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BRITISH IMPERIALISM IN THE
ANGLO-EGYPTIAN SUDAN
1883-1899

by
Clyde B. Kelly, S. J.

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate
School of Loyola University in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Master
of Arts

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LIFE

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CHAPTER I

HOW THE WEB WILL BE UNRAVELED

British imperialism! Some men have spoken these words with pride; others have spat them out with scornful contempt. They have been uttered respectfully by millions for whom these words embodied an ideal for which they were willing to sacrifice their very lives. They have been muttered with deepest hatred by other millions for whom the phrase has meant defeat, exploitation, and slavery. The proper intonation for these two words is what is sought in these pages. A sound, objective judgment of British imperialism will be the ultimate goal of this study.

The British empire has been judged time and time again. Some scholars have roundly condemned it; others have written with enthusiastic praise of its growth and merits. A sizeable library could be filled with books written on this subject. Yet the great majority of the comments made on the morality of this subject leave the reader still in doubt as to the extent to which he should condemn or praise the British for their imperialistic activities.

From among those who have sat in judgment on the merits of the British Empire, Lord Rosebery would be a good choice for spokesman in its defense. Prime minister of England, 1894-1895,

and an enthusiastic promoter of the extension of the empire, he could speak eloquently in favor of British imperialism, as the following quotation shows:

How marvelous it all is! Built not by saints and angels, but with the work of men's hands; cemented with men's honest blood and with a world of tears, welded by the best brains of centuries past; not without the taint and reproach incidental to all human work, but constructed on the whole with pure and splendid purpose. Human, and yet not wholly human, for the most heedless and the most cynical must see the finger of the Divine.¹

Lord Rosebery admitted that not all men cherished the sentiments he felt toward imperialism. He conceded that "there are some to whom the very word is abhorrent; to whom, at any rate, the word is under suspicion."² If Rosebery had read any of the comments of historian Parker Thomas Moon on the subject of imperialism, he would have seen that Mr. Moon was one of the many for whom the word had a less pleasant sound. For Moon imperialism has about it the mercenary ring of clinking coins. He finds it nothing other than a more dignified name for profiteering mercantilism.³

Looking further through the various views on imperialism which men have held, we find a group of scholars which in large

¹Lord Rosebery, Miscellanies: Literary and Historical (London, 1921), II, 262-263.

²Ibid., 232.

³Parker Thomas Moon, Imperialism and World Politics, (New York, 1927), 12.

measure removes the imperialistic activities of the British from the moral realm. To these men the British empire appears to have grown up in spite of the English rather than because they desired it. It was the contention, for example, of Sir John Seeley, nineteenth century political historian, that the British apparently "conquered and peopled half the world in a fit of absence of mind."⁴

These and most other evaluations of British imperialism contain some truth. However, the picture they present is often prejudiced and always either essentially incomplete or too generalized to be very helpful. Historians have not been interested enough in the morality of imperialism to spend the time and effort necessary to determine what it is. Yet this is the aspect of imperialism most discussed by the man on the street or the student in the lecture chair.

It is true enough, as Moon has written, that "it is a tangled web that imperialism weaves."⁵ To date, scholars have not fathomed very clearly the way in which the web was woven. Many, pulling here and there at the design, have come to somewhat hasty conclusions about the motives behind imperialism. In general, the bits of truth arrived at have been stretched to answer questions and to explain actions they cannot adequately answer

⁴William L. Langer, The Diplomacy of Imperialism: 1890-1902, (New York, 1951), 69.

⁵Moon, Imperialism and World Politics, 236.

or explain.

Most writings on the subject remind one of the jingle about the six blind scholars of Indostan who tried to describe an elephant:

It was six men of Indostan
To learning much inclined
Who went to see the Elephant
(Though all of them were blind),
That each by observation
Might satisfy his mind.⁶

As the verse goes on to tell us, each man took hold of the elephant at a different place, and each concluded from this limited experience as to the sort of animal the elephant was. One felt its side; he decided that "the elephant is very like a wall." Another grasped its tusk, thereby concluding that it was "very like a spear." A third took hold of its trunk; he stated that the elephant was similar to a snake. A fourth thought it "very like a tree" because he had clasped it by the knee. Another ran his hands over the animal's ear and thought it like a fan. The sixth blind man, grabbing its tail, concluded that the strange animal was "very like a rope."

And so the men of Indostan
Disputed loud and long
Each in his own opinion
Exceeding stiff and strong,
Though each was partly right
And all were in the wrong!⁷

⁶Thomas P. Neill, Makers of the Modern Mind (Milwaukee, 1949), 2.

⁷Ibid.

In very similar fashion scholars have studied one or other aspect of British imperialism and then either given their conclusions as the whole picture, or, at best, given conclusions which are dissatisfying because of their incompleteness.

