyptian officials in recruitment, of which the following from the Alexandria district is typical:

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1. R. Wingate, Wingate of the Sudan (London, 1955), p.216.
 2. At this point the Camel Transport Corps recruited in Upper Egypt, the Egyptian Labour Corps (E.L.C) in Lower Egypt; Hicks Paul, memorandum, n.d, Milner Mission Papers, FO848/4.
 3. During 1917 the period of service with the E.L.C. was increased from 3 to 6 months; *ibid*.

'recruiting, although nominally voluntary, was in reality compulsory. Exemption was only secured by heavy bribes. Junior officials, omdehs and sheikhs used it as a weapon against their personal enemies, as well as for the purpose of extortion.' ¹

It was the boast of the Occupation that such abuse of office by unscrupulous Egyptian officials had been eradicated by the presence of British inspectors. However, the great majority of the inspectors had now left for active service, or were confined to desk-work in Cairo since travelling allowances had been reduced. A mere seven members of the Interior Inspectorate now remained scattered through the provinces, including MacNaughten, Wild, Wellesley, Roberts and Richard Graves. Wise Bey, Inspector of Nizam, and Branch, the Interior's Veterinary Inspector, also continued to work in the districts, as did Hazel, seconded as Inspector-General of Recruiting. ²

Beyond this handful of experienced individuals, the task of communicating government requirements to the local authorities now fell to newly-arrived, uniformed British officers, with little knowledge of Arabic or local conditions. Such officers had a tendency to commend those 'umdas producing plentiful recruits, without undue enquiry into their methods. These khaki officials generally assumed that the fellaheen would gladly contribute to the war effort.

Clearly, there was little chance that the skeletal staff of permanent inspectors, employed, in addition to their usual duties, as civil members of the Military Courts and as Army intelligence agents, would alone be able to prevent the use of press-gang methods throughout the Nile Valley. The relationship with their uniformed compatriots was already a tense one, officials being sensitive to

1. Reports by British Political Officers, May 1919, MP444, ii. 306.
2. Haines, note, January 1919, FO371/3713/20835.

any suggestion that they, or the Egyptian population, were not pulling their weight in the war. Liaison had deteriorated further since G.H.Q. and the First Echelon had moved east of Suez. This left the civil authorities to negotiate with less experienced, subordinate officers of the Second Echelon. Army accountants turned down, for instance, Rushdi's proposal that service in the Egyptian Labour Corps should be better paid, (the Egyptian Government bearing the difference) and should carry a year's exemption from military service.

Some British inspectors were clearly aware of popular discontent concerning the Labour Corps, and of the dangers inherent in relying on local officialdom. Elgood recalls that certain officials

'looked sadly on these scenes. But their hands were tied and their silent disapproval was unnoticed...some endeavoured to remedy flagrant injustice...but their powers were limited, and Englishmen were bidden remember that their own country was fighting for its existence.' ¹

Most seem to have found it impossible to justify any shadow of resistance to the claims of war, and thus deprived the Interior Ministry of a customary source of intelligence from the districts. Wise Bey was one who did repeatedly warn the authorities, in particular Haines, of the dangers of the situation. ² The Interior Adviser, however, was impervious to criticism, and being anyway on poor terms with the Residency,³ was unlikely to pass on objective information to Wingate. This collapse in one of the vital functions of the adviser-inspector system of control - that of supplying information - must explain in large measure the unpreparedness of the British authorities for the nationalist upsurge after the war.

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1. Elgood, Egypt and the Army, pp.318-9.
 2. Milner's conversation with Wise, 26 December 1919, MP448, p.39.
 3. Herbert diary, 3 February 1917.

Yet it seems unlikely that the civil authorities in Cairo were blind to the risks involved in government-sponsored recruitment. Grafftey-Smith relates that this system was often referred to in Chancery as 'compulsory volunteering' and that he personally was 'offended by the zeal with which Sir William Brunyate...and his fellow advisers seemed to labour to satisfy every military suggestion.'¹ Brunyate himself later maintained that officials like he, Cecil and Lindsay felt uneasy that they were being kept at arm's length in their own departments by the military.² Yet when in May 1918 Allenby again demanded conscription in order to produce still greater manpower, a meeting of officials at the Residency which included Brunyate, Haines and Langley was prepared to endorse Haines' alternative solution of 'recruitment by persuasion' for a second year running. (See Table Eight). Accordingly the Sultan and ministers again promised to exert their influence behind voluntary enlistment, and Rushdi informed local Egyptian officials that their efforts as recruiting agents would be individually monitored.³

The only difference between this method of 'compulsion by persuasion' and conscription lay in its acceptability to the Egyptian Government, in that it entailed no conspicuous legislation. Officials and Residency evidently made the decision to renew 'compulsion by persuasion' for a second year conscious of its inherent risks. Wingate admitted to Balfour, 'it obviously opens the door to abuses, and all the more so because existing cadres do not admit of anything approaching to a close supervision of the selection of recruits by British officials.' As such it did not

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1. Grafftey-Smith to the writer, May 1982.
 2. Brunyate, note, n.d, MP449, pp.7-8.
 3. Wingate, Wingate of the Sudan, pp.216-7.

Table Eight

Egyptian Labour Corps Recruitment, 1916-18

Jan. 1916	3,012
Aug. 1916	24,926
Aug. 1917	55,884
Aug. 1918	85,965
Nov. 1918	100,506

Note:

Allowing for 6-monthly contracts by 1918, the annual turnover in men was double the figures given.

Source:

A Brief Record of the Advance of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force (London, 1919), pp.107-8.

Table Nine

Wholesale prices in Cairo, 1919

(average from 1 January 1913 - 31 July 1914 being taken as 100)

Wheat	234	Wheaten flour	251
Lentils	207	Maize flour	200
Maize	184	Butter	218
Sugar	294	Soap	373

Source:

Report 1914-1919, p.3.

correspond 'with the general sentiment and character of our administration in Egypt.' The Residency evidently hoped that any odium attached to the measures would be borne not by Britain but by the Egyptian Government, which would be

'responsible for such arbitrary proceedings as the policy demanded, whereas conscription would have involved the active and continuous intervention of British officers in an extremely unpopular measure.' ¹

However, such reasoning ignored a central tenet of the philosophy of British rule in Egypt: that the legitimacy of Britain's presence had been established in large measure upon the ability of British officials to step in between the Egyptian Government and population, to prevent just such arbitrary measures. Thus it was not improbable that the British inspectors, and not the Egyptian Government, might be blamed for neglect. The war, after all, merely continued a process whereby British officials had been progressively removed from the daily life of the fellah. For some time, the substitution of the car for the horse had been reducing familiar contact between official and population; inspectors were finding less time to talk, and more opportunities to return to Cairo. Now that war made provincial inspections a rare occurrence, the fellah could be forgiven for thinking he had been abandoned by the English mufattish.

It was not as though labour was the only demand being made on the population. The army's requisitioning of camels and donkeys removed the fellah's means of transport as well. One in six of Egypt's male camels had been purchased since 1916, but it was the subsequent removal of female beasts which evoked the fiercest reaction. Requisition prices were considered universally low, whilst animals would often be sold back, in war-work condition, at twice

1. Wingate to Balfour, 15 September 1918, FO371/3199/23442.

the price. Tariffs well below the market price were also paid for requisitioned grain and forage. As army demands sent the market price up, so there was ample scope for profiteering by 'umdas acting as middlemen.

Furthermore, as government food conservation had lapsed since 1915, the requisition of cereals merely exacerbated a situation of food shortages and rising prices. (See Table Nine, p.112). After the poor crop of 1917, a short-lived British Food Adviser persuaded the Egyptian Government to limit cotton acreages. Yet once again, the limitations of having to rely on a cooperative ministry emerged. Loath to offend the cotton cultivating interest at a time of rising cotton prices, Rushdi declined to enforce the restrictions with martial law. Offences against the limitation of cotton to a third of the cultivated area carried a derisory L.E.1 fine. Thereafter the food supply situation was entrusted to a Supplies Control Board, which took steps towards unifying tariffs and preventing hoarding, but which equally failed to augment grain supplies.

British officials tended greatly to underestimate the effect on the population of unprecedented inflation. Craig, in charge of Supplies Control, campaigned single-handedly for nationwide regulation of prices, with wage-control boards in each town. Otherwise he predicted 'insurrection in Egypt in the next twelve months.' When Brunyate vetoed Craig's scheme, which he thought hare-brained, Craig resigned.¹

Brunyate and the Ministry of Finance seem to have been mesmerised by the conspicuous prosperity which war had brought to the cotton growers and trading elements. After the early financial

1. Craig, report, 1919, WP 244/13.

difficulties of the war, the Financial Adviser reported healthy surpluses for the next four years, due to the combined effect of rising cotton prices, military expenditure and economies in public works. The Ministry of Finance believed that the greater part of expenditure resulting from the massive presence of troops had reached the Egyptian people, instead of being turned into revenue.¹ Finance officials seem to have been misled by the improvement in the government's financial position and the dramatic rise in cotton prices, into assuming that this prosperity was universal. They failed to grasp that the increasing purchasing power of the population was being applied to a restricted supply of commodities. Until the unexpected events of spring 1919, there was little official awareness of the reduced standard of living, particularly amongst the urban poor. Such was the traditional preoccupation of the British administration with the fellaheen, that the urban poor were almost forgotten.

Even the cotton growers, who had done well out of the war, emerged from the conflict resentful. In June 1918 it was proclaimed that the entire cotton crop would be purchased and distributed on behalf of the British Government, in order to guarantee essential supplies to Lancashire. Although the price was fair, it did not compare with that on foreign markets, nor with the much higher price of a year later.²

There were few groups in Egyptian society, therefore, that had not been affected or offended in some way by a whole range of tighter social, economic and administrative controls during the war.

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1. Cecil to MacMahon, 16 May 1916, FO371/2672/51083.
 2. The price fixed for this purchase in spring 1918, \$42, compared well with the market price of \$38. However, by the end of the 1918-1919 season, the price rose to over \$87; A. Crouchley, Economic Development of Modern Egypt (London, 1938), p.188.

British officialdom was implicated in a far wider sense of Egyptian grievance than the question of labour and requisition alone.

Controls over drugs, alcohol and particularly the vigorous Arms Law of 1917, trampled on Egyptian customs and immunities to quite a new extent. Then there was the notorious appeal for Red Cross Funds. The Residency was apparently aware of the dangers of extortion in such ventures, and of the likely connotation of the Red Cross for the Muslim majority. Cheetham was particularly anxious that Britain should not be popularly connected with any malpractice in fund-raising. ¹ Yet once again, as soon as the Sultan personally launched the appeal,

'the moral forces at the disposal of all Eastern governments...were let loose. Every village was assessed at a certain sum, and no fellah escaped the net.' ²

* * *

What emerges, then, from the saga of Egypt's contribution to the war, is a clear demonstration of the advantages and disadvantages of the particular species of British administration in Egypt. At the head of the credit column stood the fact that, at the moment of greatest strategic danger to the British Empire in the period that Britain had held Egypt, the Occupation had more than proved its worth. Not only had Britain been in a position to ward off outside threats to the Suez Canal, but the population had remained quiescent despite considerable provocation and even played an indispensable role in the eventual defeat of the Turks. This would scarcely have been possible without the active cooperation of the Egyptian Government, maintaining some façade of local autonomy, and carrying out unpopular measures in the name of Egyptian rather than British

1. Cheetham to Grey, 23 September 1914, FO371/1972/56358.
2. Elgood, Egypt and the Army, p.309.

authority. In this go-between function, Rushdi and his ministers proved remarkably reliable. Their apparent amenability culminated in the decision in March 1918 to assume the charge of the Suspense Account up to L.E.3 million, as a mark, so it was expressed, of gratitude 'towards Great Britain in that Egypt [had] been spared the evils of...invasion...' ¹ In this way, the major part of the administrative cost of the war in Egypt was borne by the Egyptian taxpayer.

The greater the requirements of the foreign ruler, as in a war situation, the greater is the tendency either to exert unmitigated colonial control, or to rely more exclusively on local auxiliaries, in order to fulfil those requirements. Both these conflicting tendencies were present in Egypt at this time: unprecedented dependence upon the indigenous government machinery, in company with a strong annexationist lobby. This latter policy involved little regard for the reaction of Egyptian opinion towards British rule; with the collaboration option, by contrast, there was a strong awareness of the importance of Egyptian opinion, but very little practical ability to affect that opinion favourably, given almost total dependence on local personnel. In either event, the legitimacy of British rule in Egyptian eyes would be threatened. And if the legitimacy of British rule was lost, British officials would have failed in one of their most crucial functions.

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By 1917, as the war moved away from Egypt and there began some hopes of an eventual end to the conflict, the question of the

1. Telegram Wingate to Balfour, 11 March 1918, WP 236/8.

way in which Egypt would be run when the war was over became of increasing concern. Not that there was any doubt at this point that Britain would continue in overall control. Yet various individuals, independently of one another, were now anticipating the chance when peace came, to set Egyptian affairs on what each regarded as a more satisfactory footing. Each of the proposed solutions represented a considerable deviation from the supposed norm of English heads and Egyptian hands, suggesting that the days of this nebulous means of control were numbered.

It was the failing health of Sultan Husain Kamil in early 1917 which raised the question, initially at the Foreign Office, of whether his decease might provide the opportunity for a new approach to Egyptian rule. Graham thought it was a question of

'whether the country should be allowed to work out its own salvation under our guidance along existing lines, or whether a determined effort should be made to anglicise the laws, customs, and administration, and to establish our control on a more defined and "Indian" system than has hitherto obtained.'

Annexation was tempting, in that it would simplify several problems, not least abolition of the Capitulations. Best of all, it would 'give British administration in Cairo a freer hand and end once and for all that ambiguity of direction' by which officials had been dogged. Yet annexation posed the same threats to Egyptian cooperation as it had in 1914 when, if it had been effected,

'the administration of the country would have passed into the hands of the British advisers and inspectors, the latter inadequate in numbers and sometimes in experience, with the half-hearted assistance of subordinate native officials and with all the other classes of the Moslem population united in sulky opposition, if not active hostility to the new regime.'¹

Moreover, now in 1917, if Egypt was to emerge as a moderate Muslim state and a bulwark against Pan-Islam, it was essential to have a

1. Graham, memorandum, 2 March 1917, FO371/2926/24699.

Muslim sovereign and a contented people in cooperation with Britain.

In conversation with the High Commissioner in April, the Sultan had himself mooted the possibility of annexation, and Wingate began to wonder if this was not the best option. ¹ The idea of annexation conformed, after all, with the objective Wingate had been pursuing since his arrival as High Commissioner in January: the need to reassert the ascendancy of the Foreign Office and Residency with respect to the clique of over-mighty officials headed by Cecil. Wingate had been particularly disturbed by the Sultan's complaint that for a year he had been ruled by the Cecil 'Camorra', and by his entreaty to be 'relieved of this pernicious system.' ² The High Commissioner now resolved to have Cecil removed from Egypt by granting the latter's most recent application for leave to join his regiment. Wingate disclosed to Hardinge his conviction

'that the strings must be drawn together into the hands of the High Commissioner...[as] his relations with the Sultan and Ministers notably are not in my opinion satisfactory and I think I ought not to be hampered by this fact in dealing with the Egyptian Ministers...' ³

Ideally, the theoretical separation of powers between the Residency, responsible to the Foreign Office, and the Advisers, responsible to the Egyptian Government, should now be abolished, allowing the High Commissioner to exert a more than nominal supervision of administrative matters.

However, Wingate was in no position to bring such changes about. His influence with the new Lloyd George cabinet was limited and he lacked Cecil's family connections. Indeed, at the Foreign Office he faced both a cousin of Lord Edward in Balfour, and his brother, Lord Robert. In Whitehall, Wingate corresponded solely with Graham and

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1. Wingate to Hardinge, 6 May 1917, WP 237/10.
 2. Wingate, memorandum, October 1919, WP 162/4.
 3. Wingate to Hardinge, 31 January 1917, MP445, p.43.

Hardinge, while in Cairo he confided his strategy to a few Khartoum staff who were colleagues from Hijaz operations; Lt.Col.Stewart Symes, Alexander Keown-Boyd, and the Sudan Agent and Director of the Arab Bureau, General Gilbert Clayton.

So when Hardinge advised Wingate to explore the annexation option further, the latter took the unusual step of asking Clayton, neither a diplomat nor an official, to write a despatch on the matter. ¹ Clayton was not, at this time, one who worried unduly about deferring to cooperative Egyptian rulers. To Mark Sykes he observed

'all this clap-trap about Sultans and Self-Government for Egypt is rot. They are not nearly ready for it and if you have a Palace, every ounce of power and self-government which you think you are giving to the People will go straight into the hands of the Sultan and his Ministers and be used against you.' ²

In the hard light of imperial interests, Clayton's despatch doubted whether it was possible to guarantee the necessary security of Egypt if the Protectorate were maintained. Those objections which British officials had made against annexation in 1914, Clayton now rejected. In his arguments he displays very much the outlook of the soldier, as distinct from the official with the practical task of working an administration. Side-stepping the crucial question of whether annexation would provoke non-cooperation from Egyptian ministers and officials, Clayton argued that it was the British army, and not the rejection of annexation, which ensured internal order in 1914. Annexation was now essential, he concluded, for Britain's position in Egypt to be established on a firm and lasting basis. ³

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1. Stack to Clayton, 5 August 1917, Brigadier-General Sir Gilbert Clayton Papers, Durham.
 2. Clayton to Sykes, 20 September 1917, Sir Mark Sykes Papers, St Antony's College.
 3. Clayton, note, 22 July 1917, reproduced in Lloyd, Egypt Since Cromer, i. 262-7.

Clayton's opinion, that Egypt was in a state of latent sedition against British rule, was shared by Hogarth, his colleague at the Arab Bureau. From the perspective of the academic in uniform, Hogarth discerned amongst educated Egyptians 'an almost unanimous wish that we may be compelled to withdraw at the end of the war.' Egypt was 'permeated by a spirit of conspiracy, with which we cannot deal effectively for lack of direct control of the administration.' The solution, for Hogarth, was to put 'certain ministries entirely under British control, ie. appoint not British Advisers, but British Ministers, and supplement these with all-powerful British inspectors.' ¹

This most extreme of schemes to alter Egypt's future status was not seriously entertained in London. Graham, as an ex-official, saw annexation as a political mistake and a breach of faith. Soldiers like Clayton failed to understand the workings of Egyptian administration. Consequently they tended altogether to underestimate 'the assistance which can be given in the administration of the country by the native elements and the difficulty of administering it without or against them.' ² When the question came before the Cabinet due to a further deterioration in the Sultan's health, Balfour also opposed annexation, as likely to weaken Britain's international position with regard to Egypt. ³ So when Husain died in October 1917, he was succeeded by his brother Fu'ad; the Protectorate remained, and discussion of annexation generally subsided.

Yet there were still those British officials who chafed at Britain's indirect rule in Egypt. Some evidently no longer reckoned

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1. Hogarth, note, 10 July 1917, Clayton Papers, 470/7.
 2. Graham, minute, 24 August 1917, FO371/2932/158543.
 3. War Cabinet, 19 September 1917, Cabinet Papers, CAB23/4.

to defer to the niceties of Anglo-Egyptian cooperation. Since Gorst's time, there had been disagreement between officials and the Agency as to who Britain's Egyptian intermediaries should be. While most officials saw the need for a certain deference to Egyptian ministers, few endorsed Gorst's cultivation of the Khedive as a British ally, due to a mistrust of his true loyalties. For a time this tension had subsided since Kitchener had been quite prepared to dispense with Abbas Hilmi. There was an increasing tendency, therefore, for advisers to put through measures without even a show of consultation.

Husain's resentment of this exclusion exploded during a visit to Asyut in January 1917 when, in front of local mudirs and British inspectors, the Sultan complained that many British officials

'were worthless and ought to have been dismissed long ago...that the Inspectors of Interior were altogether abusing their powers, and that they were interfering with the Mudirs to a ridiculous extent, that the Mudirs in fact could not even appoint a Sheikh of ghafirs without the interference of the Interior Inspector.'

The inspectors involved responded furiously to this perceived humiliation, ¹ associating it with the arrival of a High Commissioner with known Egyptian sympathies. Herbert records that 'all the English Officials were at once up in arms.....resignations en bloc damning the Sultan and so on.' There was a tendency to take the line,

"here we get a new High Commissioner whom we know to be only too friendly with natives...The Sultan immediately damns and insults the whole British administration...It is Gorst over again." ²

It was in the context of this feud between bureaucrats and diplomats in Cairo that Lord Edward Cecil, at home on leave,

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1. MacNaughten to Haines, 4 January 1917; Hugh-Jones to Cecil, 5 January 1917; Graves to Haines, 12 January 1917, WP 163/1.
 2. Herbert diary, 3 February 1917.

interested his brother Robert in a scheme to remove Egypt from Foreign Office jurisdiction and bring it instead under the control of British officialdom. The Cecil scheme, unbeknown to Wingate, advocated the creation of a special Egyptian department in London, staffed not by diplomats but by administrators with personal experience of Egyptian administration. ¹

Hardinge recognised the plan as a clear attempt to circumvent Wingate. In September he privately informed the High Commissioner that there was 'undoubtedly a great deal of underground intrigue going on,' and that Cecil's proposals were now coming before the War Cabinet. ² Of the three-man committee delegated to examine the issue, both Balfour and Curzon deprecated any loss of Foreign Office control over Egypt. ³ Only Milner thought that the proposals offered a much-needed rationalisation of the anomalies of British rule. Interestingly, in view of the later findings of the Milner Mission, Milner argued that Britain should take full responsibility for Egyptian government. The pretence of treating Egypt like a foreign country in which Britain was exercising only a temporary authority had always entailed disadvantages. It had been worth putting up with these in years past for reasons of international policy, but there was no cause to be saddled with them now that Britain had 'frankly dropped the mask which concealed our true position in the country.' ⁴

The Cabinet adopted the compromise solution of creating a new Egyptian Department, which by autumn 1918 had become part of a Middle East Department of the Foreign Office. In an attempt to give Whitehall a closer acquaintance with internal Egyptian problems, the

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1. Cecil, memorandum, September 1917, FO371/2932/158543.
 2. Hardinge to Wingate, 7 September 1917, WP 236/7.
 3. Egyptian Administration Committee, CAB27/12.
 4. Milner, memorandum, 31 October 1917, CAB27/12.

Egyptian Department was staffed at the outset by A.T.Loyd, an ex-British official and chancery diplomat, under Graham, the Assistant Under-Secretary. Yet these changes stopped well short of the 'Egypt for British officials' which Cecil had dreamt of. Cecil himself was prevented from pursuing his ambition further. After a short return to the Financial Advisership in the autumn of 1917, he came back to Britain on sick leave and in December 1918, died of consumption.

This hankering after a more overt British administrative control boded ill for the existing system of Anglo-Egyptian collaboration. What Rushdi and his ministers needed now, as an end to the war approached, were some tangible concessions in terms of Capitulatory reform and constitutional progress, as had apparently been foreshadowed in the declaration of the Protectorate. Only this could bolster their political credibility in the face of probable nationalist agitation. Recognising in some measure Rushdi's vulnerability to charges of subservience to Britain and disloyalty to the Ottoman suzerain, the Residency acceded in March 1917 to the setting up of a commission to investigate the possibility of reforming the Capitulations, a long-standing British pledge. The Powers, it was hoped, would transfer their Capitulatory rights to Britain on the assurance that she would protect their nationals as her own.

However the appointment of Brunyate as chairman of the commission suggested that Capitulatory reform might actually hinder the Egyptian cause, rather than advance it. Rushdi was immediately nervous

'that an important change in the system of Government [was] indicated tending towards the more "open" assumption of Government direction by British officials than had hitherto

been the case, thereby diminishing in the eyes of the native public the authority of the Ministers...' ¹

On the suggestion of Adli Yakan Pasha and 'Abd al-Khaliq Tharwat Pasha, the terms of the commission were extended in December 1917 to cover the wider issue of constitutional reform. Inauspiciously, it was Brunyate who was asked to draft a note as the basis for the commission's discussion. Once again, Brunyate's approach seemed oblivious to the whole object of the exercise - finding a basis for constitutional advance which would sufficiently satisfy Egyptian opinion to enable the ministry to withstand nationalist attack. It was quite apparent from Brunyate's Note on Constitutional Reform, presented in November 1918, that he contemplated no substantive progress towards Egyptian self-government. Indeed, his proposals for an upper legislative chamber, composed of British advisers, members of the foreign community and Egyptian ministers, suggested a far more dominant role for British officials than had hitherto been the case. In this way, Brunyate maintained, advisers would be able to support their ministers in explaining British policies.² Egyptian eyes perceived Brunyate's Note rather differently, as implying active supervision of Egyptian legislation by Europeans. Few sections of Egyptian opinion in 1918 ³ would have considered any such proposal as a basis for constitutional negotiations, which suggests that Brunyate had lost any realistic sense of what it would now take to maintain Egyptian cooperation in British domination.

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1. Telegram Wingate to Balfour, 15 March 1917, FO371/2926/24699.
 2. Brunyate, Note on Constitutional Reform, November 1918, FO371/3199/204710.
 3. The historian, al-Rafii, recalls the widespread assumption in Egypt at this time that President Wilson's Fourteen Points had established the right of self-determination, and that Britain would therefore evacuate Egypt; M. Zayid, Egypt's Struggle for Independence (Beirut, 1965), p.78.

Taken in conjunction with the role which Brunyate himself played at this time, his Note shattered any remaining illusions as to Britain's intentions in having declared the Protectorate. In addition to his post as Judicial Adviser, Brunyate was also temporary Adviser to the Interior, and in Cecil's absence, Acting Financial Adviser. When it became clear that Cecil would not return, Brunyate cajoled Wingate to allow him to retain charge of both justice and finance, until the explosion of 1919 finally gave Wingate the opportunity to have him removed from Egypt. Prior to that, most observers regarded Brunyate as the dominant representative of British power in Egypt. 'Ozzy' Walrond told Milner that he was 'by far the biggest man in the country,'¹ while Lindsay in the Finance thought that Brunyate had effectively swallowed up Wingate:

'There is nothing left...as a great boa constrictor engulfs a guineapig and never shows a bulge in his body, so has Wingate vanished...Not content with that, he has swallowed the Council of Ministers en bloc. They like it and are quite happy...L'Etat, c'est moi, says Brunyate...'²

That Egyptian ministers acquiesced in this state of affairs as Lindsay seemed to think is controverted by the evidence. As early as December 1917 Rushdi was canvassing Brunyate with plans for some devolution of British administrative control: that Britain should confine herself to finance, foreign policy, the army, and perhaps justice; that there should be no interference in the choice of ministers; and that a reduced number of British officials, selected by the Egyptian Government, should accept a technical advisory status.³ Yet no British official seems to have regarded these ideas as anything more than the 'pious aspirations' of 'advanced

1. Walrond to Milner, 5 January 1919, MP449, p.248.

2. Lindsay to Lady Cecil, 5 July 1918, Cecil-Maxse MSS, U1599/C418/1.

3. Telegram Wingate to Balfour, 9 December 1917, FO371/2928/233706.

Nationalism' - attempts at testing the ground which should be firmly ignored. ¹ Brunyate prided himself on having 'established with the Egyptian Ministers, relations of a friendliness which I believe to have been unprecedented.' ² Yet the eminent Public Health official, Dr. Granville, estimated Brunyate's unpopularity in 1919 to be such that he could be assassinated at any opportunity. ³ As Brunyate himself recognised, 'I had come to be regarded in Egypt as typifying British policy.' ⁴

* * *

Thus by November 1918, the delicate mechanism of Anglo-Egyptian cooperation, upon which British administration in Egypt entirely depended, was subject to considerable strains. The client ministry could now only continue in its cooperative role if Britain recognised the extent to which its political credibility had been compromised by the war, and compensated accordingly. However, the Foreign Office and Cabinet did not consider Egyptian loyalty such as to merit the reward of greater self-government. ⁵ Equally important, though less often recognised, British officialdom on the ground was now far less prepared to work the system of indirect control on the old undefined terms. Perhaps the 'forward' school of administrators instinctively sensed that the workability of Anglo-Egyptian cooperation had only been artificially extended by

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1. Brunyate to Wingate, 18 November 1918, WP 237/10.
 2. Brunyate to Allenby, July 1919, MP452, p.180.
 3. Conversation between Granville and Graham, 6 May 1919, MP444, ii. 288.
 4. Brunyate to Allenby, op.cit, p.181.
 5. While in India, the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms rewarded the local war effort with a considerable demission of power.

martial law and wartime circumstances. In 1917 Cecil felt that London did not adequately grasp how things would change at the end of the war, 'when the Nationalists and malcontents were freed, the Press uncensored and the Legislative Council sitting...' ¹ The only way of coping with this, officials assumed, was overt British take-over. Only when the non-cooperation of 1919 turned this option into a necessity did its unfeasibility become evident.

1. Egyptian Administration Committee, 27 September 1917, CAB27/12.

Chapter Five

November 1918-November 1919: Rebellion and Non-Cooperation

It was two days after the Armistice that the extent of Egyptian nationalist aspirations was made manifest. On their celebrated visit to the British Residency on 13 November, Sa'd Zaghlul, 'Ali Sha'rawi and 'Abd al-'Aziz Fahmi presented Wingate with the demands of the just-formed 'Egyptian Delegation', al-Wafd al-Misri: complete independence, an end to martial law and censorship, and permission to put their case in London. Later that day, in an attempt to display the Ministry's patriotic credentials and thus maintain some appearance of political credibility, Rushdi sought permission for Adli and himself also to attend talks in London.

Wingate had foreseen that the Armistice would unleash pent-up Egyptian demands for autonomy, particularly as the Anglo-French declaration in favour of self-determination for Syria and Mesopotamia had been published in Egypt on 9 November. In anticipation of some nationalist outburst he had sought policy guidance from London. The Foreign Office replied to Wingate on 13 November that it had no 'indication of such native aspirations nor of what form they [were] likely to take.'¹ There was certainly no conception in London of progress towards self-government in the foreseeable future. If anything, the war had reinforced the view of the Occupation as a strategic necessity. The existence of a British military base in Egypt had prevented enemy seizure of the Canal, had facilitated the Syrian campaign and promotion of the Arab Revolt,

1. Telegrams Wingate to Balfour, 8 November 1918 and Balfour to Wingate, 13 November 1918, FO371/3204/186090.

and by 1919 left Britain in an advantageous position to assist in the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire.

The chances of Egypt getting a sympathetic hearing in London were further reduced by Wingate's weak political influence in Lloyd George's Cabinet, and his unpopularity with Graham, Acting Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office. Still nursing ambitions of returning to Cairo as High Commissioner, Graham invariably regarded Wingate's handling of the situation with disdain. Basing his assessment of Egyptian nationalism on his experience of the early war years, Graham consistently minimised the intensity of local feeling. Like many British officials in Egypt, he belittled the nationalist leaders, coming as they did from the despised educated élite, as self-interested good-for-nothings, who did not represent the true feelings of the Egyptian people. It was Graham's view that

'the whole movement in Egypt need not be taken too seriously...; among thinking Egyptians there is no seditious spirit and few of them would contemplate our leaving the country without dismay.' ¹

On 23 November, in total disregard of Wingate's recommendations, the Foreign Office refused permission for Zaghlul and his colleagues to come to Britain, although Rushdi and Adli were informed that they might come at a later date. Wingate was himself reprimanded for having received the nationalists at all. ² This rebuke marked the emergence of an anti-Wingate campaign within the Foreign Office, which, in emphasising the High Commissioner's handling of the situation, disguised the development of the crisis in Egypt, and the role played by the Foreign Office itself in losing control of events. ³

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1. Graham, minute, 11 December 1918, FO371/3204/200588.
 2. Telegram Balfour to Wingate, 2 December 1918, FO371/3204/195347.
 3. See J. Terry, 'Wingate as High Commissioner in Egypt, 1917-1919' (Ph.D. London 1968), Ch. 6; and F. Lissauer, 'British Policy Towards Egypt, 1914-1922' (Ph.D. London 1975), Ch. 3.

British officials on the spot appear to have been equally blind to the significance of Zaghlul's request, and of its rebuttal. 'Ozzy' Walrond, in contact with the nationalists through his intelligence work in Cairo, told Milner why he thought British officials were so oblivious to reality:

'the new spirit abroad of equity and justice caused as the effect of the two Anglo-Saxon nations' efforts for liberty is naturally almost unknown to the English in Egypt...Therefore they are not disposed to reason temperately with the Egyptian party who wish for "independence" - little knowing what it means...' 1

The fact of Wingate having received the nationalists fuelled the existing mistrust between British officials and the Residency. Wingate thought the officials suspected him of 'encouraging Native Nationalistic aspirations,'² and of colluding with the Palace. Brunyate and other officials wanted the pretensions of the Sultan to be curbed, to keep him under strict British influence, while the Residency realised that Fu'ad's continued credibility as a local ruler required his wishes at least to be recognised.

Realising that he was caught between the opposing poles of Egyptian feeling on the one hand, and the mistrust of his compatriots on the other, Wingate sought to reconcile British officialdom by sounding its opinion on the nationalist phenomenon and how to deal with it. The response from Brunyate as senior British official is revealing. Brunyate told Wingate that in 1914 Britain had faced a crisis in Egypt 'not very dissimilar' to that now in motion; but through firm handling those difficulties had been 'successfully surmounted.'³ The solution now lay, Brunyate suggested, in a constructive policy of reform, as outlined in his own constitutional proposals. There was no doubt, he assured

1. Walrond to Milner, 9 December 1918, MP452, pp.77-8.
2. Wingate to Graham, 6 Novemebr 1918, MP445, p.133.
3. Brunyate to Wingate, 18 November 1918, WP 237/10.

Wingate, that his draft would be acceptable to the Egyptian Government: he had confided the scheme to Rushdi and the Prime Minister had offered no adverse comment.

In interpreting Rushdi's silence as a mark of approval for a scheme which would intensify British control in Egypt, Brunyate disastrously miscalculated the effect of local opinion on an Egyptian ministry, and on its ability to remain in office under foreign sponsorship. In reality London's snub to the nationalists had destroyed any remaining basis on which Rushdi could have remained in office: on 27 November he and Adli Yakan resigned.

Officials like Dunlop and Haines made several attempts in early December to resuscitate a cooperative ministry. Their conversations suggest that the former ministers did not share all of Zaghlul's demands, but would probably have been content with a circumscribed British administration. However, the scope of nationalist aspirations had by now developed from self-government to complete independence. Rushdi was adamant that so long as Britain refused to consider any progress towards autonomy, he could not remain Prime Minister. For four years, as it was, 'he had been reproached with having been a traitor to his country.'¹ To have any chance of survival, the Prime Minister could afford no sign of indifference to the Egyptian cause. Having acquired Brunyate's secret 'Memorandum on Constitutional Reform,' Rushdi now made the pre-emptive move of distributing its contents nationwide, together with a vehement rejoinder of his own. In a sense, Rushdi's questionable behaviour in leaking the document symbolised a rejection of the collaborative role which he was no longer able to play. Similarly, he took care to avoid selection as leader of any

1. Conversation between Haines and Rushdi, 8 December 1918, FO371/3204/213818.

Residency-picked delegation to London; rather, he prudently urged the authorities to grant travelling permission to Zaghlul, and warned that he himself would accept no invitation which excluded the Wafd.

Britain had no alternative but to accept that the Egyptian Government could no longer fulfil the cooperative function of the past. It had been a long-held maxim of British rule that there must always be an indigenous ministry in office. For the next four months, however, there obtained an extraordinary situation in which Rushdi repeatedly tendered resignations which were in turn repeatedly rejected. Government business was carried on by the circulation of papers to the Council of Ministers; but beyond this, Rushdi and Adli took no part in affairs. ¹

In other ways, too, Britain was forced to respect the Ministry's vulnerable position in the country at large. The Wafd was now in process of circulating nationwide petitions, the tawkilat, in order to demonstrate its popular support. Haines' attempt to confiscate the petitions, under military instructions, evoked an immediate attack on Rushdi from Zaghlul. ² In response to this, Haines let it be known that the petitions were confiscated by order of the British Interior Adviser alone. ³ This rare public acknowledgement of the influence of a British official behind an Egyptian minister served, as Kedourie points out, to disassociate the ministry somewhat from the unpopular business of clamping down on the Wafd. ⁴ Yet in the process of allowing the client government to reduce its collaborative image, British officials soon began

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1. Telegram Cheetham to Balfour, 3 February 1919, FO371/3711/1180.
 2. Zaghlul to Rushdi, 23 November 1918, FO141/810/8013.
 3. Rushdi to Zaghlul, n.d, *ibid*.
 4. E. Kedourie, 'Sa'd Zaghlul and the British', in The Chatham House Version (London, 1970), pp.97-8. (Kedourie, 'Zaghlul').

to realise their impotence without the support of Egyptian officials.

There was, of course, still the resort of martial law, which had never been lifted when the war ended. Yet even with martial law, the British administration now experienced increasing difficulty in controlling the manifestations of Egyptian discontent, particularly in the press, where effective control became nigh impossible. It had been Cromer's boast that the Egyptian press was completely free, and that repressive legislation was never invoked against papers which abused the Occupation.¹ This liberal image, designed to appeal to British public opinion, disguised Cromer's actual use of pressure and secret subventions to encourage an 'official' press version of British rule. This appears, by and large, to have succeeded where the British press was concerned: the London dailies and news agencies had their Cairo copy corrected at the Agency; British officials like Gorst and Merton acted as secret correspondents of The Times from the 1890s to the 1920s; and Reuter's agency received a regular subsidy from the Residency until at least 1915.² William Willcocks was one official who condemned the distorted home view of Egyptian affairs thus created, observing that 'Lord Cromer was not only the real actor of the Egyptian stage, but also the critic of his own actions.'³

Here must lie one reason why the uprising of 1919 eventually came as such a shock to home opinion. Only afterwards, from October 1919, did a series of articles in The Times by Sir Valentine Chirol begin to examine methodically the quality of British administration in Egypt, and to analyse the causes of

1. e.g., Report 1903, pp.31-2.

2. The latter was the subject of a parliamentary question in 1915; FO371/2352/171968.

3. Willcocks, Sixty Years, p.119.

Egyptian disaffection. It is possible that the standard of British rule might have benefitted earlier from more robust criticism and public accountability. As it was, British officials were artificially cocooned against attack: as servants of the Egyptian Government, they were not subject to parliamentary investigation at home, and yet in practice, their very status in the Egyptian Government stopped them being criticised from that source.

Yet if European newspapers by and large took their cue from the Residency, the British administration never succeeded in exerting the same influence over the indigenous press. Only al-Muqattam, under its Syrian Christian editor, Faris Nimr, acted throughout our period as a mouthpiece for British interests, and, at least under Cromer, received an Agency subsidy for so doing.¹ The Egyptian Gazette had followed an Agency line under Cromer; but by the post-war years, relations with its editor had progressively deteriorated, ² and the British authorities lamented the non-existence of a 'good and independent newspaper, critical but helpful,' which would do service to imperial interests. ³

To deal with more hostile journalism, there existed a Press Law of 1881 which theoretically empowered the government to suppress publications in the interests of security. This law being effectively obsolete, however, officials found themselves almost powerless to deal with the most vociferous nationalist writer of the pre-war years, Shaikh 'Abd al-'Aziz Shawish. When the Egyptian courts failed to produce a verdict against him in 1908, Gorst began to counsel a reluctant British Government that the Press Law should be revived. With London's consent, al-Liwa' was warned and Shawish

1. Willcocks, Sixty Years, p.116.

2. Marshall, Enigma, pp.23-5.

3. Foreign Office Memorandum on Propaganda, 22 April 1920, Clayton Papers, 470/10.

imprisoned. Yet in practice, the ability of nationalist papers to gain immunity under the Capitulations through association with sympathetic foreigners rendered the Press Law less than effective. For this reason the British authorities were unable to prevent publication of the French-owned Le Nil, despite its almost daily attacks on Kitchener and the ministry of 1913. ¹

With the outbreak of war and martial law, censorship of both internal and external news was carried out by the British-run Press Bureau and Post Office; and in the manner characteristic of the war years, Egyptian editors seem by and large to have complied with Interior Ministry instructions 'to refrain from arousing public feeling in present circumstances.' Preventive censorship ended with the Peace, although editors were still reminded of their responsibility under martial law for 'good conduct.' ² However, news of Brunyate's constitutional proposals raised a storm of protest in the vernacular press, and through the winter 1918/1919 a stream of articles condemning the British civil and military administration appeared in papers like al-Ahram, al-Watan and Wadi al-Nil. By spring 1919 the British realised that the 'authorised' or licensed press carried no weight in comparison to the flood of pamphlets and unauthorised publications being illicitly produced in the mosques. ³ Yet Clayton, by now Adviser to the Interior, believed there was little Britain could do to affect the tenacious domination of the press by the 'extreme' nationalists. The only hope, he suggested, was:

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1. Graham to Kitchener, 13 May 1913, FO371/1639/23658.
 2. Allenby to Balfour, 22 July 1919, FO371/3718/108203.
Papers were still not allowed to discuss political meetings, Anglo-Egyptian relations etc; Residency to Haines and Symes, 18 November 1918, FO141/810/8013.
 3. Allenby to Balfour, 11 May 1919, FO371/3717/24930/78459.

'to secure a change in tone which will be so gradual, and so general throughout the Press, as to render inoperative the system of "boycotting" by which the extremist party, by the hold which it has now obtained over the public, succeeds in paralysing the efforts of any editor who dares to oppose its policy. Similarly, repressive measures will only result in the appearance of new and still more violent newspapers, apart from the reproach of refusing liberty of the press.' ¹

Yet even if there was little chance of suppressing nationalist journalism in Egypt, there were still several ways during the months between the Armistice and March 1919 in which British officials could have alleviated Egyptian grievances, if they had been so minded. Admittedly, resentment at this point was chiefly directed against the refusal of the Delegation's request to go to Europe, especially as Syria and the Hijaz had been invited to the Peace Conference. It is possible, however, that this grievance was most keenly felt by the educated classes; while the fellaheen and urban poor, on the other hand, had additional, material reasons for disliking continued British rule at this point. It was where these bread-and-butter issues were concerned that the British administration (as distinct from British policy-makers) could conceivably have mitigated some of the feelings of the population at large, which were to give such force to the eventual rising.

Some officials evidently were aware of the need for wartime burdens to be lifted speedily from Egyptian shoulders. By January 1919 even Haines was pressing for an end to labour conscription:

'the time has come when I consider political reasons should over-ride military considerations...My proposition, therefore, is that we should do our best to obtain as many real volunteers for the Egyptian Labour Corps as possible...giving the Mudirs instructions to cease all measures of compulsion.' ²

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1. Clayton, Memorandum on the Press, 13 October 1919, FO371/3720/24930/147728.
 2. Haines to Wingate, 11 January 1919, FO141/667/2689.

However, with military demands for railway construction, Allenby could afford no reduction in manpower, and so compulsory labour recruitment continued, regardless of civilian warnings, until after the March revolt. ¹

British officials also continued to neglect the effects on the population of a rising cost of living, exacerbated by poor labour relations in many large concerns. H. Mackay of the Agricultural Bank of Egypt, writing later to The Times, emphasised the contributory role of economic grievance in the disturbances of 1919:

'the unrest in the big commercial and financial concerns, including the State Railways, [was] without doubt due to the ever-increasing cost of living and the former utter callousness of Capitalists, Egyptian and European, towards their workers.' ²

As a result,

'it became a simple matter to persuade the men, soured by struggle against privation, that Great Britain was the source of their trouble, and that the Wafd alone could deliver them out of her hands.' ³

A spate of labour disputes finally prompted the authorities to set up a conciliation commission; but as for the general state of economic difficulty, Elgood felt 'the government sat with folded hands and watched the politician make capital out of the misery that prevailed.' ⁴ No response was made to a memorandum by Dr. Wilson of the Qasr al-'Aini School of Medicine, urging government intervention to reduce the cost of living. Wilson pointed out that to support a family with two children in Cairo in 1918 cost about P.T.217 a month, while the government paid its employees only P.T.150 a month.⁵ Only after the 1919 disturbances did the Acting Financial Adviser recommend an across-the-board increase in

1. Jellicoe to Maxwell, 23 January 1920, FO848/4.

2. The Times, 3 January 1920.

3. Elgood, Transit, p.249.

4. Ibid.

5. Wilson, memorandum, 19 April 1918, FO848/4.

Egyptian Government salaries, a move which prompted other employers to follow suit. ¹

This apparant lethargy amongst British officials may be mostly attributable to the strains of war. Their ranks were depleted, as the Morning Post observed:

'We have only an Acting Financial Adviser...the Department of Public Health...has no Director-General; nor has the Statistical Department nor the Survey Department. Many officials should have retired years ago...This tired feeling is shown in a certain inaction on the part of the Government. The Commission studying the Capitulations question has not yet made a report. The University Commission seems to have given up the struggle. The reports of the Commissions on Industry and Public Health have been made, but nothing has been done to put any of their recommendations into effect.' ²

There was a tendency to mistake the malaise affecting the British administration as indicative of a sinister secretiveness concerning its true intentions. A. Alexander of the Egyptian Bar recalls proposed legal reforms which were

'shrouded in secrecy and mystery...with the result [that] the country was full of the most absurd rumours: we were to be flooded with English judges, the English language was to be the sole language of the Courts, hundreds of English lawyers were coming in from England, etc.'

