CHAPTER XI

ADLY PASHA IN OFFICE—SAAD ZAGHLUL IN POWER

THE summer of 1926 opened quietly enough after the alarms and excursions of the spring. The Cabinet over which Adly Pasha Yeghen presided was not to be considered wholly unsatisfactory in its composition. The Department of the Interior, the storm-centre as far as internal affairs were concerned, was in the safe hands of the Prime Minister himself, while Foreign Affairs were entrusted to Sarwat Pasha, in whose moderation and friendliness considerable confidence could be placed. The Department of Justice, the second line of defence for the integrity of internal administration, was in charge of Ahmed Zaki Abul Seoud Pasha, who had no strong party affinities but was reputed to be sensible and honest. But there were danger-spots elsewhere. Morcos Hanna Pasha at the Ministry of Finance was the victim of an anti-British complex, and in view of that Department's potentialities in regard to foreign officials, there was ground there for anxiety. Mohamed Mahmoud Pasha, in charge of communications, was the dark horse of the Ministry—a man of great ability and strong ambitions, with a history of intense extremism behind him—there was no telling in which direction he might steer his future course. Mahmoud Pasha came of a Sayidi family, the son of a highly respected and in-

fluential landowner near Assiout. He had for long been one of the most interesting figures in Modern Egypt: after a popular and successful career at Balliol, he had been specially selected for a post in the administration by the then Adviser to the Interior, Colonel Machell. The unfortunate incident in his administrative career which has been already described, contributed very largely to his entry upon extreme courses, but with him extremism was not a settled conviction. The remainder of the Cabinet were Zaghlul's men with definite extremist tendencies, but they were not men of outstanding ability, and their attitude would depend upon that of the leader of their party. Nor did they have charge of Departments in which they could work a great deal of mischief: only Ali Shemsi Bey at the Ministry of Education had a promising field for the creation of trouble, and for the present he was showing a tendency to swim with the tide of moderation.

The key of the situation was held by Adly Pasha, who was in many respects well qualified for such a responsibility. Sprung from an old Macedonian family, and with the blood of Mahomed Ali in his veins, he had been educated, like so many of his class, in France and Turkey, and had graduated in politics as the private secretary of the great Nubar Pasha. It will be recalled that he had been a prominent member of Hussein Rushdi Pasha's cabinet during the War, and that subsequently he had played a leading part in inducing Zaghlul to negotiate with Lord Milner. In 1921 he had undertaken his first premiership, the history of which has been already recorded in this volume. As might be expected from his origins, he was of an autocratic temperament, not easily tolerant of opposition, and not easily influenced by public

opinion. Honest, proud, and reserved, thoughtful and deliberate, he had all the attributes of a great gentleman and some of the attributes of statesmanship. His defect was a natural laziness, from which he roused himself only occasionally to energy. He could not therefore always be depended upon in a crisis, but he was widely respected and influential.

It is instructive to set against his portrait that of Morcos Hanna Pasha, the most able of his Wafdist colleagues. The son of a Coptic priest, he received the foundations of his education in Egypt, with a finishing course in Paris. He had then built up a lucrative position as an advocate. In politics he had been one of the earliest members of the Nationalist Party as a supporter of Mustapha Kamel, its real founder. After the War he had thrown in his lot with Zaghlul; in 1922 he was in conflict with the British military authorities, and later in the year he was sentenced to death for seditious activities, escaping with a commuted sentence of seven years' penal servitude and finally with release in May 1923. Intelligent, and with agreeable manners, he held a position of considerable influence in his community; but neither toleration nor breadth of view were among his special attributes, nor had they controlled his public activities. The old Cromerian Egypt and the new were here side by side.

Parliament met to hear the King's Speech on June 10. The speech was studiously moderate in tone and was well received: the Deputies with Zaghlul to preside over them were now embarked upon their legislative duties in an atmosphere favourable to reasonable discussion. Zaghlul Pasha was the controlling force, and from him I had received categorical assurances that the Government would be fully supported, and that he personally would see to it that

controversial questions were not raised in debate. That he had the power to carry out this assurance was very soon apparent. His mastery over the Deputies was abrupt and unquestioned—when anyone among them became over-insistent in speech or question, Zaghlûl simply shouted to him "*Iskut*", and that deputy meekly sat down. On one occasion several members who had tabled private bills were absent when the moment came for their discussion: Zaghlul at once ordered that the discussion of these bills should be postponed *sine die*. If a quorum was not present, Zaghlul's method was to suspend the session and walk into the lobby. There he read a rough lecture to the lounging Deputies, and then, returning to the presidential chair, rang his bell. Whereupon the Deputies hastened to their places with the chastened mien of truant schoolboys.

