

Egyptian Revolution of 1919

The **Egyptian Revolution of 1919** was a countrywide revolution against the British occupation of Egypt and Sudan. It was carried out by Egyptians and Sudanese from different walks of life in the wake of the British-ordered exile of revolutionary leader Saad Zaghlul, and other members of the Wafd Party in 1919. The revolution led to Britain's recognition of Egyptian independence in 1922, and the implementation of a new constitution in 1923. Britain, however, refused to recognise full Egyptian sovereignty over Sudan, or to withdraw its forces from the Suez Canal Zone, factors that would continue to sour Anglo-Egyptian relations in the decades leading up to the Egyptian Revolution of 1952.

Background

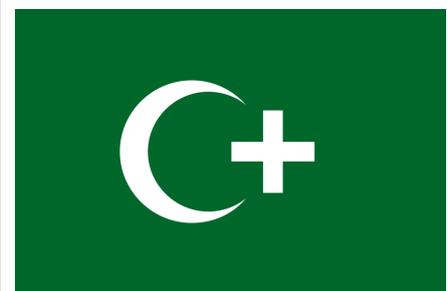
Although the Ottoman Empire retained nominal sovereignty over Egypt, the political connection between the two countries was largely severed by the seizure of power by Muhammad Ali in 1805, and re-enforced by the British occupation of Egypt in 1882. From 1883 to 1914, though the Khedive of Egypt and Sudan remained the official ruler of the country, ultimate power was exercised by the British Consul-General. When the Caucasus Campaign of World War I broke out between the Russian Empire and the Ottoman Empire, Britain declared martial law in Egypt and announced that it would shoulder the entire burden of the war. On December 14, 1914, Egypt became a separate sultanate, and was declared a British protectorate, thus terminating definitively the legal fiction of Ottoman sovereignty over Egypt. The terms of the protectorate led Egyptian nationalists to believe that it was a temporary arrangement that would be changed after the war through bilateral agreement with Britain.^[1]

Causes

Prior to the war, nationalist agitation was limited to the educated elite. Over the course of the war however, dissatisfaction with British rule spread amongst all classes of the population. This was the result of Egypt's increasing involvement in the war, despite Britain's promise to shoulder the entire burden of the war. During the war, the British poured masses of foreign troops into Egypt, conscripted over one and a half million Egyptians into the Labour Corps, and requisitioned buildings, crops, and animals for the use of the army.^[2] In addition, because of allied promises during the war (such as President Wilson's Fourteen Points), Egyptian political classes prepared for self government. By war's end the Egyptian people demanded their independence.^[3]



Saad Zaghlul Pasha



The Revolutionary flag of Egypt, 1919.

Events

Shortly after the First World War armistice of November 11 was concluded in Europe, a delegation of Egyptian nationalist activists led by Saad Zaghlul made a request to High Commissioner Reginald Wingate to end the British Protectorate in Egypt and Sudan, and gain Egyptian representation at the next peace conference in Paris. The delegation also included 'Ali Sha'rawi Pasha, Abd al-Aziz Fahmi Bay, Muhammad 'Ali Bay, 'Abd al-Latif al-Makabati Bay, Muhammad Mahmud Pasha, Sinut Hanna Bay, Hamd Pasha al-Basil, Gurg Khayyat Bay, Mahmud Abu al-Nasr Bay, Mustafa al-Nahhas Bay and Dr. Hafiz 'Afifi Bay.^[4] Meanwhile, a mass movement for the full independence of Egypt and Sudan was being organized at a grassroots level, using the tactics of civil disobedience. By then, Zaghlul and the Wafd Party enjoyed massive support among the Egyptian people.^[5] Wafdist emissaries went into towns and villages to collect signatures authorizing the movement's leaders to petition for the complete independence of the country.



Egyptian women demonstrated along with men during the Revolution.

Seeing the popular support that the Wafd leaders enjoyed, and fearing social unrest, the British in March 1919 proceeded to arrest Zaghlul and two other movement leaders and exiled them to Malta. Between March 15 to 31, at least 3,000 Egyptians were killed, numerous villages were burnt down, large landed properties plundered and railways destroyed.^[6] "The result was revolution," according to noted professor of Egyptian history James Jankowski.^[7]

For several weeks until April, demonstrations and strikes across Egypt by students, elite, civil servants, merchants, peasants, workers, and religious leaders became such a daily occurrence that normal life was brought to a halt. This mass movement was characterised by the participation of both men and women, and by spanning the religious divide between Muslim and Christian Egyptians^[8] The uprising in the Egyptian countryside was more violent, involving attacks on British military installations, civilian facilities and personnel. By July 25, 1919, 800 Egyptians were dead, and 1,600 others were wounded.^[9]

The British Government sent a Commission of Inquiry, known as the Milner Mission, to Egypt in December 1919 to determine the causes of the disorder and to make a recommendation about the political future of the country. Lord Milner's report, published in February 1921, recommended that the protectorate status of Egypt was not satisfactory and should be abandoned.^[10] The revolts forced London to issue a unilateral declaration of Egyptian independence on February 22, 1922.