Alexander judged this to have been a crucial factor in the ensuing unrest, for lawyers comprised a substantial group amongst the 'extreme' nationalists, and were supported by foreign lawyers of the Mixed Courts with vested interests to protect. ³

The Public Works Department's handling of the controversial Nile Projects had a similarly disturbing effect at this time on local opinion. Plans for storing White and Blue Nile water in the Sudan raised suspicions that Egyptian irrigation would be cut. Such

1. Elgood, Transit, p.249.

2. Morning Post, 29 January 1919.

3. Alexander, memorandum, 27 May 1919, FO371/3717/24930/82880.

suspensions were only heightened by the apparent secrecy surrounding the plans which, as Chirol observed,

'[had] presumably been discussed by the Egyptian Minister for Public Works and the Adviser to that Ministry, and...[had] been presumably approved by the Egyptian Government, but whether freely or under pressure no-one...[knew]. Egyptian public opinion [was] left without any means of knowing how far in this matter the Egyptian Government [had] been guided by Egyptian or by British interests.'

Nationalists were given further ammunition on this score by the virulent (and perhaps unprofessional) attack on the projected Nile scheme made by Willcocks and Kennedy, venerated Public Works officials of the first generation. Whether their criticisms were prompted by valid technical considerations, or, as the embarrassed Residency believed, by personal pique, they undoubtedly inflicted great damage in a conspicuous area of British administration. ²

Those British officials who were aware of certain administrative shortcomings, and who sensed trouble brewing in Egypt seem not to have been able to communicate a warning to those with leverage over policy. Chirol thought this the direct outcome of the 'excessive centralisation of British control' which had developed during the war. This tended to 'discourage rather than to promote amongst [officials] a sense of responsibility' due to the 'concentration of all power in the hands of a few privileged individuals who claimed to know all that was worth knowing.'³ As a result, Wingate had little local support in his attempts to convince the Foreign Office that Egyptian nationalism was now a powerful phenomenon.

In any case, the Foreign Office had already made up its mind to have no dealings with the Wafd, which it regarded as a seditious

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1. Chirol, Memorandum to Milner Mission, 1920, Sir Valentine Chirol Papers, St Antony's College.
 2. See H. Addison, Sun and Shadow at Aswan (London, 1959), pp.70-78.
 3. V. Chirol, The Egyptian Problem (London, 1920), pp.217-8.

movement.¹ When Wingate arrived in London in January 1919, still hoping for concessions which would enable the nationalists to work along moderate lines, he had little idea of the extent of this intransigence, nor of a plot to have him replaced as High Commissioner by Allenby. In Wingate's absence from Cairo, London received optimistic reports from Cheetham, the Residency Counsellor, which only reinforced its existing opinion. According to Cheetham, Egyptian administration was continuing without serious inconvenience, despite the absence of a secure ministry; apart from some student unrest and meetings at al-Azhar, Zaghlul's popularity was judged to be on the wane.²

In reality, it was at this point that Egyptian nationalist consciousness was rising through the nationwide distribution of the tawkilat. Far from the agitation dying out, as Cheetham reported, Wafdist organisation was in fact developing: from regular meetings at Bait al-Umma, Zaghlul's House of the Nation, and at al-Azhar, emissaries were travelling to the provinces to help village notables in forming local nationalist committees.³

On the basis of Cheetham's evaluation, however, the Foreign Office sent instructions on 26 February that the Egyptian ministers, but not the nationalists, would be permitted to come to London.⁴ In response to this, Rushdi and Adli promptly resigned once again. Zaghlul now warned Fu'ad against appointing another ministry, on the grounds that 'a Ministry formed on a programme contrary to the will of the people would be doomed to failure...' ⁵ Cheetham's

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1. Graham to Hardinge, 22 January 1919 and Hardinge to Graham, 24 January 1919, Lord Hardinge Papers, I, (40) 1919, Cambridge University Library.
 2. Telegrams Cheetham to Curzon, 3 and 24 February 1919, FO371/3711/1180.
 3. See M. Deeb, Party Politics in Egypt: the Wafd and its Rivals, 1919-1939 (London, 1979), pp.44-5. (Deeb, Party Politics).
 4. Curzon to Cheetham, 26 February 1919, FO371/3711/1180.
 5. Quoted in Kedourie, 'Zaghlul', pp.100-1.

response to this attempt at outlawing Egyptian political cooperation with the British was to recommend Zaghlul's immediate arrest and deportation. ¹

This recommendation suggests that Cheetham (as well as Brunyate and Haines who advised him) still regarded Egyptian nationalism as the 'effervescence' of mere political malcontents, which could be stamped out by striking at its leadership. Thus, when on 9 March, Zaghlul, Isma'il Sidqi, Hamad al-Basil and Muhammad Mahmud were deported to Malta, no contingency measures had been taken to deploy the police or army at strategic locations or in protection of the foreign community. ² Yet apparently the British Chamber of Commerce was already anticipating trouble, and Dr. Sydney Smith, an eminent detective in the Interior Ministry, had been openly predicting disturbances since mid-February. ³ Moreover, Wise Bey of the Nizam had come specially to Cairo to tell Haines of a warning he had received in Minufiya, that trouble would erupt if the nationalists were arrested. ⁴

Now, on the morrow of Zaghlul's deportation, demonstrations in Cairo rapidly grew beyond police control. On 10 March the army took command, yet two days later disturbances had spread to the provinces. ⁵ By 17 March many Egyptian officials were on strike, and Cairo was cut off in all but air and wireless communications. There was open revolt in Buhaira, Gharbiya, Minufiya and Daqahliya and civil government in the provinces was now non-existent except where precariously supported by the military. ⁶

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1. Cheetham to Curzon, 26 February 1919, FO371/3714/24930/36312.
 2. Elgood, Egypt and the Army, p.347.
 3. Hooker to Allenby, 1 April 1919, FO371/3715/65052; McPherson, Memorandum to the Milner Mission, p.2, McP.
 4. Wise to Milner Mission, 26 December 1919, FO848/6.
 5. See P. Caddy, 'British Policy and Egyptian Unrest, 1914-1920' (Ph.D. London 1982), Ch.3. (Caddy, 'Egyptian Unrest').
 6. Telegrams Cheetham to Curzon, 19 March 1919, FO371/3714/24930/44172-3.

Confronted with the task of restoring order and maintaining some semblance of government, many of the hidden weaknesses of British 'control' in Egypt were revealed. And after all, it was how the British administration functioned during moments of crisis that ultimately justified its existence. In all departments it was immediately brought home how much British officials relied on indigenous personnel to effect the simplest of tasks. As some departments were robbed of Egyptian cooperation, the true extent of British power was revealed.

The main rationale for having British officers in the Egyptian police, for example, had always been that the police could then be used to maintain security and protect the foreign community. When Russell became Commandant, Cairo City Police in 1918, he had realised that the reliability of the Egyptian police to a British-backed regime might soon be undermined by the growing nationalist sympathies of its members. He therefore set about establishing a bond of personal loyalty with his Egyptian force, which was now put to the test. In the face of nationalist taunts, Elgood thought that

'as a body the police stood the strain upon their loyalty to the State remarkably well. Especially was the sense of discipline noticeable in Cairo and Alexandria, the two strongholds of the Wafd. Upon the training of the officers and men stationed in these towns, British commandants had lavished infinity of pains for more than a generation, and the result was not unsatisfactory at the hour of trial.' ¹

From Russell's letters home it is clear, however, that the reliability of his force was no foregone conclusion:

'All the time one is worried to death wondering how long one's police officers and men will do what is asked of them. I am confident that they won't turn against us...but

1. Elgood, Transit, p.241.

if they want to show their sympathy with the extremists they have only to slacken off or down tools altogether.'¹

McPherson, as Ma'mur Zapt, was sure that the natural sympathies of most Egyptian police lay with the nationalists. Nevertheless, the police were the only group of Egyptian civil servants not to strike during 1919, thanks, McPherson thought, 'almost entirely to the popularity of the Commandant of Police and the truly remarkable skill with which he has kept his force together...'²

Although Russell officially handed over control to the military at an early stage in the riots, he continued to play a central role in events. There is little doubt that several potential riots were defused due to his preparedness to walk at the head of anti-British demonstrations, if it would help keep order. As scenes in Cairo reached their ugliest by 17 March, Russell requested a free rein to handle the crowds, as his wife relates:

'From 10 a.m. to 5.15 p.m. Thomas, entirely alone and unguarded led a fanatical shouting mob of from 20,000 to 25,000 people round the town standing up in his car and by the force of his own personality and grip of things, controlling them...He had several awful moments, as when they came round by Kasr el-Nil barracks and the whole length of the parapet was lined with soldiers...aiming their guns at the procession. Thomas jumped out of his car, ran ahead of the crowd, and implored the men to put their guns away, telling them that they could not help him and could only precipitate a disaster.'³

Even allowing for inevitable exaggeration in sources which focus on Russell,⁴ it is clear that here was the epitome of Cromer's ideal British official: the man who could secure British interests in Egypt by virtue of his strategic position in the administration and his 'moral' influence.

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1. Russell, April 1919, quoted in Seth, Russell Pasha, pp.146-7.
 2. McP. Vol. 14, p.468.
 3. Dorothea Russell to her father, 3 April 1919, Russell Papers.
 4. We get a different picture of Russell's methods from McPherson, who describes how, dealing with one riotous mob, he 'had a lot of fun with Russell Bey...chasing them at the head of bodies of police troops...We broke a good many heads and made several arrests;' McP. Vol.15, p.1506.

What is apparent once again, is that the role of a British official involved a difficult dual responsibility, both to Britain and Egypt, and demanded an astute evaluation of the extent to which British interests could be reconciled to Egyptian sensibilities. There were some British officials who rejected Russell's tactics of apparently playing along with the demonstrators, as being indefensibly pusillanimous. Cyril Goodman complained that Egyptians would never understand this kind of policy, 'which permits and encourages such an open demonstration of disloyalty while the country is practically in a state of revolt.'¹ Equally, McPherson, despite his devotion to Russell, condemned the general reluctance to use strong-arm methods. He describes how he himself was thwarted in an attempt to clamp down on one group of nationalist conspirators:

'On 13 March 1919 I was...outside the main gate of the mosque [al-Azhar]...little groups were arranging the sending of emissaries to the provinces to stir up trouble. ...Rejoicing that these people were outside the mosque and therefore fair game, I sprinted to the telephone...to ask permission...to round up all the speakers and their listeners [but] was told to "let them talk."' ²

McPherson criticised what he regarded as the British authorities' 'miserable fetish' of respect for Muslim sensibilities, which constrained them from even touching the mosques, let alone clamping down on their activities:

'whilst we are continually seeking out illicit presses in all quarters and seizing where possible the manuscripts...the Azhar is free...to print any matter however seditious and poisonous...we have had the key of the situation all along and have not used it.' ³

The authorities, McPherson urged, could at least cut off the nationalists' base in al-Azhar by posting a Muslim guard or establishing regular inspections.

1. Goodman, The Times, 27 March 1919.
2. McPherson, Milner Memorandum, p.3, McP.
3. McP. Vol.14, p.415.

Whether such a policy would not have exacerbated the situation is hard to judge. By the beginning of April, the newly-arrived Special High Commissioner, Allenby, was in favour of shutting down al-Azhar altogether. It was Russell who prevented this, on the grounds that it would only put 9,000 students on the streets, thereby increasing the possibility of riots. ¹

Nor could the tenuous loyalty of the Egyptian Army to the British-backed regime be forgotten in this context: Egyptian officers already had grievances concerning their exclusion from higher staff appointments, their inadequate pay and stagnant promotion. By 11 March it was felt that the army could not be subjected to the additional strain of conflicting religious loyalties; as Dorothea Russell relates, 'their own native officers said they could not risk them where the Azhar was concerned.'² Where the Egyptian army was still being used, its reliability was doubtful. In areas like Abdin Square, which was patrolled by the Sultanian Guard, little was done to maintain order. McPherson describes the events in Abdin Square on 8 April, when,

'British soldiers [were] kicked to a pulp and their blood defiled for days and nights under the ægis of the Guard, while a reign of terror for Armenians and others who dwelt in the square commenced.'³

Neither the Egyptian nor the Sudanese Army in fact mutinied in 1919, probably because they were given little opportunity to do so. Since Egyptian officers feared the effect on their men if British troops were to fire on demonstrators, the three Egyptian battalions garrisoned at 'Abbasiya were not used in Cairo, but were distributed in small groups for less active service. ⁴

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1. Dorothea Russell to her father, 3 April 1919, Russell Papers.
 2. Ibid.
 3. McPherson, Milner Memorandum, p.6, McP.
 4. Telegram Cheetham to Curzon, 21 March 1919, FO371/3714/24930/45041.

Just as there were limits to the reliability of both the Egyptian police and army, there were equal limits to the usefulness of the local British garrison, even though the army of occupation had always been regarded as the ultimate guarantee of British control. For one thing, at this post-war juncture, the garrison had neither the manpower nor the deployment to cope with disturbances the length of Egypt. Dorothea Russell, once again, indicates that any military force in the country at this moment was more apparent than real:

'the situation as regards available troops was a most anxious one - I believe they only had about 900 in all...In fact they had not a man to spare and had to leave much unguarded...General Morris and I were wondering what Cairo would have done, had they known the real situation.'

For about a week after trouble spread to the provinces, there was little army presence outside Cairo:

'reliefs were sent up on boats...as soon as the troops arrived, but for some days there were no troops available and despairing cries for help from officers of isolated police outposts had to be unanswered...'¹

Yet even in Cairo, where the garrison was concentrated, the mere presence of British soldiers provoked so hostile a reaction from Egyptian demonstrators that their use could be counter-productive. 'The presence of British troops infuriates the crowd more than anything else,' observed an Admiralty Report.² There was the equal danger of British soldiers taking unauthorised action against demonstrators in reprisal for attacks they themselves had suffered, the most emotive of which was the murder of eight British officers and men on the Cairo train at Dairut. Russell's constant nightmare was that a demonstration would encounter some group of trigger-happy Tommies, (as on 14 March when 13 Egyptians were killed),³ and

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1. Dorothea Russell to her father, 3 April 1919, Russell Papers.
 2. Rear Admiral Egypt to Admiralty, 7 November 1919, FO371/3721/161603.
 3. Chirol, Egyptian Problem, p.150.

he continually urged that the garrison be confined to barracks. The Army therefore maintained a low profile in Cairo, although Russell feared that Allenby might lose patience with this approach:

'if the mob starts again and any more soldiers and Europeans are attacked, he'll put the troops on them and then there'll be one of the bloodiest scenes in history. The British troops have been cursed and spat on wherever they went, they have had their pals bludgeoned to death, they have been on incessant duty for weeks and they are seeing red.' ¹

Even so, there is no doubt that it was only military force that eventually restored order in 1919. Outside the Governorates, there were no British police at all, and the handful of Interior inspectors who were supposed to supervise the police received only mixed support from mudirs. For some days groups of besieged European residents in Bani Suwaif, Minya and Asyut had been protected from attack by detachments of Punjabis or by Egyptian military pickets, with minimal firepower. By 17 March, however, when General Bulfin of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force got reinforcements to the provinces, he did not hesitate to employ vigorous punitive methods. It was proclaimed under martial law that those caught damaging railway or telegraph communications would be shot.² Villages suspected of harbouring leading insurgents were bombed.³ In Asyut, 28 death sentences were carried out in the aftermath of the Dairut massacre, and a further 21 executions took place elsewhere.⁴ British Interior officials, accompanying the column, acted as civilian advisers, or 'political officers' in each town that was re-occupied. It was at this time that Inspector MacNaughten flogged a man with his own hands in his Asyut office, for which he

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1. Russell to his father, 13 April 1919, Russell Papers.
 2. Chirol, Egyptian Problem, p.179.
 3. Telegram Allenby to Curzon, 4 May 1919, FO371/3716/24930/68444.
 4. Chirol, Egyptian Problem, pp.184-5; telegram Allenby to Curzon, 21 July 1919, FO371/3718/24930/105367.

was sacked by the Egyptian Government in 1922.¹

The number of Egyptian civilians killed between 9 March and 4 May 1919 is surprisingly high: 1,000 Egyptians were thought to have lost their lives, compared to 31 British and 9 Indians. ² British rule had not been threatened by an indigenous uprising to such an extent anywhere since the Indian Mutiny, and, given the simultaneous unrest in Ireland, Iraq and the Punjab, there is no mistaking fear and shock in the British reaction in Egypt.

Yet violent uprising constituted only one facet of the challenge posed to British rule during these months. Far more difficult to deal with was the passive rebellion of Egyptian Government employees. Chirol regarded this passive rebellion as

'an event of graver significance and...more enduring results than the active and violent rebellion. It disclosed for the first time the intense resentment of British control which had been slowly accumulating at the headquarters of Government in the public departments most closely...associated with the chief agencies of British control.'³

The first signs of non-cooperation came, on 9 March, from the school students, and for many months more, the regular boycott of the classroom was to become a potent method of nationalist protest. The students' grievances, beyond opposition to the Protectorate, focussed primarily on the British administration and its educational policy, although few English teachers seem to have experienced the personal animosity of their students. Typically, striking students demanded the post of Education Adviser to be abolished, all English education officials dismissed, and the teaching of English eliminated. ⁴ The authorities resorted to various threats under martial law - that schools would be closed, or examinations barred -

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1. Clayton to Milner Mission, 18 December 1919, FO848/6.
 2. Telegram Allenby to Curzon, 13 May 1919, FO371/3716/24930/73132.
 3. Chirol, Egyptian Problem, p.204.
 4. Allenby to Curzon, 4 May 1919, FO371/3717/24930/75215.

but while the Protectorate lasted, no reliable means was found of keeping Cairo students at their desks.

In a similar way, Britain found it impossible to deal with striking Egyptian lawyers. Despite warnings that no case should be adjourned without legally valid reasons, and proclamations which dispensed with the presence of advocates, business in the Native Courts was significantly impeded.

It was the strike by Egyptian civil servants which had the most far-reaching effects, however. British officials persisted in underplaying any suggestion of discontent among Egyptian Government employees. Hayter claimed, for example, that when the rebellion broke out, Egyptian coastguard, postal and irrigation officials had been the first to defend order, and that it had only been due to widespread nationalist intimidation that central government employees had reluctantly come out on strike.¹ However, subsequent reports from Political Officers suggested that, in Upper Egypt at least, 'the majority of native officials [had been] regrettably weak or timorous during the disturbances, where they were not totally disaffected...'² In Cairo the strike brought administrative chaos and grave political embarrassment. Russell described it like this:

'the main organisers are a committee of 50 government employees who refuse to let government clerks work and threaten to do them in if they do work. We can protect people in their offices but cannot afford individual protection to their homes, so only about 5% of the clerks are at work. The post office is only just working, the street-sweeping and watering has ceased, which is a great menace to health, the trams have stopped and the railways can only run a few trains with British military drivers.'³

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1. Hayter, note, 19 April 1919, MP444, ii. 181-2.
 2. Enclosure in Allenby to Curzon, 24 May 1919, FO371/3717/24930/84540.
 3. Russell to his father, 20 April 1919, Russell Papers.

Only 18% of Egyptian officials were working at the Interior, 16% in the Public Works Department, and 4% at the Ministry of Finance.¹ Even when the four Malta deportees were released on 7 April, the officials' committee decreed the strike should continue until the new Rushdi cabinet recognised the Delegation as the legal mandatory of the nation, and declared its non-recognition of the Protectorate.

McPherson, at the Interior, bitterly bemoaned the fact that the British authorities could not or would not enforce their proclamations against the strikers:

'in the face of strongly-worded Proclamations, that any inciting to strikes would be severely punished, the Heads of Departments allowed members of the Society of the Black Hand...to go round to the government employees, and threaten them with death if they did not sign a promise to go out on three days' strike...'²

What McPherson did not know was that, for the first weeks of April, the Residency was waiting to see if the new Rushdi cabinet could succeed in negotiating a return to work. Yet as a series of government appeals were defied, the ministry was itself pushed to take up the strikers' demand, that Zaghlul should be recognised as Egypt's representative. This being unacceptable to Allenby, yet another fleeting ministry submitted its resignation.³ This, in Chirol's view, demonstrated the true power of the government strike:

'...it had defeated the Egyptian Government...and produced a political deadlock which mere ministerial changes in Cairo were henceforth powerless to affect. By driving the Egyptian Ministers to resign, it had gone far to discredit the theory maintained until then throughout the Occupation, that whilst Egyptian Ministers were expected to act...in conformity with British advice, not only would British control be exercised in consultation and cooperation with them, but they would receive from it such effective support as would be required to uphold their authority in the country. The Rushdi Cabinet had resigned, not as the result

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1. Allenby to Curzon, 22 April 1919, MP444, ii. 200.
 2. McP. Vol.15, p.1509.
 3. Telegram Allenby to Curzon, 25 April 1919, FO371/3715/61981.

of differences with...the British Government, but simply because the forces controlled by the Party of Independence were too much for it.' ¹

This was the first time that Britain had been faced with administrative (as distinct from political) non-cooperation, and it took time for its long-term significance to become apparent. As yet, the strike call had evoked little response in the provinces, where Britain was highly dependent on indigenous officialdom; absenteeism was most pronounced in Cairo, where, due to a higher proportion of British officials, some measure of central administration could be maintained. Moreover, on this occasion, Allenby was able to end the strike by means of a severe warning under martial law, that any official still absent on 23 April would be considered as having resigned. ²

Once the strike was over, Allenby found himself with a civil service but no ministry, whereas previously there had been a ministry but no civil service. In both situations, martial law proved the only means of continuing to run the country. At the end of March, for example, the budget was prepared, but there was no Council of Ministers to give it sanction, without which the state could pay no bills or salaries. Finally, on 31 March, the budget was put into force by military proclamation. Other urgent matters ordinarily referred to the Council of Ministers were also made the subject of military orders, while British Under-Secretaries were authorised to exercise the powers of ministers, ³ until another cabinet could be formed.

There were signs, however, that efficient Egyptian administration might be hampered as much by the British officials, as by

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1. Chirol, Egyptian Problem, p.205.
 2. Telegram Allenby to Curzon, 22 April 1919, FO371/3715/61979.
 3. Hayter, Constitutional Developments, p.30.

uncooperative Egyptians. The effect of the uprising on British officialdom was one of widespread demoralisation. There were some individuals, certainly, who minimised the significance of recent events. Reginald Patterson, who had become Education Adviser, maintained a serene paternalism in his assumption that British rule would continue as before. The fellah, despite his recent fit of temper, was a child at heart, and like a child, was now ready 'to be good and be friends.' The great majority of Egyptian were

'at heart contented with the continuance of English control. They really do not know definitely what they want, and would be unable to formulate any concrete proposals for reform. They can therefore be satisfied with outward changes...'¹

However, the more sensitive official could not but sense the antagonism with which his presence was regarded. Edward King, a Finance Inspector, vividly recalled the hostile glares of an Azharite shaikh, an effendi, and a student - 'the extreme anti-British element' - while waiting on a railway platform on one occasion.² The effect of this antagonism was to make many officials feel spurned and resentful at what they perceived as Egyptian ingratitude; Dick Wellesley, the Inspector for Minufiya, summed it up:

'English officials are mainly sick and worn out and seem with a few exceptions to be quite ready for an "Egypt for the Egyptians" policy as long as they can get their pay and live in peace. They are all sick to death of the Egyptian and feel no further obligation towards seeing that he leads a comfortable life and is not robbed by the officials or even the brigands.'³

Other officials reacted with bitter condemnation of what they regarded as a weak-kneed British response of 'capitulation' to the nationalists. For McPherson, Allenby's decision on 7 April to

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1. Patterson, memorandum, n.d, but spring 1919, MP444, ii. 293.
 2. E. King, *Haphazard* (Abingdon, n.d.), p.17.
 3. Wellesley to Graham, 26 June 1919, FO371/3718/24930/107818.

release the Malta internees, and grant the Wafd the travelling permission they desired, marked the humiliating climax of a 'year of shame' during which, under Britain's ægis, the law-abiding had suffered a reign of terror, while traitors and murderers had been exalted. ¹ McPherson was horrified that Allenby was now even lifting martial law: by July, press censorship and the special courts were brought to an end, and the Egyptian Tribunals revived. As a result of this, Wellesley lamented, leading figures in the disturbances, particularly some senior Justice officials, were still at liberty:

'they meet daily, so I hear, in the Ministry of Justice, give their orders and make their arrangements. The Cairo Police are not allowed to touch them...At the same time enormous meetings are held every night in the Azhar where the most violent speeches calling for the murder of the English and the few natives who have backed them are made.' ²

There was indeed a spate of bomb attacks against ministers, but again the perpetrators received only light sentences.

Dispirited British officials longed for signs of a firm policy towards Egypt in London, which would clamp down on the 'extreme' nationalists, thereby bolstering the confidence of those Egyptians they perceived as cooperative 'moderates.' This certainly, was the kind of policy which Graham and Curzon would have chosen, drawing

'a sharp distinction between the movement for complete independence and one for concessions and reforms under the British Protectorate. The first could receive no countenance, the second could be met with sympathy and encouragement. If once the idea of independence received recognition...it must inevitably be so far more popular than any more moderate programme, that no native, statesman or politician, could hope to resist it.' ³

However Allenby demanded a policy of concession, and as Balfour maintained, the terms of his appointment as Special High

1. McPherson, Milner Memorandum, p.7, McP.
2. Wellesley to Graham, 26 June 1919, FO371/3718/24930/107818.
3. Graham, memorandum, 9 April 1919, FO407/184.

Commissioner meant that the Foreign Office could hardly disregard his advice. ¹

There were few British officials who had come to terms with the need for certain concessions on the British side. One who had done so, perhaps from a pragmatic military standpoint, was Gilbert Clayton. In sharp contrast to the aversion to self-government he had displayed in 1917, Clayton had come to believe by March 1919 that the nationalist movement should be met 'by a generous recognition of legitimate Egyptian aspirations and a readiness to consider reasonable requests.' ² It was Clayton who met Allenby on his arrival in Alexandria and who, according to observers, influenced his former Palestine chief into a policy of conciliation. One of the few at all to acknowledge that the current unrest was caused by the denial of independence, Clayton was convinced that 'our policy in Egypt must be very carefully reconsidered on the lines of increased sympathy with national aspirations so far as they keep within legitimate limits.' ³

One other official who foresaw that profound changes were imminent was Russell. In May 1919 he predicted:

'a very much bigger share of the government will be given to the Egyptians with a consequent reduction in the number of Englishmen, who will also be in their power. That means that one will have to sacrifice efficiency and it remains to be seen if one can sit still and watch things going to pieces.' ⁴

Through the British administration as a whole, a malaise of uncertainty prevailed. Dick Wellesley sensed a complete impasse in resolving the future direction of British policy:

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1. Telegram Balfour to Curzon, 2 April 1919, MP444, ii. 117.
 2. Clayton, memorandum, 17 March 1919, Clayton Papers, 473/3.
 3. Clayton to Wingate, 21 April 1919, quoted in Terry, 'Wingate as High Commissioner', p.113.
 4. Quoted in Seth, Russell Pasha, p.133.

'...it appears to me that no-one either native or English, civil or military, is thinking about constructing a future at all. The country is in a complete state of chaos, though outwardly quiet. The army are not governing the country as they look at the whole situation from the military point of view, and while nothing violent happens consider that all is well...The Residency seem to have no constructive policy; the Interior are paralysed and do not consider that even with the best intentions, they will find it easy to get things going again.' ¹

One factor in this administrative vacuum was Clayton's policy of withdrawing Interior Inspectors from the provinces. This left responsibility with local mudirs, who, nervous that their behaviour during the unrest might be denounced either to the military authorities or the Wafd, were tending to neglect their official duties. The central administration, on the other hand, was suffering from the post-war rush of officials to England on delayed leave. Consequently, Hornsby noted at the time,

'the country has been practically running itself all the summer. The Residency staff is all new, there has been an Acting Financial Adviser, and an acting every other adviser or none at all, so that British authority except for the army has been at a very low ebb.' ²

Thus a depleted bureaucracy and a shaky ministry were left to cope with a situation of food shortages and rising prices, which continued to worsen after the uprising. Their only response was to lift restrictions on cotton acreages and to discontinue the official food tariff, with the result that cotton cultivation once again boomed at the expense of food production.³ Chirol wrote to Gertrude Bell from Cairo in March 1920:

'...the situation here grows steadily worse...and we show less and less capacity to face it...; all the time the area producing food-stuffs in the country is being steadily reduced for the production of cotton, and so far we have done absolutely nothing to meet the paradoxical situation of a people actually starving in the midst of plenty. This

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1. Wellesley to Graham, 26 June 1919, FO371/3718/24930/107818.
 2. Hornsby, Note on the Causes of the 1919 Riots, n.d, but 1919, Hornsby Papers.
 3. See Table Seven, p.104.

is of course grist to the political agitators' mill who attribute the distress to the Protectorate.' ¹

Lord Lloyd later lamented that Britain had not responded to the uprising with 'a period of firm, just and benevolent government, directed to the removal of economic and administrative grievances,' because, in his view, 'the British obligation to the masses had been almost lost sight of.' ²

Some of the more glaring wartime mistakes were, admittedly, now avoided: payments for military requisitions, for example, were now supervised by British officers. ³ Yet beyond this, the authorities confined themselves, on the one hand, to distributing pro-British propaganda in the provinces through local notables, ⁴ and on the other, to removing the most notorious British officials as scapegoats for the general unpopularity of the administration. It had been Graham's suggestion that Dunlop, Haines and Brunyate should be dismissed on the grounds that their 'unpopular methods were prejudicial to our regaining the sympathies of the Egyptians.' ⁵ Dunlop was 'asked' to resign, and despite 12 years as Education Adviser, returned home with no honours.⁶ Haines was replaced by Clayton, while Brunyate went to England on doctor's orders. Once home, the Judicial Adviser was given no encouragement to return to Egypt. In September he was told by Curzon that his services could best be employed elsewhere in the empire; thus after a brief visit to Cairo to give evidence before the Milner Mission, Brunyate took

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1. Chirol to Bell, 1 March 1920, Chirol Papers.
 2. Lloyd, Egypt Since Cromer, i. 342-3.
 3. Allenby to Curzon, 22 June 1919, FO371/3718/24930/98003.
 4. Allenby to Curzon, 24 May 1919, FO371/3717/24930/84540.
 5. Graham, minute, 3 July 1919, FO371/3727/96485.
 6. Young, 'East', Ch. 1, p.5, YP.

up the Vice-Chancellorship of Hong Kong University.¹ Cheetham later told Rodd that it had been

'inevitable that Brunyate should go, as he represented the old tradition, and so long as he was here, the genuineness of our intentions to leave more liberty to the Egyptians would not have been believed.'²

There was, finally, one other sacrificial lamb selected by Lloyd George's government: Wingate himself. For most of 1919 Wingate too was kept in Britain, ignorant of his ultimate fate, and professionally unable to give a public defence of his High Commissioner-ship. Only in October, when Allenby's position was made permanent, did it become clear that Wingate was being made to pay for the inadequacies of Britain's Egyptian policy.

Yet the Foreign Office remained as blind to the significance of developments in Egypt as ever, and particularly to the fact that, in releasing the nationalist detainees, Britain had implicitly committed herself to negotiations for the abolition of the Protectorate. Until that process advanced, there could be no chance of political or administrative stability in Egypt. London's persistent policy of drift left both the British administration and its client ministry in an untenable position over the next months. Although it took some time for the fact to be recognised, the maintenance of foreign control had now become a straight issue between Britain and the Wafd, reducing the position of Egyptian ministers to 'that of heads of department carrying on merely routine work, and without any influence whatever on the general political situation.'³

Thus although a ministry was induced to stay in office for eight months in 1919 under Muhammad Sa'id, Egypt's true centre of

1. See FO141/686/8760.

2. Conversation between Rodd and Cheetham, 25 December 1919, MP447, p.205.

3. Chirol, Egyptian Problem, p.205.

political gravity had shifted to Paris, where the Wafd representatives were now installed at the Peace Conference. Because Britain was now dealing openly with Zaghlul, any policy of bolstering a moderate ministry became a nonsense. With the Wafd patently the ascendant force, the ground was already cut from the feet of any would-be collaborators. Moreover, Egyptian ministers could no longer be protected by the authorities from the Wafd's terrorist apparatus. British security was evidently powerless to prevent a series of attacks during 1919 on Muhammad Sa'id, Yusuf Wahba and other high officials, carried out by 'Abd al-Rahman Fahmi's 'supreme council for assassinations.' ¹

The ministry felt equally threatened, in a different way, by Britain's proposal to send a Mission of Enquiry to Egypt. The assumption being that the Mission would operate within the framework of a continuing Protectorate, the Prime Minister felt obliged to sound as opposed to its coming as did the Wafd; and in November, when the Mission's arrival was finally announced, to resign. ² The announcement was also the signal for renewed rioting in Cairo and Alexandria, and before long the pattern of events earlier in the year - student demonstrations, strikes by officials, confrontations with the British army - took shape once again.

Thus even before the Milner Mission arrived, there was little likelihood that it would meet with cooperation from many Egyptians. British rule in Egypt had in fact reached an impasse of non-cooperation, in no small measure due to the unacceptability of British administration in Egyptian sight. The Milner Mission was to cast a major part of the blame for this breakdown upon British officialdom, with some unexpected consequences.

1. See Kedourie, 'Zaghlul', p.117.
2. Telegram Allenby to Curzon, 17 November 1919, FO371/3720/24930/152819.

Sir Thomas Russell Pasha,
Commandant, Cairo City Police, 1918 - 1946



George Murray, Survey of Egypt, 1907 - 1947 | 51

Chapter Six

The British Officials and Milner

The Milner Mission has received extensive scholarly investigation. ¹ However, the usual emphasis on the formulation of British policy has tended to relegate the significance of British officialdom in the story to a minor role. This chapter offers a fresh analysis of the Mission, from the specific angle of British administration, as being indispensable to understanding the nature of Milner's recommendations, and equally the nature of 'independence' after 1922.

The Milner Mission ² came to Egypt in December 1919 with instructions to investigate the causes of the spring troubles, the existing situation, and the constitutional framework 'which, under the Protectorate,' would best promote Egyptian stability and the 'progressive development of self-governing institutions.' ³ It was a goal conceived in traditional terms of 'Anglo-Egyptian cooperation.' The Mission believed that out of its dealings with Egyptians of 'sound' moderate opinion would emerge an anti-Zaghlul party robust enough to assume once again a collaborative role. The task was somehow to 'come to terms with the better elements of Egyptian Nationalism and to try and constitute a native party who

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1. e.g, J. Darwin, Britain, Egypt and the Middle East, 1918-1922 (London, 1981); L. Ufford, 'The Milner Mission to Egypt, 1919-1921' (Ph.D. Columbia 1977); Caddy, 'Egyptian Unrest'.
 2. The delegation comprised: Milner, Colonial Secretary, Egyptian Ministry of Finance, 1889-92; Sir James Rennell Rodd, diplomat, Cairo, 1894-1901, Rome, 1908-1919; General Sir John Maxwell, Commander of British Troops, Egypt, 1908-1912, 1914-1915; J. Spender, editor, Westminster Gazette; Sir Cecil Hurst, Legal Adviser to the Foreign Office; Owen Thomas, Independent M.P. and farmer.
 3. MM Report, p.3.

would honestly cooperate with us in our constructive work.'¹

However, as an initiative whose investigative framework plainly stopped short of independence, the prospect of the Mission had already driven Muhammad Sa'id's ministry from office.² Nor was his successor, Wahba, any keener to associate his administration with an inevitable political disaster. Milner hoped that the idea of a bilateral agreement with 'representative' Egyptians might prove more acceptable than an imposed constitution. However when canvassed for its view on such an agreement, Wahba's Ministry begged to be entirely disregarded in the matter. Milner perceived that in effect the government was saying

"You see the state of public feeling. Don't ask us to run counter to it by sharing the responsibility for your unpopular proposals. That will deprive us of all authority in the country and make us useless to you."³

This caution was the direct result of an effective 'Boycott the Mission' campaign which the Wafd had been waging since October 1919. The Mission was greeted by a wave of symbolic strikes and shop-closures, and received 1,131 hostile telegrams as opposed to only 29 messages of welcome.⁴ A continuous press campaign asserted that any recognition of the Mission implied acceptance of the status quo, and warned that Egyptians responding to the invitation to give evidence would be publicly exposed as traitors. Even the re-introduction of 'consultative' press censorship could not prevent the intimidatory publication of 'interviews', supposedly given to the Mission.⁵ The security apparatus was equally powerless to stop Mission members who ventured beyond the besieged

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1. Milner, Sketch Report, 12 February 1920, MP451, pp.116-7.
 2. e.g, telegram Cheetham to Curzon, 29 September 1919, FO848/1, iii. 81.
 3. Milner to Curzon, 12 January 1920, FO848/11.
 4. MM Report, p.4.
 5. Symes, Note on the Press, 21 January 1920, FO371/3722/176623.

Semiramis Hotel being trailed by possies of noisy protestors, making the task of gauging 'representative' Egyptian opinion nigh impossible. ¹

This expression of Egyptian non-cooperation had three significant consequences. Firstly, by late December the Mission declared its willingness to hear any expressions of local opinion, and not just those that conformed to the Protectorate framework. ² Secondly, it was realised by February that the proposed delegation of senior politicians headed by the Sultan would never command the authority necessary to reach a binding Egyptian settlement, but that somehow the Wafd in Paris must be brought into the negotiating process. ³ Thirdly, the fact that the Mission found itself with no other witnesses than members of the European community and a handful of pro-British Egyptians inevitably influenced the emphasis of its findings. Allenby had elicited numerous memoranda from the official community on subjects like 'the Egyptian Government administration', which supplemented the oral evidence given by most senior British officials. Thwarted in its desire to discover some acceptable constitutional formula, the Mission found itself instead making an exhaustive analysis of every branch of Egyptian administration, so obvious was the need for systematic administrative overhaul. Several months of such enquiries, interspersed by brief provincial forays, produced the conclusions which formed the basis of the Mission's eventual report. By March it was clear that an on-the-spot agreement with Egyptian representatives was impossible, so, in the hope of entering negotiations with Zaghlul in Europe, the Mission thankfully adjourned to London.

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1. See J. Spender, Life, Journalism and Politics (London, 1927), ii. 89-90. (Spender, Life).
 2. MM Report, p.5.
 3. Milner, journal, 26 February 1920, FO848/5.

The first major category of evidence collected by the Mission related to what the British community and some Egyptians thought had caused the unrest of 1919. The conclusions suggested by this evidence, in relation to both the rural and urban troubles, carried clear implications of responsibility for the British officials. How did the Milner Mission reach its decision that British administration had been at fault?

Where the causes of rural Egyptian discontent were concerned, a standard explanation had evolved amongst the British community long before Milner's arrival. Even before the March outbreak, the former irrigation official, Willcocks, put forward a theory as to why Britain had 'today lost the friendship and confidence of the fellaheen.' Central to his argument was the 'oppression of the poor and helpless' by 'unscrupulous' Egyptian officials in the course of war-time recruitment and requisitioning. The fellaheen had above all been 'outraged by seeing, for the first time in the British Occupation, the most oppressive Omdas and officials patted on the back as men of action.' ¹ This and other memoranda suggesting the causes of discontent reached the Foreign Office by late April. Yet even earlier, Graham in London was writing a 'Note on the Unrest in Egypt' incorporating precisely the same components of supposed fellaheen grievance.² This view was reinforced right through April and May by further memoranda forwarded from Cairo. Out of twenty-eight documents discussing the possible causes of unrest, both urban and rural, fifteen emphasised these same 'wartime grievances'. ³

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1. Willcocks, memorandum, 4 March 1919, MP444, ii. 246.
 2. Graham, Note on the Unrest in Egypt, 9 April 1919, FO371/3715/60201.
 3. Evidence from: Willcocks; an anonymous Englishman; Sheikh Mohammed Mahdi; Mohammed Lutfi el-Sayid; Amin Youssef; "Fanous"; G. Wainwright; Mallaby Firth; Percy Carver; Political Officers from: Western Delta; Behera; Damietta; Alexandria; Heliopolis; Upper Egypt; MP444, ii. (Original transliteration).

A number of these analyses made the specific point, moreover, that in having permitted such abuses, the British administration had alienated, in the fellaheen, time-honoured and vital allies of British rule. Many believed that the jacquerie of 1919 had introduced a dangerous new factor into the situation. For the first time, observed Mallaby Firth of the Antiquities Department, two 'naturally hostile classes', town and country, were 'united in having grievances,'¹ producing the unprecedented phenomenon of a national political movement.

What had rapidly become an orthodox interpretation of the spring rebellion reached a wider public in late 1919 through an avalanche of Times articles by Sir Valentine Chirol, a freelance writer on Oriental affairs, recently returned from Egypt. Throughout his scathing indictment of Anglo-Egyptian administration ran a central refrain, namely: 'the ultimate responsibility rested upon British officials.'²

Given the prevalence of such views before the Mission had even started work, it is scarcely surprising that Milner and his colleagues appear to have been strongly influenced by them, particularly in light of the extreme difficulties of gathering objective information from the provinces for themselves. On 12 January 1920 Milner told Curzon that he had no doubt that the fellaheen had been 'rather too roughly handled during the war both by the civil and military authorities,'³ an explanation taken up by the Mission's draft report on the 'Causes of Unrest' in May.⁴ The Mission was careful not to cast outright blame on British

1. Firth, MP444, ii. 279.

2. The Times, 22 December 1919; see also 30 and 31 December, and 1, 2, 3 and 6 January 1920; and Chirol, Egyptian Problem.

3. Milner to Curzon, 12 January 1920, MP449, p.109.

4. Memorandum on the Causes of Unrest, MP450, 86ff. ('Unrest').

officialdom, stressing the erosion of wartime manpower, and particularly the role of 'a certain number of temporary officials, engaged owing to the urgency of war conditions...' ¹ The Mission acknowledged, nevertheless, a 'general weakening of our touch with...the natives,' ² through which the fellaheen had lost confidence in the benefits of British rule. ³

A recent thesis by Caddy has pointed out that the Mission delivered these conclusions with little substantiation; it accepted verbatim the evidence of its witnesses, making no attempt to marry these views to an analysis of the geography and targets of rural violence in 1919. ⁴ Questioning the 'recruitment and requisitioning' explanation of the uprising accepted by Milner and most subsequent historians, Caddy offers an alternative interpretation of Egyptian rural discontent which maintains an undoubted correlation with the geographical facts of the outbreak, and which emphasises instead resentments concerning cotton price controls, local tax assessments, and inadequacies in the drainage and railway systems. ⁵

The reader is invited to assess Caddy's evidence in extenso; this present thesis does not aspire to be an in-depth study of Egyptian rural unrest in 1919, and the writer acknowledges a certain credibility to this new evidence. However, this is no reason to exclude the validity of the traditional explanation, on the grounds of an apparent lack of correlation between supposed grievance and actual protest. Under the sway of nationalist or xenophobic passions, resentments do not have to be rational to carry

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1. Proposed Conclusions of Report of Special Mission, MP451, p.5.
 2. 'Unrest', MP450, p.81.
 3. MM Report, p.12.
 4. Caddy, 'Egyptian Unrest', Ch.4.
 5. Ibid, Ch. 5.

devastating force. The parallels of Irish or Afrikaner nationalist mythology suggest that if, in Egypt, labour recruitment had become equated with alien oppression, then it could still exert the force of a deep-seated popular grievance at considerable geographical or chronological distance from the event.

In any case, under either hypothesis or both, it was the British administration that was ultimately responsible for the administrative shortcomings involved; and it was the perception that British officials were at fault which is of central importance to this thesis, in view of the effect of this perception on future developments.

Even at the time there were those who doubted a facile 'wartime grievances' explanation. A number rightly pointed out, for example, that service in the Labour Corps had not been that unpopular, and that the attraction of a reasonable wage ensured considerable voluntary enlistment and re-enlistment. ¹ William Hayter made the observation that if wartime abuses had contributed to the unrest, then markedly few British officials were the target of violent attack. ² Some therefore drew the conclusion that peasant grievances had merely been animated by outside agitation. As one Interior inspector, R.V. Wild, observed:

'personally I do not consider that any of these grievances were very real, but they were worked for all they were worth by the Political Agitators...'³

There were others who acknowledged that Egyptian society had been touched by alien rule at a much deeper level during recent years than ever before in the Occupation. McPherson blamed what he called a 'miserable kill-joy policy' which had interfered with

1. Hooker, Patterson, memoranda, MP444, ii. 246, 291.
2. Hayter, Constitutional Developments, p.28.
3. Wild, memorandum, n.d, FO848/4.