At the opening of the session he faithfully carried out his promise to me, and ruthlessly closed discussion whenever it threatened to get on to dangerous grounds. I therefore felt that I could pay my annual visit to London without undue anxiety as to what might happen during my absence, particularly as I had complete confidence in the capacity of my deputy, Mr. Nevile Henderson,[1] to appreciate accurately any situation that might arise. I was fully aware, of course, that beneath the surface, apparently so little troubled, there were currents at work which might at any time cause a violent commotion.

In particular it was inevitable that the new Parliament should deal with the measures enacted by Ziwar Pasha's Government during the recent unconstitutional régime, and it was equally inevitable that by such action the authority of the King, who

[1] Now Sir Nevile Henderson, H.M. Minister at Belgrade.

had signed the decrees then enacted, and the attitude of His Majesty's Government should be called in question. The battle was not long in developing. A Committee was very promptly set up to deal with this question, and in August it reported its view that all decrees enacted during the period of dissolution of Parliament were null and void, but that in order to prevent disorder Parliament could, and should, maintain their effects while declaring their nullity. It also recommended that legislation should be undertaken providing penalties for such unconstitutional action by Ministers in the future. The problem was a difficult one. The solution propounded by the Committee seemed to have little or no bearing upon practical facts. But any protest would have involved such a maze of legal and constitutional arguments that it would probably have led nowhere. In regard to penal legislation for the future, the matter was on a very different footing. But even though the Chamber might adopt the Committee's report, the necessary legislation could be prevented, and prevented by means less stern than official intervention. So long as the Prime Minister and the President of the Chamber remained moderate and amenable to reason there was little to fear from legislation. And in this direction there was real danger of disturbance from the attitude of the King. His Majesty was at little pain to conceal his dislike of Parliament, and consequently of a constitutional régime. His embarrassing elation earlier in the year at the prospect of a combat *à outrance* between Zaghlul and the British Government has already been described. Now that that quarrel had been composed, he could not resist the temptation to foment another. The royalist newspapers at the time

of the crisis did not cease to taunt Zaghlul Pasha with yielding to pressure from the British, obviously hoping by this means to stiffen Zaghlul's resistance, and make a peaceful solution impossible. And from the moment that Parliament commenced its session, the policy of these papers had been to goad the Deputies into an indiscretion which the British Government could not overlook. Moreover the King himself was not over-discreet in his utterances, and on more than one occasion used in conversation disparaging language about his Prime Minister. Unfortunately also, that astute politician Sidky Pasha was using his opportunity as President of the Finance Commission of the Chamber to attack the royal expenditure. Zaghlul could prevent attacks upon the King, but when the royalist newspaper *Ittehad* in one issue threatened Parliament with dissolution if it attacked the King, and in the next taunted the House with its fear of dissolution, it was hardly likely that Zaghlul would remain patient for long.

Upon such lines, only too well known in the East, did the activities of the political protagonists run. However near to a reasonable frame of mind this or that leader might be brought by careful handling, behind the scenes such a web of tortuous intrigue was being woven, so many politicians were busy troubling the waters to improve the chances of their fishing, that nothing could long remain stable or certain. Indeed it was not for long that the Wafd rested content with the situation. They were not unnaturally determined to use their parliamentary power to improve their political position, and the first measure they proposed to this end was to enact that Omdehs of villages should in future be appointed by direct election. The proposal could

plausibly be advocated as an attempt to foster the principles of local self-government. In reality it was a hardly concealed attempt to secure for the dominant political party the decisive influence of the local official in each village. For the proposal was that only the persons enfranchised for parliamentary elections should have votes for the election of the Omdeh. The election was bound, therefore, to be purely political, and an Omdeh once elected on a Zaghlulist ticket could safely be trusted to see that his village voted for a Zaghlulist Deputy. The consequences upon the system of administration could not fail to be disastrous. The Omdeh would snap his fingers at those in authority over him, once they could no longer bring about his dismissal: he would devote his whole attention to gaining the favour of the electorate, and destroying political opponents. Adly Pasha realised to the full the anarchic character of the proposed legislation, but he was little inclined to do battle with Zaghlul. His principal reason for this was that Zaghlul's followers were becoming restive and would genuinely require a sop of some kind. He was therefore inclined to agree to a compromise that the principle of election should be tested out on a limited scale in one district. It was a dangerous experiment in so important a matter; particularly because concession was bound to increase demand, and there was no telling that Zaghlul would not admit a private bill providing for universal election. In fact this was what ultimately happened, and perhaps for the best: for Adly Pasha was thus compelled to take a firm stand, whereupon Zaghlul saw to it that the measure was dropped for a time.