Aftermath

Although the British Government offered to recognize Egypt as an independent sovereign state, this was only upon certain conditions. The following matters were reserved to the discretion of the British Government. They were: The security of the communications of the British Empire in Egypt; the defense of Egypt against foreign aggression; the protection of foreign interests in Egypt; and the Sudan.^[11]

The Wafd Party drafted a new constitution in 1923 based on a parliamentary representative system. Egyptian independence at this stage was provisional, as British forces continued to be physically present on Egyptian soil. Moreover, Britain's recognition of Egyptian independence directly excluded Sudan, which continued to be administered as an Anglo-Egyptian condominium. Saad Zaghlul became the first popularly elected Prime Minister of Egypt in 1924.

In popular culture

Aspects of the Revolution are depicted in Naguib Mahfouz's novel *Palace Walk*.

Notes

- [1] Vatikotitis 1992, p. 240-243
- [2] Vatikotitis 1992, p. 246
- [3] Daly 1998, p. 2407
- [4] Quraishi 1967, p. 213
- [5] Vatikotitis 1992, p. 267
- [6] <http://www.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=ODfRbCkr9TAC&oi=fnd&pg=PR10&dq=hauran+rebellion+1909&ots=UnED07aNAU&sig=Lvms9i2BXXPzFwn7OhsN7i9WXp0#v=onepage&q=killed&f=false>
- [7] 2000, p. 112
- [8] Jankowski, *op cit*.
- [9] NY Times (<http://select.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=F10B17F83D5C147A93C7AB178CD85F4D8185F9>). 1919
- [10] Daly 1998, p. 249-250
- [11] Vatikotitis 1992, p. 264

Further reading

- Daly, M.W. (1988). *The British Occupation, 1882-1922*. Cambridge Histories Online: Cambridge University Press.
- Fahmy, Ziad (2011). *Ordinary Egyptians: Creating the Modern Nation through Popular Culture* (http://www.amazon.com/Ordinary-Egyptians-Creating-through-Popular/dp/0804772126/ref=ntt_at_ep_dpt_1). Stanford University Press.
- Goldberg, Ellis (1992). *Peasants in Revolt - Egypt 1919*. International Journal of Middle East Studies 24, no. 2.
- Jankowski, James (2000). *Egypt: A Short History*. Oxford: Oneworld Publications.
- Valentine, Chirol (1922). *The Egyptian Question*. Journal of the British Institute of International Affairs 1, no. 2.
- Vatikiotis, P.J. (1992). *The History of Modern Egypt* (4th ed.). Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University.
- "800 natives dead in Egypt's rising; 1,600 wounded" (<http://select.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=F10B17F83D5C147A93C7AB178CD85F4D8185F9>). *New York Times*. July 25, 1919
- Quraishi, Zaheer Masood (1967). *Liberal Nationalism in Egypt: Rise and Fall of the Wafd Party*. Kitab Mahal Private LTD..
- Zunes, Stephen (1999). *Nonviolent Social Movements: A Geographical Perspective*. Blackwell Publishing.

Article Sources and Contributors

Egyptian Revolution of 1919 *Source:* <http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?oldid=441445940> *Contributors:* Alansohn, Ardfem, BomBom, Capolino, Cloj, CommonsDelinker, CrimeCentral, DesertMoh, Dimadick, Djihed, Egyegy, Elmondo21st, Eskandarany, Estrellador*, FunkMonk, Graf Bobby, GreysHark09, Harland1, Hibernian, Historian73, Jagged 85, Jfaughnan, Joyous Cow, Kintetsubuffalo, Lapsed Pacifist, Matt Heard, Mohamed Osama AlNagdy, Nbenfield, Oliver202, The Egyptian Liberal, Varlaam, VictorianMutant, Wavelength, Woohookitty, XinJeisan, Zerida, ΩΩΩ, 21 anonymous edits

Image Sources, Licenses and Contributors

Image:Saad Zaghul.jpg *Source:* http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:Saad_Zaghul.jpg *License:* unknown *Contributors:* BomBom, Elmondo21st, Vask

Image:Revolution flag of Egypt 1919.svg *Source:* http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:Revolution_flag_of_Egypt_1919.svg *License:* Public Domain *Contributors:* Kookaburra

Image:Cairo-Demonstrations1919.jpg *Source:* <http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:Cairo-Demonstrations1919.jpg> *License:* Public Domain *Contributors:* FunkMonk, JMCC1, The Egyptian Liberal, 2 anonymous edits

License

Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>