'innocent picturesque native customs (sic)' for having hustled the easy-going...native, until he has become irritated and worried.' ¹

Yet the average resident formed his opinions on 1919 from the remarkably similar stories picked up in the villages by those who went to investigate, ² and from the nationalist propaganda which justified resistance to the Protectorate in identical terms; one typical pamphlet called upon Egyptians to

'detest the Protectorate because it snatched away your son from your arms, and subjected him to death and flogging in Palestine and Syria...detest the Protectorate because it deprived you of your food and your animals...and because it took possession of your cotton at a ridiculous price and sold it at L.E.40.' ³

This interpretation of the fellaheen's grievance led some to conclude that Britain had failed in her duty towards Egypt; that the fellah indeed had 'ample cause for discontent' ⁴ since beneficent reform had become only a reality of the past. In recent years, Spender agreed, there had really been 'little to our credit...' in Egypt. ⁵

Perhaps there was a sense in which it was easier for the British administration to blame itself for certain deficiencies than fully to accept that Egyptian nationalism had become a popular, nationwide phenomenon. Self-criticism implied the need for reform, without touching the underlying assumption that British rule was right and inevitable; whereas to accept the ultimate logic of popular nationalism would be to sound the death-knell to continued occupation.

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1. McP. Vol. 15, p.1505.
 2. e.g, Wainwright, 14 April 1919, MP444, ii. 277.
 3. Enclosure, Cheetham to Curzon, 16 October 1919, FO407/185, No.254.
 4. Enclosure, Allenby to Curzon, 24 May 1919, MP444, ii. 300.
 5. Spender, memorandum, 6 April 1920, MP454, p.140.

There was more to this reaction, in other words, than morbid self-doubt, or the 'failure of imperial nerve' which is frequently imputed to the Milner Mission's findings in general. Certain circumstances encouraged local observers to adopt a particular interpretation of events in 1919 which cast British officials in a guilty role. Moreover, we should remember that this criticism originated not so much from the officials themselves, as from non-official British residents, many with their own axe to grind against British administration.

Thus when Willcocks, for example, condemned the present generation of officials as 'weak-kneed and time-serving Britons,'¹ we should bear in mind his resentments over lost promotion in the Irrigation department dating from the 1890s, and his current vendetta against the Public Works over the principles of the Nile Projects. Then there was the local commercial community, which for some years had been fearing a sell-out to Egyptian nationalism by the British authorities, and which had now suffered most directly from the paralysis of business during 1919.² It was these residents who now embellished the view of a British administration in decline, in comparison, frequently, to a somewhat romanticised picture of the early years of British rule. Inspectors, they complained, no longer 'mov[ed] slowly, becom[ing] intimate with local magnates and omdehs, and hobnob[bing] with all and sundry,' but merely dash[ed] over long distances in motor cars...'³ Nor did the committee of non-official residents feel any 'confidence in the Advisers on whom the High Commissioners have largely to depend,'⁴ principally, it appears, because residents felt the

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1. Willcocks in Report of the Non-Official British Community, MP447, p.67. ('Non-Official').
 2. e.g, Allenby to Curzon, 19 April 1919, MP444, ii. 270-1.
 3. Senior Missionaries, 'Non-Official', pp.90-1.
 4. 'Non-Official', p.67.

advisers ignored their long experience of the country. There was little love lost, apparently, between the two elements of the British community; 'the British official,' observed Moseley, was at best 'unbeloved of the unofficial Britain.' 1

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Such criticisms of British officialdom were usually applied in relation to the rural manifestations of Egyptian discontent in 1919. However, the Milner Mission discovered that in different ways the British official was also regarded as a major culprit of British rule by many educated nationalists in the towns, As Milner put it:

'even now it is not so much the presence of British troops which excites the hostility of the Egyptians. It is our administrative occupation of the country, our interference with all their domestic affairs.' 2

Typical of many lists of grievances submitted to the Mission by educated, professional Egyptians was one from Muhammad Lutfi al-Saiyid. Alongside other familiar complaints - the unfulfilled promises of evacuation, the refusal to allow Egyptian delegates to the Peace Conference, and the deportation of Zaghul - Lutfi al-Saiyid specifically cited the policies and personalities of British officials, most notably Brunyate, Haines and Dunlop. 3

That British civil servants were a particularly tangible manifestation of British rule is confirmed by a report from the Government Censor's Office. In 1918 the Chief Arabic Censor found that one in every hundred letters sent abroad from Egypt referred to the current political situation, and particularly to the goals of

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1. Moseley, With Kitchener in Cairo, p.178.
 2. Milner, memorandum to the Cabinet, 16 September 1920, MP451, p.10.
 3. Conversation between Furness and Mohammed es-Sayed Lutfi, 19 April 1919, MP444, ii. 260-1. (Original transliteration).

complete independence and clearing the country of foreign officials. 1

Again, it is likely that the Mission arrived in Egypt with some preconceived notions on this subject. The Foreign Office already suspected that excessive numbers of British officials were partly to blame for Egyptian ill-feeling, as Curzon told Allenby in May 1919:

'it has been seriously represented to us that one of the chief causes of the present discontent...is the large increase in the number of government posts held by British officials.' 2

Then in December Chirol had raised public concern by his publication of previously unknown figures, suggesting that the number of British officials had more than doubled since 1906, to 1,761. The Times highlighted the contrast between these figures for an Egyptian population of 13 million, and the 4,898 European officials who served a population of over 300 million in India. 3

The Milner Mission rapidly concluded that the number of British officials was now incompatible with a supposedly limited administrative presence, and that it was one of the principal

'grievances of the more moderate Egyptian malcontents ...that they are..."priest-ridden", i.e., kept too much in leading strings by an ever-increasing number of British officials.' 4

The civil service statistics for 1919-20 produced for the Mission established for the first time that there were in fact 1,546 pensionable and contract British officials (see Appendix One), with a further 164 monthly- or daily-paid employees, bringing the total to 1,710. 5

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1. Darke to Cheetham, 26 December 1918, FO141/810/8013.
 2. Curzon to Allenby, 13 May 1919, MP444, ii. p.194.
 3. Times, 22 December 1919.
 4. Milner, journal, 10 December 1919, MP448, pp.15-6.
 5. Egyptian Government Statistics, MP453, pp.72 and 60.

The Mission noted, furthermore, that Egyptian feeling concerning the numbers of British officials had probably been revived after the war by an impression of a fresh influx of recruits. A report of the Public Health Commission, proposing a marked expansion in foreign staff, had reached the local press,¹ while the British community's newspapers continued to announce the arrival in Egypt of new appointments, including, significantly, five young Interior inspectors.²

The Mission did not believe that foreign competition posed any valid threat to the vast number of low-rank civil servants, since the proportion of Egyptian officials in junior pensionable and contract positions had actually increased since 1910. (See Table Three, p.66). However, it recognised that it was in the category of senior posts that 'the increase in British [had] been disproportionate to the increase of Egyptian officials...' suggesting that 'sufficient effort [had] not been made in recent years to train Egyptians for positions of greater responsibility.'³ The Mission pointed out, furthermore, what it considered a significant variation between ministries in the preponderance of foreign officials. It found no evidence of excessive interference in the Ministries of Interior, War or Justice, while in other departments a marked British monopoly of higher posts. (See Table Ten).

Despite the Mission's conclusion that it was the higher administrative echelons which suffered from an excess of British officials, it is interesting that Egyptian criticism seems to have focussed as much on the presence of junior foreign officials as on

1. Patterson, memorandum, n.d, MP444, ii. 292.
2. Clayton before Milner Mission, 18 December 1919, FO848/6.
3. Note on Statistics, 9 November 1920, MP450, pp.65-6.

Table Ten

Distribution of Posts over L.E.800 in Three Ministries, 1919-20

<u>Ministry</u>	<u>Percentage of Posts by Nationality</u>		
	<u>Egyptian</u>	<u>British</u>	<u>Others</u>
Finance	11.8	76.4	11.8
Education	21.4	75.0	3.6
Agriculture	10.0	90.0	-

Source:

Egyptian Government Statistics, MP453, pp.74, 75, 79.

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their more conspicuous departmental chiefs.¹ Yet perhaps nationalist feeling amongst Egyptian civil servants was likely to be most acute at the interface between aspiring young effendi and the junior British official.

In William Hayter's view, the fault lay not so much with the appointment of young Englishmen where technically-qualified Egyptians did not exist, as in the failure to make adequate provision for the future. Hayter felt that each time 'twenty scientists were engaged from Cambridge, twenty young Egyptians should at once have been sent to Cambridge to study the same branches of science...'²

Little existed in the way of formal training procedures, however; aspiring Egyptian bureaucrats found themselves trapped with insufficient experience, yet denied the opportunity to acquire it. Most British officials did prove their technical expertise in their respective fields, yet certain notorious examples of ineptitude challenged the long-held assumption that any Oxbridge graduate with a year's Arabic was automatically more capable than an Egyptian. A number of Financial Advisers were appointed without any prima facie qualifications in finance, while it was alleged that one Under-Secretary of Agriculture could not tell wheat from barley.³

Egyptian acrimony over foreign domination of the bureaucracy went hand in hand, the Mission found, with long-standing resentment against British-directed education policy. The belief was widespread that the occupying power had consistently retarded the development of Egyptian education, particularly at the secondary level, with the specific intention of limiting the number of qualified Egyptians.

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1. Young was a target for this kind of criticism while a junior inspector in the Survey; see Young, 'East', Ch. 4, p.1, YP.
 2. Hayter, Constitutional Developments, p.18.
 3. Graves to Haines, 12 January 1917, WP 163/1.

As early as 1905, when free tuition had been abolished for instruction above kuttab level, it was alleged that British advisers,

'though they are not unwilling to teach the fellaheen to read and write, and to encourage industrial schools with a view to educating craftsmen, deliberately discourage anything approaching to higher education, as they are unwilling that any steps should be taken calculated to fit the Egyptians gradually to dispense with European assistance in the government of the country.' ¹

Even though Cromer might justify the reintroduction of fees from primary to higher school level as a measure to prevent the monopolisation of education by the rich, ² there is little to disguise the lowly status of Public Instruction in the Anglo-Egyptian order of priorities. Education was only re-elevated to a ministerial portfolio in 1907 after years as a department of Public Works; between 1907 and 1917 the Egyptian literacy rate (over 5 years of age) had merely risen from 54 to 79 per thousand, a reflection of consistently meagre budgetary allocations. ³ Even within the hierarchy of British officials, teachers were relegated virtually to untouchable status.

There is no doubt that from the early 1900s, in order to cope with an excess of junior government functionaries, ⁴ the British authorities pursued policies designed to restrict the appointment of Egyptians to the government. To be eligible, the graduates of private schools were now also required to possess a government school certificate; moreover, those with a Primary (as opposed to a Secondary) certificate were restricted to posts of L.E.10 per month. ⁵ Equally, the reintroduction of school fees was in fact

1. Report 1905, p.82.

2. Ibid, pp.82-3.

3. Literacy and budgetary statistics, Ministry of Education, FO848/7.

4. Report 1900, p.49.

5. Reid, 'Educational Choices', p.359; Report 1901, p.39.

viewed as a means of discouraging applicants to the Higher Primary Schools, and thence to the Civil Service. ¹

Nevertheless, the attractions of government service for school leavers remained strong as ever. Beside the inducements of short hours, social standing, opportunities for self-enrichment, and ultimately a pension, the civil service held certain advantages over other careers. Two prestigious nineteenth-century occupations had now lost their appeal; the Occupation had deprived the Egyptian Army, now British-officered, of its former status, while the religious establishment of al-Azhar was losing its traditional teaching and judicial functions to the secular education system and legal profession respectively. ² But now, even the law, long regarded as the best preparation for a government career, was becoming an over-crowded profession; from about 1908 the Egyptian Government sharply reduced its appointments of Law School graduates, fearing a link between nationalist agitation and the legal profession. ³ The openings for Egyptian doctors were similarly contracted. ⁴ Thus Egyptian graduates of the Higher Schools, whose attendance had risen from 743 in 1905 to 1,110 in 1920, ⁵ were facing limited opportunities in the professions at the same time as entry to the civil service was becoming increasingly cramped due to competition from British graduates.

The tendency to regard these obstacles as the outcome of a British conspiracy of repression was exacerbated more than anything by the reputation of its alleged perpetrator-in-chief, the notorious

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1. PP 1903, lxxxvii (1529), p.56. (Report 1902).
 2. Reid, 'Career Choices', pp.350-2.
 3. Ibid, pp.367-8.
 4. Ibid, p.370.
 5. Report 1905, p.84; Report 1914-1919, p.48.

Education Adviser, Douglas Dunlop. Whether or not Dunlop was really bent on 'keeping the Egyptians down,' the personality of this unimaginative official confirmed an impression of hostility amongst Egyptians and British alike. 'The root of the matter', wrote Patterson, Dunlop's successor, 'is that he is unapproachable and uncongenial, and his policy is consequently suspect.' ¹ Humphrey Bowman, one of Dunlop's inspectors, perceived a certain shy reserve behind the ramrod discipline; ² yet the impression that he had little sympathy for Egypt ensured that Dunlop was universally feared and disliked by Egyptians. In the heady days of student unrest following Mustafa Kamil's death, the Adviser had been threatened and publicly booed. ³

Not that Dunlop was an unmitigated conservative in educational matters: it was he who did most to advance the cause of education for girls through the shoals of parental and social hostility by a judicious combination of enthusiasm and strict regard for the requirements of protocol. ⁴ Neither was Dunlop's reactionary image totally deserved over the issue of Arabic. It was Wilfred Blunt who originally spread the suggestion that Dunlop deliberately discouraged his teaching staff from learning Arabic and thus, by implication, suppressed the vernacular as a medium of instruction. ⁵ It is true that a great expansion in English-language instruction occurred in the Higher Colleges during Dunlop's earlier years in office. However, as a number of British teachers relate, it proved too much to expect Egyptian pupils with only

1. Patterson, memorandum, n.d, MP444, ii. 292.

2. Bowman, Middle East Window, p.42.

3. Bowman diaries, 24 April 1908.

4. The number of girls attending schools under government auspices grew from 2050 in 1900 to 49,732 in 1919; Mrs Elgood, 15 January 1920, FO848/7.

5. Blunt, My Diaries, ii. 40.

rudimentary English to grasp advanced subjects as imparted by British officials. Bowman felt that 'more than half of what was learnt in this way was never properly digested or understood.'¹ Probably as a result of this, Dunlop by his later years seems to have revised his view of teaching in the vernacular.

It is generally forgotten that, alone of all the Advisers, Dunlop came to insist upon his British officials making a serious study of Arabic. Before a teaching appointment could be confirmed, new arrivals had to pass an examination in reading manuscript, translation and conversation. ² Moreover, all teaching in primary and secondary schools, with the exception of English-language instruction, was conducted in Arabic by 1919.³

Be this as it may, Dunlop's public image had grown steadily blacker with the years. Ronald Storrs regarded him as 'one, indeed the chief of the Big Four indirectly responsible for the Egyptian Revolution.'⁴ A typical protest meeting of striking students in April 1919 demanded, in addition to ending the Protectorate, the abolition of the Educational Advisership, the dismissal of all English teachers and the eradication of English instruction. ⁵ It was in these kinds of ways that British officials fuelled the fire of urban Egyptian nationalism - by their personalities, their policies, and their very presence.

Under the Occupation, an Egyptian student, avid for advancement, would encounter a crowded educational system, and an English schoolmaster, speaking a largely alien tongue, who possibly

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1. Bowman, Middle East Window, p.62.
 2. See McP. 14 November 1901, 2 May 1902.
 3. Dunlop, memorandum, October 1919, p.5, FO848/3.
 4. Storrs, introduction to Bowman, Middle East Window, p.xv; the other three, presumably, being Cecil, Brunyate and Haines.
 5. Allenby to Curzon, 4 May 1919, FO371/3717/75215.

had little inclination for extra-curricular activities. ¹

Our student, increasingly sensitised to the Occupation by the nationalist press, might personally experience failure at examinations which had been set and marked by British officials. However, should he succeed in achieving his Secondary Certificate, less and less would this guarantee him admittance to the civil service. There was now no justification, as the Milner Mission observed,

'for a presumption that any certificate obtained in the schools carries with it a title to Government employment...for the number of certificate-holders largely exceeds the number that can actually be employed...'²

The Mission noted a widespread resentment that, in refusing employment, the government was breaking faith with the certificate-holder. ³ Yet it was under British 'advice' that an atrophied education system continued to produce intending bureaucrats, despite all attempts to the contrary.

Finally, for those that secured a government post, there was the ignominy of discriminatory remuneration. The Egyptian Government salary scale operated openly in favour of its European employees. British officials earned 19% of total Egyptian Government salaries (excluding Council of Ministers) while holding only 6% of pensionable or contract posts. ⁴ The resulting sense of grievance was compounded by the effects of inflation which, by the end of the war, was affecting all those on fixed incomes. 'The real inability of the greater mass of public servants on fixed salaries to make both ends meet' prompted the Egyptian Government in September 1919 to raise its salaries by 20%. ⁵ However, the principle of separate salary

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1. Bowman, Middle East Window, p.39.
 2. Recommendations of Sub-Committee "A" on Education, 24 April 1920, MP448, pp.201-2.
 3. Ibid, p.203.
 4. Egyptian Government Statistics, MP453, p.72.
 5. Report 1920, p.26; telegram Cheetham to Curzon, 16 September 1919, FO371/24930/129867.

scales or expatriate allowances remained. Brunyate thought it 'very important' that 'a distinction should be made between Englishmen and Egyptians doing identical work,' believing that

'we are entitled to expect from senior British officials a certain style of living which is quite unnecessary in the case of Egyptians, and which is fully justified by the importance of prestige as an element in the administration of a country governed on such lines as Egypt.' ¹

Only in 1921 did the Cadre Commission on government salaries recommend a single rate of salary for all posts, whether held by an Egyptian or European, as a fairer and more acceptable system. British officials would, in addition, receive pensionable expatriation pay. ²

So for a variety of reasons, a good many Egyptians who had been groomed by their families for government service, instead turned in frustration to journalism and nationalist agitation. Significant among these was the founder of al-Liwa', Mustafa Kamil, who rejected government service after graduating in law. Others felt the bite of British administrative dominance when their promotion in the bureaucracy was blocked. One such was Muhammad Farid, Kamil's successor as head of the Nationalist Party, al-Hizb al-Watani. ³ Others like Ahmad Lutfi al-Saiyid chafed against the professional controls exerted upon them, as senior Egyptian officials, by their British superiors. Unlike his British counterparts, Lutfi al-Saiyid, as Deputy Public Prosecutor, was unable to examine major cases without reference to his British chief. It was over a legal disagreement with this individual that Lutfi al-Saiyid finally left the Ministry of Justice for private legal practice, and in particular the defence of the villagers of Dinshawai. ⁴

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1. Brunyate to Wingate, 4 January 1919, MP447, p.23.
 2. Allenby to Curzon, 19 July 1921, enclosing Report of Cadre Commission, FO371/6320/E8660.
 3. R. Tignor, Modernisation and British Colonial Rule in Egypt (Princeton, 1966), p.261.
 4. Lutfi al-Saiyid, Egypt and Cromer, p.186-8.

In view of these kind of connections between the civil service, the legal profession and the nationalist press, the Milner Mission accepted the widely-held view of these occupations as the seed-bed of Egyptian nationalism:

'the ranks of the Nationalists were swelled continually by the growing number of the official class, who regarded the presence of the British...as a bar to their prospects of promotion...It is established beyond question that the anti-British movement had its origins in the official class and among the lawyers who are allied to them.' ¹

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Only with the publication of the Milner Report in February 1921 did the Mission's conclusions become public. In essence, the Mission envisaged the termination of the Protectorate over Egypt, and the substitution of a bilateral treaty, under which the direct exercise of British authority would be sharply curtailed. The treaty would confine Britain's jurisdiction to Egypt's external relations, Egyptian finance as this related to the foreign debt, and questions of Egyptian security and justice affecting the European community. Spender summed up the Mission's central conclusion in this way:

'if the Egyptians did not want us to govern them and could keep order and maintain solvency without us, we were under no obligation to undertake the invidious, difficult and very expensive task of governing them against their will.' ²

This unexpected turnabout has frequently been characterised as imperial 'failure of nerve', a reaction of shock and guilt to the events of 1919, which set Britain on the retreat in the Middle East. ³ Yet the plan to terminate the Protectorate has much more the features of a pragmatic measure of rationalisation than

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1. 'Unrest', MP450, pp.75-6.
 2. Spender, *Life*, ii. 91.
 3. See, e.g, Kedourie, 'Zaghlul'.

a symptom of imperial malaise. Versailles had left Britain with an artificially over-extended empire, which experienced a rash of post-war protests, often, as in Egypt, in reaction to unprecedented wartime demands. Milner's Egyptian response reflected a realisation of the vulnerability of such^a possession at a time of demobilisation, and an instinct that British interests might be served better by disengagement from the formal political control which had solidified during the war, while continuing to protect key interests in the area by less conspicuous means. The traditional importance of Egypt in defending the Indian heart of the empire was in no way diminished. Milner remained convinced that Egypt was 'truly the nodal point of our whole Imperial system.' But as he suggested to the Cabinet, '...is it necessary that we should own it? Is it not sufficient if we have a firm foothold there?'¹ Curzon shared his view that the precise form of an Egyptian agreement mattered little:

'You and I agree that these Eastern peoples with whom we have to ride pillion have different seats from Europeans and it does not seem to me to matter much whether we put them on the saddle in front of us or whether they cling on behind and hold us round the waist. The great thing is that the firm seat in the saddle shall be ours.'²

In all the following negotiations to secure Egyptian consent to such an amended relationship, one question was never at issue: that British administration in Egypt in its existing form would come to an end. For the purposes of this study, this is the point of central (although strangely neglected) interest. Something had happened to alter Milner's whole perspective since 1917, when he had endorsed Cecil's plan for complete administrative takeover. Soon after the Mission's arrival, he seems to have decided that Britain's administrative involvement in Egypt should end. In January 1920 he

1. Milner, memorandum to the Cabinet, 16 September 1920, MP451, p.10.

2. Curzon to Milner, 3 January 1920, FO848/11.

wrote of 'the conviction at which I have gradually been arriving, that the right line for us now to take is gradually to draw out of the administration of Egypt and put more real power and responsibility into native hands.' 1

It is only through an understanding of the key role played by the British officials in preceding events that we can understand the basis of Milner's decision, and thus comprehend the true nature of the Milner plan as a whole. Milner decided that British administration should be done away with for the simple reason, I suggest, that British officials were not fulfilling the supportive role with regard to Britain's interests in Egypt which they had always been expected to play. In two vital respects their traditional value in the eyes of British policy had disappeared. Firstly, they had lost their practical value, since the optimum system of advisory administrative control no longer functioned as intended. Secondly, their original philosophical value, as a means of legitimising Britain's presence in Egypt, had evaporated; far from boosting Britain's image in Egyptian eyes, the officials had now become a symbol of all that was unpopular about British rule.

Since the presence of the officials had now become counter-productive, so their elimination, Milner came to believe, could have positive advantages for Britain's position in Egypt. To be seen dealing drastically with British officialdom was a means, I would suggest, of trying to win the support of that 'cooperative class' of 'sound' Egyptian nationalists with whom the Mission wanted to negotiate a treaty. To get rid of the British civil servants, with the exception of those demanded by the dictates of imperial security, was to make them the complete scapegoat for the

1. Milner, journal, 31 January 1920, MP448, p.57.

unpopularity of British rule. In December 1919 Milner told Lloyd George that if the moderates were

'successfully to resist the Extremists, we must have something to give to the Moderates; they must be able to hold out some attractive prospect of "self-government" to the people - beautiful phrase, this, but Orientals live on phrases and camouflage...'¹

The end of British administration, even at the price of reduced efficiency, presented the ideal sop to throw to the moderate nationalists. Perhaps also by emphasising the administrative change involved, Milner was on safer ground with a Cabinet worried by the strategic implications of ending the Protectorate. To end Britain's intervention in Egypt's internal affairs could be both expiation and blessing: a means of escaping an imperial millstone in order to safeguard imperial priorities.

For at least a year before he returned to Egypt, Milner had been in regular communication with his old Private Secretary from South African days, 'Ozzy' Walrond, now resident in Cairo, and esteemed by the Colonial Secretary as an astute Egypt-watcher.² Walrond's letters primed Milner to expect a marked deterioration in the standard of administration in Egypt, and urged a drastic cut-back in British personnel.³ A memorandum of August 1919 in Walrond's spiky hand acknowledged that Britain had important interests in Egypt, but continued:

'...if the people of Egypt are happier with self-government, and a few Englishmen to show them the way to govern themselves, and will guarantee the present state of finances will continue and will agree to the Ministry of Finance being under the control of our Treasury, why not let them have it and absolute control in one or two Departments of State to see how they will acquit themselves.'⁴

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1. Milner to Lloyd George, 28 December 1919, MP449, p.123.
 2. e.g, Milner, conversations, 8 December 1919, FO848/5.
 3. e.g, Walrond to Milner, 28 October 1918, MP452, p.61 and 10 November 1918, MP452, p.67.
 4. Walrond, memorandum, 29 August 1919, MP163, quoted in Lissauer, 'British Policy Towards Egypt', p.314.

Thus it may have been Walrond who supplied the Mission with its core concept even before its arrival in Cairo.

Certainly once in Egypt, the administrative emphasis of the evidence available to the Mission may well have encouraged an evaluation of the Egyptian situation in strongly administrative terms. Milner's papers show that he paid particular attention to the advice of one hard-headed British official, the Vice-President of the Native Court of Appeal, Judge Percival. Percival was one of the first to articulate the view that there were two policies open to Britain, which admitted of no compromise. Assuming complete independence to be out of the question, Britain could either decide to continue its responsibility for Egypt's good government, or to confine its responsibility to the protection of foreign interests. The first option would meet fierce opposition and could only be carried out by the application of force, while the withdrawal option would mean inevitable administrative deterioration. However, Cromer's deliberately ambiguous mechanism of control had now finally broken down, and any 'further policy of drift [was] certain to end in disaster.' ¹

The Mission appreciated that, of these options, only withdrawal was feasible. For Britain to take over the Egyptian Government completely was, Spender acknowledged, 'superficially a tempting remedy', but in the end it would '[defeat] itself by causing discontent...' British officials, moreover, were 'not enough and never could be enough to make the administration British...' ² In other words, the traditional arguments against annexation now applied more potently than ever. It was thus a question, Milner

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1. See Percival, memorandum, 17 April 1919, MP444, ii. 264-6, with marginal notes by Milner, indicating his interest.
 2. Spender, 'Some General Observations', February 1920, FO848/8.

instructed his colleagues, of deciding 'how much authority we ought to try to exercise in Egypt, what we should try to do and what we had better leave alone.' ¹

In the following weeks, the Mission proceeded to isolate the areas where Britain should retain administrative control by means of a cold-blooded analysis of Britain's essential interests. Milner suggested that finance and defence were all that really mattered in Egypt, and that Britain should aim to withdraw from all other departments. ² Hurst was prepared to go even further: agriculture, education, public health, local government, communications and public works could all be handed over immediately, but Britain could also withdraw its financial control without prejudicing any vital interests, as long as debt repayments were satisfactorily guaranteed. ³

However, in time, the caution of the financial officials prevailed. It was imperative, they argued, that the Powers should be given no opportunity to intervene in Egypt on the grounds of a default in debt repayments. In light of this, the Mission accepted the need for continuing financial control in the shape of a senior British official in the Finance Ministry who would be responsible for safeguarding the service of the debt, and who, to that end, would maintain a general supervision of financial policy. ⁴

The Mission also recognised the need to retain control over security and justice, if the foreign communities were not to feel threatened by Egyptian autonomy. As it was envisaged that any treaty would be accompanied by the abolition of the Capitulations, there

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1. Milner, memorandum to Mission members, n.d, MP449, p.6.
 2. Milner's comment on Harvey's evidence to Mission, 1 January 1920, FO848/6.
 3. Harvey to Mission, op.cit, and Hurst, Note on the Lines Egyptian Reform Should Take, n.d, MP449, pp.22-9.
 4. Note on Ministry of Finance, 5 May 1920, MP450, pp.53-4.

was the danger that insecure foreign nationals might implicate their home governments in their defence instead. To forestall this threat and to make Capitulatory reform acceptable to the Powers, the Mission's legal expert, Hurst, proposed a British commandant of police in each mudiriya, British police officers in all cities with European populations, and a British Inspector-General of Police in overall charge. ¹ Britain would also retain an adviser in the Justice Ministry to safeguard the judicial position of foreigners in the absence of the Capitulations.

These proposals involved a drastic reduction in British officials: with the exception of the two advisers and the senior police officers, the Egyptian Government would be free to determine which posts it wanted foreigners to occupy, and British officials would in future only be appointed at its request. For its part, the Egyptian Government would undertake not to recruit any other foreign nationals without Britain's approval. Those British officials who remained would have the option of retiring early on a pension. Equally, after an agreed transfer date, the Egyptian Government would have the right to pension off those officials it no longer required. After this, in other words, no official would remain in Egyptian Government service unless both parties so desired. Whatever the reason for the termination of employment, compensation was to be generous, and under British control. ²

In public, the Mission expressed confidence that British influence over Egyptian affairs would not be unduly diminished by these changes, since relatively few officials, it thought, would opt

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1. Hurst, Memorandum on British Desiderata Relating to Public Security, 15 June 1920, MP450, p.150.
 2. General Conclusions for Mission Report, March 1920, MP451, p.4.

for early retirement, while the danger of large-scale dismissals by the Egyptian Government was regarded as slight; the Milner Report boldly asserted:

'the idea of any Egyptian Government, however free to do so, attempting to make a clean sweep of its foreign officials is a chimera...for no sensible Egyptian seriously wishes to dispense with foreign aid in the government of his country.' ¹

Besides, Britain would retain a broad basis of influence in Egypt in other ways:

'the presence of a military force, the High Commissioner's acknowledged position as a guardian of foreign interests, the two Advisers, and much more the presence for years to come of a large number of British people in the Egyptian Service, staying there not by our dictation, but because the Egyptians feel they cannot do without them [would] ...supply all and more than all we need for a policy of Influence, as distinct from a policy of Domination. Especially as we keep the Sudan, and with it the control of the water, without which Egypt cannot live.' ²

In appearance, it was once again the Cromerian philosophy which had reigned supreme when Milner was a British official in the 1890s: the assumption that small numbers of officials in a few pivotal departments of government, could, with the ultimate backing of military occupation, exert a 'moral' influence beneficial to British interests throughout the Egyptian administration. It is indicative that at about the time of his return to Egypt Milner wrote: 'I am not sure that we have not got off the road since [Cromer's] day both to the right and to the left.' ³

However, on closer examination, Milner's blue-print for continuing British influence in Egypt differed from Cromer's approach in one crucial respect. In advocating the termination of British administration, the Mission demolished at a stroke the

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1. MM Report, p.29.
 2. Milner to Curzon, 19 August 1920, MP454, p.276.
 3. Milner to Robert Cecil, 2 November 1919, Add.MP, MS Eng.Hist. c 699.

concept that British officials should provide Egypt with sound government as some kind of moral quid pro quo for the benefits Britain derived from the Occupation. Evidently it was now assumed that Britain could continue to extract its strategic advantage from Egypt without even the pretence of moral justification.

The Mission received pressure from many quarters not to lose sight of Britain's 'duties' towards Egypt. Cyril Goodman testified his opinion that

'the bulk of the Anglo-Egyptian Civil Service and of the commercial community, whose concern lies mainly in the direction of increased efficiency and who feel strongly the responsibility of the protecting power to guarantee good government in Egypt [would] ask [the Mission] for "strong government."' ¹

A number of resident European landlords asked what would happen to the fellaheen if 'rack-renting Pashas' were to acquire control of water distribution, without the restraints of British supervision, ² and Isma'il Sirri Pasha told Rodd that it was essential that some 'strong British control were maintained to ensure that the humbler classes were treated with justice.' ³ These concerns were taken up by sections of the British Press, as when the Morning Post lamented that 'to entrust Egypt with self-government would be to betray the trust both of the commercial community and of the whole mass of the fellaheen...' ⁴

Moreover, individual members of the Mission like Spender, who championed agricultural policies for the fellaheen, ⁵ and Thomas, an enthusiastic advocate of land redistribution, ⁶ brought a

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1. Goodman, note, August 1919, MP447, pp.167-8.
 2. e.g, Milner, conversation with Fischer, 31 January 1920, MP448, p.143.
 3. Rodd to Milner, 2 July 1920, MP450, p.153.
 4. Morning Post, 27 October 1920.
 5. Spender, Memorandum on Propaganda in Egypt, 6 April 1920, MP454, p.140.
 6. Thomas, Memorandum on the Agricultural and Economic Position of Egypt, 26 April 1920, MP447, p.230.

continuing sense of responsibility for Egypt's internal affairs into the deliberations of the Mission's subcommittees. Those Mission members examining Interior affairs were anxious that any proposed reform should be 'calculated to improve the situation of the fellah,'¹ while irrigation was thought 'so essential to the well-being of the country' that the relevant committee recommended that water distribution should be kept under close British inspection.²

There are several possible explanations why Milner resolutely ignored these pressures for Britain to retain responsibility for sound government in Egypt. Perhaps he really did believe that efficient government would not be unduly impaired by his scheme, because he truly assumed that British influence would not be significantly diminished. Taking its statements at face value, the Mission hoped that the granting of independence would bring reconciliation with the Egyptians. Given goodwill on both sides, it believed it would be possible 'to establish a new partnership of voluntary service, which [would] enable Great Britain to fulfil her pledges to the Egyptian people...'³ It should not be supposed that 'Great Britain was, under stress of circumstances, proposing an experiment which she believed would fail or to which she gave a grudging or reluctant consent.'⁴

This explanation appears less plausible, however, when we scrutinise the Mission's inside view of the prospects for Egyptian administration under their scheme. To Curzon in December 1919 Milner expostulated: 'any country less capable of "self-determination" than

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1. Memorandum on Interior, 13 May 1920, MP450, p.44.
 2. Note on Public Works, n.d, MP450, pp.5-7.
 3. Recapitulation of Conclusions, MP451, p.182.
 4. Defence of the Mission's Policy, n.d, MP451, p.186.

the Egypt of today it would be difficult to imagine.' ¹ Repeatedly, behind the assurances made for public consumption came some tacit recognition that inefficiency and mismanagement were bound to result from British withdrawal. Yet Hurst's reaction to this was quite ruthless, almost vindictive in tone:

'Experience is the only argument which will convince the Egyptians that they are not all competent and I think that experience ought to be forced upon them. British control ought to be withdrawn...whether the Egyptians like it or not.' ²

In discussing the kind of constitution to be established under the new treaty, it was acknowledged that with an illiterate majority, parliamentary government would inevitably mean oligarchical government, with little guarantee that the interests of the Egyptian masses would be protected. Any treaty, the Mission concluded, must attempt to ensure the inclusion of certain safeguards. ³ Yet how this was to be achieved in practice, while, at the same time reducing British authority in Egypt to the minimum, was not discussed.

If any individual Mission members nursed qualms that Britain was abandoning her Egyptian obligations, it seems they were unable to voice them effectively to Milner. Of the six investigators, Maxwell was granted leave of duty from the Mission due to heart trouble, and Thomas rarely commented on any subject except agriculture. Spender later assured readers of the Quarterly Review that the Mission had given 'anxious consideration' to the question of how the fellaheen would fare under Egyptian rule, but had satisfied itself that both peasants and pashas now had 'modern ideas' which made a return to

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1. Milner to Curzon, 18 December 1919, FO848/11.
 2. Hurst, Note on the Lines Egyptian Reform Should Take, n.d, MP449, p.43.
 3. Mission's General Conclusions, 17 May 1920, MP451, 148ff.

the oppression of the past most unlikely. ¹ We have no evidence that the Mission came to any such conclusion, so perhaps Spender was nearer the mark when he admitted in his autobiography that if there had been any serious differences between Mission members, 'I doubt if any of us would have succeeded in moving Milner from any position to which he was firmly anchored.'² We arrive at the conclusion, therefore, that Milner and Hurst, who were clearly in agreement that a decisive solution was imperative, supplied the Mission with its real dynamic, to the exclusion of any dissentient voices.

It is noticeable, however, that when discussing a continuing responsibility for Egyptian law and order, the Mission now began to apply the language of 'moral duty', 'obligation' and 'responsibility' to Britain's relationship with the European community in Egypt, instead of with the fellaheen as before. One Mission document, for example, talked of

'a very definite duty imposed upon Great Britain to see that the country does not go back. Foreign capital has been invested in Egypt upon the security of the British Occupation. Foreign residents may not give us all the support that we deserve in the fulfilment of our task, but that does not relieve us of the obligation of seeing that their money is safe.'³

There was perhaps a sense in which the Mission salved its corporate conscience by merely transferring the former notion of moral obligation from the fellaheen to Egypt's foreign residents.

The real reason why Milner could by-pass the notion of moral obligation to the Egyptians so painlessly was that the very idea had now become a nonsense. The events of March 1919 had plainly demonstrated that few Egyptians now believed that British officials

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1. Spender, 'The Egyptian Problem', Quarterly Review, 237 (1922), 428.
 2. Spender, Life, ii. 91.
 3. Memorandum, probably by Milner, What Should Our Policy Be? MP449, p.50. (My emphasis).

administered Egypt to their benefit. Moreover, amongst British officials themselves, the concept of the White Man's Burden in Egypt had become more of a penance than an article of faith. The decidedly muted optimism of the Gorst era concerning Britain's 'regenerative' capacities had soon lapsed further into a grim determination to see Britain's work in Egypt through to some kind of conclusion: '...not expecting any particular gratitude, understanding that we are not popular,' wrote Sidney Low in 1914, the British official must steadfastly discharge 'an obligation we cannot as yet abandon.' ¹

Sincere, if paternalistic concern for the Egyptians as people had come to be tinged, at worst, by an amused disdain. The infamous Cecil regarded Egypt as no more than

'a huge joke...It is not, as some falsely hold, a corner of the empire inhabited by future proconsuls and the grateful people they govern...but an enormous and unending opéra bouffe.' ²

For those less cynically inclined than Cecil, there was nonetheless the feeling by the early 1920s that, as one official put it, 'our day of usefulness was over.' ³ Milner was still the first to extol in public the 'magnificent results' and 'miraculous transformation' effected by the Occupation. Yet even he in the next breath admitted that it had been 'too much to ask a schoolmaster with L.E.500,000 to alter the character of a whole people.' ⁴

The evidence suggests that had the Mission chosen to go in the direction of all-out British rule, it would have taken massive revitalisation to motivate British officialdom to take up the task of Egyptian reform once again. The cumbersome structure of a Cairo-based, sedentary bureaucracy would have had to be challenged; for

1. Low, Egypt in Transition, p.282.

2. Cecil, Leisure, pp.226-7.

3. Edwards, 'Further Reminiscences', Edwards Papers.

4. Milner, Notes for the Report, n.d., MP451, pp.89-90.

the ritualised lifestyle which British officials had now evolved effectively cut them off from those on whose behalf they were meant to be governing. As Walrond observed,

'they spend a very healthy life going to their offices and from their offices to Gezeereh where most of them reside, the men all meeting daily at about 6.30 at the English Club...They are very good Englishmen, but they do not enter into the lives of the Egyptians at all with very few exceptions.' ¹

Administration at the grass roots was now all but eclipsed by the paper work of a centralised bureaucracy. The result, Marshall observed, was that

'the official becomes theoretical only, instead of being both theoretical and practical...The signing and sealing of piles of letters...becomes an irksome drudgery. Men complain and growl, come and go, but still the system continues, beginning with "I have honour to inform" and ending with "Your Humble Obedient Servant"'. ²

Perhaps the majority of officials settled quite happily for a daily round of Club gossip and golf, with Egyptian horizons that seldom lifted above promotions, travelling allowances and home leave. They were known, according to the Norwegian Consul, as 'the Bread and Butter Englishmen'. ³ A far cry, certainly, from the buoyant spirit of the 1890s, epitomised by this somewhat purple passage from Willcocks:

'existence in the deserts during the winter months was pure delight. The clear atmosphere, the bright starry nights, the sunshine, and the bracing air were enough themselves to make one thank heaven daily for such blessings, but when to them was added the knowledge that we were working on one of the great projects of our time, I can truly say that I often felt...that I was not walking on this prosaic earth, but was being born on wings from place to place.' ⁴

There was, finally, the problem of British officials' manners: treatment of Egyptians, which ranged from the sarcasm of a Cecil to

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1. Walrond to Milner, 9 December 1918, MP452, p.77.
 2. Marshall, Note on Our Guardianship in the East, 1908, MP452, p.131.
 3. Hooker, memorandum, June 1919, MP447, p.80.
 4. Willcocks, Sixty Years, p.129.

the assumption of what Francis Edwards called 'Balliol effortless superiority,'¹ or frequently just an ignorant disregard for the finer points of Egyptian etiquette. The Milner Mission constantly received such complaints: that British officials were too impatient to exchange social niceties, or kept dogs on chairs in their offices, and so on.² The once-proud Egyptian Service would almost have had to be recreated from scratch, certainly re-educated, to fit it for the task of governing Egypt into the 1920s.

Nevertheless, the majority of British officials, and even the majority of critical British residents,³ assumed when the Mission arrived that British administration would continue indefinitely. For some, the aftermath of war and rebellion promised not contraction but expansion. Brunyate, most notably, entertained a far-reaching scheme of administrative overhaul, which encompassed rationalising the structure of Egypt's Ministries, reforming the Capitulations to release wider tax revenues, and above all, recruiting more British officials.⁴

When Brunyate's scheme was pre-empted by his removal from Egypt, a new spokesman for this 'stay-at-all-costs' school of thought emerged in the person of the former Judicial Adviser, McIlwraith, who published a veritable barrage of articles at this time. It would be folly, McIlwraith observed, for Britain 'to jeopardise the magnificent results attained by the efforts of her administrators for nearly forty years by premature concessions to a noisy little band of native demagogues.'⁵ Yet for Britain to meet

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1. Edwards to Elizabeth Monroe, 4 September 1963, Edwards Papers.
 2. Report of a British Political Officer, n.d, MP444, p.295; Walrond to Milner, 9 December 1918, MP452, p.79.
 3. See e.g, Carver to Wingate, 17 December 1918, MP444, ii. 242.
 4. Brunyate to Wingate, 4 January 1919, MP447, pp.1-48.
 5. McIlwraith, 'Egyptian Nationalism', Edinburgh Review, 230, p.77. For McIlwraith's continued campaign, see a succession of articles in Fortnightly Review: 'Three Egyptian Proconsuls', Vol.111; 'The British Protectorate of Egypt', Vol.113; 'The Egyptian Situation', Vol.114; 'The Report of the Milner Commission', Vol.115.

the needs of Egyptian Government adequately, there was agreement on the need to appoint more British officials, and to give them positions, most notably in the Interior, carrying clearly defined authority. There was considerable enthusiasm for the idea of British Commandants or Inspectors of Police in the provinces, or for the appointment of more Interior inspectors, or Indian-style Residents. ¹

There were those elements of British officialdom - most notably amongst the Interior officials ² - who even before Milner's arrival were resigned to a British withdrawal. Nevertheless, for many the greatest jolt to imperial confidence came not from the discontent of 1919, but from the Mission itself. It was the long period of uncertainty ending in the Agreement of August 1920 which did most to demoralise those many officials who had assumed that they were in Egypt to stay. Wild rumours that radical changes were afoot penetrated the Mission's bland reticence, and there was talk of 'the complete souring of good English officials.' 'The Mission may be doing good', wrote this observer,

'but it's difficult to believe it...from what we hear they keep airing the view...that no Englishman in this country has ever been worth a d---. That we don't work or earn our pay - and have been out of sympathy with all classes for years...and that we should nearly all of us - some say all - clear out bag and baggage...Our friends are leaving us and our enemies triumphing - largely with the help of the Milner Mission.' ³

However, one small group of officials, including, significantly, nearly all the advisers, already regarded Egyptian self-rule as an urgent necessity. The Customs Director, T.C. Macaulay, thought all

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1. Wise, memorandum, 12 August 1919, FO848/4; Monteith-Smith to Mission, 28 January 1920, FO848/6.
 2. Burnett-Stuart, Memorandum on the Interior, 31 August 1919, FO848/3.
 3. Anonymous to Murray, 18 January 1920, FO371/3722/175510; the writer was probably Dick Wellesley of the Interior, a frequent correspondent with Murray.

efforts to solve the Egyptian problem would be 'foredoomed to failure unless they were preparatory to the withdrawal of all British control over the internal affairs of the country...' ¹ The Legal Adviser, Hayter, acknowledged that 'politically-minded Egyptians really had a serious grievance,' ² and believed that Britain should no longer try to be 'the Salvation Army to a whole people' when there were Egyptians more than capable of running the country. ³ Sir Maurice Amos, the new Judicial Adviser, took the view that recent expressions of wounded Egyptian pride could not be dismissed as 'weak, exceptional or unimportant.' The only possible policy, he believed, was to 'show ourselves in a conspicuous manner to be the friends of all measures tending to build up a strong national feeling.' ⁴ At the Foreign Office, Amos was regarded as 'a rather advanced Radical.' ⁵ Perhaps somewhat less radical was the veteran Financial Adviser, Sir Paul Harvey. Yet even he indicated himself 'all in favour of handing more over to native control.' ⁶ Clayton, the Interior Adviser, we have already encountered as perhaps the most liberal influence on Allenby. It is evident that the new High Commissioner had taken care to replace the pre-1919 generation of advisors with men of more liberal outlook.