Throughout August the session dragged on, and by the end of that month the Deputies were begin-

ning to feel that they had sufficiently earned their pay for the moment. The adjournment came on September 20, but just before that date an illuminating incident took place, which ended in a fierce discussion between Zaghlul Pasha as President of the Chamber and the Prime Minister, in the course of which both completely lost their tempers. The President was defending the right of the Chamber to give detailed instructions to Ministers as to administrative measures, and the Prime Minister as stoutly denied this right. Zaghlul was compelled to cede in this particular quarrel, but the incident was instructive from two points of view. In the first place, it served to remind Zaghlul that if it came to the possibility of a dissolution and the loss of their pay and opportunities he would not be able to rely upon the support of the Deputies. In the second place, it clearly showed how foreign to the Oriental mind is democratic government. The Egyptian Parliament could not yet realise the distinction between legislative and executive functions, or see any meaning in the theory of ultimate responsibility. To the Eastern mind power means direct and personal power. Until the alternative meaning is absorbed and the old tradition dies, constitutional government cannot have sure foundations, and the danger must always remain that autocracy is the only means of saving the administration from chaos.

Indeed, there was much truth in the comment made in the Egyptian Press that the present Parliament was representative not of the Egyptian nation, but of Saad Zaghlul. The President of the Chamber had during its first session made very clear his intention to impose, by means of his influence in the Chamber, a virtual dictatorship upon the country. It

was in pursuit of this aim that he upheld the right of the Chamber to interfere with the executive authority of the Government. And, thus encouraged, the Deputies had swarmed over the Government offices, reading files, offering advice, even issuing orders, while Parliamentary Commissions drafted their proposals for legislation without the slightest consultation with the Departments concerned. The eagerness of the Deputies to show their power, while satisfying their personal animosities, added to the administrative chaos and afforded an unpleasant spectacle. Not only Ziwar Pasha himself but members of his family were made the objects of persistent persecution: and all officials suspected or known to hold anti-Wafdist views were subject to fierce attempts to hunt them from their posts. Nevertheless, the past session had produced no instance of any attempt to harass His Majesty's Government in debate; and as long as Zaghlul continued in his present frame of mind, it was unlikely that such topics would be publicly raised.

But behind the scenes there constantly proceeded a guerilla warfare, attempting, now at this point, now at that, to undermine the authority of Great Britain, and to take from her the practical means by which she could maintain and discharge the responsibilities which she had reserved to herself in the Declaration of 1922. The most important of these were the British officials in the service of the Egyptian Government. No English authority, and no reasonable Egyptian opinion, had ever disputed the fact that the assistance of British officials would for some time to come be essential to the Government of Egypt. In addition, by reserving responsibility in 1922 for the protection of foreign interests, we had

also reserved to ourselves a share in responsibility for the maintenance of internal order. The Milner Commission, in recommending that Egypt should be declared independent, had based its view in this connexion on the assumption that Egypt would never be unwise enough to get rid of her foreign advisers, an assumption which was immediately and entirely falsified.[1] Experience had clearly shown that Egyptian leaders lacked either the courage or the good sense to fight for any measure which might possibly be construed, however unreasonably, as a betrayal of the ideal of independence. In that case, if we were not to be false to our word and our trust, we must insist as a matter of right upon the retention, with powers undiminished, of that minimum of British officials which appeared to us essential for the discharge of our responsibilities.

It was now becoming urgent that the matter should be finally regulated, for under the scheme agreed upon with the Egyptian Government in 1923, the existing contracts with foreign officials were to terminate in April 1927. Moreover, apart from the actual posts filled by British officials, constant attempts were being made to diminish or else completely to atrophy the functions attached to these posts, and unless we soon made a determined stand against this tendency, we should be creating the very impression that I was convinced we must avoid—the impression that we did not mean what we said in 1922. Everything that I had seen and heard in Egypt during the last twelve months had confirmed my strong conviction that, only with the eradication of that impression, could our policy make headway.