It was the strain of thought represented by these men which in fact lay at the heart of the Milner plan. Darwin points out that officials like Clayton, Amos and Hayter, who had all begun their Egyptian service under Cromer, had a firm sense that Egyptian consent was indispensable to advisory control. ⁷ It was this

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1. Macaulay, memorandum, 14 October 1919, FO848/4.
 2. Hayter to Mission, 5 February 1920, FO848/6.
 3. P. Napier, A Late Beginner (London, 1966), p.162.
 4. Amos, memorandum, 8 July 1919, FO848/3.
 5. Lindsay, minute, 5 September 1921, FO371/6307/10042.
 6. Milner, conversations, 22 December 1919, MP448, p.35.
 7. Darwin, Britain, Egypt and the Middle East, p.126.

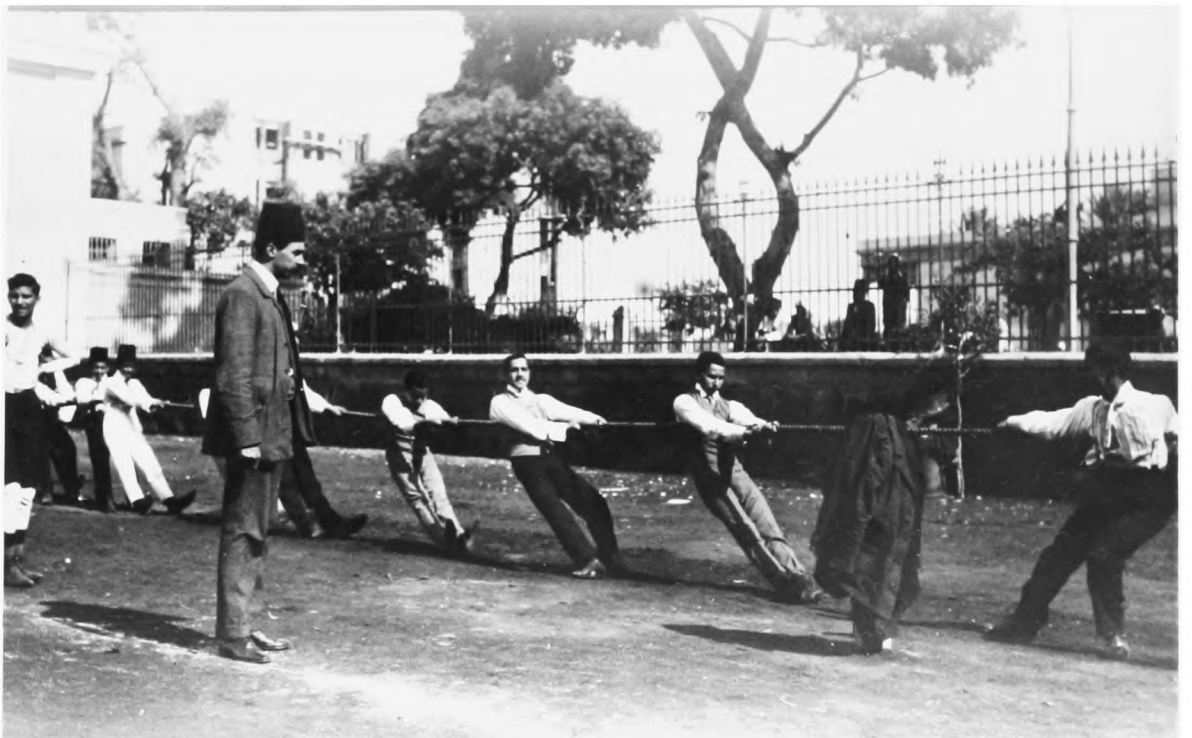
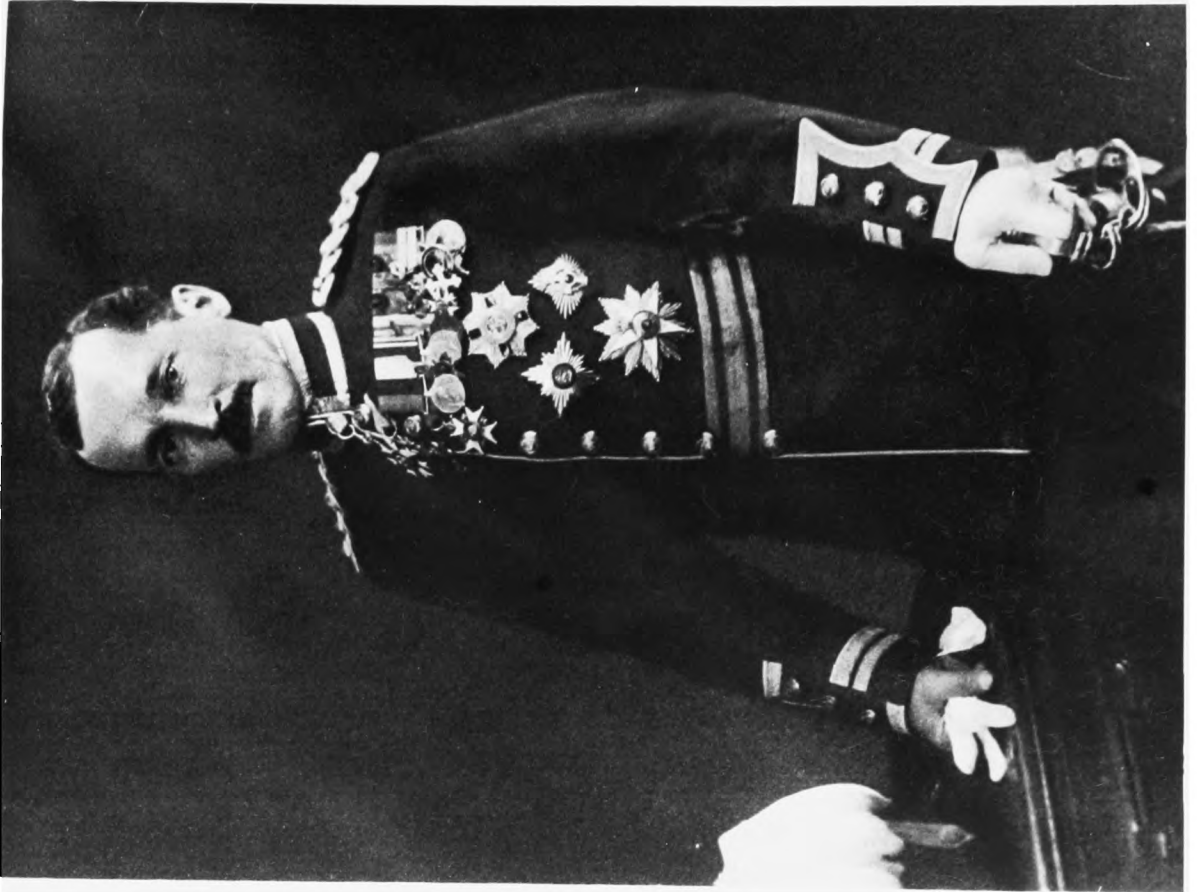
consent which had now all but evaporated, making an alternative system of control imperative if total non-cooperation were to be avoided. Milner perceived that

'with the growth of anti-British sentiment throughout the ranks of the bureaucracy, matters are going from bad to worse. The situation is not one in which the plan of simply carrying on and taking no notice is a sufficient policy...If things go on as they are going, we may be confronted with the necessity of taking the Administration entirely into our own hands, of replacing the Mudirs and Mamurs by British officials, and putting the provincial police under the British commandants...This is a prospect so unattractive, that it can only be faced in the last resort.' ¹

In other words, while the decline in the philosophical value of the British official made the termination of British administration possible, the deterioration in their practical value made self-rule essential. What Britain feared most in Egypt by 1920 was administrative non-cooperation: the final collapse of the collaborative balance upon which British rule had depended for forty years. It was this fear which, in the final analysis, dictated the Milner Mission's conclusions. And even when His Majesty's Government proceeded to shelve Milner's recommendations, the perceptions of British officials of the non-cooperation danger prevailed, until the unilateral declaration of independence in 1922 banished the liabilities of ruling Egypt once and for all.

1. Sketch Report, 12 February 1920, MP451, p.116.

Brigadier Sir Gilbert Clayton Pasha,
Adviser to the Minister of Interior, 1919 - 1922



Mr Bearan and pupils of Taufiqiya School, early 1900s

Chapter Seven

1920-1922: Administrators as Agents of Change

It was two years before the Milner recommendations elicited any modification in Egypt's relationship with Great Britain, and then in a manner quite different to that envisaged by the Mission in 1920. During this period between Milner's return to Britain and the eventual imposition of 'independence' in early 1922, the focus of attention shifts to London and two seasons of - ultimately fruitless - negotiations. Only in February 1922 does the storyline return to Cairo, with an ultimatum from Allenby that the Protectorate over Egypt should be terminated forthwith. Of the intervening twists and turns of diplomacy we have several meticulous studies.¹

Nevertheless, this first of many phases of Anglo-Egyptian negotiations holds fresh interest for the purposes of this study. For one thing, in the course of negotiations, the future role envisaged for British administrators took greater shape. More significantly, it was during this period that British diplomats and officials in Egypt were grappling with an increasingly unworkable apparatus of British control, as the traditional sources of Egyptian political and administrative cooperation grew less dependable. British officials in particular came to believe that this breakdown in collaboration presaged active non-cooperation and the imminent disintegration of British rule. Such fears evoked from British officialdom a veritable barrage of warnings, surely unique in colonial annals, that British administration should be withdrawn before it was too late. Just how far these pressures contributed to

1. e.g., Darwin, Britain, Egypt and the Middle East, 100ff.

the eventual declaration of independence has never been adequately acknowledged, still less explained. How, by 1922, did British officials become the agents of imperial change that they did? The current chapter addresses this question.

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The inner history of the 1920 negotiations need not detain us. They are relevant inasmuch as the mere fact of entering discussions was bound to bring the problem of Egyptian cooperation into sharp focus. British policy-makers were coming to realise that Egyptian representatives would have to command majority support at home for any agreement reached to have a chance of popular endorsement. Any settlement, no matter how liberal, could be sabotaged if its Egyptian originators were perceived as accomplices in British chicanery. The Egyptian ministerial figures of the day seem to have realised that the stigma of collusion which they carried disqualified them from negotiating any durable agreement on their own. Moreover, even to be seen talking with the British was further to jeopardise their chances of political survival. It was Adli who had finally persuaded Milner that Britain's only hope lay in drawing Zaghlul into the dialogue, as the one outstanding figure free of the taint of collaboration. ¹

By conceding that it might be necessary to talk to those hitherto regarded as 'extremists', the British authorities irrevocably opened the way to an unprecedented range of further concessions. For the moment, however, since Adli was offering his services as a go-between with the Wafd in Paris, there was the hope

1. Milner, journal, 26 February 1920, FO848/5.

that Zaghlul might join Adli and Rushdi to form that long-sought after dream of the British in Egypt, a robust party of cooperative 'moderates'.

Talks began in London on 9 June, Adli having succeeded in bringing Zaghlul from Paris. Milner presented Zaghlul with a set of terms which, while guaranteeing Egypt's 'independence', essentially confirmed Britain's right to maintain an army of occupation and to regulate Egypt's foreign relations. Britain would support Egypt in her desire to abolish the Capitulations, but would require her agreement to the appointment of Financial and Judicial Advisers. ¹

The limitations implied by these terms drew immediate rejection from Zaghlul, whereupon Milner shifted his focus to talks with Adli instead. By mid-August these issued in a significantly more generous set of proposals from the British side, which would concede to Egypt the right of representation abroad and restrict Britain's military presence. While Adli found these terms acceptable, Zaghlul once again demurred. Representatives of the Egyptian delegation now returned home to elicit the local response to these August proposals. The mandate which returned from the Wafd's constituency being less than enthusiastic, negotiations resumed in October 1920 with Zaghlul adopting a yet more aggressive stance. However, his demands for the Protectorate to be annulled and for the role of British officials to be further emasculated brought the talks on this occasion to a final collapse. ²

Nevertheless, the preceding months had seen substantial concessions on several established British desiderata. Milner believed that this was the moment, with Zaghlul present and talking,

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1. O. Eran outlines the substance of Anglo-Egyptian negotiations from 1920 onwards in 'Negotiating the Anglo-Egyptian Relationship', in K. Wilson (ed), Imperialism and Nationalism in the Middle East (London, 1983).
 2. Ibid, pp.58-9.

to clinch an agreement with Egypt's 'moderate' leadership. He assured an anxious Curzon that conceding the right of diplomatic representation, for example, was

'a price worth paying if we get on to really good terms with these people. I believe that to be possible but only if we play a very bold game and make them a very seductive offer.'¹

It was indeed bold for a Colonial Secretary apparently to be wooing the Wafd. For much of 1920, until negotiations finally broke down, Zaghlul was at least partially admitted to that select guild of Egyptian politicians to whom Britain would afford sanctuary and support at all costs for the benefit of their alliance with British interests. For this brief period, Zaghlul was given the deferential kid-glove treatment usually reserved for suppliant Egyptian ministers, in the desperate hope that he would join his hand to an Anglo-Egyptian agreement.

However, in exerting her protective powers on Zaghlul's behalf, Britain was in fact strengthening the hand of the main opposition force in Egyptian politics, the very opposition against which Britain was usually anxious to bolster a cooperative ministry. It was the instinct of Britain's representatives in Egypt to support Taufiq Nasim's ministry during the period of negotiations, especially as a flush of assassination attempts confirmed his unpopularity and vulnerability.² From London, however, there came instructions that nothing must be done to offend Zaghlul's associates. The truth of things was that Britain now had, or rather hoped for, two sets of Egyptian brokers, whose goals would ultimately be irreconcilable. The task of trying to defer simultaneously to both Ministry and Wafd devolved upon the

1. Milner to Curzon, 19 August 1920, MP454, pp.276-7.

2. Nasim was shot at on 12 May 1920, four days after an attack on Husain Darwish, Minister of Waqfs; List of Political Crimes, Russell Papers.

Residency. It was British officialdom, on the other hand, who had to confront the administrative consequences of this contradiction in terms, most noticeably malaise and uncertainty.

Uncertainty in the Egyptian administration stemmed in good measure from an almost total ignorance of what was going on in London. It is extraordinary that neither the Residency, British officials, nor stranger still, the British Cabinet were informed of the nature of the Mission's conclusions and subsequent negotiations until after the 'agreement' of 18 August. Until then, British officials in the Press Bureau, whose job it was to promote a line suitable to Britain in the Egyptian press, could only try to encourage the notion that a settlement was desirable, so ignorant were they of the current trend in Egyptian policy.¹ Judge Percival complained of being 'kept in a state of absolute darkness,' a situation which he found made his 'relations with the Ministers more difficult than usual.'²

The first hint of Milner's strategy for winning over the Wafd came when, in the aftermath of Nasim's attempted assassination, British Interior officials traced a political murder conspiracy to the person of 'Abd al-Rahman Fahmi. As Secretary of the Wafd's Central Committee, Fahmi was Zaghlul's chief liaison officer in Egypt during the absence of the party leadership in Europe. Curzon's reaction to this development is indicative of the extent to which the Foreign Office was prepared to abandon its customary protection of the Egyptian Government in the wild hope that Zaghlul - condemned not long before as a ruthless demagogue - might accept its forthcoming July proposals. While admitting that it would be difficult to refrain from taking action against a proven criminal,

1. Symes, Note on the Press, 28 June - 12 July 1920, FO371/4996/E9273.
2. Percival to Hurst, 12 July 1920, FO848/20.

Curzon urged the utmost caution in handling Fahmi since the news of his arrest had already aggravated Zaghlul. Furthermore, any suggestion of weak evidence could leave room for suspicion that the 'arrest was made for [the] political object of striking a blow against the Zaghloulist organization', which would bring negotiations 'to an end in a manner much to be deplored.'¹

Although Nasim's actual assailant was eventually convicted by a military court and executed, the Foreign Office remained protective of Fahmi to the last. Allenby's request for permission to have his residence searched met with the instruction that Wafd committee members should be allowed to be present.² When a military court condemned Fahmi to death, Milner defied Allenby by instructing the War Office to hold the sentence in abeyance. The court's verdict was now brought before Cassell, the Judge Advocate General, for further ruling. Cassell could find no legal grounds for not confirming the verdict of guilty. Regardless of this, Milner induced the War Office to commute Fahmi's sentence to 15 years' penal servitude.³

In the eyes of British diplomats and officials in Egypt, a policy so deferential to the Wafd only demoralised further an already fragile Egyptian Government. As it was, so divided were the loyalties of Egyptian officials that it had been deemed unwise to let the native Parquet and judiciary handle the Conspiracy Case. From the outset investigations had been put in the hands of the British Public Security Department, with a British military court to supply the verdict. Allenby

'considered that it would be dangerous, not to say futile, that the case should be handed over to the Native Parquet

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1. Telegram Curzon to Allenby, 2 July 1920, FO371/4985/E7453.
 2. Telegram Allenby to Curzon, 18 July 1920, FO371/4985/E8482.
 3. Cassell, memorandum, 20 December 1920, FO371/6283/E105; minutes of a conference between the Secretaries of State for War and for the Colonies, 6 January 1921, FO371/6283/E311.

...the dangers of leakage and the influences to which the Parquet are at present exposed made it imperative to exclude them...' ¹

The possible susceptibility of Egyptian officials to the emotions of nationalism brought home once again the importance of having British officials at strategic positions in the security apparatus. Yet British officialdom was suffering equally from a crisis of confidence, and it was in consideration of this that the Residency thought it 'doubly important' that Fahmi be radically dealt with, '...in fairness to the departments concerned and to keep [the] authority and efficiency of [the] police unimpaired.' ² However, preserving the dignity of the British administration rated lower with the Foreign Office than the new imperative of appeasing Zaghlul. Not only was Fahmi reprieved from the scaffold, but instructions reached the authorities in Egypt that further investigations into the 'Society of Vengeance' were to be dropped. ³

It was not just the British administration which felt that London was ignoring its legitimate concerns; the Egyptian Ministry met much the same indifference during these months. When, for example, negotiations appeared to be faltering in early August, the Council of Ministers, anticipating nationalist disturbances erupting beyond its control, sought Residency approval for severe pre-emptive measures, to include deportations, British military intervention and the dissolution of the Wafdist Committee. ⁴ When the Residency conveyed these representations to London, there returned a categorical veto: the Foreign Office could not approve 'any action which would exacerbate the local situation and, by once more making Zaghlul and his followers our enemies, consolidate all sections of

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1. Allenby to Curzon, 28 July 1920, FO371/4986/E9610.
 2. Telegram Scott to Curzon, 29 August 1920, FO371/4987/E10613.
 3. Curzon to Allenby, 27 November 1920, FO371/4988/E13100.
 4. Telegram Scott to Curzon, 10 August 1920, FO371/4979/E9763.

Egyptian Nationalists against us.' ¹ Similarly, when the delegates' emissaries returned from London in September, the Interior Ministry was instructed, contrary to its instincts, not to interfere with their activities, nor to check discussion of the proposed settlement by means of censorship; orderly political meetings were not to be dispersed, despite the martial law decree prohibiting public gatherings. ²

Such a degree of latitude towards the nationalists might have suggested that London was now treating the expression of Egyptian opinion more seriously than ever before. However, this attitude of unprecedented receptivity, born of the exigencies of negotiation, had died a speedy death by the end of 1920. For one thing, the talks themselves had crashed to a halt. Yet even before this, word had finally reached the ears of the British Cabinet, via leaks in The Times, as to the direction the negotiations were taking. Their response of shocked disapproval stemmed from not having been informed of developments which, by virtue of involving Egyptian 'extremists', would, they felt, reduce the chances of an acceptable settlement. ³ It was therefore with relief that the Cabinet heard of the eventual failure of the talks, apparently as a result of Egyptian obduracy, since this was regarded as absolving His Majesty's Government from any further commitment to Milner's proposals.

Those at closer proximity to the Egyptian situation saw things differently. There now began to come reminders from the Residency that the Egyptian problem could not merely be swept under the carpet; the fact that negotiations had stalled did not, Allenby

1. Telegram Curzon to Scott, 14 August 1920, FO371/4979/E9763.
2. Scott to Clayton, 2 September 1920, FO371/4979/E11360.
3. See D. Cooper, Old Men Forget (London, 1953), p.100.

pointed out, mean that their substance could now conveniently be forgotten. ¹ In the Cabinet, however, the Milner recommendations lost their chief protagonist when, in spring 1921, Milner resigned as Colonial Secretary, to be replaced by Winston Churchill, his arch-opponent on the Egyptian question.

Zaghlul had meanwhile rapidly fallen from grace as a potential treaty-maker in British eyes. He had not played the game expected of a 'moderate' nationalist, and in his eclipse the British authorities instinctively reverted to those Egyptian brokers they knew better. For Allenby, like Wingate before him, this pointed to cultivating the Sultan, a policy viewed with extreme misgivings by the Foreign Office and many officials. The Eastern Department reported that Allenby was 'backing the Sultan blindly' in the latter's efforts to acquire an image of popularity which would assure him of a prominent position in any further negotiations. ² From February 1921 a resumption of talks was indeed in the offing, as Curzon had convinced Cabinet members that some change would have to be made in the Protectorate, whatever their reservations concerning the Milner proposals. ³ Thus once again arose the question of finding suitable Egyptian negotiators. The Sultan had never been a Foreign Office candidate in this regard. This was due partly to a suspicion that royal self-aggrandisement would always come before Egyptian national interests. Then there was also the consideration that a future Anglo-Egyptian agreement might include measures of constitutional reform: Darwin suggests that the introduction of effective representative institutions was no doubt

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1. Allenby began to urge the resumption of negotiations in his telegram to Curzon, 18 November 1920, FO371/4981/E14430.
 2. Eastern Department, 'Egypt: a General Review', 14 January 1921, MP455, p.94. ('Eastern Department Review').
 3. Cabinet meeting, 22 February 1921, FO371/6292/E2463.

considered the perfect reward for the cooperation of an Egyptian ministry, but hardly an inducement for a monarch bent on enhancing his constitutional prerogatives. ¹

However, by March 1921 Allenby had succumbed to the Foreign Office view that Adli was the man most likely to reach a workable agreement. To that end the Residency cooperated in a manoeuvre which, by mid-March, ousted Nasim as prime minister, installing Adli in his place. ² And for what remained of the Protectorate, Adli would be Britain's 'man' in Cairo, a fragile vessel for her increasingly dwindling hopes.

Britain's relationship with her various hoped-for Egyptian clients over this period is highly revealing of the increasingly precarious nature of British rule. Whether pandering to the whims of the Wafd or the Sultan, or now desperately attempting to buttress the Adli ministry, Britain was having to give away more and more in order to sustain her Egyptian intermediaries, and yet was receiving in return fewer and fewer of the expected benefits for British rule. Of the Wafd, the Sultan and the Umma politicians, only the latter gave Britain any appreciable returns on her disbursement of moral support, and they simply because the weakness of their own position made outside backing a sheer necessity.

Some British officials now began to wonder whether the cost of Egyptian support had grown too high. Was the British administration, they asked, being forced to sell its soul into the bargain? From the Residency they were receiving instructions to turn one blind eye after another. Russell was forced to watch the reprieve of a choice political criminal like Fahmi for the sake of an agreement with Zaghlul which never materialised. Meanwhile, for

1. Darwin, Britain, Egypt and the Middle East, p.104.

2. Allenby to Curzon, 18 March 1921, FO371/6294/E3853.

the Sultan to build up his standing in the provinces, the Eastern Department reported that 'many things [were] being done daily which [could] not be justified according to the British idea of justice.' ¹ The Eastern Department itemised illegal land purchases, the dismissal of mudirs at royal behest, and financial extortion of the fellaheen amongst other royal misdemeanours which the Residency seemed disinclined to reprove, and which could not be considered 'worthy of our best tradition.' ² It was the story of wartime abuses once again: the tarnishing of Britain's reputation as a just ruling power due to her perceived association with mal-practices which she appeared unable or unwilling to prevent, but now without the extenuating circumstances of war.

Worse was to come, however. Not long after Adli had been installed, the calculations of Ministry and Residency alike were upset by the unexpected return to Egypt of Zaghlul. What Adli dreaded was the disruptive effect on the country, and by implication on the government, of Zaghlul's bid to dominate the forthcoming negotiations, and his imposition of more exacting terms on Britain. In order to strengthen his hand, Adli entreated Allenby to allow him a number of popular dispensations. The withdrawal of press censorship Allenby was happy to permit, although the suspension of martial law was another matter. Allenby explained that this must await the redefinition of Egypt's status, and with it the creation of a legislative authority which could replace the system of military justice. ³ In other 'less essential' matters, however, Allenby was prepared to oblige the Ministry by adopting a laissez faire attitude, and it was this that worried some British officials.

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1. 'Eastern Department Review', MP455, p.89.
 2. Ibid, p.92, and Eastern Department, 'A General Review', 20 January 1921, MP455, pp.98-102.
 3. Allenby to Curzon, 3 April 1921, FO371/6312/E4303.

Russell's letters to his father at this point complain of instructions he had received not to interfere in student demonstrations. This was all very well,

'so long as the Government does what the students like but one day soon the Government will have to do something the boys don't like and then the demonstrations will be hostile:... [and] I shall have all the work over again to suppress them.' ¹

Dowson, the Financial Adviser, also worried about the long-term consequences for the name of British administration of measures - in this case financial - which he was asked to permit in the short-term interests of the Ministry. The context of these measures was a fall in the cotton price from L.E.187 per kantar in February 1920 to L.E.18 in February 1921.² From late 1920 there had been pressure on the Egyptian Government in the press to make cotton purchases and to restrict acreages. These pressures increased with the banding together of ailing cultivators to form the General Agricultural Syndicate in January 1921, and thereafter a certain amount of cotton was duly purchased by the government in the provinces.³ With Adli's coming to office, however, the Syndicate acquired added influence: Isma'il Pasha Sidqi, the new Finance Minister was himself a member, as was Gaafar Pasha Wali, the Education Minister. Moreover, with an eye to the Syndicate's political support the Ministry had given undertakings before taking office that cotton prices would be ameliorated.

With this object, Sidqi suggested to the Financial Adviser that the government should now extend its cotton purchases to include the Mina'l Basal exchange in Alexandria. Dowson's response is minutely documented, offering us a rare glimpse into the workings of the

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1. Russell to his father, 25 March 1921, Russell Papers.
 2. Mulock, Report on the Economic and Financial Situation of Egypt for 1921, FO371/7751/E4690/624. (Mulock, Economic Report).
 3. Allenby to Curzon, 25 April 1921, FO371/6312/E5140.

adviser/minister relationship, and highlighting in particular the constraints on the influence of British officials by this point. In reply, Dowson observed that the issue was simply one of rich landowners inveigling the government to speculate on the cotton market to their advantage. In view of the 'grave financial risks' attached to such an enterprise, he begged Sidqi to bear in mind the current 'very grave' state of Egyptian finances. The whole venture, Dowson tersely observed, would be 'little short of suicidal.' ¹

The initial reaction of the Residency was to assure Dowson of support should Sidqi persist in a 'dangerous' policy against his advice. However, after further meetings with Sidqi on 22 March, the British position changed. Sidqi justified his request, pointing out 'that it was necessary for the Cabinet to mobilise and retain all popularity they could in view of Saad Pasha Zaghlul's attitude and approaching return'. ² Reluctantly, Dowson himself now came to admit that the issue of cotton purchases could jeopardise Adli's very political existence. To Allenby he observed,

'the new Ministry, which is heralded as having come into power to voice the people's will, will undoubtedly be held to have signally failed if, on the burning economic question, it had to confess at the outset that their airy promises were unrealizable...and, if this...coincided with the advent of Zaghlul...it is to be greatly doubted if they would survive.'

Thus in view of 'all the pains taken to obtain the Adly Cabinet', Dowson conceded that it might be necessary to go 'a considerable way, even along a hazardous path, to assist them to maintain themselves.' A recent slight improvement in cotton prices postponed the necessity for immediate intervention. However the Financial Adviser was prepared to sanction a promise of limited government purchases at Mina'l Basal 'in case of necessity.' ³ Both Allenby

1. Dowson to Sidqi, 20 March 1921, FO371/6330/E4006.
2. Dowson to Allenby, 22 March 1921, *ibid*.
3. *Ibid*.

and the Foreign Office endorsed this compromise, considering it undesirable to impose 'any veto on the freedom of action of the Egyptian Government in sacrificing sound finance to the exigencies of a difficult political situation.'¹ Accordingly, in the days immediately following Zaghlul's return to Egypt on 4 April, the Egyptian Government made cotton purchases in Alexandria involving over L.E.50,000.²

The officials involved never fully forgave themselves for permitting a venture which, in contravening the tenets of 'sound finance', came somewhere close to original sin according to the Holy Writ of British 'colonial' administration. Dowson himself 'earnestly hoped' that the measure had gone some way towards alleviating popular distress, but he wanted it 'unambiguously recorded' that such action could not be 'justly defended on any other grounds, particularly at a time when the financial resources of Government themselves demand an almost parsimonious husbandry...'³

It is this last phrase which suggests the underlying cause of Dowson's concern. The financial year 1920/21 had just closed to reveal a deficit of L.E.15.5 million.⁴ The shortfall was met only by cutting into the Reserve Fund, reducing it from L.E.17 million as at March 1920, to L.E.1.5 million, a precarious figure compared with the vast reserves which had been accumulating since Cromer's day.⁵ These reserves had become an important guarantee of Egypt's credit abroad. Now it seemed

'that for the first time in 40 years the Egyptian Government might fail to pay its way...If this situation

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1. Murray, minute, 5 April 1921 and Allenby to Curzon, 26 March 1921, FO371/6330/E4006.
 2. Telegram Allenby to Curzon, 6 April 1921, FO371/6330/E4149.
 3. Report 1920, p.24.
 4. Report on Egypt for 1921, p.26, FO371/7766/E14446. Note: from 1921 onwards, annual reports were only produced for official use.
 5. Scott to Curzon, 29 March 1921, FO371/7761/E3794.

had materialised, it would have had a most damaging effect upon the credit of Egypt at a most crucial time in her existence.' ¹

Any lapse in Egypt's international reputation of being a reliable debtor would have signified that British officials had failed in one of their key entrusted responsibilities. Moreover, in light of the attempts to modify Egypt's status at just this time, the financial deterioration could scarcely have come at a worse moment: European financiers would hardly be encouraged to sanction any relaxation of British administrative supervision. Almost as regrettable, such a deficit fuelled suspicion in Egypt itself that Britain was only going to devolve control after carrying out a retaliatory scorched earth policy. This was certainly the insinuation of one particular attack in al-Ahram:

'we understand why you squander the country's wealth on supplies, and coal, and harbour works; and why you have raised officials' pay until two-fifths of the revenue is swallowed up...What you aim at is to smash our Budget and leave our Government helpless, destitute of reserve funds and without resources.' ²

Ernest Dowson readily admitted that the Government's deficit had been caused by abnormally high expenditure on increased salaries for public servants, food subsidies, and emergency purchases of coal and cotton. Nor did he attempt to deny that 'errors in judgement and mistakes in management of a serious character [had] occurred.'³ In this regard, most accusing fingers seemed to point at the Department of Supplies, a body which had replaced the wartime Supplies Control Board to combat food shortages by purchasing commodities, controlling their distribution, and regulating exports. During 1920 the department had begun purchasing maize at a point

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1. Report 1921, FO371/7766/E14446.
 2. Public Security Department Report, week ending 7 June 1922, FO371/7742/E6157.
 3. Report 1920, p.26.

when prices were at a peak and when a low cereal acreage was anticipated. Then acreages had suddenly increased while the maize price dropped, leaving the department to sell a vast surplus on a falling market. ¹ Undeterred, the department embarked the following year on large-scale purchases of coal, and yet once again, the Finance Ministry sustained considerable losses from the Department's operations, this time totalling L.E.559,000. ²

The question which is never squarely addressed in the relevant reports, however, is that of the responsibility for this financial mismanagement. Once again, the intentionally-vague definition of the role of British officialdom effectively blurs our understanding of the locus of control in the Anglo-Egyptian administration. The official in charge of Supplies, Percival Elgood, attributed the many 'errors of judgement' associated with Supplies policy to inadequate statistics, failure to anticipate trends in consumption and prices, and to the 'rashness of entrusting operations of this magnitude to inexperienced hands.' ³ This last allusion is clarified by further scrutiny of Elgood's reports. It appears that, in fact, the Supplies Department found itself constrained to follow the wishes of a consultative committee of ten Egyptians and ten Europeans who, in tandem with the Egyptian Government on the one hand and the Lancashire cotton lobby on the other, balked at the notion of restricting cotton production in order that Egypt might grow more of her cereal requirements: Elgood silently blames the influence of cotton interests for having made necessary the department's heavy cereal purchases.

1. Report 1920, p.59.

2. Elgood, 23rd Report on the Food Situation, 10 June 1922, FO371/7751/E6558.

3. Ibid and Elgood, Transit, p.276.

From other quarters there came more overt assertions that the Egyptian Government bore the responsibility for the consequences of having given in to vocal economic interest groups. The Annual Report on Egypt for 1920 gave short shrift to the various

'hazardous pseudo-commercial enterprises which, firstly under the stress of public safety, and lately to meet claims for economic protection, have been embarked on by the Government.'¹

Moreover, as the devolution of administrative control drew nigh, it remained one of the chief fears of British finance officials that future Egyptian Governments might get enticed into 'insidious' undertakings of a commercial nature, dissipating the country's financial reserves overnight. ²

It was only in the financial year which preceded the declaration of 'independence' that Egypt emerged from its post-war pecuniary difficulties to regain, it was felt, much its previous state of health. This recovery was attributed to the country's proverbial 'recuperative power' and, more specifically, to a sharp tightening of the budgetary belt by the British authorities. Transmitting the final accounts for 1920-1921, Scott assured the Foreign Office

'that Egyptian finance under British guidance, [had] passed successfully through a time of great difficulty and that the British officials [would] hand over to their successors a machine which [was] both sound and efficient.'³

Significantly, however, this note of self-congratulation was not shared by the official who had been responsible for Egyptian finances since 1919, Ernest Dowson. Dowson was typical of many British officials in Egypt: an expert in his field, and a first-class administrator, with little inclination for the political role which had become increasingly incumbent upon the Financial Adviser

1. Report 1920, p. 31.

2. e.g, Mulock, Economic Report, FO371/7751/E4690.

3. Scott to Curzon, 12 April 1922, FO371/7761/E4237.

in particular. ¹ He was, according to his colleague in the Finance, Francis Edwards, 'the soul of integrity', a man esteemed by Englishman and Egyptian alike.²

It had long been Dowson's view that the financial administration of Egypt was a shambles. In evidence to the Milner Mission, Dowson submitted that finance officials had muddled along for years, their roles undefined and labour undivided; distracted on the one hand by the ministry's many technical jurisdictions, and on the other by the political duties of the Financial Adviser. The net result was that functions as basic as the audit were 'performed with an inadequacy sometimes approaching neglect,' while the consideration of broader questions of financial policy was invariably eclipsed by an 'unregulated stream' of petty issues. ³

Taking up this theme again in 1921, Dowson pointed out that, due to the wartime erosion of British manpower, in the four years since Cecil's departure there had been no fewer than seven individuals acting as Financial Adviser, for no more than an average of six months each. If there was to be a price tag attached to this lack of continuity, Dowson did not hesitate 'to place it at four or five million at least.' He believed, in other words,

'that the reserve would now have been richer by fully some such amount if a competent man had been appointed to replace Lord Edward Cecil in March 1917 and had remained continuously in office ever since.'⁴

Moreover, there was still a danger, unless radical reforms were effected before Britain devolved control, of handing over

'a higger-mugger administration to the Egyptians which we must not be surprised to see rapidly revert to the oriental divan we started to reform 40 years ago.'⁵

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1. See Murray, minute, 30 January 1923, FO371/8959/E1107.
 2. Edwards to Elizabeth Monroe, 4 September 1963, Edwards Papers; Murray, minute, 7 March 1922, FO371/7732/E2543.
 3. Dowson, memorandum, 1919, FO141/435/10180.
 4. Dowson, note, 5 April 1921, FO371/6332/E5006.
 5. Dowson, memorandum, 12 March 1921, FO141/435/10180.

Yet for all Dowson's pleas for reorganisation, the only reply from London observed that 'no useful purpose would be served at the present juncture by embarking on [such] a scheme.'¹ What the Foreign Office knew which Dowson could not anticipate was just how small a stake Britain was now expected to retain in an independent Egyptian administration. Yet while London maintained diplomatic silence as the negotiations dragged forward, the administrative frustrations of officials like Dowson were compounded by what appeared to be habitual British indifference to their situation.

What was true of the Finance Ministry was reflected throughout the Egyptian administration. Most government departments by 1921 were suffering from creeping paralysis, to the increasing despair of their British chiefs. Whether out of the requirement of deference to the ministry, or whether due to personnel shortages or future uncertainties, many British officials felt the administration to be slipping from their grasp.

Where this feeling of imminent breakdown was regarded as most dangerous, due to its implications for security, was in the Interior Ministry. In the course of 1921 certain influential British Interior officials concluded that they could no longer guarantee the imperial requirement of maintaining security. This conclusion, justified or otherwise, was to prove a major catalyst in the following developments in Anglo-Egyptian relations.

The Interior was perhaps the ministry which had suffered most damage to its authority from the troubles of 1919. Even after the rebellion had been put down, officials continued to be haunted by endemic political disturbances and particularly by a rising crime

1. Curzon to Allenby, 3 May 1921, FO141/435/10180.

rate in the provinces. Murders, by 1920, numbered 100 a month;¹ moreover, the statistics for crime in general by the end of 1920 were double those for the corresponding period in 1918.²

In this context, Clayton asked Wyndham Deedes, as a matter of urgency, to superintend the reconstruction of the Public Security Department, for, as Clayton put it,

'without an efficient system of control and Intelligence we are practically helpless against subversive elements, which are working in Egypt and from abroad.'³

By July 1920 Deedes had submitted recommendations supposedly designed to revitalise the atrophied public security system.⁴ In practice, however, the grand 'reconstruction' came to very little. The only innovation to be considered was the concept of a British gendarmerie in the provinces. Proponents of the idea envisaged a force of some 5,000 men stationed throughout the country, no doubt in response to demands for a return to British police officers outside the cities.⁵ However, problems of cost and feasibility soon put paid to the gendarmerie notion, whilst Deedes' other recommendations - in essence, salary increases and the redefinition of lines of authority in the Interior Ministry - were rapidly lost in the prevarications of the Finance Ministry and the Cadre Commission.⁶ Deedes, meanwhile, had moved on to Palestine, leaving the elderly Monteith-Smith in charge of public security.⁷

Meanwhile, as a result of the reduction of British inspectors in the provinces, there were by mid-1920 only two Interior inspectors

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1. Report 1920, p.80.
 2. Wellesley to Monteith-Smith, 10 January 1921, FO371/6314/E1916.
 3. Telegram Clayton to Deedes, 22 September 1919, Deedes Papers.
 4. Deedes, Report on Public Security, 30 July 1920, FO371/5029/E9150.
 5. Note on a Meeting to Discuss a British Gendarmerie, 27 November 1919, MP453, pp.107-8.
 6. Clayton to Allenby, 20 November 1920, FO371/4989/E15242.
 7. Ryder Papers, p.1, St Antony's College.

in the whole of Upper Egypt, and two more in the Delta.¹ By the end of the year, due to manpower shortages and the pressures of 'political work' at headquarters, Stafford was the only inspector on duty in the provinces,² although others like Young were making tours of inspection from Cairo. The net result was that

'the old Inspector system was in abeyance...The dual control of the provinces came to an end and Mudirs, although visited from Cairo, were left entirely responsible for their own administration.'³

Without their old freedom of access to the villages, inspectors found themselves increasingly powerless to check falling standards of administration. Young found that

'interest among Egyptians in the administration of the country had almost ceased. All thoughts turned to politics. A kind of numbness had crept in. Mudirs when called on were hospitable and kindly as ever but failed to respond to suggestions...'⁴

Inspectors realised that behind this inertia on the part of Egyptian officialdom lay the anticipation of a Wafdist government in the near future, in which eventuality any evidence of over-zealous service to the previous regime could bode ill for an official's prospects. This insecurity rapidly impinged upon administrative efficiency, with ma'murs, for example, showing little inclination to tackle crime in their districts. Thus the Egyptian police found their work hampered both by the indifference of their administrative superiors and by the low prestige of the ministry they served. In this vacuum of governmental authority British officials reported that brigands were being appointed as ghafirs, and that it was being widely said: "Mafish Hukuma" (There is no Government).⁵

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1. Young, 'East', Ch.14, p.3, YP.
 2. Report 1920, p.80, and Monteith-Smith to Allenby, 9 November 1920, FO141/514/12487.
 3. Young, op.cit, Ch. 14, pp.3 and 9.
 4. Ibid, Ch. 16, p.15.
 5. Wellesley to Monteith-Smith, 10 January 1921, FO371/6314/E1916.

More than anything it was this aura of governmental impotence which the remaining British officials lamented. The Public Works inspector, Bury, was horrified on returning from leave to Tanta in late 1920 to find that this 'very excitable mob town' no longer had an Interior inspector to watch events, nor British troops in the vicinity. ¹ Time and again, from numerous individuals came the entreaty: 'the government must have a policy.' ²

That Britain had indeed lost hold of any kind of consistent Egyptian policy was tragically proved during the Alexandria riots of May 1921. Zaghlul, we remember, had returned to Egypt in April, apparently bent on ousting Adli from the presidency of the delegation going to London for fresh negotiations, if necessary by discrediting him out of office. In retrospect it is clear that early in Adli's ministry, the Residency decided not merely to support the Prime Minister in the face of Wafdist attack, but in effect to hand his government an administrative carte blanche. This episode remains hazy, however, as few documents apparently survive to explain its intended rationale. But for the Alexandria riots and the enquiry which they brought about, the extent to which the British authorities had now abdicated control of the Egyptian administration might not have come to light. ³

From the end of April British officials were reporting an upsurge of xenophobia in the Delta, instigated, they believed, by travelling emissaries of the Wafd. ⁴ On 29 April trouble erupted between rival supporters of Zaghlul and Adli at Tanta, in the course

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1. Bury to Murray, 11 November 1920, FO848/20.
 2. e.g, Public Security Department to Residency, 26 April 1921, FO141/514/12487.
 3. An intelligence report after the riots suggested that Adli and his ministers had been allowed to take over 'real executive authority' from the time they came into office; report from E50/Cairo, 6 June 1921, FO371/6298/E7590.
 4. Patterson to Allenby, 27 April 1921, FO141/514/12487.

of which four Egyptians were shot dead by the local police. This over-reaction gave Zaghlul the opportunity he was seeking to brand Adli's government as unpatriotic, and led Adli to issue the fateful instruction that a repetition was to be avoided at all costs. ¹

So when mob demonstrations broke out in Alexandria in mid-May, the local Governor and police had been categorically instructed not to let themselves be provoked. ² Significantly, Keown-Boyd, Allenby's Oriental Secretary, who was in Alexandria just before the riots, endorsed this strategy of non-interference. On 17 May he noted:

'there is little doubt that the state of feeling in ...Alexandria, Damanhour and Tanta is such that the breaking up of demonstrations when they occur would probably lead to violent onslaughts on the police...The Ministry are probably right to avoid interference with demonstrations as long as no damage is caused.'³

The account of the events which followed given by Ingram, Alexandria's Police Commandant, points to the helplessness of his situation. On 17 May he arrests the mob leaders only to see them unilaterally released by the Parquet. Only late in the day on 19 May, after considerable violence, does the Interior grant his force permission to open fire. ⁴ The police and Egyptian army still find themselves incapable of controlling events; yet four days elapse between Allenby's promise of military assistance on 19 May⁵ and the eventual arrival of British troops on 23 May, ⁶ by which time Alexandria had suffered 58 deaths from mob violence.⁷

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1. Ingram, Summary of Report of Military Court of Inquiry into Alexandria Riots, 5 July 1921, FO371/6300/E8041. (Ingram, Report).
 2. Ibid.
 3. Keown-Boyd, note, 17 May 1921, FO141/514/12487.
 4. Ingram, Report.
 5. Telegram Allenby to Curzon, 20 May 1921, FO371/6296/E5843.
 6. Egyptian Gazette, 25 May 1921.
 7. Public Security Department Report, 19 - 25 May 1921, FO371/6313/E6506.