For several months now I had been in correspond-

[1] See p. 31 *ante*.

ence with the Secretary of State on this subject. The view to which I adhered was that the 1922 Declaration must strictly guide our action, and that we must address the Egyptian Government on some such lines as the following: "It is necessary for "the preservation of the *status quo* in respect of the "subjects reserved under the 1922 Declaration, that "certain posts in the administration should be filled by "Englishmen. In regard to the remaining posts now "held by foreigners, the Egyptian Government is "clearly at liberty to fill them with Egyptians, English "or other foreigners, but it must be remembered that "we have enunciated a Munroe doctrine in regard "to Egypt in her own interests, and those interests "still require that His Majesty's Government should "be consulted before a non-British foreigner is ap- "pointed." To take up any other attitude seemed to me to be a dangerous departure from our declared position. The next consideration was one of practical expediency—could we make such a declaration to Egypt, without raising a storm which might wreck the prospects of our policy? The Foreign Office were inclined to take the view that the practical danger of this was serious, but I myself saw no reason to think that our position was in fact so weak as they held it to be. They tended to the opinion that the British Government was in possession of no arguments, except an ultimatum, which could persuade the Egyptian Government either to retain British officials or to refrain from appointing non-British foreigners. My own view was that if we were prepared, and let Egyptians see that we were prepared, to issue the ultimatum which the Foreign Office regarded as our sole weapon, we would not in fact have to use that weapon: and that even if this assumption were wrong,

the use of this weapon would be advantageous in bringing Egypt to a correct understanding of our position, while the discarding of it from considerations of immediate expediency would be fatal to the future of both Egypt and England.

My anxieties upon this head were not lessened by the incidents of the summer of 1926. That able but incalculable statesman, Sidky Pasha, saw fit, in pursuit of some private end which could not be guessed at, to raise in the Finance Commission of Parliament, the question of the Budget provision for two of the key posts, those of Financial and Judicial Adviser. To avoid the raising of this very dangerous topic, pressure had to be brought upon the Commission through Zaghlul by the channel of Adly Pasha. Sidky Pasha had apparently gained his end, for he said no more, but very carefully let it be known that it was under direct instructions from Zaghlul himself that the matter had been dropped. On my return to Cairo in November, I broached this subject of officials with Zaghlul himself, and found that his attitude was inclined to be reasonable. He stated that he considered the retention of British personnel was essential to the welfare of the administration, that he regarded them as more valuable than other foreigners, and would not hesitate to speak and to act accordingly. I could not welcome this declaration with all the enthusiasm I should have liked to accord to it. In the first place, I knew that private conversation was not invariably an accurate forecast of public speaking. In the second place, Zaghlul Pasha at this particular interview clearly had much on his mind the question of the future of the Constitution. Indeed, immediately after his declaration in regard to British officials, he asked me point-blank what my

intentions were in regard to it. I contented myself with pointing out to him that I had blessed it unequivocally in public, and in private I had given considerable help towards its recent resurrection: whether I should still continue to love my adopted child would depend very largely upon its future behaviour.

It was undoubtedly his anxiety for the Constitution (which was giving him so much power), and his fear that a dissolution would deprive him of the peaceful enjoyment of the fruits of his labour, that were causing Zaghlul at this stage to desire friendly relations with the British Government. Adly Pasha agreed with me that such was now his desire, but also agreed that it arose from no change of heart, but from a belief that the Constitution could not be safeguarded without our help. It was brought clearly home to me that I was back in the whirlpool again, when, at an ensuing interview, His Majesty King Fuad was anxious I should realise how greatly during this period of constitutional government Zaghlul was strengthening his hold on the country. Whatever he might say or do, his intentions towards His Majesty's Government were still as dangerous and hostile as ever. It was gratifying to receive these tributes from so many different and conflicting sources to the power and influence which Great Britain still held in Egypt: gratifying also to be confirmed in my opinion that if we remained stable, our example would affect Egyptian leaders. But how long would it be before one or other of them would provoke his neighbour past bearing, and set the whole mixture boiling again?

For the moment, at any rate, the prospects were not unfavourable. Zaghlul had directed the attention

of the Chamber of Deputies away from controversial topics during the last session of Parliament, and although the Chamber had presented some unpleasant aspects, it had contributed a certain amount of constructive work. The debate on the Budget had been conducted with some moderation. True, the Deputies had increased their own salaries from £360 to £600 a year: true, they had evinced unhappy tendencies to interfere in executive functions, and to harass political opponents. But they had refrained from too provocative attacks upon the Palace credits, and had shown some concern for the health and welfare of the nation at large.