At first sight, responsibility for the irresolute handling of the episode would appear to have rested with Adli's ministry who, it emerged, had been left a 'free hand' by Allenby.¹ Yet it is hard to understand how abandoning a precarious government in so explosive a situation could possibly have furthered the Residency's desire to buttress Adli's regime. To expect a vulnerable ministry suddenly to cope single-handedly with disturbances on this scale, without the customary underpinning of British authority, was as Elgood inferred, ridiculous:

'the maintenance of law and order was no doubt primarily the responsibility of the Egyptian Government and not [Allenby's]; but so long as the Protectorate continued, Europeans were entitled to look to Great Britain for protection.'²

The British community in Alexandria agreed that, in effect, Britain had neglected its much-publicised 'obligation' to protect the European population, just as it had effectively abandoned its 'obligation' to the fellaheen since the war. To the Egyptian Gazette, a mouthpiece for resident British opinion, it was patently clear that 'under an Egyptian Government Europeans could never rely on the Egyptian authorities,' yet it saw no reason to hope that 'the Government [would] be induced to depart from its project of endowing Egypt with self-government because the Egyptians of Alexandria [had] shown themselves in their true colours.'³ Revealingly, Keown-Boyd commented in the aftermath of the riots that the British colony had 'hated our policy of non-interference.'⁴

In a sense, this episode only deepened existing insecurities in the European community.⁵ The vacillating behaviour of the

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1. Walrond to Vansittart, 3 August 1921, FO800/153.
 2. Elgood, Transit, p.279.
 3. Egyptian Gazette, 25 May 1921.
 4. Keown-Boyd to Watson, 30 June 1921, FO371/6301/E8283.
 5. We refer here principally to the British residents; for the experience of the Greek community in Egypt, see the recent study by A. Kitroeff, 'The Greeks in Egypt, 1919-37' (D.Phil. Oxford 1983).

authorities had merely confirmed anxieties regarding the vulnerability of Europeans under the kind of autonomous regime apparently under discussion. How, the Egyptian Gazette wanted to know, was a lone British official in the Ministry of Justice going to protect the lives and property of foreigners as the Milner Mission promised? ¹ Yet it was not just the imminent political reforms which unnerved British residents: for some time there had been additional disquiet regarding proposals for judicial reform. The scheme, conceived by Cecil Hurst early in 1920, had started with the then assumption that Britain was in Egypt to stay, and that so long as Britain remained the responsible power, she had an interest in securing herself greater freedom from the Capitulations, particularly since she could not continue to enjoy the prerogatives of martial law for much longer. Hurst's plan for Capitulatory reform envisaged the fusion of the Consular Courts with the Mixed Courts, and gave the British High Commissioner jurisdiction over the appointment of judges who, it was assumed, would now be predominantly British. ² Predictably enough, the other European powers smelt British opportunism in this stratagem, and so Hurst's reforms, initially planned to take effect from November 1920, were soon lost in a morass of diplomatic procrastination. ³ More surprisingly, perhaps, the British community proved equally hostile to the project. Judge Crabites complained that foreign nationals were being asked

'to consent to wipe out their time-honoured guarantees and accept in lieu thereof such legislative vagaries as may appeal to the passing caprice of an Egyptian Legislative Assembly, with nothing to protect them from the effects of

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1. Egyptian Gazette, 3 June 1921.
 2. Hurst, minutes, 23 April 1920, FO371/4998/E3814 and 29 October 1920, FO371/5003/E13286.
 3. Amos, memorandum, 9 December 1920, FO371/6285/E433.

ignorance, inexperience, xenophobia and fanaticism other than the veto of His Majesty's High Commissioner.'¹

Yet what appeared to European opinion to be an inadequate guarantee of British control, to Egyptian opinion seemed another guise for extending British influence still further by ascribing novel powers to the High Commissioner. Unable to sooth the qualms of one community without raising the suspicions of the other, the British authorities had reached the conclusion by mid-1921 that Capitulatory reform would best be postponed, lest it jeopardise an Anglo-Egyptian agreement altogether.² In Clayton's mind, the Alexandria riots merely confirmed the folly of Capitulatory reform, since it was 'very improbable' that Britain could secure

'by anything less than the pressure of bayonets, such real control of Egyptian administration as [would] enable us fully to discharge the responsibility to the foreign powers which we now appear ready to assume.'³

In the event, Capitulatory reform was indeed dropped; the concept of protecting the foreign community, however, was not. Under the terms of 'independence' granted in 1922, Britain effectively took on responsibility for the European population in Egypt by reserving the 'protection of foreigners' to its jurisdiction, despite the concerns of some British officials as to whether this was a realistic undertaking.

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Undeterred by the provocations of the Wafd, Adli left for negotiations in London in July 1921. To this extent Residency policy had succeeded, in sustaining an Egyptian ally as far as the conference table. Ultimately, however, this could only be a dead-end road. Adli

1. Crabites to Allenby, June 1920, FO371/5000/E7756.
2. e.g, Clayton to Amos, June 1921, FO371/6289/E8534.
3. Ibid.

came to London under the accusation of betraying his nation, and thus could not hope to return with an agreement acceptable to Egyptian sentiment. The British position was equally constrained by the caution of the Cabinet, and thus could never alter on fundamental questions of sovereignty. So when the inevitable breakdown in talks eventually came in November 1921, the sticking points were British insistence on a continued unlimited military presence, the future role of the High Commissioner and British Advisers and, as always, the Sudan.¹

More significant, perhaps, than the actual collapse of negotiations was the announcement of Adli's resignation on 11 December. As Adli explained to Lloyd George, the well-worn policy of supporting moderate Egyptian politicians in exchange for their cooperation with British rule could go no further, since, he believed, no amount of British buttressing, short of outright force, would now be capable of sustaining an unrepresentative Egyptian ministry in office. ²

The British Residency had evidently not yet embraced this conclusion but still clung to a traditional policy of cooperation with moderate elements. In the months since the Alexandria débâcle there had been a marked reversion at Qasr al-Dubbara away from the "hands off" approach that had ended so disastrously in May.³ Instead of leaving the Egyptian Government to pursue its own path, Scott, who was acting for Allenby, had returned to the view that

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1. Telegram Curzon to Allenby, 17 November 1921, FO371/6307/E12611.
 2. Lindsay, minute, 7 November 1921, FO371/6310/E9726.
 3. For one thing, the Interior Ministry tightened up security procedures in an attempt to prevent a recurrence of the Alexandria fiasco. Police commandants were to maintain closer contact with the British military command, while Brigade Commanders were instructed to use their discretion in an emergency where taking over from the civil authorities was concerned; Scott to Curzon, 13 and 28 September 1921, FO371/6305/E10831 and E11213.

all possible British influence should be brought to bear in support of the ministry. In particular, Adli should be protected from the effects of Zaghlul's latest campaign: a tour of the provinces with a visiting delegation of Labour Members of Parliament. What was needed, Scott argued, was an invocation of martial law to ban the tour and expel the M.P.s because

'[the] sight of Zaghlul surrounded by British M.P.s and voicing the most insulting calumnies against the Government is ruinous to its prestige and to its influence over its servants...' ¹

In the event, Zaghlul was permitted to proceed with his river-boat tour of Upper Egypt, although restricted in going ashore and under heavy surveillance.² Scott was satisfied that this response set the right pattern for future policy:

'our relations with [the] present Government are harmonious, and so long as we continue the policy of according them all reasonable support in the maintenance of their authority...Zaghlul's efforts to disturb these relations...cannot succeed.' ³

However, only days later Adli would reject this notion of just "carrying on" as blindly unrealistic. Moreover, he was supported by an influential section of British official opinion. For at least a year, certain British officials had believed that Britain must adopt a far more radical solution to the problems of ruling Egypt. Their views were generally dismissed as unduly alarmist, equally their solution as reckless in the extreme. Only late in 1921 did their viewpoint move into the ascendancy, with the winning of a new adherent: Allenby himself. By November 1921 the High Commissioner appeared to have fastened upon what these officials were saying as the primary justification for forcing a change in the Anglo-Egyptian

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1. The Council of Ministers, quoted by telegram Scott to Curzon, 28 September 1921, FO371/6305/E10821.
 2. Clayton to Residency, 19 October 1921, Clayton Papers, 470/13.
 3. Telegram Scott to Curzon, 24 October 1921, FO371/6306/E11735.

relationship. Their warnings were taken up by the Residency as a threat and finally as an ultimatum to break through the inertia of the British government with regard to the Egyptian question. In this way, the backroom influence of British officialdom supplied the driving force behind the major development in Anglo-Egyptian relations of our period: the unilateral declaration of independence of 1922.

The essence of these officials' viewpoint is contained in a letter received in the Foreign Office from an unnamed British administrator as early as September 1920. The writer warned that should Milner's recommendations be disregarded by the British Government,

'we shall be faced with the uncompromising hostility of the entire educated classes who...form an essential part of the administrative machine. In this case government by coercion is all that is left to us and quite apart from the cost of the large army of occupation this would entail...it is more than doubtful whether our object would be achieved by such means. The strike of native employees in the Egyptian Ministries during the spring of last year proved that without the collaboration of Egyptians in the administration the government of the country could not be carried on and if coercion had to be employed such collaboration would certainly be withheld.' ¹

Those senior officials who had for some time believed self-government to be the only option for Britain in Egypt were now urging the utmost haste in putting self-government into effect if further revolt was to be prevented. No adviser now countenanced a return to the kind of British rule of the past. In March 1921 Allenby had canvassed the opinion of several advisers regarding a suggestion that if the Milner recommendations were jettisoned, the

1. A British official to the Foreign Office, 9 September 1920, contained in a memorandum by Murray, 4 October 1920, FO371/4980/E12578. The official was probably Clayton, since we know Clayton wrote a memorandum on this theme ten days later: Clayton, memorandum, 20 September 1920, FO371/4980/E11542; see also a similar minute by Clayton, 26 January 1921, Clayton Papers, 470/11.

support of the fellaheen might be enlisted for an old style of British administration, catering particularly to rural interests.

Their reply was unequivocal:

'Western ideas of autonomy and self-government, not to mention independence...have gained too strong a hold on all sections of the community in Egypt for it to be possible for us to return to old-time methods.'

Any notion of dividing the rural population against the 'nationalist' intelligentsia was now out of date, Patterson concluded:

'a return to Cromerism pure and simple is impossible. We cannot put the clock back a quarter of a century.'¹

In June 1921, Allenby received a memorandum from the Legal Adviser, Hayter, which went several steps beyond his fellow advisers in its thinking. The Milner Report, Hayter argued, could never form the basis of an adequate Egyptian settlement since it failed to take into account the aspiration for complete independence; an alternative policy must therefore be developed. This alternative, Hayter suggested, was for Britain to make a unilateral declaration of Egypt's independence, with the goal of a signed agreement covering British interests within the following ten years. ²

It was from a British official, then, that there came the most forthright statement yet of the non-viability of collaboration within the existing terms of reference of Anglo-Egyptian dialogue. From an official, furthermore, came the genesis of the concept of delaying a bilateral agreement, while granting 'independence' in the interim, a concept adopted in time by Allenby.

Hayter's rationale was endorsed by Amos, the Judicial Adviser. At a Foreign Office meeting in July 1921 Amos predicted (with considerable accuracy) the likely course of events if negotiations

1. Patterson, memorandum, 2 April 1921, FO141/484/278.
2. Hayter, memorandum, 5 June 1921, *ibid.* P. Napier describes her father's dream of independence for Egypt in A Late Beginner, p.176.

failed: Adli's resignation, problems in forming a successor ministry, administrative paralysis due to the hostility of civil servants and increased terrorist attacks. As Amos saw it, the only hope was for Britain to put the fullest concessions on the negotiating table: all the advisers agreed, for example, that diplomatic representation should certainly be granted, and that the future roles of the advisers were another area of potential compromise. 'We can afford to be generous on all points,' concluded this meeting, 'and to go even further than Lord Milner except in the matter of British troops...' 1

There was even one adviser, however, who was prepared to abandon that Holy of Holies of British desiderata in Egypt, the Occupation itself. Clayton, himself a soldier, considered that there was no real need of a British garrison to defend either the Canal or Egypt's frontiers so long as troops were stationed in Palestine and the Sudan; equally, the protection of the foreign community could be as effectively assured by a gendarmerie force. Clayton agreed with Hayter that 'no Egyptian negotiators [could] hope to secure popular acceptance of an agreement which is based on anything less than independence...' The insistence on a continued British garrison he considered just such a stumbling-block, and therefore he urged its removal. 2

By autumn 1921 it was Clayton who had emerged as the most outspoken voice of British officialdom; it was also Clayton, due to his familiarity with Allenby, who was to prove most influential at the Residency. We remember that in late September Scott, the Acting High Commissioner, was urging a policy of vigorous support for the ministry. Before long, however, Scott and Selby (First Secretary)

1. Murray, minute, 27 July 1921, FO371/6302/E8857.

2. Clayton, memorandum, 8 October 1921, Clayton Papers, 470/14.

had a meeting with Clayton which seems to have introduced a new note into Residency thinking. Both diplomats now wrote almost identical letters to London outlining policy alternatives in quite altered terms. Scott and Selby suggested that Britain faced a choice of either ruling Egypt by force or granting complete internal independence. Both writers then went on to develop the implications of a policy of force: could His Majesty's Government guarantee the troops and financial resources for a policy of repression? Furthermore, could the government withstand the pressure of public opinion in the event of unpalatable aggressive measures? If there was the slightest doubt on either count, as both writers evidently believed there was, then it was infinitely preferable to 'have done with it' ¹ and 'take the opportunity...to get out on the best terms we can.' ²

For a home government at that moment preoccupied with the Irish crisis, such warnings could hardly fail to hit their target. Although by no means in agreement with Selby and Scott's drastic conclusions, the Foreign Office concurred that there were horrible risks involved in failing to reach an Egyptian settlement: the indefinite commitment of a garrison of at least 12,000 troops; numerous unpopular sentences of death and deportation; a total reliance on martial law in the absence of a ministry; and worst of all, the danger of creating 'another Ireland, without an Ulster, which would be a storm centre in the Mediterranean and a perpetual menace to the Suez Canal.' ³ Nevertheless, the Cabinet still believed that a moderate Egyptian government could be sustained, as

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1. Scott to Lindsay, 30 September 1921, FO371/6305/E11225.
 2. Selby to Tyrell, 1 October 1921, FO800/153.
 3. Cooper and Murray, memorandum, 14 October 1921, FO371/6305/E11225.

before, with the assurance of British support.¹ Most notably, Allenby himself had not yet been convinced of the British officials' point of view. Speaking to the Cabinet on 4 November, the High Commissioner seemed to advocate a policy of standing by Adli's ministry, much as Scott had been urging until not long before.²

Yet in the course of the following two weeks, during which time Allenby returned to Egypt and Adli resigned, something caused the High Commissioner to change course dramatically. We may surmise that on Adli's rejection of Britain's treaty terms, Allenby found himself confronted by the advisers, demanding to know how Egypt was to be governed, without a ministry and with no prospects of a settlement. In any event, later that day Allenby conveyed to London a remarkable memorandum from Clayton, Dowson, Patterson and Amos, expressing their joint conviction that to maintain the status quo in Egypt would not only cause 'complete administrative chaos' but would entail 'serious risk of revolution throughout the country.' It was possible in this eventuality that martial law could maintain a certain level of security, but the advisers begged to emphasise that where the machinery of government was concerned, Egyptian cooperation was indispensable: the small leaven of British officials could not hope to run the country on their own. For the cooperation of the indigenous administration to be retained, it was imperative that His Majesty's Government approve a liberal programme without delay.³

In the days that followed, Allenby's position in relation to the opinion of the advisers developed from one of cautious blessing to determined advocacy. On 6 December he proposed to London the unilateral termination of the Protectorate first mooted by

1. Cabinet Sub-committee, 24 October 1921, FO371/6306/E11908.
2. Cabinet minutes, 86 (21), 4 November 1921, FO371/6307/E12388.
3. Telegram Allenby to Curzon, 17 November 1921, PP 1922, xxiii (1592), p.5. (Correspondence 1922).

Hayter,¹ and on 11 December returned to the attack, expounding the untenability of the existing state of affairs for any prospective ministry.² At the Foreign Office Sir Eyre Crowe (Permanent Under-Secretary) lamented that it was 'difficult to believe' that such words emanated from 'the same Lord Allenby who when in London...claimed with such confidence that...he would have no difficulty in giving effect to the policy of maintaining our position in Egypt.' The only explanation, Crowe concluded, must be the influence of 'the officials who [had] always favoured the undiluted Milner doctrine...'³

As yet, however, Allenby's turnabout had not affected official thinking in London. On 3 December the High Commissioner had been required to deliver a communication to the Sultan declaring Britain's 'unshaken' claim to certain 'exclusive rights and responsibilities' in Egypt⁴ in a Cromerian tone which did little to assist the formation of an urgently-needed ministry. Hovering in the wings, however, was the hopeful figure of Tharwat, and Allenby's following actions are most easily understood as a standard British gesture intended to encourage a tremulous would-be Egyptian prime minister: after various restrictions on Wafd activity, Zaghlul and four supporters were deported on 23 December.

The removal of Egypt's leading nationalist brought about a predictable explosion but did not bring about a ministry. Allenby pointed out that investing Under-Secretaries with ministerial powers under martial law could only be a temporary expedient: a ministry had to be procured and the necessary price to pay was the abolition

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1. Allenby to Curzon, 6 December 1921, Correspondence 1922, p.7.
 2. Telegram Allenby to Curzon, 11 December 1921, FO371/6308/E13587.
 3. Crowe, minute, 12 December 1921, *ibid.*
 4. Allenby to the Sultan, 3 December 1921, FO371/6310/E12919.

of the Protectorate. On these terms Tharwat would take office; without this concession, Allenby foresaw:

'either the annexation of a violently hostile country which would require to be governed by force, or else complete capitulation on the part of His Majesty's Government.' ¹

Clearly, Allenby had now quite absorbed the thinking of the senior officials, and was employing their logic as a battering ram on London. Curzon himself had now been won to the cause, as had Murray and Cooper at the Foreign Office. ² On 18 January the Foreign Secretary took the case for abolition of the Protectorate to the Cabinet, pointing out that the Egyptian administration could not continue to 'scrape along under martial law' indefinitely. ³ Unconvinced, the Cabinet took the unprecedented step of summoning Clayton and Amos for consultations: ⁴ never before had the British servants of the Egyptian Government been accorded so prominent a position in deliberations concerning Egyptian policy, surely an implicit acknowledgement of their influence by this point.

In reply, Allenby maintained that the Cabinet was already in possession of the final opinion of both advisers and Residency, and reiterated that what was at stake was the very continuation of government in Egypt. Allenby trusted that the nature of the risks of administrative non-cooperation were fully appreciated at home: Egypt was largely administered by Egyptians, with only the 'advice and assistance of a very small body of Englishmen' who were totally dependent on the goodwill of their local colleagues. These British officials, Allenby concluded, with a slight hint of menace, would be 'powerless in [the] face of [the] situation which would arise on [the] rejection of my present proposals.' ⁵

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1. Allenby to Curzon, 12 January 1922, Correspondence 1922, p.20.
 2. Cooper, Old Men Forget, p.107.
 3. Curzon, Memorandum to the Cabinet, 16 January 1922, FO371/7730/E652.
 4. Curzon to Allenby, 18 January 1922, FO800/153.
 5. Telegram Allenby to Curzon, 20 January 1922, Correspondence 1922, pp.23-4.

A few days later, with no response from London, the menace in Allenby's tone became overt: if his advice were not accepted, he would proffer his resignation, ¹ as would the four British advisers. ² It was the latter threat that the Foreign Office found particularly alarming since it introduced a hitherto undreamt-of dimension to the nightmare of Egyptian non-cooperation. British officials, Lindsay reminded his colleagues, were not the servants of the British Government, and so there was no formal means of controlling their behaviour. There was evidence, moreover, that 'almost as one man' they disagreed with London's policy of not giving way to Egyptian demands. Thus, were the anticipated breakdown in Egyptian cooperation to take place, it was likely that British officialdom would 'not be of much use to H.M.G. for the purpose of carrying on in Egypt.' Far from being the dependable last resort of British control they had always been assumed to be, it now seemed at the moment of crisis that the British officials might not rally to the flag but actually help to 'accelerate any movement that takes place in Egypt.' ³

Officially, the Cabinet remained intransigent: Allenby was informed that Britain could not abandon her reserved interests in Egypt without effective guarantees. ⁴ Yet beneath the surface, the joint coercion of Allenby and the officials was having its effect: the High Commissioner was summoned to explain himself in London, accompanied by Clayton and Amos.⁵

The final confrontation between Allenby and the Cabinet has been well documented since Wavell first revealed what actually took

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1. Telegram Allenby to Curzon, 25 January 1922, FO371/7730/E921.
 2. Telegram Allenby to Curzon, 26 January 1922, FO371/7730/E1031.
 3. Lindsay, memorandum, 26 January 1922, FO371/7730/E767.
 4. Curzon to Allenby, 28 January 1922, Correspondence 1922, p.26.
 5. In their absence, British officials were unofficially warned by London to refrain from embarrassing behaviour; telegram Murray to Amos, 28 January 1922, FO371/7730/E1031.

place. ¹ It was no doubt the "Bull's" fire and fury that finally drew Lloyd George's surrender on that occasion; but always in the background there are the advisers, (most notably Amos, this time) reiterating their point of view with cool conviction:

'...in Egypt they were threatened with the great danger of a complete breakdown in the Government. This would be certain to be followed by a period of Annexation since there would be nothing else to do...Mr. Amos said that talk of annexation filled the British Officials working in Egypt with despair...' ²

The end result of this encounter, of course, was Britain's declaration to the Sultan of 28 February 1922: that Egypt was recognised forthwith as an independent, sovereign state; that the British Protectorate was terminated; that martial law would be withdrawn upon an Act of Indemnity; but that in four areas, Britain would reserve absolute discretion, pending satisfactory agreements between H.M.G. and the Government of Egypt, viz. the security of Imperial communications; the external defence of Egypt; the protection of foreign interests; and the Sudan.

It seems beyond doubt that it was the British officials of the Egyptian Government who were the main catalysts, if not the instigators behind the devolution of control which took place in Egypt in 1922: first by their persistent lobbying of the Residency and the Foreign Office that the Protectorate must be abandoned, and finally by their threat to down tools if it were not. If only for their central role in this episode, the British officials deserve to be rescued from the historiographical oblivion to which their shadowy status has relegated them.

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1. Lord Wavell, Allenby in Egypt (London, 1943), pp.77-8.
 2. Memorandum of a Conversation at Downing Street, 15 February 1922, between the Prime Minister, Curzon, Allenby, Amos, etc; FO371/7731/E1964.

That it should have been British officials who were instrumental in bringing about one of the first major acts of 'decolonisation' possibly strikes as somewhat surprising: such officials might have been expected to be vociferous advocates of continued British administration, if only for the mercurial motive of safeguarding their careers. However it seems that after the announcement in January 1921 that no more British officials would be recruited on a permanent basis,¹ most officials had resigned themselves to shortlived Egyptian careers, and thus were perhaps able to contemplate the direction of British policy with a certain detachment. Maybe the foremost proponent of independence was Clayton who, as Adviser to the Interior, himself stood right in the path of early retirement.

There was a further respect in which British officials in Egypt were uniquely free to express their views - for the simple reason that, unlike colonial officials proper, they were emphatically not the employees of the Crown. Untrammelled by considerations of career and heirarchy, Anglo-Egyptian officials were in a position to speak their minds with a certain reckless abandon. Their main concern was that self-rule should be granted before the situation deteriorated irretrievably. As one official wrote to a Member of Parliament,

'we are not likely to have a more favourable opportunity of settling once and for all the Egyptian question...my view I know is shared by most of the British officials.'²

So when the December communication to the Sultan indicated continued intransigence in London, 'at least 98% of all the officials,' according to Hopkins of the Finance, 'were astonished at its tone...the whole thing is sickening and so absolutely unnecessary.'³

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1. Addison, 'The Anglo-Egyptian Association', Addison Papers.
 2. Enclosure in L. Haslam M.P. to Harmsworth, 30 November 1921, FO371/6308/E13245.
 3. Hopkins to Lady Milner, 31 December 1921, Cecil-Maxse MSS, U1599/C367.

The root of these officials' concern was a concern that continued disregard for Egyptian aspirations could trigger an Egyptian explosion which would only be subdued at great cost. The question remains, however: was non-cooperation an actual danger at the end of 1921, or merely a perceived danger which was nevertheless predicted so convincingly that the British Government was eventually panicked into granting independence?

The evidence for the period between the breakdown of negotiations and Zaghlul's deportation suggests that the provinces were quiet, ¹ that crime was generally down, ² and most significant, in view of the warnings of administrative non-cooperation, Egyptian officialdom had not yet come out on strike. In early December Allenby advised the Foreign Office that it was 'by no means clear' that non-cooperation was 'an imminent danger.'³

Only when Zaghlul was deported did Egyptian officials leave their desks and was there an outbreak of rioting; but in two days, by 27 December, most officials were back at work,⁴ and the country was once again reported quiet.⁵ So we are left with just a suspicion that in deporting Zaghlul, Allenby assumed or maybe hoped that the country would erupt in just the way he was currently predicting. In point of fact, the troubles of Christmas 1921 were a mere shadow of the chaos of March 1919. Russell told his father on 3 January 1922 that the recent rioting was 'exactly what we expected would happen...the only thing is that we all expected very much more serious trouble than we have had.'⁶

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1. e.g, Graves to Young, 22 November 1921, FO141/514/12487.
 2. Clayton to Residency, 28 January 1922, FO371/7761/E1604.
 3. Public Security Department Report, 1-7 December 1921, FO371/6313/E13946.
 4. Wavell, Allenby in Egypt, p.67.
 5. Telegram Allenby to Curzon, 28 December 1921, FO371/6308/E14321.
 6. Russell to his father, 3 January 1922, Russell Papers.

So we may conclude that Egypt was not on the point of revolt in December 1922 as the British Residency and officials implied it was. This is not say that a total breakdown might not have occurred before long, if the declaration of independence had not been made when it was. After all, the officials were basing their prognosis on their recent experience of creeping administrative inertia. Yet what actually brought about the end of the Protectorate was not the Egyptian situation at that precise moment, nor Allenby losing his temper with Lloyd George; but the fact that certain British officials of the Egyptian Government had decided that it must be withdrawn.

Whether these officials would have pursued this course so vigorously had they realised how swiftly and effectively Britain was to lose administrative control after 1922 is another matter. Their apparently enlightened views may have disguised a naive ignorance of what 'independence' would actually mean. Amos had told Lloyd George in London that no-one anticipated 'losing all control of Egypt' if the Protectorate were abandoned.¹ We turn now to examining the assumptions and realities of independence for British administration in Egypt.

1. Conversation at Downing Street, 15 February 1922, FO371/7731/E1964.

Chapter Eight

The Officials and Independence: Milner's Chimera

From our post-colonial perspective we can forget that the dismantling of British administrative control over Egypt was, for its time, a foray into uncharted territory. The concept of self-government had long been familiar in respect of the settler dominions, of course, and now since 1919 India had embarked on a system of dyarchy. This was the first time, however, that Britain had handed over the reins of central government to a non-European people. ¹ Part of the interest of the Egyptian experiment of 1922 lies in its novelty and in what it suggests about contemporary notions of "independence".

In the course of the Milner investigation, certain forecasts were made regarding Britain's position in an independent ² Egypt. Firstly, Milner stressed that continuing military occupation would ensure that Britain retained overall hegemony in Egypt: with this latent yet omnipresent force at her command, she could be confident of dominating any crisis or threat. ³ In the light of this, the Milner school went on to assume that Britain would be able to hand over to Egyptian management those departments considered non-essential, while retaining enough control of finance, justice and security to ensure the fulfilment of obligations to Egypt's creditors and foreign residents. This involved the further assumption that a few remaining officials would be able to exert

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1. The Irish, who could be considered kith and kin, had achieved Home Rule three months previously.
 2. The validity of the term "independence" in this context may be questioned. It is employed here in its contemporary sense.
 3. e.g, Hurst, Memorandum on Egyptian Reform, 1920, MP449, p.39.

sufficient influence over affairs in the former category. Exactly how the future Financial and Judicial Advisers would exercise control in their respective spheres was never explained, beyond references to that Cromerian concept of 'moral influence'. Milner suggested that once Egyptians no longer regarded British officials as their masters,

'[the] native Ministers [would] continue to lean...upon the British members of their staffs. It is true that the latter will no longer be in a position to dictate, but will have to rely upon their personal qualities to carry the day by influence and persuasion...' ¹

At the Foreign Office, Lindsay put it this way:

'so long as the definition does not say what an Adviser may not do, the Adviser's position in Egyptian Government may always be great in proportion to his ability and personality. I don't believe any Treaty will ever change this.' ²

There was a tendency to assume moreover, that, given the choice, the Egyptian Government would not even eliminate British personnel from the other 'non-essential' departments.

On the basis of these assumptions, the Milner plan envisaged an optimal balance of British administrative involvement in Egypt: adequate to guarantee a hard-core of essential British interests, and yet limited enough to absolve Britain from the responsibility of running the country in the event of anarchy.

What the Milner scheme did not clarify, however, was whether the future British official would serve the Egyptian or the British government. William Hayter was one of the few to remark upon the confusion in British thinking in this regard. In June 1921 he wrote:

'the real difficulty of the English high officials...on which the [Milner] Report never touches, is that they have to serve two masters, the Egyptian Government and the British High Commissioner. It has not mattered so much in the past, since the British Representative has, in the last

1. Milner to Cabinet, 16 September 1920, MP451, p.11.
2. Lindsay, minute, 7 May 1921, FO371/5244/5006.

resort, been the ruler of Egypt; but...it will be quite impossible with an autonomous Egyptian Government.'¹

At this stage few others foresaw any difficulty in British officials maintaining the Janus-like dual loyalties of the past: ostensibly the servants of the Khedive, yet cognisant, to a greater or lesser extent, of duties to the British Crown. In the course of time others came to advocate what Hayter now suggested: a clear-cut division between those technical experts who would genuinely serve the Egyptian Government, and the supervisory financial and judicial officials, who should openly be members of the High Commissioner's staff.

What worried some observers more at this stage was whether Milner had overestimated the freedom of action which a British official could expect under an autonomous Egyptian Government. There was particular concern that the Financial Adviser was expected to maintain most of his previous functions without any guarantee of adequate powers to fulfil them. Allenby wondered what leverage would be available to the Financial Adviser were the Egyptian Government to embark on financial measures deemed injudicious by Egypt's creditors. ² Hayter realised that the Financial Adviser would no longer have the whole Ministry staff at his disposal to keep him informed of projects at their inception, nor would he retain his Cabinet seat, with its ultimate power of veto. Moreover, his responsibility for the payment of certain external charges brought with it no direct access to revenues in the event of default. ³

On closer examination it appears that Britain's proposed devolution of administrative power was little more than a compromise, a mish-mash of "leaving things to the Egyptians"

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1. Hayter, memorandum, 5 June 1921, FO141/484/278.
 2. Allenby to Curzon, 18 January 1921, MP455, pp.83-4.
 3. Hayter to Clayton, memorandum, 28 December 1921, Clayton Papers, 470/13.

tempered by the old "a-word-in-your-ear" style of control. Its taint of Cromerism still made it unacceptable to Egyptian opinion, as Adli had made clear during the 1921 negotiations. So could it possibly be expected to work?

Late in the Protectorate there were two attempts to make the proposed mechanism more defined, and thus, it was hoped, more viable. The first, Curzon's, endeavoured to extract guarantees from Adli which would strengthen the position of the Financial Adviser. The Cabinet was concerned that it 'was no good having a Financial Adviser if he was not to be consulted'; any Anglo-Egyptian agreement should at least establish his right of access to the Egyptian Prime Minister and Minister of Finance. ¹ However, with the eventual collapse of the 1921 talks, this attempt at manoeuvring the senior British official back onto more familiar ground came to nothing.

The second modification plan, emanating from the Amos, Hayter and Clayton triumvirate, pointed in the opposite direction to Curzon's. In this matter of the advisers' future powers, the officials argued once again that Britain must make bold concessions to achieve a workable settlement. The solution to inadequate powers for remaining British officials lay, they argued, not in exacting retrograde guarantees, but rather in a cool-headed recognition that the control of the past must disappear. The Caisse de la Dette, they suggested, would continue to exert the necessary financial safeguards, and in a form less objectionable to Egyptian opinion than a conspicuous individual. The Judicial Adviser they thought might prove equally dispensable, since the Capitulations, which provided foreigners with considerable safeguards, were now unlikely to be abolished in the near future. However, Amos was unsuccessful in his

1. Minutes of Second Conference, 14 July 1921, FO371/6302/E8536.

bid to introduce concessions along these lines to the 1921 negotiations. ¹

Nevertheless, the Advisers continued undeterred in their backstage campaign to achieve the maximum credibility in Egyptian eyes for the projected handover of administrative control. Early in 1922 Clayton urged that as soon as an Egyptian ministry could be formed on the strength of ending the Protectorate, steps should rapidly be taken towards indigenising key administrative posts as 'immediate evidence of good faith on the part of His Majesty's Government and an encouragement to such [a] ministry.'² Murray had come to a similar conclusion in London, observing that the position of a new ministry could be 'materially strengthened were it able to show that under its auspices the government of Egypt by Egyptians was becoming progressively more of a reality...'³ So, true to the philosophy of the Milner scheme, British officials were to be the first sacrifice on the altar of independence for Egypt.

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What is so noticeable about the months following the declaration of independence in February 1922 is that there were few guidelines as to how to set about dismantling a British administration. At an early stage the Residency realised that it should cease publication of the Annual Report since, with independence, Britain no longer possessed the 'locus standi for commenting officially and regularly on [Egypt's] internal domestic affairs.'⁴ In practice, some British officials noticed very

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1. Murray, minute on the negotiations, 27 July 1921, FO371/6302/E8857.
 2. Clayton, memorandum, 1 January 1922, Clayton Papers, 470/13.
 3. Murray, minute, 5 January 1922, FO371/7730/E208.
 4. Lindsay, minute, 7 April 1922, FO371/7766/E3762.

little change for at least a year, as the finance official Andrew Holden recalls: 'independence at first did not seem to make much difference to the administrative officials, who went on doing their duties much as before.'¹

The first to be affected, as befitted a policy of symbolic intent, were the men at the top. On 1 March, the day that a ministry took office under Tharwat, the new Prime Minister reached an accord with the Residency on the future status of the advisers. In the Scott-Tharwat agreement, as it became known, Britain acknowledged the incompatibility of outside advisory control with the public accountability implied by parliamentary institutions, shortly to be established. The future function of the adviser should therefore be limited to giving advice to his Minister, who would henceforth be solely responsible for his decisions. Officials below the rank of adviser would in future only be answerable to their Egyptian minister. The agreement also directed that the Financial Adviser would now lose his seat on the Council of Ministers. However, in view of his duty to remain informed on all financial matters, it was agreed that the Financial Adviser should be given all facilities for keeping abreast of developments. The responsibilities of the Judicial Adviser with regard to the Mixed Courts and the administration of justice as it affected foreigners were similarly acknowledged. His Majesty's Government stated its intention to abolish several of the other adviserships in the near future, and reiterated its support for a policy of replacing Europeans in the civil service with qualified Egyptians. ²

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1. Holden, Memorandum on Egyptian Nationalism, 1968, Andrew Holden Papers, St Antony's College.
 2. Enclosure in Allenby to Curzon, 4 March 1922, FO371/7732/E2766.

The first tangible outcome of the Scott-Tharwat accord came two months later when Clayton submitted his resignation. So departed from Egypt one of the leading spirits behind the transition to Egyptian administrative responsibility. At the same time Patterson retired as Education Adviser, although was reappointed the following year as Financial Adviser. A third advisership was eliminated in August 1922 when Sir George Macauley retired as Communications Adviser and was not replaced.¹

However, the financial basis upon which officials left Egyptian service rapidly highlighted certain inadequate premises held by the British concerning the consequences of independence. The initial reaction to Milner's proposals had been a fear that numerous foreign personnel would be dismissed. The protests from a rapidly-formed Association of British Officials ² induced Allenby to commission compensation proposals from Judge Percival, a respected figure in the official community. Percival realised, however, that British officials actually had more to fear from being kept in Egypt against their will than from summary dismissal. In planning a compensation agreement, both governments favoured the notion of a time limit during which the Egyptian Government could dismiss unwanted staff, whilst those officials who wished to could depart voluntarily. It emerged that the Egyptian Government had an interest in restricting the number of retirees by means of a time limit simply because of the cost of compensating them. Britain had a similar interest, of course, in order to preserve maximum efficiency. Percival represented the majority of British officials in urging that the time limit should be dropped: officials should be

1. Allenby to Curzon, 30 August 1922, FO371/7768/E9126.

2. Addison, 'The Anglo-Egyptian Association', Addison Papers.

free to resign at any time they chose, rather than find themselves trapped in working conditions they no longer found acceptable.¹

Yet officials were equally aware that to retire with compensation could involve distinct disadvantages: a cut in income by up to a half, as well as a major blow to the prospects of any official in mid-career. Percival feared that it might be

'only those officials who have no responsibilities in the way of family or otherwise, or who have outside financial resources, or to whom the new regime is profoundly distasteful, who [would] exercise the option to retire.'²

On several counts, therefore, many British officials had come to view Egyptian independence with apprehension. Little progress had been made during the 1921 negotiations on the compensation issue and independence finally came to pass without any prior agreement on the matter. It had always been assumed that compensation according to an established scale would be made a treaty obligation upon the Egyptian Government; both officials and Foreign Office now realised with horror that, without a treaty, the Egyptian Government was under no legal obligation to pay compensation at all. There were indications, moreover, that Tharwat was loath to commit himself to compensation without reference to the forthcoming parliament.

Here was Britain's first encounter with the question of how to secure her interests without her former authority over internal Egyptian affairs. The old mechanisms of control, which it had been assumed would continue to function to some extent, suddenly seemed unreliable. Murray's question, 'what lever have we got to compel the Egyptian Government to come to terms...?'³ would run like a refrain through the next years of Britain's involvement in Egypt.

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1. Percival, General Lines for a Compensation Scheme, 2 May 1921, FO371/6328/E6490.
 2. Percival to Lindsay, 12 October 1921, FO371/6329/E11325.
 3. Murray, minute, 8 April 1922, FO371/7749/E3736.

For one thing, Britain's residual influence would be tempered by having to respect the laws of Egyptian collaboration, as much now as before independence. The restricted terms of reference under which Tharwat had taken office condemned his government as national traitors to the Wafd, to the point that, later in 1922, ministers became targets for a number of assassination attempts. The scarcity value of a ministry under these conditions made Allenby reluctant to pressurise Tharwat on any but the most crucial British requirements.

British officials became increasingly bitter that their interests were evidently not counted amongst these. Dick Wellesley reported a widespread feeling that 'the Residency are more or less in with the natives and are ready to sacrifice the English to bolster up Sarwat.'¹ Moreover, the majority of British officials had little confidence that the advisers were representing their interests adequately. The advisers, who were fairly regarded as having engineered the demise of British rule, were themselves senior enough to retire on full pension, and thus would be less directly affected by the finer points of compensation.²

When pressed by the Foreign Office as to what progress had been made on the matter, Allenby expressed the view that 'it would be a mistake to drive the government out of office on this issue' particularly since 'it would be impossible to find another government to take its place.' He therefore proposed to inform the officials that, in the absence of an agreement, all compensation applications would be handled individually.³ However, when another two months had elapsed without advance, London returned to

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1. Wellesley to Murray, 8 June 1922, FO371/7734/E6199.
 2. Clayton was a particular object of ill-feeling in this regard; Russell to Milner, 31 January 1923, MP51, p.16.
 3. Telegram Allenby to Curzon, 8 June 1922, FO371/7749/E5837.

the attack with the somewhat desperate proposal that some revenue-earning branch of the administration should be seized under martial law as security against the officials' entitlements. ¹ Allenby rejected any such intervention on the same grounds as before. ²

Thus for the whole of 1922, the departure of British officials was handled on an ad hoc basis by a Residency committee, provided that individual applicants could prove they were working under unacceptable conditions. The Egyptian Government generally accepted a scale of indemnity proposed by the Residency, at a level 20% below Percival's original recommendations. ³ Even so, out of the 120 pensionable British officials who had applied to leave Egypt by December 1922, only nine cases had been approved by the Egyptian Government.⁴ Moreover, this procedure offered no assurance to those officials deemed 'indispensable' by the Egyptian Government that they would be allowed to leave with compensation at some future point.

There can be no clearer evidence than that evinced by the compensation saga that British officialdom had been selected as the principal scapegoat for the unpopularity of British domination in Egypt. The ultimate raison d'être for having British officials in Egypt had always been that they would serve British interests in one way or another. That interest had now officially become one of 'disentanglement' - as Allenby put it, 'totally to dissipate any suspicion in the Egyptian mind that we are less anxious than they to terminate our administrative control;' ⁵ and now, as before, British officials were expected to serve that purpose, and play out their propitiatory role to the end.

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1. Telegram Murray to Allenby, 16 August 1922, FO371/7736/E8014.
 2. Telegram Allenby to Curzon, 18 August 1922, FO371/7736/E8254.
 3. Ingram, minute, n.d, FO371/7750/E12560.
 4. Allenby to Curzon, 9 December 1922, FO371/7750/E14161.
 5. Allenby to Curzon, 20 December 1922, FO371/8966/E44.

'Disentanglement' was now viewed as vital to that familiar British task in Egypt, the cultivation of collaborators. In some ways, as Deeb points out, Britain was now more dependent than ever upon local intermediaries, having ostensibly abandoned the option of direct action in Egypt for an indirect involvement. ¹ The Residency remained acutely aware that it would be impossible to rule Egypt directly in the event of non-cooperation or the protracted absence of a ministry, and that for this reason, unwelcome British interference was to be avoided where possible. Besides, a ministry was essential to bring into being a constitution, a measure which Britain foresaw both as a popular gesture, and a means of restraining Fu'ad's pretensions of autocracy. ² In the longer term, there was the need to enshrine Britain's modified relationship with Egypt in a bilateral treaty. This overriding policy objective would constrain the Residency to follow the path of tolerant non-intervention more closely still, and even to accept a Wafdist government, as potential treaty-brokers with adequate national legitimacy.

From this broad sweep over Britain's principal Egyptian interests, one might conclude that British officials would no longer have any significant role to play. This is certainly the opinion of the venerable one-time Oriental Secretary, Sir Laurence Grafftey-Smith:

'the Residency was not interested in what the British survivors did or did not do in Egyptian service, except for the three senior men in the Finance and Justice and the European Department of Public Security;...Politically, our sole interest was to find a suitable recipient for the favour of full independence. These matters were not pursued by British officials...' ³

1. Deeb, Party Politics, p.127.

2. Ibid, pp.124-5.

3. Grafftey-Smith to the writer, July 1982.

There is no doubt that during the decade after 1922 the Residency did come to accept a very limited role for those officials who remained in Egypt. Yet it must be said that at the outset neither Allenby nor most officials anticipated just how limited that role would become. In reality, the erosion of powers and the winnowing of influence came more rapidly and thoroughly than any but a few had anticipated. In the first months after February 1922 the Residency talked enthusiastically of 'disentanglement' as the panacea for Britain's problems in Egypt. Yet 'disentanglement' was never truly anticipated to mean dispossession and expulsion, but rather disencumbrance and extrication: a process which would be conducted on British terms, at British pace, and to British advantage. It was a matter, as Allenby succinctly put it, of 'disentangling ourselves without losing hold.'¹ The internal contradictions of this objective only came to be appreciated, gradually and painfully, over the following months. This process of realisation is of interest in its own right, as it illustrates not only Britain's evolving status in Egypt but also one of the earliest experiences of transfer of power.