Furthermore, their attention was now being seriously distracted from political issues by the growth of a crisis in the cotton-growing industry, which by October had reached considerable proportions, since by that time the continued fall in the price of cotton was reducing the poorer cultivators to undoubted straits. The result was that there was a loud and widespread demand for Government intervention, and also that Zaghlul and the Wafd, as the elected representatives of the people, were being held responsible for the situation, and were losing a large measure of popularity. The Deputies, many of them landlords, were in truth at the bottom of the trouble. They were over-selfish, and refused to reduce or postpone the collection of rents, which were in almost all cases unfairly high. It remained to be seen whether, when the Chamber met again, as it was shortly to do, its members would give their first care to their own pockets, to their political futures or to the interests of their poorer tenants. The question was bound to prove a perplexing one, both for Zaghlul and for the Government. Curiously enough

it was not without embarrassing aspects for the British power. No "declaration" and no "constitution" could unsettle the fellah of Egypt from his established belief that the Residency and the British officials had complete control over the situation still and could come to his rescue, if they wanted to. For the failure or success of the steps taken by the Egyptian Government, the blame or the credit would unfailingly be laid at our door. But in spite of this embarrassing delusion, I did not feel inclined to take a hand. The economic fact underlying the present difficulties was undoubtedly that rents were far too high in proportion to the prices of cotton. At the existing price, the tenant could not hope to clear more than £4 or £5 per feddan on his crop, while the landlord was requiring twice that sum as rent. But if he was left alone, the landlord would almost certainly be forced by economic pressure to make the necessary reduction. He could not afford to have his land untenanted, and that would be the inevitable result of pressing his demand for the existing rent. Of course if the unrelenting cupidity and short-sightedness of the landlords threatened to produce a critical situation, it would be the duty of the British power to intervene. But such a stage had not yet been reached, and it was still possible that the landlords would cease to oppose the facts, and take a longer view of their own interests, before it was too late.

Parliament met again on November 18, and the opening ceremony passed off smoothly enough; although the close observer could discern upon the surface ripples enough to indicate the conflict of currents beneath. The air of detachment which His Majesty King Fuad assumed for the occasion

was indicative enough. Equally marked was the perfunctory nature of the salutes which one or two Ministers gave him as they passed the royal dais. The relations between the constitutional monarch and his constitutional advisers were clearly by no means cordial. Zaghlul, on the other hand, received a vociferous welcome from the Chamber, and was again unanimously elected President. In fact the King and Zaghlul Pasha were once again drifting into a position of definite hostility, and both were concerned to find out what the attitude of the Residency would be. The strength of our position lay in the fact that both were extremely puzzled and anxious over the answer to that question. It was impossible for a politician bred and trained in Egyptian methods to believe that any person, so closely interested in the result of the struggle as the British representative must be, could stand aside and refrain from taking a hand in the great game of intrigue. Yet that was the attitude of His Majesty's Government: and they could not bring themselves to ascribe to this attitude its real motive, but must believe that some deep-laid stroke was being engineered. All their ingenuity was devoted to discovering what this stroke might be, and the longer they failed to find out, the greater apparently became the reputation of Great Britain as a cunning contriver. In reality nothing was being contrived; a definite and declared policy was being steadily maintained, and attention was being secured for it.

I had not to wait long, however, before it became necessary to take fresh action in support of this policy. Election to posts among the various Parliamentary Committees was among the first business to be transacted; Ahmed Maher was returned as Presi-

dent of the Comptabilité Committee, and Nekrashi as Secretary of the Education Committee. As both of these men had been seriously implicated in the conspiracies which led to the murder of the Sirdar in 1924, their nomination as Wafd candidates constituted, if not a deliberate challenge to the British Government, at any rate a dangerous incident which might encourage a further campaign against us. It was doubtful whether Zaghlul had wished for such nominations; the probability was that he had been unable to oppose the extremists in his own party. It was clearly essential that that element should receive no encouragement, and it seemed imperative to warn both Zaghlul Pasha and the Prime Minister that these particular nominations could not but be viewed with grave displeasure by His Majesty's Government. The Secretary of State fully shared my view; the warnings were conveyed, and the manner in which they were received showed that they did not fail to create the desired impression. My relief at this result was the greater because at this very juncture I was especially anxious not to have a disturbed atmosphere in which to begin negotiations on the subject of the retention of British officials. The most threatening danger now was the attitude of the Ittehadist (the King's party) newspapers, which were constantly harassing Zaghlul about his moderate and accommodating attitude towards the British Government. Indeed it became necessary to utter a strong hint that such articles could not but be regarded as evidence of an unfriendly attitude towards Great Britain.

But these vexations were an inevitable ingredient of the game as played in Egypt: and on the whole the year was ending well. The Constitution was estab-

lished, and was working so far with no marked anti-British bias. On the contrary, the Prime Minister and his leading colleagues, while retaining the support of the Wafd, were in cordial and friendly relations with the British representative.