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Always the linchpin of government departments, the Finance Ministry offers valuable evidence of the collapse of British control over Egyptian administration. In June 1922 the Financial Adviser, Dowson, remained confident that his office need suffer no undue loss of influence as a result of the recent reforms. Dowson pointed out that officials in Egypt had never been confined by the paper

1. Allenby to Curzon, 1 October 1922, FO371/7737/E10770.

attributes of their offices, and that now, as before, the post of Financial Adviser held scope for augmentation. ¹ Now was the moment to choose between a strictly passive role, in which the Adviser would dissociate himself from internal Egyptian affairs and would merely act as 'the financial sentinel of the Residency;' or alternatively, an active policy of 'maintaining as close touch as can tactfully be secured with the broad current of Egyptian financial administration,' with a considerable advisory function in mind. This positive approach, backed up by increased personnel for the Financial Adviser's office, was the way, Dowson believed, to 'prevent or restrict the growth of influence from hostile sources.' So far, Dowson had been allowed a preview of financial business before its presentation to the Council of Ministers, and it was his expectation that this 'procedure should crystallise and become habitual.' ²

While sharing Dowson's optimistic view of Anglo-Egyptian cooperation in the Finance Ministry, the Residency was not so sure about the Financial Adviser's scheme for expanded functions and personnel. If Egyptians were not to feel that independence was illusory, Allenby observed, then the Financial Adviser should be careful to keep 'strictly within his sphere, even though he [might] witness much inefficiency outside his sphere, and long to correct it.' ³

Dowson, it appears, had not yet imbibed the rationale of 'disentanglement' as understood by the Allenby 'brains trust'. ⁴ Yet there was a further sense in which he had evidently not

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1. Dowson, Note on the Powers and Functions of the Financial Commissioner, 26 June 1922, FO371/7737/E10770.
 2. Ibid.
 3. Allenby to Curzon, 1 October 1922, *ibid.*
 4. A contemporary term used to include Clayton, Amos and Hayter.

perceived any change since the declaration of independence. It was the Governor of the National Bank of Egypt, Sir Bertram Hornsby, who observed to Dowson that the Financial Adviser was in fact in the weak position of having 'responsibility without power or authority, commanding an influence which would be at best very shadowy, depending...on personal factors, the permanence of which [could] not be assured.' ¹ Hornsby gave force to his argument by asking how Dowson could have intervened in the recent occurrence of a substantial deposit being made by the Egyptian Government with the Bank Misr. 'In the first place,' Hornsby enquired,

'is it certain that you would have heard of it? Such a measure is not necessarily brought before the Council of Ministers and might well be taken by the Finance Minister after informal discussion with his colleagues. And if you were informed, what could you do? Presumably you would lodge a protest, with the result, let us assume, that the measure contemplated would be dropped. Then the cry would arise that there was no real independence...'²

However, in the short interval between June and August 1922, Dowson had evidently come to this realisation himself. 'The Milner people,' he now observed, 'laid down that the proposed Financial Commissioner was "to ensure the solvency" of Egypt, and having written an easy phrase left it at that.'³ From the later perspective of retirement, Dowson recognised that his powers as adviser had been steadily eroded. He particularly lamented the demise of the Financial Committee as an effective organ of control. When the Tharwat-Scott agreement had removed the Financial Adviser from the Council of Ministers and the Financial Committee, it had been stipulated that all financial business should be submitted to the Cabinet via the Financial Committee after prior examination by

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1. Hornsby to Dowson, draft letter, August 1922, Hornsby Papers.
 2. Ibid. Hornsby's concern lay in the choice of Bank Misr as opposed to the British-run National Bank.
 3. Dowson to Hornsby, 12 August 1922, Hornsby Papers.

the Financial Adviser. However, there had been 'an increasing tendency for the Council of Ministers...to take decisions on matters of primary importance to the State over the heads of the Financial Committee,'¹ allowing the Financial Adviser, therefore, to be effectively side-stepped and ignored by the Ministry of Finance. Nor could he rely any longer on the information and assistance of a British Under-Secretary and Assistant Under-Secretary, since both Dallin and Trelawny had left Egyptian service during 1923.² Besides the Legal Secretary³ and an Administrative Secretary, this left the Adviser with only the Financial Secretary to keep the entire financial and economic field under observation.

The Financial Adviser was, in fact, usually aware of instances of financial mismanagement; his frustration lay in his inability to intervene. Administrative congestion as a result of over-centralisation in the person of the Finance Minister was a frequent complaint, but being a matter of internal organisation, could not be remedied. Nor could the Financial Adviser do much to ease an inexperienced department and parliament through the process of preparing and approving a budget. Where there was evidence of government involvement in commercial ventures, the Financial Adviser could do no more than issue a warning in his Annual Note on the Budget.⁴

Yet what worried officials most were signs of incipient corruption. British land tax officials were approached to sanction tax reductions on estates belonging to the King and Sidqi. Although both requests were refused, Dowson was alarmed:

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1. Dowson, Memorandum on the Responsibilities and Functions of the Financial Adviser, November 1923, Hornsby Papers.
 2. Annual Report on Egypt for 1923, FO371/10060/E6663.
 3. At this time Cecil Campbell, engaged primarily on petroleum matters.
 4. e.g, Dowson, Note on the Budget, 1923-4, October 1923, FO371/8976/E11317.

'if such efforts have already been made by the King's representatives...and by the best Finance Minister Egypt has ever known...and while two Englishmen are still in charge of the Department of Direct Taxes, what is to be expected if and when an Egyptian Director-General is appointed? It is quite certain that no Egyptian Director-General would have refused to reduce land tax on the King's properties, and it would have been an exceptional Egyptian...who would have refused to meet Sidky Pasha's request...' 1

As it was, there had been complaints against British intervention when the Residency had insisted on the resignation of Muhibb Pasha, a Finance Minister caught dabbling in cotton profiteering. 2

British officials soon discovered that under this new regime they must choose targets for censure with care, as each instance of interference could weaken the case for the next.

That British Finance officials were not more concerned than they actually were was probably the result of a healthy balance sheet for several years after independence. The year 1922-3 ended with a surplus of over L.E.6 million, of which L.E.5 million was earmarked for the Reserve Fund,³ causing the Foreign Office to comment:

'the prosperity of the Egyptian Government is quite appalling. They have liquidated all their war commitments. The war has added not one penny to their public debt...their currency is sound...They have a Reserve Fund of 10-11 million - a third of a year's income!' 4

The following year the Residency reported another surplus, of L.E.5 million, with the grudging comment: 'the Egyptian Government's success in getting in their taxes has rather surprised us.' 5

These healthy results notwithstanding, Dowson reminded his colleagues that the Financial Advisership had not been retained for periods of financial security, but against bad times. A situation

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1. Dowson, memorandum, 4 July 1923, FO371/8962/E8232.
 2. Annual Report for 1923, FO371/10060/E6663.
 3. Dowson, Observations on the 1923-4 Budget, 27 March 1923, FO371/8976/E3856.
 4. Lindsay, minute, 18 April 1923, *ibid.*
 5. Annual Report for 1923, *op.cit.*, and Chancery to MacDonald, 20 May 1924, FO371/10056/E4830.

might arise demanding his intervention by which time most British experts could have left Egypt, all business would be conducted in Arabic, and an atmosphere of hostile obstruction could have developed. This unpalatable possibility led Dowson to reiterate his plea for additional substantive powers. ¹

However, Patterson, his successor, read the signs of the times rather differently. On taking office, Patterson described his perceived terms of reference in a way that suggests he had accepted the constraints on his role which Dowson had resisted. The Financial Adviser, he observed, was 'obviously...out to acquire as much influence as possible;' however, to avoid the censure of the new parliament it would be necessary 'to walk delicately,' remembering that the Financial Adviser had 'no constitutional right to interfere in the administration of the Finance Ministry.' He could merely try and influence Egyptian policy 'by such means as remained to him.' Significantly, Patterson emphasised other facets of his post which were now becoming increasingly important: he regarded his 'chief function' as being one of the High Commissioner's political advisers, while, as the recognised head of the British officials, it would be his duty to represent their interests to the Egyptian Government.²

If finance was one area of continuing British interest in Egypt, then security, of course, was another. Not long after the declaration of independence, Britain faced a security crisis in Egypt only surpassed in gravity by the revolt of 1919. In the course of this crisis, several assumptions concerning Britain's continuing ability to maintain order in Egypt were put to the test and found wanting.

1. Dowson, memorandum, November 1923, Hornsby Papers.
2. Patterson to Murray, 3 July 1923, FO371/8988/E6917.

Between November 1919 and November 1924, 32 terrorist attacks took place on British subjects in Egypt, resulting in ten deaths. Eleven of these attacks took place during 1922.¹ With the exception of Bimbashi W.Cave, who, as Inspector in the Cairo City Police, had once arrested Zaghlul,² the victims were all manifestly non-political figures: Robson, a junior lecturer at the Royal School of Law and recently arrived from Leeds;³ Aldred Brown, an elderly education official 'on the eve of retirement, after a long career spent largely in trying to get better terms of service for Egyptian schoolmasters...'⁴ T.C. Brown, an official 'entirely devoted to his work, the improvement of fruit-tree cultivation,' who 'got on well with the Egyptians.'⁵

All British officials were advised to carry pistols, and to go to the office in pairs, preferably by taxi.⁶ Yet when Allenby's warnings to the Egyptian Government that the atrocities must stop had no effect, the British community began to suspect the Residency of the same indifference which they already felt over their compensation. In June 1922 Wellesley reported that 'talk was heard before [Allenby's] garden party, of people staying away to show their disapproval of what they considered the Residency's slackness over the murder of Cave.'⁷

Once again, the Foreign Office began casting around for some effective means of exercising pressure on the government, such as taking control of the Alexandria Customs or the State Domains.

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1. Delany, comments on Allenby in Egypt, Allenby Papers, St Antony's College.
 2. Holden, Memorandum on Nationalism, Holden Papers.
 3. Addison, 'Pleasures of Anglo-Egyptian Cooperation', Addison Papers. ('Pleasures').
 4. Hayter, Constitutional Developments, p.43.
 5. Murray, minute, 14 August 1922, FO371/7736/E8014.
 6. Holden, Memorandum on Nationalism, Holden Papers.
 7. Wellesley to Murray, 8 June 1922, FO371/7734/E6199.

However, Allenby thought this would represent an unthinkable policy reversal: the ministry would resign and Britain would be left to handle 'an anarchic collapse of administration.' Martial law was already being used to arrest prominent agitators and to patrol Cairo with cavalry. Beyond that Allenby believed the use of force would be counter-productive. ¹

The fact was that the British element in Egypt's security apparatus was powerless to cope with political crime of this nature. Wellesley did not believe that it was

'the fault of the Police. No Police in the world can run a good show...with the population either naturally against them or - as they are now - terrorised by either side and with the examining magistrate and the whole of the Ministry of Justice against them too - quite openly.' ²

Russell agreed that the chief obstacles were an uncooperative Egyptian public, ³ and the obstructionism of a pro-nationalist Parquet. Certainly any residual British influence in the Ministry of Justice was ineffectual in the present circumstances.

The authorities were hampered in catching the assassins by one further factor: personality clashes between British officials, especially between Russell and the coterie of Interior officials installed by the Residency. At the nadir of the murder hunt in December 1922, the Residency took steps to circumvent both Russell and the Parquet, by establishing a special investigation team under Ryder, with complete freedom under martial law.⁴ Joseph McPherson, who worked with the police murder hunt, had no hesitation in blaming 'the jealousies between [the] police and [Ryder's] criminal investigation committee' for the immunity enjoyed by the

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1. Telegram Allenby to Curzon, 22 August 1922, FO371/7736/E8393.
 2. Wellesley to Murray, 8 June 1922, FO371/7734/E6199.
 3. Russell, Note on Political Police Work, July 1922, Russell Papers.
 4. Russell to Milner, 31 January 1923, MP51, p.15; Ryder diary, December 1922-January 1923, Ryder Papers.

assailants. ¹ In a remarkable 'off the record' letter to Milner, Russell complained:

'we are all of us in despair...People consider that Allenby is colossally ignorant, very stupid, is entirely in the hands of a small group of officials, who are quite out of touch with everything....and who do not know the country.' ²

Chief among this Residency clique was Clayton, widely suspected of having tried to 'curry favour for himself with natives and the powers that be,' in tandem with the brilliant but mistrusted Amos.³

The discontent of many rank-and-file officials came to a head after Robson's murder in an unprecedented protest meeting, held at Sheperds Hotel on 2 January 1923. With adroit handling the proceedings stopped short of openly censuring Allenby,⁴ but the meeting had its effect nevertheless. The Residency now became markedly more prepared to resort to martial law: a military governor was installed in Cairo, British troops patrolled the streets, and fines were imposed on suspect quarters of the city.⁵ Finally, in July 1923, a Military Court condemned five conspirators to hang,⁶ and the atrocities subsided.

The first major challenge to British interests in Egypt under self-government had finally been overcome, but only, we are forced to conclude, because British power was artificially preserved for a year after independence by the continuation of martial law. This had remained in being pending the enactment of an Act of Indemnity. When, meanwhile, a situation arose jeopardising the British community, Allenby opted to 'make use of the only force on which he

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1. See "Café Maraschino" episode in McP., reproduced in part in Carmen and McPherson, McPherson, pp.259-61.
 2. Russell to Milner, 31 January 1923, MP51, pp.19 and 13.
 3. Ibid, pp.18 and 14.
 4. Rapp memoirs, p.32.
 5. Telegram Allenby to Curzon, 7 February 1923, FO371/8959/E1553.
 6. Egyptian Gazette, 23 July 1923.

[could] place full reliance, namely British troops.' ¹ Martial law made it possible to direct British retaliation against specific targets rather than against the population at large. For the murder investigators it provided the sole means of side-stepping the obstructive Parquet, and of trying the culprits. ² Without martial law, what remained of British influence in the Egyptian administration was manifestly inadequate in circumstances such as these to enable Britain to fulfil her undertaking to protect foreigners.

Yet as time went on, martial law became a considerable embarrassment, particularly to the Foreign Office. Throughout 1922 the Residency had been committed to a policy of disentanglement, including, as a central feature, the abolition of martial law. Allenby had been acutely aware that every fresh proclamation postponed the implementation of disentanglement and that the value of martial law was, therefore, very limited.

However, as 1922 gave way to 1923, a noticeable hesitancy appeared in the Residency's advocacy of disentanglement, whilst its recourse to martial law became more frequent and forthright. When questions were raised in the Commons in March 1923 regarding a L.E.100,000 punitive fine recently imposed in Cairo, Murray minuted:

'there is no disguising the fact that martial law is being used more drastically today than at any time since the outbreak in the spring of 1919.' ³

With alarm, the Foreign Office discerned a drift back to measures which directly contravened a policy of withdrawal. While British troops remained an everyday sight on Cairo streets, how was responsibility for law and order to be shifted to Egyptian

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1. Murray, minute, 28 February 1923, FO371/7740/E14459.
 2. Ryder insisted on a Military Court for the second Conspiracy Trial; a Native Court was entirely ruled out. Ryder Papers, January 1923.
 3. Murray, minute, 7 March 1923, FO371/8983/E2590.

shoulders? What of the associated dangers of losing a Ministry, and then perhaps having 'to run the country by undisguised coercion'?¹ Here was a recurrence of the nightmare of the late Protectorate, the very kind of risk that independence had been rushed through to forestall.

However, the Foreign Office evidently did not discern the probable cause of these retrograde tendencies. When Allenby had appointed Ryder to the atrocities investigation, he had also removed the elderly Monteith-Smith from the post of Director-General, Public Security (DGPS), and replaced him with Alexander Keown-Boyd. Keown-Boyd was one of the group of former Sudan officials who had come to Egypt with Wingate, whom he served as Private Secretary. Under Allenby, Keown-Boyd became Oriental Secretary. We have already observed Allenby's close and dependent relationship with Clayton. With Clayton's departure, Allenby seems to have turned to Keown-Boyd for advice. Russell complained that the post of DGPS only went to Keown-Boyd 'as he is a Residency pet,' and one of the 'two or three people who run Allenby.'² Russell was no impartial observer; nevertheless, we need not doubt that Keown-Boyd was a significant new influence at the Residency, albeit a very different type of influence to Clayton. Keown-Boyd came into the ascendancy at a point when the weaknesses of Clayton's policy of disengagement were becoming increasingly apparent. Nowhere was this more obvious than in Britain's inability to deal with the atrocities campaign. Keown-Boyd undoubtedly saw the solution in turning the clock back to an unashamed exercise of British control. Allenby's deepening reliance on martial law dates from Keown-Boyd's accession to influence.

1. Murray, minute, 7 March 1923, FO371/8960/E2512.

2. Russell to Milner, 31 January 1923, MP51, pp. 16 and 19.

The question of how foreigners were to be protected in the absence of an Interior Adviser had not been settled when Clayton retired. An Egyptian DGPS was appointed, with jurisdiction over domestic security, leaving the status of the British DGPS undefined. An agreement in November 1922 finally laid down the latter's right to be informed of all threats or charges against Europeans, his shared jurisdiction over police appointments, and his control of a special intelligence section. It was this position, in charge of what was now called the European Department, that Keown-Boyd inherited.

The new DGPS now sought to strengthen the European Department in an unmistakable rear-guard action to preserve a bastion of British control over Egyptian affairs. 'From the first,' Russell commented, 'he arrogated to himself not only the powers of a DGPS...but of an Adviser.'¹ Looking ahead to the forthcoming abolition of martial law, Keown-Boyd now revived the idea of a gendarmerie force as additional protection for foreign residents, a scheme which the Foreign Office had always regarded as excessive. Realising that London was likely to dismiss the proposal, Keown-Boyd developed plans for raising a force of over 2,000 men, and even started recruiting in Britain, expressly failing to consult the Foreign Office.² When reports reached the Egyptian Department, Murray could not 'help thinking that Lord Allenby [had] drifted very far from the policy of "disentanglement" which he advocated so strongly a year ago.'³

Predictably thwarted by London from developing his gendarmerie force, Keown-Boyd was obliged to look to the regular

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1. Russell to Milner, 31 January 1923, MP51, p.17.
 2. Ibid, pp.18-19 and Lindsay, minute, 18 May 1923, FO371/8962/E4885.
 3. Murray, minute, 6 March 1923, FO371/8960/E2512.

City police ¹ to fulfil his objectives. When the majority of British officials were given the option of remaining in Egypt until 1924 or 1927, police officers were instructed by the European Department to stay until 1927 for security purposes. More controversially, Keown-Boyd went so far as to issue orders direct to provincial police and mudirs, ² even though these indigenous authorities had been made responsible to the Egyptian Interior Minister alone when martial law was abolished in July 1923. Keown-Boyd even claimed that Egyptian police commanders knew that 'if they were disloyal or did not use their best efforts, they would be shot, imprisoned, sacked or otherwise punished by or through us.' ³ One Egyptian historian recalls the belief that Keown-Boyd virtually ruled Egypt through the police. ⁴

Keown-Boyd interpreted his role not merely as a protector of foreign interests, but more importantly, as the Residency's watchman over Egyptian politics. Milner's tidy division of the administration into Egyptian and British spheres was evidently proving elusive. Grafftey-Smith confirms that the DGPS maintained all the 'functions of an old-style Adviser to the Minister of Interior' although 'such duties were never mentioned.' ⁵ The Residency now came to regard both Keown-Boyd and the Egyptian DGPS, Hasan Rif'at, as 'our only link with the darker side of politics.' ⁶

How was Keown-Boyd able to pursue this intelligence-gathering role in the absence of a British administrative network?

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1. By 1926 there remained 39 British police officers in Egypt, of whom 22 were in Cairo; List of Senior British Officials in the Egyptian Government, 1926, Addison Papers. (List 1926).
 2. Russell to Milner, 31 January 1923, MP51, p.18.
 3. Keown-Boyd to Clark Kerr, 17 March 1924, FO141/484/278.
 4. Interview with Dr Louis Awad, Cairo, April 1982.
 5. Grafftey-Smith, Bright Levant, p.50.
 6. Grafftey-Smith to the writer, June 1982.

We must remember that in 1922 the Interior inspectors, a traditional source of information concerning the provinces, had finally been withdrawn.¹ Moreover, in 1925 Russell closed down the Special Political Office of the Cairo City Police, feeling that the Egyptian Government should not continue to pay for an establishment it did not know about.² Instead Keown-Boyd seems to have gleaned his information on provincial tours undertaken by himself and a staff of three, supplemented through the Residency's network of British consuls. Egyptian intelligence sources may also have been available to the European Department since Hasan Rif'at, described as an 'implacable enemy of Wafdist extremism,'³ worked closely with Keown-Boyd. After all, whatever the political differences between the British and Egyptian governments, there remained at the administrative level a considerable identity of interest on security matters for some years to come. Finally, a significant amount of information arrived through the petitions which continued to flow into the Residency at a rate of 4,000 a year. The official Residency line was that these petitions were now disregarded due to Britain's withdrawal from Egyptian affairs.⁴ However, Keown-Boyd tells us that complaints against Egyptians were unofficially passed to the Public Security Department, who sometimes intervened in the situation concerned.⁵

The combined result of the European Department's intelligence-gathering was a fortnightly report to the Residency, covering, in addition to recent political developments, such security indicators as press comment and the economic situation.⁶

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1. Annual Report for 1922, FO371/10060/E1920.
 2. Russell to Keown-Boyd, 18 June 1925, FO141/474/1884.
 3. Grafftey-Smith, Bright Levant, p.103.
 4. Ibid, p.94.
 5. Keown-Boyd to Residency, 9 March 1930, FO141/621/51.
 6. See e.g, FO371/8973.

Through this Keown-Boyd established for himself a niche which proved virtually unassailable until 1937.

Very few other officials of Keown-Boyd's school of thought possessed his immunity from dismissal or chose to remain in Egypt. By and large those officials who stayed on or who were recruited after 1922 were philosophically predisposed to the idea of Egyptian autonomy. Russell, who remained Commandant, Cairo City Police until 1946, was one of the most committed of this raft of officials. According to his son-in-law, he 'entertained no illusions about Egypt being a part of the British Empire;' his work he regarded as assisting the promotion of Egyptian self-reliance. He was a servant of the Egyptian Government who paid him; there could be no question of a double loyalty to Britain. ¹ Jarvis, regarded Russell's political impartiality as his 'strong card,' especially 'his ability to serve without friction and without appeal to the Residency under a variety of ministries, from the violently anti-British to the pathetically Anglophile.' ²

Russell's commitment to Egyptian self-government possibly reduced the obvious usefulness of the police as an agency of British policy. Yet it is arguable that his discreet obedience to any number of ministries - tempered by a firm resistance to commands involving malpractice - won him greater influence in the long run. ³

There was in Russell the sense of trusteeship which characterised earlier British officials. Yet because it was an altruism of personal conviction rather than British propaganda, there was a sense in which it was more acceptable to Egyptian sentiment. Indeed, it was recognised that Russell, as a detached outsider, was uniquely

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1. Seth, Russell Pasha, pp.11-12.
 2. Jarvis, Desert and Delta, p.84.
 3. For the well-known story of Russell and the train, see Russell, Egyptian Service, pp.212-3.

able to render Egypt certain essential services. Outstanding among these was his campaign against drug trafficking, which produced long-overdue Egyptian legislation in 1925. Shifting his crusade to the illicit entry of drugs into the country, Russell was granted discretionary use of L.E.10,000 of secret service funds, and freedom of access to all government departments and mudirs.¹ This delegation of authority to a British official, remarkable for its time, Russell used to signal effect at the League of Nations Opium Advisory Committee in Geneva. He could condemn Europe for pouring 'its tons of poison into my country'² in a way that perhaps no Egyptian would have been able to do.

Russell was just one of a number of officials whose commitment to the Egyptian Government (usually the fruit of a personal affection for Egypt) enabled them to navigate the reversed direction of administrative control in the Anglo-Egyptian relationship to a new career in which their professional skills were respected and utilised. Andrew Holden, who was retained by the Finance Ministry until 1951 in charge of land tax assessment, was another official whose sympathies were, he felt, always with Egypt.³ This attitude did not protect Holden from attempts by Egyptian colleagues to get him disgraced and removed;⁴ nor was he in a position to prevent corrupt practices among his Egyptian superiors. Nevertheless, land tax assessment was another field where being an impartial outsider was recognised as a positive advantage. Both Egyptian and British sources suggest that Holden was retained,

1. Seth, Russell, pp.176-7.

2. Ibid, p.189.

3. Holden to Sandall, 14 May 1973, Holden Papers.

4. Holden describes his experience with Husain Kamil Pasha in 'Trials of a Director-General', Holden Papers.

eventually as the last executive British finance official, because only he was trusted to be fair. ¹

The influence of these solitary individuals was obviously but a shadow of that of the bygone inspectorate. The last Englishmen remaining in the villages by the late 1920s were the Finance inspectors, Edwards and Jameson. Edwards felt keenly what he regarded as the indifference of the indigenous official to the fellaheen, and even more his own inability to intervene. When confronted with petitions for assistance, he had to point out that 'Egypt was now independent and England could not interfere in domestic quarrels.' ²

Where British officials were able to operate quite as freely now as under the Protectorate was in the field of scientific expertise. Of all British officials, the technicians were manifestly the least political. Their professional freedom of action and their length of service reflected an Egyptian awareness that their expertise, often in fields of vital economic concern, could not yet be replaced. There was, for example, the botanist Clement Brown, who stayed until 1951 as the Egyptian Government's Senior Cotton Breeder. His namesake T.W.Brown was attacked during the 1922 atrocities, but later returned to his post as Director of Horticulture. Dr. John Ball remained with the Egyptian Survey from 1897 to the 1940s, where his work ranged from underpinning the temple of Philæ to designing a hydroelectric project for the Qattara Depression. Tom Dale remembers Ball as 'one of Egypt's silent yet grand government servants.' ³ His colleague in the

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1. e.g, interviews with Herbert Addison, December 1981, and with Faris Sarufim, Cairo, April 1982.
 2. Edwards, 'A People Abandoned', Edwards Papers.
 3. Note on Dr John Ball, Dale Papers, St Antony's College.

Survey from 1907 to the 1940s, George Murray, was another who spent a lifetime under canvas in the desert, an existence cut off from government involvement; only in retrospect did his surveys of the Alamain desert prove their worth to the British in Egypt.¹ Out of a host of others, we should also include William Balls (served 1911-49), the cotton expert, and Harold Hurst (1906-1951), the eminent Nile scholar. Such officials helped bring reality to the most visionary aspect of the Milner plan, namely, that 'on honourable terms of free contract' there could be established 'a new partnership of voluntary service, which [would] enable Great Britain to fulfil her pledges to the Egyptian people...' ²

It is noticeable that the technicians (and also the university lecturers) were the officials who had the least difficulty in defining their new role under Egyptian authority; by and large their working relationship and social rapport with Egyptians was good. However, the nearer to the nexus of British interests in the administration, the more problematic became the position of the post-1922 official. It was in the departments where British interests were at stake that British officials had become accustomed to exert most thorough control, and hoped to maintain the greatest efficiency. Officials in these departments were more likely to perceive their loyalty as being to the Residency, and were thus more likely to come into conflict with their Egyptian superiors, particularly since the very significance of these departments made them the first targets for Egyptianisation. British officials were often the first to discover the inaccuracy of many of the assumptions upon which the Milner plan was founded. Contrary to Milner's optimistic predictions, many suffered a loss of authority; it proved

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1. See G. Murray, Dare Me to the Desert (London, 1967), and see above, p.160.
 2. Milner, Draft Recapitulation, 1920, MP451, pp.181-2.

impossible to maintain past levels of efficiency, or to make a clear-cut distinction between British and Egyptian concerns.

No-one was more aware of the ambiguity of his new role than Maurice Amos, who remained Judicial Adviser until 1925. The functions of the Judicial Adviser had been streamlined after 1922 by withdrawing British supervision from the administration of 'native' justice. The adviser remained deputy chairman of the Consultative Committee on Legislation, and oversaw the appointment of foreign judges in the Mixed Courts. However, since these functions entailed a negligible work-load, it was decided to merge the separate post of Legal Adviser to the Residency with the Judicial Advisership. With this came extensive consultative work on legal aspects of the Capitulations, martial law, and the draft Egyptian constitution. However, these were duties, as Amos pointed out, in which it was

'natural if not inevitable for him to adopt the stand-point of a British civil servant...The Government from which he [had] no official secrets [was] the British not the Egyptian Government.' ¹

Despite his rapport with politicians like Tharwat, Amos realised that he would never be fully trusted by the local government since he was marked out as being first and foremost a Residency agent. So even an official like Amos, who had been in the forefront of the campaign to withdraw British administration, now found himself trapped by a double allegiance likely to provoke the old Egyptian resentments.

It was tempting to consider abandoning the advisership altogether for a post with a clear-cut identification of loyalty to Britain. By 1924 the Judicial Adviser was rarely informed of Ministry business. Moreover, the demise of the British judicial

1. Amos, Memorandum on the Office of Judicial Adviser, 14 November 1922, FO371/8959/E1107.

inspectorate and the withdrawal of foreign judges from the Native Courts of First Instance now made it impossible to ensure the independent functioning of the lower Egyptian courts. In the rare event that charges of nepotism or government interference actually reached the Adviser, Britain's commitment to non-intervention in local affairs obliged him merely to refer the matter to the Minister. Judicial proceedings involving foreigners continued unaffected, of course, under the ægis of the Mixed Courts; and although legislation no longer emanated from British officials, a draft of every law submitted to the Legislative Assembly of the Mixed Courts was forwarded to the Residency.¹

As early as August 1922 the Association of British Officials reported widespread dissatisfaction amongst its members, principally in reaction to perceptions of deteriorating standards and ill-treatment. ² A detailed case analysis of 1924 gave instances of the Egyptian Government: failing to pay the correct salary or to give periodic increments; failing to observe the implicit conditions under which officials had opted to remain in Egypt, by appointing Egyptians over their heads, or transferring them elsewhere; and failing to use their services or advice. The Egyptian Government was also criticised for allowing deliberate attacks on the integrity of officials and acts of personal discourtesy towards them.³

Treatment of this kind was ascribed to resentment at the continuing financial burden of employing foreign personnel, or to

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1. A protest from the High Commissioner usually served to defeat any bill widely opposed by the foreign community, e.g, the 1923 bill on the sale and purchase of cotton; Annual Report for 1923, FO371/10060/E6663.
 2. Association of British Officials, memorandum, 17 August 1922, FO371/7750/E12560.
 3. Allenby, memorandum, 25 July 1924, FO371/10018/E6658.

the 'moral coercion' of public opinion, which sought to 'make the position of British officials as difficult as possible.' 1

Invariably, the problem was analysed in terms of 'deficiencies' in Egyptian character, usually itemised as 'vanity' and 'moral cowardice' or sheer stupidity. 2

Yet the character of the British official was rarely considered even though inflexibility and arrogance were sometimes a major irritant, as in the case of Blakeney, General Manager of Egyptian State Railways. Complaints reached the Residency that Blakeney's Under-Secretary, Sami Pasha, was ignorant, interfering and anti-British, and that as a result, railway efficiency was deteriorating dangerously. During 1922 the Residency tried to uphold Blakeney's position through warnings to the Egyptian Government. 3 It was noticeable, however, that there were other British officials who found the notorious Sami Pasha, properly treated, 'reasonable and open to conviction.' 4 It became clear that it was Blakeney's pugnacity and unwillingness to yield his former undisputed control of the railways which had, in good measure, made conflict inevitable, provoking resistance to his management simply on principle. Allenby went so far as to say that, due to his manners and methods, 'General Blakeney was himself responsible for much of the deterioration in the administration which he struggled so hard to avert. 5 Therefore, when Blakeney tried to extend his Egyptian tenure from 1924 to 1927, the Residency felt it was in Britain's best interests to accede to the Egyptian Government's decision to dismiss him.

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1. Association of British Officials, memorandum, 17 August 1922, FO371/7750/E12560.
 2. 'In a nutshell...the Egyptians are no use and never will be;' a common remark, here from Wellesley to Murray, 8 June 1922, FO371/7734/E6199.
 3. Allenby to Curzon, 19 August 1922, FO371/7768/E8622.
 4. Allenby, memorandum, 30 September 1922, FO371/7737/E10769.
 5. Allenby to Curzon, 30 November 1923, FO371/8992/E11713.

Perhaps British officials also bore some responsibility for the decline in efficiency in terms of their past failure to train Egyptian subordinates. Allenby admitted that Britain had suddenly increased the responsibilities of a cadre who had never been trained to acquire 'moral courage and a sense of responsibility.' ¹

Admittedly, it was painful for officials to watch the decline of structures which they had developed over years. It was particularly so for the irrigation officials, men of 'considerable technical pride,' ² who regarded the precise running and careful maintenance of the irrigation system as vital to Egypt's well-being. The Irrigation Department had had an unusually high proportion of Egyptians as senior officials before 1922, but ultimate control had always remained in British hands, in the belief that Egyptians alone would be incapable of distributing water equitably. Therefore, as British officials handed over these positions of control, ³ there came predictable complaints that difficult technical problems were now being ignored, and that water was being diverted to those with political pull. This was attributed to the Egyptian official standing in awe of his rich fellow-countrymen, whereas the English official, it was thought, 'felt that he was equally the servant of pasha or peasant.' ⁴ The fears that technical considerations would take second place to political requirements seemed to be confirmed during the exceptionally low Nile of 1924 when the Minister of Public Works, Murqus Hanna Pasha, against all British counsel, ordered an extension of the inundated area by 100,000 feddans. ⁵

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1. Allenby, memorandum, 30 September 1922, FO371/7737/E10769.
 2. Ibid.
 3. By 1926 Britons had withdrawn from the four senior posts of Under-Secretary, Assistant Under-Secretary, and Inspectors-General for Upper, and Lower Egypt, leaving only a British Inspector-General for the Sudan; Note, 10 December 1926, FO141/741/4911.
 4. Edwards, 'A People Abandoned', Edwards Papers.
 5. Annual Report for 1924, FO371/10911/J1981.

As a result of such experiences, there were large numbers of British officials in most departments who wished to leave Egypt by 1923. They included some like Wellesley, who had 'until recently had a genuine belief in the capacity of Egyptians to govern themselves.'¹ In addition to dissatisfaction with working conditions, many were anxious to retire due to uncertainties surrounding the question of compensation on which there was still no formal agreement with the Egyptian Government. Now, as the opening of an Egyptian parliament approached, many officials anticipated the repudiation of even the present, unofficial arrangements, and concluded that immediate retirement was the only way to guarantee their remuneration. At the alarming prospect of a mass exodus of officials, the Residency finally forced a compensation scheme on Yahya Ibrahim, which was ratified as Law No.28 of 1923. Under this agreement, British officials were required to choose between retiring in April 1924 or applying to be retained until April 1927. Whatever their choice, the Egyptian Government could still retain or dismiss an individual as it wished. Retiring officials would be entitled to their pensions, a repatriation allowance, plus compensation calculated according to salary, age and length of service. However, any official electing to leave before the agreed date might forego half his compensation.²

Under the new dispensation, as before, the number of officials wanting to leave far exceeded the number dismissed. Since 1922 a few particularly cantankerous individuals had been jettisoned,³ but surprisingly few in view of the supposed unpopularity of British officialdom. Jarvis attributed this to the

1. Murray, minute, 16 June 1922, FO371/7734/E6199.

2. PP 1923, xxv (1999).

3. Blakeney, of course, was one, as was MacNaughten, the Interior inspector of 1919 disrepute.

esteem in which many individual officials were held by their subordinates, so that

'when the cry for their removal went up in 1922 the usual attitude was, "sack every British official in the country except my own chief."' ¹

By contrast, at least 700 foreign officials, of whom a half were British, elected to leave Egypt in April 1924. ² By the summer of 1924 there were many more who wished to go, both from amongst those who had been retained despite opting for retirement and those who had chosen to stay until 1927.

The principal factor behind this sentiment was the attitude of the Wafdist government that had been elected since Law No.28, at the beginning of 1924. Zaghlul's ministry disputed the compensation provisions, as having been pledged without parliamentary assent, and had already dallied in authorising entitlements to 1924 retirees. ³ More than this, since Zaghlul's election the treatment of British officials had noticeably deteriorated. The culmination of what many regarded as a campaign of slights and indignities had come in an attack on Henry Anthony, the Director-General of State Domains. Anthony, of all British officials, had a 'very high sense of duty to the Egyptian Government,' and, according to Holden, 'took very seriously our task of helping educated Egyptians to run their country themselves.'⁴ In the course of giving evidence in a case relating to a particular land transfer, Anthony's own professional integrity was publicly besmirched, and in June 1924 he was suspended.⁵

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1. Jarvis, Desert and Delta, p.80.
 2. Murray, minute, 17 March 1924, FO371/10018/E2324.
 3. Lloyd, Egypt Since Cromer, ii. 84.
 4. Holden, 'Trials of a Director-General', Holden Papers.
 5. Elgood, Transit, p.295.

For the first time a British official had been disgraced by the Egyptian Government, and yet the Residency could do nothing to have Anthony exonerated until Zaghlul's ministry fell. Allenby explained that it was now

'a matter of great difficulty to take adequate measures for...the protection [of British officials], and the necessity for attempting to do so constitutes a weakness in our diplomatic position and a source of constant friction.' ¹

The Residency's reluctance to intervene on behalf of aggrieved officials stemmed from the hope that Zaghlul might negotiate a treaty with Britain's new Labour Government. As during past negotiations, deference to a potential treaty-maker provoked some surprisingly lenient acts from the Residency, as well as some unexpected proposed concessions for the negotiating table: the withdrawal of British troops to the Canal; the abandonment of the claim to protect foreigners, and possibly the abolition of the adviserships. These proposals reflected a realistic acknowledgement of Britain's dwindling capacity to influence Egyptian administration. Allenby felt that the claim to protect minorities was now a 'source of embarrassment rather than advantage.' Neither the European Department, the foreign police officers nor the advisers were able to fulfil their intended purpose, the adviserships in particular having become conspicuous cases of responsibility without power. ²

'Disentanglement,' then, was definitely back in vogue by mid-1924, for much the same reason that had brought the concept to birth in 1921. The prospect of a hostile Wafdist government had revived old fears of non-cooperation and anarchy. Questionnaires passed between London and Residency examining the scenario of how

1. Allenby to Chamberlain, 25 July 1924, FO371/10018/E6658.
2. Allenby to Chamberlain, 28 July 1924, FO371/10042/E6661.

Britain could cope in the event of having to rule Egypt directly. ¹ Allenby concluded that to avoid a situation where this unwelcome prospect could become a reality, it was not enough for Britain to disentangle herself from the administration; British troops would also have to be withdrawn to the Canal, for so long as they were 'stationed in or near Cairo so long [would] the Egyptian Government be able by "downing tools" to make us directly responsible for the maintenance of order...and eventually for the whole government of the country.'² To forestall such an eventuality, Allenby was anxious that nothing - and particularly not the concerns of British officials - should rupture Britain's relations with Zaghlul.

Negotiations took place in autumn 1924, yet despite the Residency's accomodating attitude, came to nothing. Zaghlul still denied Britain's right to maintain any forces on Egyptian soil, or to defend the Canal. Only now did the Residency recognise that during the previous nine months of non-intervention, Zaghlul's ministry had been whittling away at what remained of British administrative influence. In April, for example, the government decided to amalgamate the budgets for the Financial and Judicial Advisers' offices, which had been separately established at independence, back into their respective ministry budgets. It was felt that this was a move 'calculated to open the way for a diminution of their prestige and for annoyance in such matters as the management of their offices...'³ Yet no amount of disapproval from the Residency succeeded in reversing the decision. By now, Amos was disinclined to renew his contract when it expired

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1. e.g, telegram Curzon to Allenby, 13 March 1923, FO371/8960/E2619.
 2. Murray, minute, 31 January 1924, FO371/10041/E6470.
 3. Telegram Allenby to Chamberlain, 12 June 1924, FO371/10067/E5156.

in November 1924, although aware that in this event, the post of Judicial Adviser would probably be allowed to lapse.

With the Wafd in power and a spate of student demonstrations, the European Department began to fear unrest beyond British control. The concern was that the provincial police were no longer reliable, due to their fear of taking any measures against rioters which could be punished by their own government.¹ Russell and Keown-Boyd agreed that the Egyptian Army, due to its nationalist sympathies, offered no alternative means of quelling a mob; and Russell was not sure he could count on his senior police officers to deal with any outburst of feeling against Britain. ² However, Russell's over-riding frustration was a lack of government support:

'when Saad came into power the first thing he did was to snub the police and tell them to leave the crowd alone. On every occasion I get the same orders: "you are to keep order but under no circumstances are you to use any force with the crowd."' ³

So to have a British-run police force in the cities was no longer an adequate guarantee against disorder. British police officers were now dependent on political masters who might themselves have an interest in anti-British disturbances.

Moreover, as Zaghlul extended the Wafd's political patronage throughout the civil service, Egyptian officials could find themselves persecuted for their British associations. Russell was acutely aware that his Egyptian officers engaged on sensitive duties would be 'marked men for the future and if not protected by us would sooner or later suffer for it.' ⁴ Even Egyptians who worked with British colleagues in non-sensitive departments were made to feel

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1. Keown-Boyd to Kerr, 17 March 1924, FO141/484/278.
 2. Keown-Boyd, note, 11 April 1924, FO371/10020/E3534.
 3. Russell to Murray, 10 August 1924, FO371/10021/E6977.
 4. Russell to Keown-Boyd, 14 June 1925, FO371/10899/J2001.

a certain disloyalty, a sense that they were, in effect, British also. ¹ The Residency evidently instituted a rule that Egyptians who were 'persecuted by the Wafd for earlier assistance to us' should be afforded 'discreet protection.' ² Yet as always, it was a question of how to exert the necessary leverage, as officials like 'Abd al-Hamid Sulaiman (Egyptian State Railways) and Haidar Bey (Cairo City Police) found to their cost. ³

Finally, Britain now had to acknowledge that the Egyptian press was virtually beyond her control. With martial law gone, the British authorities no longer had any ability to suppress excessively hostile papers. Critical articles in such organs as Liberté, Ahram and Wadi al-Nil, usually on the theme of illegitimate British intervention in Egyptian affairs, went perforce without rejoinder. Jurisdiction over propaganda and political subsidies to newspapers had now been removed from the old British Press Bureau to the Secretariat of the Council of Ministers. ⁴ Dr. Nimr's Al-Muqattam could usually be relied upon to lament the passing of British administration, but here again evidence of Residency complicity could be dangerous for the individual concerned. ⁵

In effect, Zaghlul's 1924 ministry was Britain's second major crisis in Egypt since independence. Yet in contrast to the 'atrocities' crisis, Britain no longer had the asset of martial law. This made it necessary to resort to alternative means of leverage, whose efficacy were always diminishing. Still the most frequently-used method of pressurising the Egyptians was the "warning". The

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1. Interview with Adel Sabit, Cairo, April 1982.
 2. Grafftey-Smith, Bright Levant, p.121.
 3. FO141/619/128 is devoted to this question of protecting Egyptian officials.
 4. Keown-Boyd, Report on European Department, 1924, FO371/10057/E1488.
 5. Marshall, Enigma, p.28.

force behind a warning was unseen: a supposed residual British "influence", backed in turn by latent military force. In fact, the effective use of the warning was limited. With an amenable prime minister like Yahya Ibrahim it could work, ¹ but if over-stretched, it could just as well bring about a ministry's downfall. ² Employed with a hostile government, a warning might have no effect at all - involving Britain in an undesirable loss of prestige - as Allenby discovered when he reproved the government for defaulting on its payments in service of various Ottoman loans. ³ Thus the Residency increasingly restricted its warnings to issues where there were the strongest grounds; it preferred to group together a whole list of complaints; and it began accompanying the warning with threats of sanctions.

One threat to be considered was the seizure of the Alexandria customs as a source of financial leverage. Unlike the vast land tax operation, the customs were considered compact enough to be taken over, albeit requiring an undesirable re-imposition of martial law. ⁴ There was a stronger card to play, however, with regard to the Egyptian request to raise import duties from 3% to 15% ad valorem. This was an issue where the Residency advised deferring a decision to retain a future bargaining lever. ⁵

Yet Britain's most powerful remaining sanction lay in her continuing control of the Sudan. Tottenham, the Public Works official, pointed out that Egypt's water supply was totally dependent on what happened to the Nile beyond her borders. In the

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1. e.g, Furness used to "rub in" various points with Yahya; Furness to Murray, 14 October 1923, FO371/8963/E10431.
 2. e.g, Nasim's government resigned in February 1923 amidst accusations of having surrendered to a British diktat concerning the Sudan.
 3. Murray, minute, 25 November 1924, FO371/10058/E10234.
 4. Macaulay, note, 27 March 1923, FO371/8961/E3601.
 5. Telegram Scott to Curzon, 12 September 1923, FO371/8985/E9165.

past Egypt had virtually monopolised the river, but now the Sudan needed water for extended areas of cotton cultivation. Equally, Uganda or the Belgian Congo might have their own designs for Lake Albert. The fact that Britain was so powerfully placed in the Nile basin implied that an adequate water supply for Egypt could only be insured 'with the assistance and the goodwill of Great Britain.'¹ Dowson thought it not too much to say that

'Great Britain ...exercises a Hydrographical Protectorate over Egypt, which is far less assailable, and may well prove to be more important than the political Protectorate abolished in February 1922.'²

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At the heart of Britain's involvement in Egyptian administration after 1922 lay a conflict - a conflict of instincts summed up in Allenby's reference to 'disentangling ourselves without losing hold.' The new instinct, fostered by Milner, suggested withdrawal from British rule as the most prudent means of safeguarding certain vital interests. The old instinct resented this retreat and refused to accept it as final and irreversible. Yet common to both was a refusal to face the fullest implications of Egyptian nationalism. With hindsight, we see it was just as absurd to try and placate the Egyptians with a spurious independence as it would have been to try and turn the clock back to the status quo ante bellum. Beneath the many false assumptions embodied in the 1922 declaration of independence lay one crucial miscalculation: that it would be possible for Britain to hand over responsibility for Egypt's government and still retain the old control as and where it suited. Never was this belief more obviously disproved than by the reaction to the murder of Sir Lee Stack.

1. Tottenham, memorandum enclosed in Allenby to Curzon, 1 July 1922, FO371/7754/E9611.

2. Dowson, memorandum, 14 August 1923, FO371/8971/A5734.

The Governor-General of the Sudan and Sirdar of the Egyptian Army, Stack was fatally shot in Cairo on 19 November 1924. The assassination apparently followed a spate of anti-British demonstrations in the Sudan, but was later traced to an Egyptian nationalist conspiracy, possibly with an interest in undermining Zaghlul. This was certainly the effect of the murder: Allenby accused Zaghlul of personal responsibility on the grounds that he had encouraged a climate of mob disorder. The Residency composed an ultimatum of punitive demands which the Foreign Office was asked to approve for immediate delivery before the ministry could resign. Twice the Foreign Office replied, counselling a less harsh communication,¹ but before the second of these telegrams could be deciphered, Allenby delivered his original, unaltered text to the prime minister.²

For having 'allowed the Governor-General of the Sudan to be murdered' the Egyptian Government was directed to apologise, bring the assailants to trial and pay a fine of L.E.500,000. Egyptian elements in the Sudanese army would be withdrawn from the Sudan; the area to be cultivated in the Gazira would be increased from the present 300,000 feddan limit; the adviserships and the European Department would be maintained with powers intact; and the retirement conditions of remaining foreign officials would be revised according to British wishes.³ To ensure the financial backing for this last demand, Allenby authorised the take-over by marines of the tobacco customs administration.⁴ Further contingency

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1. Telegrams Chamberlain to Allenby, 20 November 1924, FO371/10043/E10067 and 22 November, FO371/10044/E10160.
 2. Wavell, Allenby in Egypt, p.112.
 3. Lloyd, Egypt Since Cromer, ii. 96-7.
 4. Telegram Allenby to Chamberlain, 24 November 1924, FO371/10044/E10185.

proposals, swiftly vetoed by London, included the use of military displays and the shooting of hostages. ¹

Allenby's response was, of course, in direct contravention of his policy of disentanglement. More than that, the sense in which he seemed to wish to take revenge on the entire Egyptian population, above all by the deliberate diversion of irrigation water to the Sudan, appeared to abrogate all that Britain had ever claimed about being the protector of the fellaheen.

It has not gone unnoticed that Allenby took the opportunity of Stack's murder to try and repair some of the losses incurred over the previous year. In fact, it seems that the Residency had been anticipating some kind of ultimatum along these lines for several months, judging from the discussion of potential methods of leverage. In January there had been mention of the fact that the 300,000 feddan limit on Gazira cultivation was now insufficient for the Sudan's cotton requirements, and would have to be lifted, regardless of whether the Egyptian Government concurred.² Two days before Stack's murder Allenby had been instructed to raise this with Zaghlul, and no doubt the issue presented itself as an ideal threat, although in point of fact, Egypt was unlikely to have suffered from a marginal increase in Sudanese irrigation. An alternative means of force - the seizure of the tobacco customs - was being discussed three weeks before the murder as a possibility 'if it were ever necessary to coerce the Egyptian Government.'³ Moreover, there had been speculation that force might be necessary to induce the Egyptians to let British officials retire immediately, without the statutory reduction in compensation. ⁴

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1. Telegram Chamberlain to Allenby, 24 November 1924, FO371/10044/E10185.
 2. Murray, memorandum, 12 January 1924, FO371/10030/E649.
 3. Allenby to Chamberlain, 31 October 1924, FO371/10043/E9742.
 4. Murray, minute, 29 September 1924, FO371/10018/E8185.

This notion of force probably derived from the more general idea, current before the murder, that Britain might have to annex Egypt. Dowson, for instance, thought the Egyptians should be allowed to have 'a run for their money...until the experiment is an acknowledged failure...'; Britain simply had to be 'on the spot to take charge again.' ¹

Not only did the circumstances of Stack's assassination offer the Residency an opportunity to make good the damage of the Zaghlul administration, but a chance to dispose of Zaghlul's ministry altogether. When Zaghlul resigned in the face of Allenby's ultimatum, it allowed, in Allenby's vocabulary, "reasonable" Egyptians to assert themselves. In other words, a ministry took office under Ziwar which was prepared to accede to Residency demands.

The obvious opportunism of Allenby's actions has encouraged the view in a few quarters that Stack's murder may actually have been anticipated. It has been suggested to me that some British elements knew that Stack was going to be attacked and chose to let it happen for the excellent casus belli it would provide. According to Elgood, it had seemed to some British residents as though Allenby had been 'awaiting the assassination of some highly-placed official, before he took action.' ² We do know that the police were aware of a plot to kill Stack and warned him of this; ³ it may just be that the precautions taken were inadequate.

What is more to the point, however, is that Allenby's ultimatum had little long-term effect. If the Stack crisis was exploited as an opportunity to re-assert the old British control, it

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1. Dowson to Hornsby, 12 August 1922, Hornsby Papers.
 2. Elgood, Transit, p.295.
 3. 'First Conspiracy Trial', Richard Adamson Papers, St Antony's College; and Seth, Russell, p.154.

was an attempt that manifestly failed. There was the short-term achievement of securing a more cooperative premier than Zaghlul, yet on the other hand Egypt gained the major objective of ending the post of Sirdar. Furthermore, Allenby received orders to terminate the seizure of the tobacco customs, and to revoke his instructions to the Sudanese government concerning increased irrigation.

Yet even supposing London had allowed Allenby to persist in such a policy, it is questionable whether Britain could ever have seen such a confrontation through to the end. This point was even made by Lloyd, Allenby's pugnacious successor:

'let us suppose that the Egyptian Government had remained in office and maintained its refusal to accept our demands. In such a case what step could we have taken to enforce them? We already had an army in occupation of Egypt, and we could have reinforced that army and taken over the administration of the country...Did the Government of Great Britain seriously contemplate such a step? And if not, what other effective action was possible?'

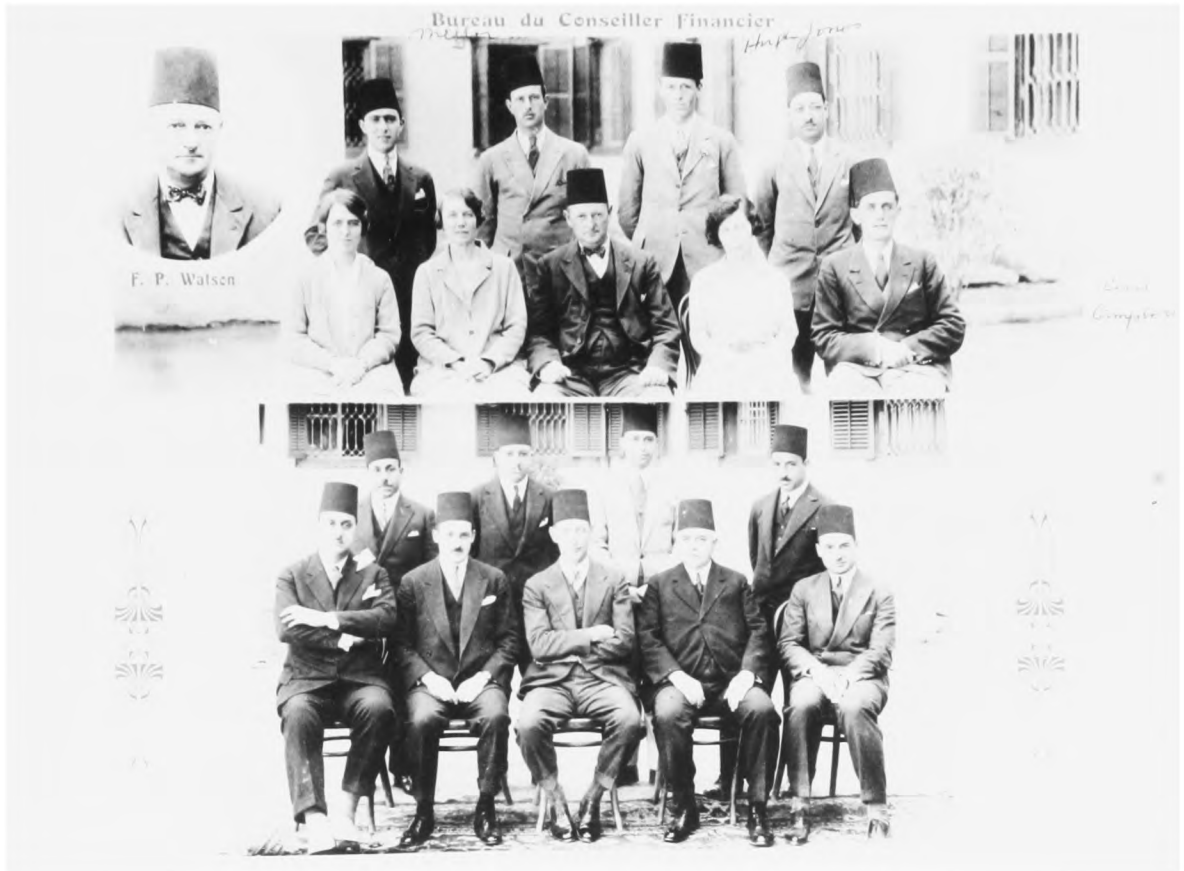
Lloyd rightly perceived that after the flood of concessions which Britain had made since 1922, Allenby's ultimatum was actually an act of weakness rather than of strength. The plans to reduce Egypt's water and to shoot hostages would have only punished the innocent; and if 'we could not prevent the killing of innocent Europeans, except by the killing of innocent Egyptians, we had indeed reached the last stage of powerless ineptitude.'¹

The practical consequences of the November ultimatum were in fact two. Allenby's contravention of British policy caused London to send out Neville Henderson with the status of Minister at the Residency. Taking this as a mark of no confidence, Allenby resigned and was replaced in 1925 by Lord Lloyd.² Secondly, Ziwar's

1. Lloyd, Egypt Since Cromer, ii. p.105.

2. See Wavell, Allenby in Egypt, pp.122-4 and N. Henderson, Water Under the Bridges (London, 1945), p.136. (Water).

British Officials in the Ministry of Finance, 1928
(Top row, centre: Mellor and Hugh-Jones;
second row, centre: Watson; right: Campbell;
fourth row, centre: Hogg)



Andrew Holden, Controller Land Tax Assessment,
in Girga Province, 1936

Chapter Nine

A Partnership of Voluntary Service?¹

By 1926 the number of British officials in Egypt had shrunk from the 1919 peak of 1,546,² to 576.³ (See Appendix Two). Of these, we know that only a minority were officials who had been permanently employed by the Egyptian Government since before 1923; the majority had either been compensated and reappointed, or were newly-recruited officials, on short-term contracts. ⁴ Thus, over a thousand British officials had left Egypt since 1919, and even with new arrivals, the service was now only two fifths of its pre-independence strength.

Yet what is remarkable about these figures is not that so many officials had left Egypt, but rather that so many still remained. The Egyptian Constitution of 1923 had ruled that permanent posts in the public service would henceforth be reserved for Egyptians. Yet even fourteen years after the Constitution, in 1937, (we have no comparable statistics for 1936 itself), the number of British officials had only dropped from 576 to 571. ⁵ (See Appendix Three). Of these 327 were new arrivals.⁶

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1. Milner, draft Recapitulation, 1920, MP451, p.182.
 2. Pensionable and contract officials; see p.171.
 3. List 1926, Addison Papers; the grades included in this list appear comparable to those included by Milner.
 4. In 1926 there were 130 permanent officials who were remaining until 1927, and 375 officials who had retired and been re-engaged on contract; Henderson, note, 28 June 1926, FO371/11616/J2504. Deducting these two groups from the total of 376 officials leaves a figure of some 70 persons recruited from outside Egypt. The statistics are so sketchy as to prevent any degree of accuracy.
 5. List of Senior British Officials in the Egyptian Government, 1937, Addison Papers. (List 1937).
 6. Addison, 'Anglo-Egyptian Association', Addison Papers.

In this respect at least, then, it seems that Milner was right when he predicted that the Egyptian Government would not be able to manage without substantial numbers of foreign officials. The surprisingly vigorous survival of British officialdom begs two questions which this final chapter seeks to address. Firstly, why was it that the Egyptian Government retained so many foreign personnel, despite its apparent desire for indigenisation, and despite Britain's commitment to disengagement from Egyptian administration? Secondly, since Egypt had now attained a degree of autonomy such as to preclude outside administrative control, what did the remaining officials perceive as their raison d'être for being in Egypt?

The explanation for the survival of the British official lies, more than anywhere, with Britain's High Commissioner in Egypt between 1925 and 1929, George, First Baron Lloyd of Dolobran. Lloyd suggested that the policy expressed in the 1922 declaration

'had never been given a chance to succeed....We had been far too prone to disregard its definite implications and we had constantly been guilty of official expressions and actions which had every appearance of an inclination to depart from it.'¹

An appearance of weakness had encouraged the Egyptians to wring ever more concessions from Britain. This would only stop, Lloyd believed, if Britain made clear her determination to uphold the objectives laid down in 1922.

However, Lloyd's apparent commitment to the declaration of independence barely concealed a private belief that 'solutions based upon a series of hopeless ambiguities' spelt disaster, and that Britain's actions in 1922 had been a mistake, 'alike to Egypt and to ourselves.'² For Lloyd, the proper course after 1919 would have been a return to a Cromerian style of British rule, and indeed, he

1. Lloyd, Egypt Since Cromer, ii. 141.

2. Lloyd in C.Adam, Life of Lord Lloyd (London, 1948), p.198.

seems to have been inwardly dedicated to achieving just this. To one British official he confided the unlikely story that 'Austen Chamberlain had said to him: "You must govern Egypt as Cromer did."' ¹ This self-styled emulation of the legendary pro-consul pervaded Lloyd's whole style, from the ostentatious use of outriders, to the very format of his two-volume apologia, significantly entitled Egypt Since Cromer.

Chief amongst the 'definite implications' of 1922, Lloyd insisted, was that Britain should retain enough officials in Egypt to fulfil her undertakings to protect imperial communications and the foreign community. This in stark contrast to Allenby's eventual conclusion, that since Britain would be unable to carry out these undertakings through a handful of individuals, the very retention of British officials was futile. When Lloyd arrived in Egypt, British officialdom appeared to be on the verge of extinction, since the Stack ultimatum had secured officials the right to leave Egypt whenever they wished. After a major exodus during 1925, Lloyd evidently decided to 'do all that was possible to save something from the wreck,' and it was, according to Jarvis, largely 'due to his firmness...that control of the more essential...posts remained in British hands until 1936.' ²

In mid-1926, seizing upon the fact that the contracts of all non-Egyptian personnel would expire the following spring under the terms of Law 28, Lloyd launched a campaign to keep the British officials in Egypt. The journalist, Owen Tweedy remarked in his diary:

'Lloyd is going to fight like hell for their retention, but on what grounds I don't know. The law said the Egyptian Government could get rid of them. Law's law and now Lloyd says it isn't.' ³

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1. Tweedy diaries, 24 March 1927, Owen Tweedy Papers, St Antony's College.
 2. Jarvis, Desert and Delta, p.27.
 3. Tweedy diaries, 18 November 1927.

Lloyd explained his intention to nullify the 1923 compensation agreement, which Britain had herself imposed on the then Egyptian Government, with the argument that Law 28 had anticipated an Anglo-Egyptian treaty coming into being before 1927; since no treaty had been reached, the Law's retirement clauses did not now apply. This argument struck Tweedy as

'rather thin and un-British. The British officials have got their compensation on the idea that they were leaving and now they are to stay.' ¹

The reasons Lloyd advanced for needing to retain the officials were two-fold. Firstly, there was the danger that if British officials left Egypt, their positions would be taken by other foreign nationals. Lloyd warned that there were already signs of this foreign take-over in the areas of antiquities, the law and particularly, education. ² From the fact that only two of the twenty-four professors at the new Egyptian University were British-born, ³ Lloyd developed a theory of foreign conspiracy which bordered on the obsessive.

Lloyd then went on to propound a view of the essential role played by British officials in Egypt which even Cromer might have hesitated to claim. According to Lloyd, Britain's whole position in Egypt depended, apart from the army of occupation, on the existence of British officials. They were the High Commissioner's advisers, his source of information, and one of the principal channels of his influence. 'Without the nuclei of British Officials in the various Departments for purposes of information and support,' Lloyd told the Cabinet,

'the High Commissioner's position would be impossible.... In the event of a breakdown in the negotiations on the four reserved points, the presence of these officials provided

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1. Tweedy diaries, 22 December 1927.
 2. Lloyd to Chamberlain, 7 March 1926, FO371/11591/J642.
 3. Elgood, Transit, n.313.

the only means through which, in the last resort, we could rule the country.....If we allowed the contracts of the British Officials to be cancelled in 1927 our position in Egypt would be fatally undermined...'¹

Whether this degree of faith in the indispensability of British officials was warranted in the conditions of the mid-1920s we may question. Lloyd's deputy, Nevile Henderson, observed sharply that the British officials could

'scarcely be described as effective safeguards either against the prejudice to British Imperial and foreign interests or against serious maladministration. They could only be rendered so, if full executive powers were restored to them and British Under-Secretaries and Advisers reappointed to the various Ministries.'

In the actual condition of things, British officials could at most be described as a check against excessive inefficiency, as sources of information for the Residency, and a means of maintaining a certain British prestige. ²

Yet in fact, Lloyd dreamt of rebuilding the edifice of Anglo-Egyptian administration along much grander lines than even the 1922 declaration supposed, encompassing areas of government which Britain had long abandoned to Egyptian control. Lloyd opposed any assumption that

'because a department is definitely outside the sphere of our reserved points no developments within it could ever menace our position in respect of those points...It is important that we should be alive...to what is happening in all departments...'³

In addition to this unprecedentedly broad interpretation of the reserved spheres of interest, Lloyd also believed that Britain retained a responsibility for the welfare of the Egyptian people. British political domination, for Lloyd, automatically implied a moral responsibility for good government. His quarrel with the Milner plan derived from the fact that it abandoned any semblance of

1. Lloyd to the Cabinet, 30 July 1926, FO371/11597/J2152.
2. Henderson, memorandum, 28 June 1926, FO371/11616/J2504.
3. Lloyd to Chamberlain, 26 March 1927, FO371/12369/J809.

concern for the Egyptians, and therefore appeared to 'shirk the responsibilities of Empire,' while still taking the profits. ¹

The solution was a return to the philosophy of earlier years, where the work of British officials provided moral justification for British control.

Remarkably, these arguments persuaded the Cabinet to sanction Lloyd's desire to insist on the renewal of contracts for British officials, and gradually to reinstate British officials into positions they had vacated. ² In Cairo, meanwhile, a committee established by the High Commissioner was drawing up a survey of the Egyptian administration, outlining measures which would be necessary to restore bygone levels of efficiency. The committee's recommendation that an additional 208 British appointments would be required ³ provided Lloyd with just the evidence he was seeking. He now proposed to fight the Egyptian Government for these fresh appointments, department by department, insisting on the long-term reservation of specific posts rather than the short-term installation of particular individuals. The exact functions of these posts would be established in advance, some involving executive powers.

Lloyd's crusade to restore British administration in Egypt was obviously a complete reversal of recent policy: rather than disentanglement, here was a scheme for a more systematic administrative take-over than had ever occurred under the Protectorate. Officials were now encouraged to stay, rather than to leave. In fact, Lloyd had picked up what had been a relatively minor issue of departing British officials, and had inflated it to the status of a major political question, as a central plank of his two-edged

1. Lloyd, Egypt Since Cromer, i. 359.
2. See Murray's later minute, 13 June 1929, FO371/13843/J1747.
3. Henderson to Chamberlain, 29 August 1926, FO371/11616/J2504.

campaign against the Egyptian Government and British policy-makers. Because of this, the question of British officialdom once again became a live issue in the Anglo-Egyptian relationship, when otherwise it might have been expected to recede into obscurity.

Senior British officials and Residency staff were the first to question the feasibility of Lloyd's project. Grafftey-Smith regarded the High Commissioner's sense of mission and trusteeship as 'irrelevant to the Egyptian situation...There was no room left for paternalism in Egypt, after 1922.'¹ Both Patterson, who, as Financial Adviser, was expected to negotiate fresh British appointments with the Egyptian Government, and Campbell, chairman of Lloyd's committee of British officials, were privately convinced that only the bare minimum of officials should remain. Where possible, Patterson tried to ignore the High Commissioner's instructions, and his successor, Watson, took much the same line, believing that 'no official who [had] drawn his compensation [had] any cause to grumble against the Egyptian Government.'²

Lloyd could do nothing about the British officials who opposed him except ignore their advice. Amongst his own staff, however, he actively circumvented Grafftey-Smith, Henderson and Furness, who represented London's disengagement policy, and instead worked 'entirely through the First Secretary, Wiggin.'³ Both Henderson and Furness resigned at the earliest opportunity. The High Commissioner was, therefore, effectively isolated from the liberal-minded set of senior officials and diplomats whose counsels had generally prevailed at the Residency since 1920, drawing his support instead from those rank-and-file British officials who favoured a return to firm British control.

1. Grafftey-Smith, Bright Levant, p.101.
2. Tweedy Diaries, 27 November 1927.
3. Henderson, Water, p.150.

There were some, like Judge Marshall, who considered that with Lloyd's advent as High Commissioner, 'a new light began to shine in Egypt,' and that 'at long last, the mantle of Elijah had fallen upon an Elisha.' ¹ Here, finally, was a High Commissioner who invited junior officials to the Residency, and gave the assurances of support which had always been conspicuously lacking. Exhilarated by Lloyd's promises, some officials pushed their new advocate in a still more Cromerian direction. For example, there was no discouragement from the Residency when a group of irrigation officials formulated and submitted to the Minister of Public Works a scheme for the restoration of British control over irrigation, couched in terms of Britain's traditional responsibility to promote Egyptian prosperity. ²

From the beginning, the Foreign Office had watched these developments with suspicion. Patrick reminded his colleagues in the Egyptian Department that

'Egyptian administrative efficiency or inefficiency is per se, of no interest to us at this juncture...If the administration contrives to carry on with any reasonable degree of success, our requirements will have been met, and we shall have avoided an unnecessary clash with Egypt on ground not too favourable to us.' ³

London shared Lloyd's concern to exclude other foreign officials from Egypt, but would only go so far as to sanction the retention of 'the strict minimum of British officials in the minimum number of administrations obviously covered by the 1922 reserved points...' ⁴ Lloyd was instructed to drop any idea of the long-term reservation of British positions, or of officials being invested with strong executive powers. ⁵

Lloyd accordingly abandoned his intention to demand that all

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1. Marshall, Enigma, p.155.
 2. See file FO141/741/4911.
 3. Patrick, memorandum, 21 February 1927, FO371/12378/J591.
 4. Murray, minute, 1 February 1927, FO371/12368/J243.
 5. Telegram Chamberlain to Lloyd, 28 December 1928, FO371/11593/J3351.

British officials should be retained on contract after 1927, campaigning instead for the maximum number of contracts to be renewed. The railways were a particular target of this crusade: Lloyd insisted that the desideratum of protecting imperial communications required another 25 Englishmen to be appointed to supervisory positions. ¹ There were also frequent attempts to augment the number of British Judges in the Mixed Courts and to appoint a British Procureur-General. ²

Early in March 1927 Lloyd received the Egyptian Government's reply to his demands concerning the British officials. For a government like Adli's, with a strong component of Wafdist members, and facing Zaghlul as President of the Chamber of Deputies, Lloyd's demands were offensive and embarrassing. The Egyptian Government had been given to understand that it would be free to decide which officials it would retain after 1927, and without doubt, Egyptianisation was politically desirable. On the other hand, there was no denying the indispensability of many foreign officials, particularly in technical and educational posts. Furthermore, Adli was loath to jeopardise the political protection extended to him by the Residency. His solution to this dilemma was to renew the contracts of the majority of officials, and hurriedly resign office to leave the political repercussions to Tharwat. ³

Of the 427 remaining British officials governed by Law 28, 352, or 82.5%, were offered new contracts. ⁴ For the first time all British officials in Egypt would be engaged on contracts only renewable by the Egyptian Government. These were not, however, the five-year contracts which Lloyd had led officials to expect, but

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1. Telegram Lloyd to Chamberlain, 18 December 1926, FO371/11593/J3351.
 2. See Percival, memorandum, 18 April 1926, FO371/11606/J1392.
 3. Elgood, Transit, p.304, and Delany, memorandum on Lloyd, Gerald Delany Papers, St. Antony's College.
 4. Telegram Lloyd to Chamberlain, 28 April 1927, FO371/12369/J1048.

ranged instead from one to three years. Many officials, according to Tweedy, were disillusioned by the Residency's failure to keep its promises; once again it seemed that the officials' cause would be sacrificed to political expediency. ¹ Lloyd was reportedly 'furious over his humiliation about the British officials.' ²

This experience of 'defeat' apparently fired Lloyd with grim determination to see the next issue of principle through to a British victory. ³ An issue was not long forthcoming which involved another group of British officials, the British officers in the Egyptian Army. Since 1924, under the influence of Hasan Hasib, a particularly anti-British Minister of War, British officers in the Egyptian Army had been steadily replaced by Egyptians. Moreover, the Sirdar had now lost various minor jurisdictions to the War Ministry, although the new position of Inspector-General of Troops in Egypt, held by Spinks Pasha, somewhat helped redress this balance. When Stack was murdered, however, the moot question arose of whether another British Commander-in-Chief of the Egyptian Army should be appointed. To both Allenby and the Foreign Office, the whole rationale of the British relationship with the Egyptian Army needed to be reassessed. If faced with disorders encouraged by a Wafdist government, the nationalist-spirited Egyptian Army was thought unlikely to oppose the mob. ⁴ The penetration of 'Zaghulism' amongst Egyptian officers was now regarded as such that merely holding the Sirdarship in British hands no longer necessarily connoted British influence over the Egyptian Army. The Foreign Office reminded itself that Britain's undertaking to defend Egypt against aggression implied the use of British, not Egyptian forces; equally, it would be through the army of occupation, in the last

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1. Tweedy diaries, 18 and 24 March 1927.
 2. Ibid, 29 March 1927.
 3. Ibid.
 4. Keown-Boyd, note, 11 April 1924, FO371/10020/E3534.

resort, that Britain would impose her will against any internal Egyptian threat.

For all these reasons, Lloyd was initially inclined to endorse Allenby's decision, to allow the British Sirdarship to lapse. ¹ There was no reason, after all, why Britain should want the Egyptian Army, which was controlled by a government rather more independent than client, to be too effective. Thus the Residency consistently opposed requests that the Egyptian Army should increase its strength by two battalions, or purchase new weaponry. ²

However, in April 1927, not long after the 'unsatisfactory' conclusion of the British officials episode, Lloyd thought he discovered a sinister plot to wrest the Egyptian Army finally from British control. This was suggested by proposals in a parliamentary report that, besides increasing the strength of the army, the Sirdarship should be abolished, and Spinks be removed from the Army Council. ³ Lloyd's response to this perceived threat was typical. His demand that the Egyptian Government should recognise Spinks as the Acting Sirdar reflected his habitual belief in British officials as an effective buttress against the loss of British control. Spinks himself, Lloyd reported, was confident that given 'a recognition of his powers he could hold the fort for us indefinitely.' Why, Lloyd asked, should his word be doubted? Was it not 'axiomatic' that a Commander-in-Chief's authority could not be tampered with? ⁴ The Foreign Office was not so sure, feeling it all too probable that Spinks' influence could be obstructed, regardless of his rank and paper attributes. ⁵

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1. Telegram Lloyd to Chamberlain, 20 April 1926, FO371/11595/J938.
 2. e.g, telegram Lloyd to Chamberlain, 5 December 1926, FO371/11595/J3307.
 3. See Lloyd, Egypt Since Cromer, ii. 201-2 and Elgood, Transit, pp.208-9.
 4. Lloyd, memorandum, 10 April 1927, FO371/12377/J980.
 5. Murray to Tyrell, 26 March 1927, FO371/12377/J720.

Lloyd's response was also characteristic in the way it elevated an internal administrative issue to a top-level Anglo-Egyptian confrontation, in which British gunboats appeared off the Egyptian coast, with the likely prospect that Tharwat's ministry might fall, and parliamentary government even be suspended. Not far from this brink, and after a whole volley of warnings and notes, the Egyptian Government finally produced an acknowledgment of Britain's position under the 1922 reservations which Lloyd found acceptable. ¹

Insomuch as Spinks was promoted and his authority strengthened, it was a nominal victory for Lloyd. Some British officers, like Squadron Leader Long, continued to exert a certain British influence with the Egyptian military, in this case in the sphere of aviation. Never was this kind of British influence put to the test of conflict. Yet once again, it seems more than likely that Lloyd's assured belief in the value of the British official, which he maintained to the point of confrontation twice during 1927, was based on a fatal underestimation of the power of Egyptian nationalism.

The fact remained, however, that where the civilian British officials were concerned, Lloyd, together with Adli, changed the entire outlook in the course of 1927, since the majority of officials who were expected to leave now stayed on. Egyptians who assumed that certain posts had been bought by the payment of compensation now discovered that these positions were still closed to them.

In addition to the retention of existing British officials, Lloyd and Adli were also responsible for the appointment of many new officials at this time, particularly as secondary school teachers and university lecturers. Between 1926 and 1937 the proportion of

1. See correspondence reproduced in Lloyd, Egypt Since Cromer, ii. 400-7.

British officials who were involved in education rose from 32% to 55%. ¹ Herbert Addison recalls that this new influx came as quite a surprise, not least to established officials, who now asked:

'why were the new men there at all? Were they not all British subjects? And was it not one of the tenets of the Egyptian renaissance through which we were living that Egyptians alone should conduct the affairs of their own country?' ²

When the Egyptian University was founded in 1925, most of its academic appointments came from the Continent, not from Britain. For decades, British officials had displayed a scornful attitude towards the notion of an Egyptian institution of higher learning, ³ whilst Egyptians, for their part, were only too keen that the university should be established outside the sphere of British control. In 1926 the Residency began to realise with alarm the weakness of Britain's academic representation, particularly in the Faculty of Arts; whether the university was a useful institution was no longer a relevant issue. What was more important, Lloyd believed, was that the French had been busily exploiting Britain's apparent indifference to their own cultural advantage. ⁴

The Residency had asked the Foreign Office's assistance in locating suitable British candidates for university appointments in 1925, ⁵ but by 1927, Lloyd was prepared to go further. Pressure was brought to bear on the Minister of Education, 'Ali Shamsi, to support English candidatures for the deanships of Arts and Science, whilst Tharwat was reminded of the necessity of 'Anglo-Egyptian cooperation' in educational matters. ⁶ In 1929, when Britain was

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1. List 1926 and List 1937.
 2. Addison, 'Pleasures', Ch.3, p.2,
 3. Patterson, memorandum, 9 April 1925, FO371/10906/J1138.
 4. Telegram Lloyd to Chamberlain, 1 March 1926, FO371/11591/J523.
 5. The Foreign Office network supplied Robert Graves for the professorship of English Literature; R. Graves, Goodbye to all That (London, 1929), p.264. (Goodbye).
 6. Henderson to Lloyd, 1 October 1927, FO371/12383/J2810.

offered four chairs in the Faculty of Arts, Lloyd claimed victory in his 'four year struggle...to restore British vis à vis Latin influences' in the university. 1

The Residency tended to leave the recruitment of British schoolteachers to the Egyptian Government Educational Mission in London. Nevertheless, in 1926, when Shamsi proposed placing French-language teaching on a par with English in Egyptian schools, 40 new English teachers were rapidly dispatched from London.² In point of fact, the Egyptian Government always conceded that English teachers were indispensable; indeed, it had taken the initiative to appoint British teachers to staff the schools which opened after independence. Then later, in 1936, the Council of Ministers approved a scheme which gave British teachers the same security of employment as permanent Egyptian officials. ³

Yet it was not just in the educational field that a significant level of fresh recruitment went on right through our period. Each year, as a number of British officials left Egypt, new recruits arrived on contract, usually for technical departments like the railways. ⁴ There were some who found the system of short-term contracts 'rather humiliating, for until almost the last moment they might not know whether or not they could hope to stay in Egypt.' Yet there were many others, like Herbert Addison, who felt that 'each renewal of a contract served as one more vote of confidence.' ⁵ In 1930, the resumption of treaty negotiations temporarily renewed the expectation that most contracts would soon

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1. Telegram Lloyd to Chamberlain, 11 March 1929, FO371/13866/J682.
 2. Henderson to Chamberlain, 8 October 1926, FO371/11586/J2869.
 3. J.Cryer, 'Note on British Schoolmasters in Egypt', Addison Papers.
 4. In 1930, for example, 37 British staff left, and 24 arrived; FO141/689/612.
 5. Addison, 'Pleasures', Ch.3, p.10.

be terminated; yet once again, the treaty evaporated, and once again the majority of contracts were renewed. ¹

Our search for an explanation of the survival of British officialdom long after 1922 has pointed, on the one hand, to the old-style imperialist designs of Lloyd, and on the other, to the pragmatism of the Egyptian Government when it came to staffing certain sectors of the administration. Yet the picture would remain incomplete if we failed also to take into consideration the attractions of Egyptian service for many British officials. The changed circumstances of independence had induced many - indeed the majority - of the pre-1922 cadre to leave Egypt. Even so, there were aspects of Egyptian life and work which attracted certain officials to remain regardless, and which appealed equally to the new generation of recruits.

Throughout our period, British officials were attracted to Egypt by the opportunities for social life, sport and travel, and not least, by Egypt herself. For the many classically-educated officials, particularly of the earlier generation, it was Egypt's history which provided constant fascination. Besides the obligatory Egyptological remains on Cairo's doorstep, there was the exotic appeal of Old Cairo, and Islamic culture. ² McPherson, who had dreamt since boyhood of living in Cairo, plunged into every aspect of Egyptian interest: the Coptic and Orthodox churches, mosque architecture, traditional practices like the zar, Arabic, antiquities, desert exploration. The Cairo of the early 1900s was still relatively unspoilt: McPherson's accomodation had desert on three sides, and from his bed he had 'a full view of the pyramids without raising or turning his head.' ³

1. See FO141/621/51.

2. British officials produced a number of serious works on Egyptian subjects, like McPherson's Moulids (Cairo, 1941).

3. McP. Vol.15.

There is no evidence that these particular attractions of Egyptian service diminished in appeal over time. Another constant factor in Egypt's favour, certainly for those weighing up the alternatives of employment in India or the Sudan, was the climate. The rigours of the Egyptian summer could usually be avoided by home leave, or a few months in Alexandria, and there were indeed some British officials who came to Egypt particularly for health reasons. ¹

Although the later breed of officials no longer had provincial postings as inspectors, there is no sign that the post-1922 generation were any less smitten with the exploration bug than their predecessors. Indeed, the advent of motor vehicles which could navigate the desert opened Egyptian exploration to a far wider range of officials than Thomas Russell and his Camel Corps. Yet above all, as Vansittart explains,

'Egypt was a great point of departure. Everyone went up the Nile to the Sudanese frontier, but I meant to get far beyond that - to the Equator on the White Nile, to Abyssinia on the Blue. Or one could go north to Jerusalem, the Holy Land, Damascus, Aleppo, all names of glamour; or east to still mysterious Arabia. The first object therefore was to earn some leave.'²

Egyptian service never attained the sporting image of the Sudan Political Service, whose rigorous physical demands attracted a large proportion of 'hearty' recruits. ³ Nevertheless, many British officials clearly relished the wide range of sporting activities available in Egypt. Ibex-hunting in the Eastern Desert gave Russell his 'best moments of sport and adventure.'⁴ McPherson engaged in

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1. e.g. Graves, Goodbye, p.263.
 2. Lord Vansittart, The Mist Procession (London, 1958), p.84.
 3. A. Kirk-Greene, 'Sudan Political Service Profile', Seminar, St Antony's College, 1981.
 4. Russell, Egyptian Service, p.101.

football, fishing, swimming, sailing, duck-shooting, wolf-hunting, riding and golf. And while later officials could no longer 'shoot the incoming quail...seated...at their own front doors,' as did Marshall's contemporaries in Alexandria, ¹ they were as loyal to their afternoon golf as ever.

Plenty of colonial postings had their sporting opportunities and historical interest. What made Egypt - precisely Cairo - unique was the social life it offered. The combination of Egypt's tourist attractions, climate and crossroads location produced a cosmopolitan population, amongst whom thrived social activity perhaps as dazzling as anywhere in the non-European world. The tourist season from November to March brought with it a polyglot influx of hotel residents and passers-through, invariably on their way between 'Europe and India, Australia, China, Japan, the South Sea Islands, East Africa, South Africa and Heaven only knows where else besides.'² As in India, the visitors included the "Ladies' Eastern Fishing Fleet," casting their nets over the army of occupation or the stray British official. Besides the Club or the Opera, the classic feature of the Cairo social whirl was the nightly hotel ball:

'all the principal hotels give a ball once a week throughout the season; but the smart ones, to which all the Best People go, are the Savoy and the Semiramis....It is possible to go to a dance six nights out of seven for the five months of the season...'³

If anything, the range of social events in Cairo broadened as time went on. Addison relished the increasingly international atmosphere amongst the academic community, and the activities offered by the Anglican Cathedral, the British Council and the

1. Marshall, Enigma, p.10.
2. Cecil, Leisure, p.143.
3. Ibid, pp.141-2.

Anglo-Egyptian Union, all of which came into being in the mid-30s. ¹ The inter-war years also produced a spate of literary activities amongst the official community, especially the academics. Producing work often in the Cecil genre of comic memoirs, and rarely attaining the standard of some Anglo-Indian work, the literary circle nevertheless attracted a certain kind of official. For example, Bonamy Dobrée, Professor of English in Cairo between 1926 and 1929, whom Malcolm Muggeridge described as

'Bloomsburyite, topped up with D.H.Lawrence, with just a dash of Marx...He spoke of T.S.Eliot as Tom...and on his passport described himself as "man of letters".'²

While many officials, like the young lecturer Ivor Treavett, had a 'fantastic' time during their Egyptian service, ³ there were others for whom the social life, the sport and exploration had little appeal. Robert Graves resigned after a matter of months, as he found 'little to do in Egypt...but eat coffee-ices at Groppi's, visit the open-air cinemas, and...get on with writing.'⁴ Muggeridge, Graves' colleague at the university, left for similar reasons. ⁵

Of course, what took most British officials to Egypt was the job itself, although here there were more qualitative changes between the perceptions of pre- and post-independence officials. The former appeal of power, prestige and promotion at an early age disappeared with time. With Egyptian control, gone were the discretionary powers

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1. Addison, interview, April 1981, and 'Anglo-Egyptian Union', Addison Papers.
 2. M. Muggeridge, Chronicles of Wasted Time (London, 1972) i. 169. (Chronicles). See amongst other works by British officials, P. Newby, Picnic at Sakkara (London, 1955); D. Enright, Academic Year (London, 1955).
 3. Interview, Noël Treavett, June 1982.
 4. Graves, Goodbye, p.275.
 5. Muggeridge, Chronicles, i. 179.

which gave McPherson, as Ma'mur Zapt, free travel anywhere in Egypt, the pick of horses of the Mounted Troops, and a reserved fauteuil at the Opera.¹ With Egyptianisation, it would never again be possible for a Storrs to rise from humble clerk to Oriental Secretary in five years. Energy, originality and ability - the qualities which it was originally claimed set the Egyptian Service apart from the I.C.S. - were rarely emphasised amongst later officials. They were perhaps not the qualities appropriate to a period of nationalist fervour, and were certainly not the qualities attracted by the pay and prospects of the 'Public Instruction'. Muggeridge encountered little opposition when he applied for a schoolmaster's position in the mid-20s:

'employment with the Egyptian P.I....offered no prospects in the way of advancement or pensions, and most of the applicants were very young, and from...Red Brick universities, or middle-aged to elderly, with indeterminate qualifications and an air of having failed or run into trouble somewhere along the line.'²

Certainly, Egyptian employment was no longer regarded as a plum career, attracting Oxbridge graduates of an upper middle class background.

The pay of British officials had never been good, and the 20s and 30s brought no improvement. Admittedly, Watson, as Financial Adviser, earned the same as his Minister, L.E.3000.³ By and large, however, most senior officials had now departed, leaving scores of junior personnel on low salaries - under L.E.500, in the case of a railway mechanic. The English School in Cairo realised that many official parents could not afford to let their children attend, let alone send them home to Britain, the traditional norm

1. Ma'mur Zapt episode, McP.
2. Muggeridge, Chronicles, i. 166.
3. FO141/702/228.

amongst Anglo-Egyptian families. ¹ The only compensations for poor pay and prospects were income tax exemption under the Capitulations, the possibility of having servants, and what Addison called a certain douceur de vivre. ²

So what was there about the role of the later official which continued to attach so many Englishmen to Egypt? More generally, how did the British officials fit into what the British thought they were doing in Egypt during the 20s and 30s? These questions form the focus of the remainder of this study.

We know that British officials figured crucially in Lloyd's dream of resuscitating a Cromerian-style Egypt. Certainly, there were those, officials included, who believed that the time would come when either the Egyptians would invite the return of British rule, or things would deteriorate so far as to necessitate a fresh take-over. Lloyd instinctively gravitated towards an official like Edwards, an exponent of the fellaheen's economic plight, and had him seconded to the Residency to advise on the 'rural problem'. For his part, Edwards regarded Lloyd as a second Cromer.³

However, many officials realised that Lloyd's policy could never win Egyptian cooperation. Moreover, the post-1922 cadre had never known Cromer, and felt that 'the visions of Cromer's time were now presumptuous.'⁴ Yet this did not necessarily mean that officials regarded their appointments as irrelevant. Addison had a strong sense that he had been invited to the country by an Egyptian academic, and that it was Egyptians who asked him to stay on. For

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1. Horan to Residency, 21 December 1921, FO371/7745/E2769.
 2. Addison, 'Pleasures'.
 3. See Edwards, 'A People Abandoned', and 'Report on the Rural Problem', Edwards Papers.
 4. Addison, interview, April 1981.

Russell too, the deciding factor in remaining was the fact that Egyptians asked him to do so.¹

There were now few areas of the administration where Lloyd's dream of continuing trusteeship was translated into any kind of reality. Perhaps the only one was that forgotten relic of wartime, the Frontier Districts Administration. From its establishment in 1917, this had been unique as an administrative authority virtually independent of Egyptian Government control. Prior to the war, the Eastern and Western Deserts and the Sinai fell under the confused jurisdictions of the Coastguards, the Ministries of Justice and Interior, and the Egyptian Army. When the war proved the regions' vulnerability to attack, Clayton convinced Wingate of the need for a unified administration which would guarantee security on Egypt's periphery.² It was hoped that the cloak of war would mute Egyptian objections to an assertion of remarkably untrammelled British control: a predominance of British military personnel, wielding executive powers derived from the Commander-in-Chief, and using Egyptian Government funds free from ministerial control.³

After the war, the problem of what would happen when martial law ended was circumvented by making the Frontier Districts Administration an autonomous unit of the Egyptian Army, where continuing British influence was guaranteed in 1922. However, the real explanation of the Administration's tenacious autonomy lay in the contrasting attitudes of Egyptians and British towards the desert Beduin. Nationalist governments might claim that the deserts should be under Egyptian control, yet in practice they despised their inhabitants, and preferred to ignore them. In contrast, British officials like Parker and Jarvis found positive satisfaction

1. Russell to Milner, 31 January 1923, MP51, p.17.
2. Stack to Clayton, 16 February 1917, Clayton Papers, 470/6.
3. MacDonnell, note, 1 September 1919, MP444, iii. 51.

in the provision of basic government services to these hitherto neglected provinces. The introduction of law and order, or the construction of roads, were initially justified in terms of security. However, the Administration soon came to see its role as an agency for genuine, if limited, development: supplying hospitals, schools and water, and encouraging agriculture, local industry and afforestation.

Successive Egyptian ministries reduced the number of British officers in the Administration, from 39 to 7 between 1922 and 1928,¹ a process which Lloyd struggled to arrest. The Egyptian Government also stalled over fresh appointments of frontier governors, and restricted British supervision to the level of Acting Assistant Director-General. It was the saga of attack and erosion common to most of the old British administration; but unlike the Egyptian Interior, the Frontiers Administration managed to preserve much of the old British trusteeship through the 1920s and 1930s. Here survived the Cromerian notion that the character of a lone official was key to successful administration. Jarvis's assessment of the qualities required to win the Arab's confidence stressed, in addition to 'honesty and strength of purpose,' the ability to 'do a long day on a camel.'² In the desert, equally, there still survived a paternalism which sought to protect a tribal society from irrelevant regulations of the Egyptian Government. There were many occasions when Jarvis felt bound to turn a blind eye - to raiding, for example - when the rule-book dictated otherwise. These officials were the first to admit that the effects of frontier administration were slight, that after 'after fifteen years service or so the official leaves the people in his area precisely the same as he found them...'³

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1. See K. Perkins, 'Great Britain and the Egyptian Frontier Districts Administration', Middle East Studies, 18, 4 (1982), 411-25.
 2. Jarvis, Yesterday and Today in Sinai (London, 1941), pp.19-20.
 3. Jarvis, Desert and Delta, p.177.

Yet there were few other Egyptian departments where British officials still held the trust of Egyptians concerning their capacity for constructive administration. Ironically, the department which had always commanded the greatest respect, irrigation, had now sunk to a nadir of disrepute. According to Watson, irrigation was the one department where there had been 'absolute stagnation for years.'¹ British engineers were apt to blame this on Egyptian technical ineptitude, and on political cowardice in grasping the nettle of new water conservancy projects. The Nile Commission Report of 1926, in common with majority British opinion, advocated a White Nile dam at Jabal Auliya, which would serve both Sudanese and Egyptian requirements. However, faced with the alternative, advocated by Buckley, of raising the Aswan barrage under exclusive Egyptian control, successive ministries, to quote Elgood, 'dared not commit their country to decision.'²

However, this critical attitude ignored the fact that Allenby's 1924 ultimatum had shown Britain apparently prepared to use the issue of Nile control punitively towards Egypt. Fortnightly Review in 1925 commented on a deep-seated suspicion now inculcated amongst the fellaheen that 'the British Government [had] ulterior designs on their water supply, in order to develop the Sudan in the interests of the Lancashire cotton industry.'³ Thus for Britain to invoke a bygone reputation for devotion to the cause of Egyptian irrigation was now unfortunate and inappropriate.

In fact, Watson had no hesitation in blaming the years of confusion in irrigation matters on childish British officials who themselves could not decide between Jabal Auliya and Aswan. The alliance of Buckley's idiosyncratic viewpoint with Egyptian national

1. Tweedy diaries, 4 April 1928.
2. Elgood, Transit, p.307.
3. 'Egypt for the Egyptians', Fortnightly Review, 123 (1925), p.74.

pride held firm against the inception of any irrigation projects at all until 1929. Only then, in the absence of an Egyptian parliament, did Muhammad Mahmud's government reach a Nile agreement, which not only endorsed the Jabal Auliya option, but overcame the greater stumbling-block of conceding Egypt's monopolistic claim to Nile control. ¹ Again, it had been British officials who had always upheld Egypt's possessive claim to the river; the belated realisation that the competing claims of the Sudan could not be ignored was therefore a bitter pill for Egyptian opinion. All in all, the British contribution to irrigation during the 1920s appears to have been a mixed blessing.

The more grandiose the terms in which Lloyd cast the role of British officials, the wider tended to be the discrepancy between ideal and reality. The university lecturers, for example, were exalted as a buttress against the penetration of 'foreign' influences, educationalists in general as the vanguard of British culture in Egypt. Lloyd believed that Britain's whole position depended upon countering the infiltration of 'French doctrine', particularly in the Faculties of Arts and Law which nurtured Egypt's future politicians. Robert Graves recounts that on his arrival, 'British officials at the Ministry of Education begged me to keep the British flag flying in the Faculty of Letters.' However, in a matter of months Graves had decided this was an absurd objective, and that 'Lloyd believed in his job more than I did in mine.' ² A suspicious 100% pass rate from pupils who could not grasp his lectures impelled Graves to resign. In fact, the evidence suggests that few British lecturers took their patriotic duties as seriously as Lloyd desired: Egypt simply offered them a job. ³

1. Lloyd to Chamberlain, 11 May 1929, FO371/13856/J1420.
2. Graves, Goodbye, pp.267 and 275.
3. Interview, Treavett.

It is arguable that the English schoolteachers were even less effective as the propagators of their culture. Although there were now more of them than ever before, the reality seems to have been a pitifully low standard of instruction. The limited job prospects of Egyptian teaching attracted only the lower level of graduates, usually without any English-teaching qualification. Textbooks were insipid and obsolete, whilst the old system of parrot-fashion cramming, long-criticised under the British regime, still reigned supreme. Foreign teachers were now forbidden to have any extra-curricular contact with their pupils. An investigation by a Board of Education inspector in 1929 concluded that the present conditions of English-teaching could 'do nothing but lamentably lower British prestige.' ¹

There was, however, one area where a small leaven of British officials served Britain rather more effectively after 1922, although in a fashion, by contrast, which the British authorities were far less keen to advertise. This was the area of British commercial interests. In 1930, when an Anglo-Egyptian treaty again seemed imminent, representatives of the Alexandria business community submitted to the Residency, in the context of their apprehensions of a treaty, an assessment of the role British officials had played in encouraging British trade. In their appraisal, the three principal bulwarks of British commerce in Egypt were the existence of the Mixed Courts, the Capitulations, and British administrative influence. There was no denying that the presence of British officials gave British businessmen an 'enormous advantage' in securing government contracts and in ensuring that the terms of tender were strictly enforced. ² It might not have been

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1. Mann, report, 16 July 1929, FO371/13879/J2073; also F. Marvin, 'Education in Egypt', Contemporary Review, 139 (1931), 456-63.
 2. Alexander, note, enclosure in Turner to Loraine, 5 April 1930, FO371/14610/J1274. (Alexander Note).

exactly a case of 'trade following the flag,' but it had 'certainly been one of its being encouraged by the British control of the Administration.' ¹

In addition to this kind of assistance from British officials in Egypt, the Office of the Inspecting Engineer for the Egyptian Government in London existed specifically to supply British manufactures to the Egyptian Government. The Office, which originally handled railway equipment alone, now met the Egyptian Government's requirements for everything from schoolbooks to armaments, and in 1922 employed 68 English staff. Central to the bureau's operations was a partnership between Tottenham, the Inspecting Engineer, and in Cairo, 'Abd al-Hamid Sulaiman, the General Manager of Egyptian Railways, who maintained a firm belief in the superiority of British goods. In 1926 Lloyd proudly reported that since 1919 Britain had won more orders by value from the Egyptian Railways than all her competitors put together. ²

However, since the 1924 parliament introduced the slogan of 'economic independence at all costs', ³ the Inspecting Office had been subject to consistent attack. The Foreign Office was already aware of the need to 'avoid laying ourselves open to the charge that by our predominant position in Egypt...we are favouring British Trade at the expense of the Egyptian taxpayer.' ⁴ The Office was therefore pruned down to 'very modest dimensions,' in order to continue its work on 'less obtrusive lines.' ⁵ The Residency warded off many attempts to have 'Abd al-Hamid Sulaiman replaced, and to remove the Office from London to the Continent and Britain's

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1. Alexander Note, FO371/14610/J1274.
 2. Lloyd to Chamberlain, 2 December 1926, FO371/11589/J3303.
 3. See R. Owen, 'The Ideology of Economic Nationalism in its Egyptian Context', in M. Buheiry (ed), Intellectual Life in the Arab East, 1890-1939 (Beirut, 1981).
 4. Rodd, minute, 10 April 1923, FO371/8985/E3597.
 5. Dowson, memorandum to Residency, 14 July 1922, FO371/7768/E8622.

cheaper competitors. Only in 1946 was the Office eventually closed.

In general, the commercial benefits of having British officials in the Egyptian Government were waning by the 1930s. The board which handled government concessions, under the supervision of the Finance official, Baxter, was abolished in 1927, and replaced by an Egyptian body with strong Bank Misr connections. So now, Campbell lamented, when concessions came up for renewal, if they were with Europeans, they were made 'fifty times stiffer;' if with Egyptians, 'reduced to a farce.' ¹ It was true, there were still 'willing British officials' in the European Department, who could help clear obstacles to government orders; but what worried the Alexandria businessmen was what would happen 'when we are deprived of these aids.' ²

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Here, then, were some of the functions fulfilled by British officials in the post-1922 schema of British involvement in Egypt: technical supervision and training, with an eye to national kudos and perhaps economic advantage for Britain; the propagation of the English language and educational system in Egypt, to ensure that a variety of cultural, political and economic benefits fell to Britain, rather than to her competitors; the maintenance of law and order and of judicial protection for the foreign community; and in general, the fostering of a British reputation for high standards, justice and integrity. Of course, such objectives have characterised many post-colonial attempts at informal domination, and thus, once again, the Egyptian story offers a precedent for the later transfer of power elsewhere.

1. Quoted in Tweedy diaries, 27 November 1927.
2. Alexander Note, FO371/14610/J1274.

Yet if in practice British officials could be obstructed from fulfilling their supposed functions, or if their claims to be rendering disinterested service were not necessarily believed, there could be a considerable discrepancy between endeavour and achievement. And indeed, for the remainder of our period, British officials experienced more and more of the constraints which had developed after 1922. By 1927 it was felt that the titles of the advisers, for example, no longer corresponded 'with any accuracy to the functions they perform[ed].' The Financial Adviser did not, in practice, 'give advice to the Egyptian Government, or indeed in any way control their decisions, except by virtue of his personal influence.' ¹ In fact, Egypt's continued prosperity made it difficult to raise any major objections to financial policy, except possibly to the government's reluctance to spend. Each year from 1922 to 1927 there had been an addition of between L.E.4 and 7 million to the Reserve Fund. ² It was over day-to-day ministry operations, however, that remaining finance officials felt the hopelessness of their position. James Baxter, described as having worked 'exceptionally...sympathetically with Egyptians,' submitted his resignation with these comments:

'most Egyptians from Ministers downwards display ignorance and incompetence in the handling of economic and financial questions so gross that discussion seems...useless....It really isn't possible to do a decent job of work in present conditions.' ³

As Egypt plunged into the economic depression of the 1930s, British officials felt their sense of responsibility, particularly for the fellaheen, outraged by their inability to intervene. Francis Edwards lamented that successive governments ignored the scourges of

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1. Patrick, memorandum, 21 February 1927, FO371/12378/J591.
 2. Campbell, note, 26 October 1927, FO371/12378/J3183.
 3. Baxter to Lloyd, enclosure in Lloyd to Chamberlain, 8 January 1928, FO371/13114/J259.

indebtedness, illiteracy, population growth and land fragmentation. Moreover, the rigid collection of taxes during this crisis for the producer was likely to enhance his receptivity to 'Communitic teachings.'¹ Then there was the government's increasing resort to purchasing on the cotton market in the face of falling prices, a remedy which British officials always regarded as more dangerous than the malady.²

Those officials concerned with security encountered parallel frustrations into the 1930s. When, for example, the Wafd staged a heroic return reception for Nahhas Pasha in 1930 after the fall of Muhammad Mahmud, Russell was again instructed that the police should not employ force to maintain order. 'Using a modicum of force,' Russell complained,

'I could have kept good order; as it was, policemen and officers were being flaunted and even assaulted by those wretched schoolboys....I do not feel inclined to allow my police or myself to be the laughing stock of the students to satisfy the vanity of the Wafd leaders.'³

Since British officials were not fully able to sustain the administrative role designed for them by Lloyd, this forced the High Commissioner to rely increasingly on the political influence of the Residency, backed, ultimately, by military force. It was these political manoeuvrings, without doubt, which constituted the major thrust of Britain's involvement in Egypt by this point. This saga does not concern us, except insofar as it provides evidence that senior British officials were being employed more and more as the political adjuncts of the Residency, in parallel to their dwindling administrative functions. Lloyd displayed a particular penchant for drawing in any convenient British officials as supporting actors

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1. Edwards, 'The Egyptian Rural Problem', Edwards Papers.
 2. See, e.g, Tweedy, 'Stability in Egypt', Fortnightly Review, 134, (August 1930), 174-5.
 3. Russell, note, 20 March 1930, FO371/14609/J1115.

in his campaigns to uphold British interests. For instance, the complaints of the British police commandants that proposed legislation concerning Unlawful Assemblies would prevent them from keeping order supplied Lloyd with a useful casus belli against Nahhas.¹ Similarly, the resignation of Judge Kershaw over acquittals in the Stack murder trial was put to effective use in Lloyd's strategy to keep Zaghlul out of office in 1926.² Whenever contentious intervention had to be justified to London, the support of senior British officialdom was invariably invoked, whilst the ensuing ultimatum was regularly delivered to the minister concerned by one of the advisers or Keown-Boyd.³

Britain's over-riding long-term objective remained, of course, the conclusion of an acceptable bilateral treaty, while preventing any threat to British interests in the meantime. Thus the Residency retained a close vested interest in the make-up of any Egyptian ministry, and by virtue of the powerful backing it could bring to bear for or against any faction, would remain closely entwined in local political rivalries. In general terms, the political options revolved around ministries of a Palace, Liberal Constitutionalist or Wafdist complexion. The first two tended to mean rather more harmonious cooperation with British requirements over the short-term, but offered little realistic treaty potential. The latter the Wafd possessed in good measure, except that its political objectives were also the furthest removed from British requirements.

It was in balancing this see-saw that Lloyd developed the practice of employing British officials and other individuals as political contacts and go-betweens. The rigid Lloyd-Wiggin

1. See Lloyd to Chamberlain, 13 April 1928, FO371/13119/J1338.
2. Lloyd, Summary of the Political Situation since 27 May, 10 June 1926, FO371/11583/J1695.
3. e.g, Lloyd to Chamberlain, 14 April 1928, FO371/13118/J1256.

interpretation of British supremacy at all costs effectively debarred the Residency from dialogue with any but the most compliant Egyptian politicians. Cecil Campbell regarded it as a 'great weakness' that under Lloyd the Residency was 'in fact completely isolated and had no real contact with the Egyptians.' ¹

Communication with Zaghlul, in particular, was virtually non-existent. Lloyd seems to have felt it beneath the dignity of His Majesty's High Commissioner to engage in sordid wheeler-dealing. It therefore became imperative to develop a network of informants and intermediaries who could keep the Residency in some kind of contact with the Egyptian political world. Journalists like Delany and Tweedy, with their astute sense of political realities and their personal rapport with the Wafd leadership, were in a unique position to explore the ground for political compromise, ² or even to pass private communications from the Foreign Office to Egyptian politicians. ³

For day-to-day discussions with the ministry Lloyd, relied on senior officials like the Financial Adviser. Significantly, Lloyd regarded the principal function of the Financial Adviser, in addition to being the leading British official, as acting as a

'buffer between the High Commissioner and the Government in a multitude of questions...in regard to which the direct intervention of the High Commissioner is either impossible or undesirable and to insulate the High Commissioner as far as possible from those smaller frictions inevitable to the task of defending British interests...and thus to leave him free to handle major questions of policy with his influence unimpaired.' ⁴

Ironically, it was the attachment to an outmoded concept of the role of British officialdom which helped to bring about George

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1. Conversation between Campbell and Murray, 14 June 1928, FO371/13121/J1904.
 2. As Delany attempted to do during the Army crisis; see Delany, memorandum on Zaghlul, Delany Papers.
 3. Delany, memorandum on Lloyd, Delany Papers.
 4. Lloyd, memorandum, 18 October 1927, FO371/12390/J230.

Lloyd's own dismissal. London's long-accumulating dissatisfaction with their Cairo representative focussed primarily on his excessive interference in internal Egyptian affairs. When the Foreign Office informed Lloyd of the unacceptability of his policies, one major charge related to the campaign to retain the British officials, another to his provocation of the Army Crisis.¹ Like Wingate and Allenby before him, Lloyd had no alternative but to accept an ignominious resignation.

London had long been irritated by Lloyd's support for the British officials, whom it perceived as so powerless as to be irrelevant, except as a potential treaty concession. During the 1929 Henderson-Mahmud negotiations, Britain was quite prepared to discuss the abolition of the European Department, as well as the removal of British officers in the Egyptian Army.

Nor could remaining British officials expect anything like the level of advocacy they had enjoyed from Lloyd under the new High Commissioner, Sir Percy Loraine. For Loraine had fully imbibed the lesson of Lloyd's disgrace and would never stray from the policy which sought an Anglo-Egyptian treaty with the minimum British intervention within Egypt. The low priority now accorded to the British officials was apparent from a discussion between Loraine and Murray, evaluating the issues on which the Residency should stand firm against the Wafd government of 1929. These were deemed to include: the victimisation of the previous regime, the passage of the Assemblies and Arms legislation, and the amalgamation of the advisers' budgets. The abolition of the London Inspecting Office and of British supervision of the Ports and Lights administration fell into a second category of 'to be dissuaded, but if necessary allowed.' The replacement of British officials and officers in the

1. See Lloyd, Egypt Since Cromer, ii. 312.

Frontier Districts Administration appeared finally under the heading, 'to be acquiesced in.' 1

However, our study of the years after 1922 has suggested that the freedom and effectiveness of the British officials varied not just with the character and policies of the current incumbent at Qasr al-Dubbara, but equally with the strength of the collaborative relationship which obtained between the Residency and the Egyptian ministry of the moment. With an anti-British government, drawing little support from the High Commissioner, the remaining officials tended to be bypassed or harrassed. However, if an administration depended heavily on its alliance with the Residency, and particularly if the latter had a strong interest in the survival of that administration, British officials were usually to be seen playing some role supportive of the government.

For Lloyd, a minister like Muhammad Mahmud had been the ideal client politician. Accordingly, we observe the European Department moving into action, through the Interior Ministry, to head off opposition and mobilise displays of support for a premier with little spontaneous following of his own. Keown-Boyd reported that the Public Security Department spent six days planning Muhammad Mahmud's visit to Tanta, including the importation of disguised ghafirs to lead the cheering. 2 Yet with the return of the Wafd in 1929, the officials once again recede into the shadows, with the exception of Cecil Campbell, who emerges as something of a political analyst 3 and as a mediator at the 1930 talks.

The functions of the officials broadened once more with the coming to office of Sidqi. Loraine was pursuing a resolute policy of non-intervention, which allowed Sidqi to procede with constitutional

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1. Loraine to Murray, 4 December 1929, FO371/13851/J34631.
 2. Hoare to Cushendon, 20 September and 13 October 1928, FO371/13123/J2787 and J3005.
 3. e.g, Campbell, minute, 27 July 1929, FO371/13844/J2214.

reforms strengthening the hand of the King and the Executive at the expense of the Legislature, and particularly the Wafd. That this was collaboration by another name is clear from the support Sidqi received from the vestigial British administration, notably in coping with the disorders which followed his suspension of parliament. Keown-Boyd, the European Department and Russell were especially conspicuous in terms of services rendered, whether dealing with rioters or press criticism, evoking this comment from Diya in November 1930:

'British neutrality is a mockery. Egyptians laugh at it every time they see British officers and officials executing, not without zeal, the autocratic orders given to them...'¹

Although Loraine's successor, Sir Miles Lampson, opposed this policy of 'neutrality', which actually tended to associate Britain with Sidqi's excesses, British officials continued to be seen as administrative bulwarks for the ministries of the 1930s. When, for example, Hoare made his 1935 speech implying British opposition to the resumption of parliamentary life in Egypt, and Cairo students marched in protest, they confronted the Egyptian Government police as being synonymous with perfidious British control - a conviction inevitably reinforced by the killing of three students by British police officers. So, in a variety of ways, even shortly before the 1936 treaty, there were British officials who still played a role close to the nub of the Anglo-Egyptian political relationship.

While Loraine had distanced the official community with a silent and aloof manner, Lampson reverted, if not to Lloyd's obsession with the idea of British administration, certainly to a receptive attitude where the officials were concerned. In fact, it is clear from the Lampson diaries that for advice the new High Commissioner looked to the advisers rather more than to his diplomatic staff.

1. Enclosure in Loraine to Henderson, 14 November 1930, FO371/14622/J3804.

Lampson's first appointment after arriving in Cairo was to receive the Financial Adviser; ¹ thereafter Watson returned to the Residency several times a week, usually bringing a mixture of administrative reports and political news, the latter the fruit of his regular contacts with the Egyptian Prime Minister. The Judicial Adviser and Keown-Boyd would add to the High Commissioner's briefing during their weekly visits, and would frequently be dispatched in return to one or other politician to convey a requirement, or to take soundings.

It was with these three officials that Lampson usually clarified his political strategy. Did the Egyptians really want a treaty? ² Who did the advisers think should be appointed as regent in view of Fu'ad's failing health? ³ What were their views on the proposed Cabinet additions? ⁴ Keown-Boyd, in particular, struck Lampson as 'clear-headed, sensible and well-informed.' ⁵

The advisers, for their part, seem to have perceived their counselling function primarily in terms of keeping the Residency-Ministry collaborative relationship in optimal working order, backing or rejecting political candidates as appropriate. Nasim needed the Residency's support, observed Keown-Boyd in January 1935, and Lampson should take care to see him regularly.⁶ By May, however, the advisers felt that Nasim was becoming too dependent on the Wafd, and the Judicial Adviser drafted him a letter of resignation. ⁷ On two further occasions it was advised that Nasim should go, ⁸ but each time the officials finally endorsed

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1. Lampson Diaries, 9 January 1934, St Antony's College. (LD).
 2. LD 28 February 1934.
 3. LD 28 January 1935.
 4. LD 6 February 1935.
 5. LD 15 May 1934.
 6. LD 15 January 1935.
 7. LD 29 May 1935.
 8. LD 23 November and 11 December 1935.

his retention. ¹ Perhaps not surprisingly, Lampson began to wonder whether any of the advisers were 'really reliable.' ² Certainly, we are left with the impression that the advisers no longer provided the High Commissioner with any original or bold thinking, as Clayton had in his day; but rather that they were now set in a mould, flies in amber, the exponents of a certain tried-and-tested method of 'handling' Egypt.

However, as before, the lower-rank British officials were a class apart. A wide range of staff came to discuss their departments with Lampson, usually with the hope that the High Commissioner could intervene. No, Lampson sympathised with Burnett-Stuart, there was really nothing Britain could do for the fellaheen now, however much it was 'our instinct' to help. ³ In the course of time, even so, the urge to support the officials seems to have overcome Lampson, for his diaries reveal a number of interventions in administrative matters à la Lloyd. ⁴ Political realities apart, the High Commissioner clearly hankered after a re-establishment of British administrative control, and perhaps without the intervention of the treaty, might have been tempted to pursue such a course.

It is not necessary to enlarge here on why that elusive Anglo-Egyptian treaty suddenly became a reality in 1936. The effect of changes in the balance of power brought about by the Axis is well known. Yet in addition to perceptions of mounting international crisis, what is not so well known is that the Cabinet was further pressurised into serious negotiation by warnings from Keown-Boyd, conveyed via Lampson, that if the demands for a treaty were ignored, Egypt would be racked by riots of 1919 proportions.⁵

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1. LD 25 November and 11 December 1935.
 2. LD 25 November 1935.
 3. LD 14 April 1934.
 4. e.g, over crime, LD 13 March 1934; over irrigation, 19 March 1934; over the fellaheen, LD 10 January 1935.
 5. FO141/614/1/4049/35.

For one last time, then, a British official played a significant role in representing the strength of nationalist sentiment to the home government, even though again, as for Clayton before, the course of action he advocated spelt a certain end to his career. In the light of such considerations, Lampson, conducting the negotiations in Cairo, could maintain the pressure on London which produced the concessions necessary for agreement:¹ principally on military withdrawal from Cairo and Alexandria, but also concerning the Sudan.

The issue relating to the British officials - that of the responsibility for foreigners - was settled without a hitch: Britain had been ready for years to hand this task over to Egypt. It was perhaps the only meaningful concession of the agreement, and a welcome release for Britain (if not so perceived by the foreign community), much as the concession of administrative responsibility had been in 1922. Britain vouched her assistance for the abolition of the Capitulations (which took place in 1937), to lead to the closure of the Mixed Courts (in 1949). British personnel would withdraw from the Egyptian Army, and the Adviserships would come to an end. In terms of the overall locus of power in Egypt, however, the treaty meant little alteration. British military hegemony had merely been recast in a new formula. The Occupation would continue, out of sight of Cairo, under the name of an alliance. Britain had simply achieved a long-sought Egyptian endorsement for her familiar method of indirect control.

Yet 1936 did not mark the end of British officialdom in Egypt. In fact, 1936, as much as 1922, was only the beginning of an end. On these two occasions Britain merely abdicated the responsibilities in Egypt upon which the rationale of having British officials had come to be founded. Herbert Addison felt the treaty made little

1. e.g., Telegram Lampson to Eden, 25 May 1936, FO371/20108/J4810.

difference to him, since his contract went on being renewed until 1952. ¹ The two advisers did retire in 1937. However, the List of Senior British Officials for that year records 571 individuals still in Egyptian Government service, the List for 1939, 559, and for 1945, 452. ²

Of these officials, only the police were kept on at British request. The treaty laid down that 20% of the police would retire each year, a process which was delayed by the war: only in 1946 did the last police leave, and did Russell hand over to an Egyptian commandant in Cairo. Apart from the police, British officials were retained on contract, at Egyptian behest. In 1946 officials were still to be found in Land Valuation, Customs, Antiquities, the Survey, in the Ministries of Public Health, Justice and Public Works, in the Agriculture department, the Railways, Ports and Lights, and National Defence; 67% of the 1945 total were employed in the Ministry of Education. ³ With Egyptian Government approval, many of these officials, particularly those in technical capacities, became involved in war work after 1939, and were able to bring their considerable local knowledge to bear. ⁴

As Anglo-Egyptian relations worsened after the war, a further 160 British officials were forced to leave in 1951, although a number were still in Cairo in January 1952, some to be murdered in the Turf Club on Black Saturday, including, tragically, Craig of the Finance, one of the longest-serving British officials. ⁵ The negative state of Anglo-Egyptian relations over the next years

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1. Addison, 'Pleasures', Ch.3, p.10.
 2. List of Senior British Officials in the Egyptian Government, 1937; List of British Officials in the Egyptian Service, 1939; List of British Officials in the Egyptian Service, 1945; Addison Papers.
 3. List...1945.
 4. See, e.g, Addison, 'Anglo-Egyptian Association', and 'Pleasures', Ch.4, p.1, Addison Papers.
 5. Craig had joined the Public Instruction in 1896.

torpedoed the dismissed officials' compensation claims until 1957, when the Egyptian Government eventually paid L.E.400,000 out of the L.E.650,000 that had been requested. This, as one ex-official observed, represented a remarkable magnanimity, that even in the aftermath of Suez, the Egyptian Government could still honour its obligations to its former British servants. ¹

1. Addison, 'Pleasures', Ch.5, pp.10-13.

Postlude and Perspective

If we now attempt to isolate the central statement of this study, it is that the role of the British officials of the Egyptian Government is a key to understanding the Anglo-Egyptian relationship as a whole, precisely because it was the officials who summed up the "differentness" of British control in Egypt. It is the ambiguity and complexity of the officials' role which can clarify for us, far more than the role of the British Residency or the Army of Occupation, what it was that made Egypt unique amongst British possessions.

The crucial difference which set the British official in Egypt apart from his compatriots in other colonial administrative services was that in theory, and often in practice, he was the servant of a foreign government and not of the British Crown. From the earliest days of the Occupation, the idea of making Egypt a British territory under imperial-style rule was viewed as far more of a potential liability than an asset, particularly due to its likely effect on Britain's foreign relations. The Occupation had not originally been conceived in such terms. Besides which, Egypt already enjoyed almost a semi-European image which seemed to make colony status inappropriate. Then there was Egypt's nominal position within an Ottoman Empire to which British foreign policy traditionally displayed a certain deference. Moreover, Egypt was unusual in boasting an advanced government machinery, which was already partially under international management.

In order to parry criticisms that she was suppressing the Egyptians and ousting her European partners, there was a tendency to express Britain's presence in Egypt in internationalist, mandatory terms: Britain had, so to speak, taken up the obligation of ruling

Egypt on behalf of both the international community, and the Egyptians themselves. Implicit in this notion was a promise of early withdrawal, with the implication that Egyptian self-government had merely been suspended for working repairs, and would be re-instituted at a future date. Which other non-settler British territory, one might ask, was ever treated as a candidate for responsible government at so early a stage in its tutelage? For this reason alone it was considered more appropriate that imported administrative experts should be installed within the existing government apparatus in an advisory capacity, rather than create a colonial-style administrative structure which would soon have to be dismantled.

Thus the role of the British officials exemplified two distinctive aspects of Britain's involvement in Egypt, as originally envisaged: namely, that British rule would entail some measure of Egyptian partnership, and would not be permanent. Together, partnership and non-permanence offered a promise that Egyptians would be steadily drawn back into the management of their affairs, and as such formed the twin pillars upon which Anglo-Egyptian collaboration was founded.

By definition, British officials in Egypt were unique in that they did not rule but merely advised and inspected. This mechanism, we have seen, was evolved in order to maximise the Egyptian Government's image of autonomy, and thus local credibility, and at the same time to render the Christian foreign power as inconspicuous as possible in the sight of the Muslim population. In other words, a behind-the-scenes style of imperial management was conceived as a strength to the British position in Egypt.

Yet it is by studying the role of British officialdom as this thesis does that the true weakness of Britain's position in Egypt prior to 1922 is revealed. In the first place, by the opening

of our period the system had been critically undermined because Britain had unilaterally changed the ground-rules of Anglo-Egyptian cooperation: if speedy withdrawal from Egypt had indeed been her genuine intention, in reality it now appeared more distant than ever. The concept of non-permanence, like that of partnership, had seemingly been crushed beneath an avalanche of young men down from Oxbridge. Egyptians were apparently deemed no readier than before for administrative responsibility, since Egyptian government now connoted not merely English heads, but English hands as well. By tracing the development of British administration in Egypt from the repudiation of Gorst to the ascendancy of Cecil and Brunyate, we can chart the process by which Britain's chosen system of control in Egypt lost any of its original advantages: Egyptian resentment at exclusion from office in fact destroyed the local credibility of the collaborating authorities, whilst investing the Christian ruling power with the very notoriety it had been anxious to avoid.

Moreover, even with the vast increase in British personnel and the much more thorough approach to Egyptian government which had occurred by 1914, the system of 'advisory control' held certain inherent weaknesses which undermined Britain's position in Egypt still further. By being defined as the servants of the Egyptian Government, British officials in Egypt were much less capable than most imperial administrators of controlling Egyptian administration at any depth. The efficacy of their advice depended on local cooperation and execution in nearly every instance. In view of the fact that Cromer had deliberately exalted them as guardians of good government in Egypt, the officials found themselves in a situation of responsibility without power. This could be merely demoralising, as when confronted with their inability to eradicate such problems as crime and rural indebtedness. The ramifications

were more dangerous in wartime, however, when Britain found herself almost completely dependent on local personnel, and thus at the mercy of local methods, when exacting military requirements on the population. Most alarming of all, in a situation of nationalist resistance, British 'control' could be incapacitated altogether by the uncertain reliability of the Egyptian security forces and civil service.

In fact, our study of the role of British officialdom forces us to question whether Britain ever really 'controlled' the Egyptian administration at all in the years before 1922; certainly not, it seems, in the sense that the British Raj 'ran' India, for example. British administration in Egypt, by comparison with most other non-settler territories in the Empire, emerges as a highly-fragmented entity. If Egyptian affairs were managed along lines desirable to Britain, then this was due far more to a fortuitous contiguity of interest between British officials and British policy-makers than to the execution of a 'policy' in the usual sense of colonial administration. For the few advisers who were in regular communication with the Residency, there were a majority of officials whose distance from diplomatic circles even extended to a certain suspicion of the 'politicians'. To the extent that an official like Russell viewed his primary loyalty as being to the Egyptian Government, 'British administration in Egypt' harnessed centrifugal forces which could never have existed in the Colonial Service proper.

If British officials shared a common outlook and way of doing things, then this was very much a philosophy caught, not taught. Egypt-bound recruits might get themselves kitted out at Walters and Co.¹ just like their colleagues destined for the

1. Walters of Turl Street was one of a number of firms who supplied Probationers to the Egyptian Service; see C. Allen, Tales From the Dark Continent (London, 1980), pp.52-3.

Colonial Service. The difference lay in the kind of career training each would receive during his preparatory Oxbridge year: for the Egyptian official there was no equivalent to Lugard's Dual Mandate to supplement the language instruction.¹ This vagueness of definition pervaded the Egyptian Service throughout, and must help explain why its officials are now largely forgotten by comparison with their telegenic counterparts who served in India or Africa. Egypt never possessed the admixture of ingredients apparently essential to the creation of a 'service ethos'. Firstly, its officials had no allegiance to the British Crown. Elsewhere this bond introduced such elements of cohesion as signing the Governor's Book on arrival, an honours procedure and a service List, and perhaps also engendered a sense of exclusivity vis à vis the non-official British community. Secondly, the deliberately vague status of officials in Egypt discouraged the fostering of a 'reputation' which, in the case of the Sudan's hearty image, or India's name for calibre, could become semi-institutionalised through recruitment requirements. Thirdly, the Egyptian Service neither existed for long enough, nor was of the right size, (the Indian Civil Service was large enough, the Sudan Political Service was compact enough) to develop the self-generating links with particular families, schools and colleges, which contributed to other services' pride in continuity.

Finally, Egypt was never associated with 'up-country' work to the same extent as other territories. For the brief period that British inspectors toured the Egyptian provinces, the harsh mystique of this life-style vitalised work in Egypt with something of the sense of service and esprit de corps² which pervades the

1. See Allen, Tales From the Dark Continent, p.51.

2. See, e.g, Sir Gilbert Parker, Donovan Pasha (London, 1910).

Plain Tales legend.¹ Egypt suffered, however, from an ease of communications which attended her geography and relatively small size. The constant proximity of Cairo's comforts ensured that British officials spent only the shortest periods actually resident in the provinces, their wives none at all. In any case, the heyday of the inspectors was virtually over by the Great War; certainly after 1921, when most officials were withdrawn from provincial work, Egyptian service lost a source of life-blood which was never quite replenished by the ministry and lecture-hall existence of later years.

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Are we to conclude from this saga of ambivalence, therefore, that Egypt was merely an oddity in terms of imperial administration, its officials of no more than freakish historical interest? This thesis has attempted to show that, on the contrary, there are numerous points of connection between the British experience in Egypt and the wider story of imperial management - similarities and parallels which are in fact only brought into focus through specifically studying the British officials.

Firstly, an analysis of the rise and fall of British administration in Egypt contributes added force to the theory that European imperialism depended heavily on non-European foundations.² As Britain moved into a formal imperial relationship with Egypt after 1882, it was with the tacit acknowledgment that her administrative presence must adapt itself to local structures and

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1. In addition to C. Allen, Plain Tales From the Raj (London, 1976) and Tales From the Dark Continent, see also R. Hunt and J. Harrison, The District Officer in India, 1930-1947 (London, 1982) and R. Collins and F. Deng (eds), The British in the Sudan (London, 1984).
 2. R. Robinson, 'Non-European Foundations of European Imperialism', in W. Louis (ed), Imperialism, the Robinson and Gallagher Controversy (New York, 1976).

sensibilities in order to guarantee local cooperation, both political and administrative. Once that cooperation could no longer be depended upon, as after 1919, Britain had little alternative but to abandon the formal imperial relationship for a less embroiling involvement in Egypt.

Significantly, it was the administrative officials themselves who realised most forcibly that Anglo-Egyptian cooperation had exhausted its viability after 1919. The role of administrative demoralisation in bringing imperial rule to an end in Egypt presages the Indian experience of twenty years later. The Indian Civil Service also experienced the trauma of an unanticipated revolt (in 1942) in which the loyalties of indigenous officials like the police appeared by no means certain. In India, similarly, the combination of war and a certain demission of power into local hands had removed British officials from the districts to centralised desk-work. Recent research has shown how the malaise afflicting the Indian Civil Service at the end of the Second World War nurtured a belief that Britain no longer had either the man-power or the will-power to sustain the Raj. ¹ As in Egypt earlier on, this belief developed into an urgent warning that British rule must be wound up before reaching total collapse. This 'either - or' argument would find similar echoes later on in Iain Macleod's 'doctrine of the lesser risk' which pervaded the Scramble from Africa of the 1950s and 1960s: namely, that the dangers of moving slowly to independence far outweighed the risks of hurrying. ²

Nevertheless, there remains something unique about the Egyptian story, in which it was the administrators, first and

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1. See D. Potter, 'Manpower Shortage and the End of Colonialism', Modern Asian Studies, vii, (1973), 47-73; and A. Ewing, 'The Indian Civil Service, 1919-1942' (Cambridge Ph.D 1980).
 2. N. Fisher, Iain Macleod (London, 1973), p.143.

foremost, who dragged disbelieving diplomats and politicians into accepting that the Protectorate could not continue. This is all the more surprising when we consider the relative novelty of the concept of self-government at this time. Furthermore, by acting as they did, British officials were guaranteeing the premature termination of their careers and the likely deterioration of their administrative creation. Certainly, there were virtually no other instances on the African continent where the British administrator provided the locomotion in the process of decolonisation. ¹ With the possible exception of Uganda, where officials regarded the proposed timetable of constitutional advance as unrealistically protracted, most British administrators seem to have accepted independence as more or less inevitable, given the precedent of self-determination in South Asia, and the Macleod's convictions as Secretary of State. Although many colonial officials actually blanched at the speed with which independence was being brought about, they were not asked their views on the subject, but merely implemented instructions from Whitehall and Government House. This reminds us once again that British officials in Egypt enjoyed a curiously autonomous status by virtue of their Egyptian Government employment, which encouraged, particularly from the senior advisers, a quasi-political function, and thus more than a purely administrative significance.

Yet inasmuch as the officials employed their intermediary status to advocate an essentially limited form of independence, it seems that they, like many of their successors in other territories, still drastically underestimated the potency of the nationalist phenomenon, and thus were lulled into a belief that independence would not substantially affect the exercise of outside influence. ²

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1. See A. Kirk-Greene (ed), Africa in the Colonial Period: the Transfer of Power, pp.56-9 and 81.
 2. *Ibid*, p.147, gives a parallel with Tanganyika.

Our study of British officials in Egypt in the 1920s and 1930s provides an analysis of one of the first transfers of administrative power to take place this century. Although a combination of Lloyd's imperialist tenacity and Egyptian Government pragmatism preserved the existence of British officialdom to a far greater extent than might have been expected, their effective powers were nevertheless eroded in ways and at a speed which few had anticipated before 1922. As one by one the police, the judicial system, the press and the exchequer fell to the domination of potentially nationalist ministries, so British officials were deprived of their former channels of imperial management. Corrupt practice, the use of an alien tongue, and simply the determination to do things differently all combined to reduce British administrative influence to marginal levels.

Alternative forms of control, whether ministry-making or calling in the gunboats, assumed a new importance for the Residency. The King, who as the Khedive or Sultan of earlier years had been a prime target for British deposition, now acquired a certain usefulness in British eyes, thanks to his penchant for suspending troublesome politicians along with the constitution. Under the more compliant but unpopular regimes of a Muhammad Mahmud or a Sidqi, British officials could find their services being re-employed in something of the old collaborative framework, buttressing the government, particularly in the Interior. However, due to the unacceptability of these functions in the long term, British officials were increasingly relegated to an innocuous educational or technical role, or were otherwise purloined by the Residency as elder statesmen experienced in working the peculiar Anglo-Egyptian relationship. Their supposed tasks of safeguarding administrative efficiency and

the security of European residents had long been ridiculed by the realities of self-government. However much Lloyd, and perhaps to some extent Lampson, dreamt of resuscitating a golden age of altruistic administration under British auspices, London had long regarded British officialdom as no more than a bargaining lever to be used with the Egyptians. The final sacrifice of the officials in the Treaty of 1936 simply allowed His Majesty's Government to purge itself at last of the embarrassment which had always permeated its relationship with the administration of Egypt.

The Empire's interest in Egypt was by no means dead, of course. If anything, the Treaty triggered a new surge of British colonisation which reached its climax by the early 1940s in Egypt's pivotal wartime role. The agents of this latest and final British take-over were not bureaucrats, however, but politicians and soldiers, bankers and businessmen.¹

If the Anglo-Egyptian officials were such an embarrassment as they were invariably portrayed, we are bound to wonder whether their 70-year existence served Britain any identifiable purpose. Then at the very least the officials must be credited with fulfilling the Occupation's original objective, the restoration of Egypt's financial and administrative equilibrium. Beyond that, there is room for speculation that the campaign waged by certain officials against continuing the Protectorate in 1921-2 may possibly have saved Britain from a long-term, costly imbroglio in Egyptian pacification, which could only have weakened her overall strategic position.

From a more detached perspective, can we identify any enduring legacy of Britain's interaction with Egypt to which the officials may have contributed? Or have the sands of time all but

1. Bank Misr, for example, came to be virtually dominated by British capital.

obliterated their footprints, save for a street in Zamalek still referred to as Sharia Willcocks, despite its official new association with Taha Husain? After all, the span of British rule in Egypt, as Lloyd observed, was so short that when

'set in its true perspective in the unending history of the Nile Delta, it becomes a moment so fleeting that only the longest record would find a place for it.'¹

The legacy, if there is one, evades articulation, yet its elements perhaps include the formation of an infrastructure in modern irrigation, agriculture, basic engineering, medicine and banking, and contributions to a military and scientific tradition. As far as a cultural legacy is concerned, it is the Continental - and above all the French - influence which retains the stronger impression, whether in terms of university organisation, educational philosophy, or styles of entertainment and fashion.² Some members of an older generation pay tribute to the benefits, in their eyes, of an English-style schooling, and to the reputation of certain Englishmen for straightness and service. As so often in the colonial interaction, the Anglo-Egyptain relationship encompassed love, hate and vast areas of mutual non-comprehension. What the last remaining Anglo-Egyptian officials desire is for this relationship to be adequately recorded.

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1. Lloyd, Egypt Since Cromer, i. 1.
 2. The writer thanks Dr Magdi Wahba for his stimulating thoughts on this subject.

Appendix One

British and Egyptian Officials by Department, 1919-20

<u>Ministry</u>	<u>Department</u>	<u>Egyptians</u>	<u>British</u>
<u>FOREIGN AFFAIRS</u>		18	1

<u>FINANCE</u>			
	Central Administration	682	56
	Direct Taxes	1118	2
	Survey	1053	59
	Statistics	48	2
	Government Press	52	13
	State Domains	552	16
	Customs	891	15
	Coastguards	162	22
	Frontier Districts	253	50
	Mines	22	11
	Laboratory + Assay	40	19
	War Trade	--	14
	Provincial Services	391	--
		-----	-----
		5264	279

<u>EDUCATION</u>			
	Central Administration	1198	164
	Commercial, Technical + Industrial Education	154	30
	Sultania Library	17	--
		-----	-----
		1369	194

<u>INTERIOR</u>			
	Central Administration	368	35
	Public Health	905	107
	Prisons	298	18
	Tanzim	6	--
	Quarantine	7	--
	Lunacy	47	10
	Police School	15	2
	Legal Department	21	--
	Provincial Services	1994	137
		-----	-----
		3661	309

cont'd

Numbers of Officials, 1919-1920, cont'd.

	<u>Egyptian</u>	<u>British</u>
<u>JUSTICE</u>		
Central Administration	3111	37
Mixed Parquet	24	1
Mixed Courts	422	29
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	3557	67

<u>PUBLIC WORKS</u>	1413	246

<u>AGRICULTURE</u>	556	52

<u>COMMUNICATIONS</u>		
Central Administration	32	22
State Railways, Telegraphs, + Telephones	3271	188
Postal Administration	1276	48
Ports & Lights	100	120
Bridges	1	-
Inland Navigation	21	5
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	4771	389

<u>WAR</u>	584	9

<u>GRAND TOTAL</u>	21,193	1,546

Source: Egyptian Government Statistics, MP453, pp.72-82.

Note: Table shows pensionable contract positions, excluding Ministers, Ministry of Waqfs, and Director-General, Foreign Affairs. Table also excludes 1,812 other European officials mainly in the Railways and the Mixed Courts.

Appendix Two

British Officials by Department, 1926

Ministry of Finance

Central Administration	6	
Financial Adviser's Office	4	
Direct Taxes	3	
Survey	26	
Statistical Department	2	
State Domains	3	
Customs Administration	3	
Mines and Quarries	5	
Chemical Department	12	
State Legal Department	2	
Sub-Total		66

Judicial Adviser's Office 3 3

Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1 1

Ministry of Education

Central Administration	14	
Egyptian University	21	
Higher Colleges	29	
Secondary Schools & Other Colleges	120	
Sub-Total		184

Ministry of Interior

Central Administration	1	
European Department	4	
Public Security Department	1	
Police Officers	39	
Public Health Department	12	
Other Departments	15	
Sub-Total		72

Ministry of Justice

Mixed Courts	7	
Native Court of Appeal	1	
Central Parquet	3	---
Sub-Total		11

British Officials in 1926, cont'd.

Ministry of Public Works

Irrigation Department	43	
State Buildings	4	
Mechanical Department	9	
Tanzim	6	
Main Drainage	6	
Antiquities	6	
Physical Department	9	
Sub-Total		83

Ministry of Agriculture 11 11

Ministry of Communication 117 117

Ministry of War and Marine

Egyptian Army	12	
Frontier Districts Administration	7	
Coastguards	9	
Sub-Total		28

Grand Total 576 576

Source: List of Senior British Officials in the Egyptian Government, 1926, Addison Papers.

Appendix Three

British Officials by Department, 1937

Ministry of Finance

Central Administration	2	
Financial Adviser's Office	3	
Survey and Mines	20	
Customs	1	
Chemical Department	4	
Coastguards and Fisheries	6	
Sub-Total		36

<u>Ministry of Commerce and Industry</u>	5	5
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<u>Judicial Adviser's Office</u>	3	3
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Ministry of Education

Central Administration/Inspectorate	24	
Egyptian University	62	
Higher Colleges	5	
Secondary Schools & Other Colleges	220	
London Office	1	
Antiquities	4	
Sub-Total		316

Ministry of Interior

European Department	5	
Public Security Department	2	
Alexandria Municipality	2	
Police Officers	54	
Quarantine Administration	7	
Public Health Department	5	
Sub-Total		75

Ministry of Justice

Mixed Courts	8	
Central Parquet	3	
Sub-Total		11

cont'd

British Officials in 1937, cont'd.

Ministry of Public Works

Irrigation (16 in Sudan)	22	
State Buildings	3	
Mechanical & Electrical Departments	1	
Tanzim	1	
Main Drainage	2	
Physical Department	6	
Sub-Total		35

Ministry of Agriculture 10 10

Ministry of Communications 74 74

Ministry of War and Marine

Frontier Districts Administration	6	6
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Grand Total 571 571

Source: List of Senior British Officials in the Egyptian Government, 1937, Addison Papers.

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