This "Indostan" approach to the morality of imperialism has also resulted in a wide divergence of opinion. Many have taken a fact or two, wrapped these in surmises, bound in their particular philosophies of life, and put out the whole as a judgment on British imperialism. In the following citation professor William L. Langer of Harvard University enumerates some of the different analyses of the motivation behind imperialism:

The liberal-bourgeois writers . . . are apt to stress considerations of prestige, the desire for security, the striving towards national self-sufficiency, the tendency towards the organization of ever larger social units, or the urge of deeply-rooted ethical sentiments as the impelling motives underlying the desire for expansion. Professor Schumpeter has advanced the ingenious and persuasive argument that imperialism is really nothing but atavism, a belated outcropping of a primitive disposition towards aggression . . . Another recent student of the problem ends by rejecting all previous explanations and reduces imperialism to an expression of the honor motif which is so potent a force in the social groups as in the individual.

Suffice it to say, then, as professor Langer concludes, that there has been little agreement among those who have analyzed imperialism as to the motives which induce a country to expand its territory or control.

⁸Langer, Diplomacy of Imperialism, 68.

The only way a sound judgment of British imperialism can be made is by a thorough, unprejudiced examination of historical facts. Just what the British did and why they did it must be determined. The multiplicity of differing conclusions as to what motivated British imperialist expansion can be explained by the fact that this approach has not often been used. As professor Langer writes, referring to nineteenth century imperialism, "almost no attempt has been made to analyze a concrete example of imperialist action in the period."⁹ Such an analysis is what this work attempts. This method is the basis for hope that this study will succeed in giving a rather adequate explanation of the motivation behind British imperialism.¹⁰

The method will be to study a concrete example of British imperialism. The investigation will advance through four stages. First, a discovery of what the British actually did. Secondly, determining who was responsible for the actions taken. Thirdly, an investigation of why the British nation acted the way it did in this particular instance. Fourthly, a judgment of just how praiseworthy were the policies adopted.

⁹Ibid., 69.

¹⁰Much of what is said in these pages will not apply perfectly to the early history of England's imperialism since the period here studied is the later nineteenth century. The form of government and political philosophy of England during the last century differed in significant aspects from that of England in the sixteenth, seventeenth, or even eighteenth centuries.

It would certainly be more satisfying to make an exhaustive analysis of several examples of British imperialist activity, but since this would be impossible in a work of modest size, the next best approach seems to be to examine thoroughly one instance of the growth of the British empire. This method is more advisable than a summary investigation of a number of cases of imperialism because thorough comprehension of what actually happened is necessary before any solidly founded conclusions can be drawn.

The British imperialistic activities studied in these pages center around the country of the Sudan, and cover the years 1883-1899. During this period, one in which modern imperialism reached its peak, the African country known as the Sudan played an important role in British politics. Hardly a day went by during many of these years in which London papers did not carry an article about this land. This prominence which the Sudan enjoyed in the English mind makes it a proper choice as a test case for a study of the motivation behind British imperialism. Another reason for selecting the Sudan is that it was made part of the British empire during the years in which England added to her rule about three million square miles of African land, great stretches of border lands along the northern frontiers of India, half the Malay peninsula, and several important islands in the South Pacific. An understanding of the motives behind the taking of the Sudan will serve as a guide to understanding the reasons behind the other British acquisitions during this same period.

Moreover, the fact that British policy regarding the Sudan changed frequently during the eighties and nineties affords an unusual opportunity to study the workings of the English imperial mind. For these reasons, then, the Sudan has been chosen as the territory in which the driving forces behind British imperialism are to be investigated.

First, the historical facts of the case will be related. What the English did in the Sudan is the question which will be answered. Once this has been ascertained, it will be necessary to determine what individuals or groups were responsible for the actions taken. It would be impossible to determine correctly why something was done unless we first know who did it. Here the major problem will be to weigh the importance of the parts played by certain individuals, by the British parliament as a group, and by public opinion in determining British imperial activities.

Having shown who was responsible for the imperialist steps taken, it will then be possible to proceed to a discovery and scrutiny of the reasons behind their actions. Here they study is limited to two motives which the documents and facts show were the fundamental motives behind British action in the Sudan. The two motives are the influence of economic considerations and the urgings of national pride.

Once it has been shown why the British acted the way they did during the various phases of their fluctuating interest in the Sudan, it will be possible to make a moral evaluation of

these activities. Although a judgment of subjective guilt or lack of it in the individuals involved would be practically impossible and will not be attempted, some decision as to the objective merits of British imperialism in the Sudan will be made. Also the knowledge of the difficulties involved in making a categorical judgment of the ethics of imperialism should result from this study.

We are now ready to enter the first phase of our investigation. In this chapter we have outlined the purpose of this thesis and the method by which that purpose is to be achieved. Chapter II will outline the history of British activity in the Sudan during the last two decades of the nineteenth century.

CHAPTER II

BRITISH EXITS AND ENTRANCES IN THE SUDAN

Bildad-es-Sudan, the Country of the Blacks, begins just south of Egypt and extends southwards for about 1200 miles to the boundaries of Kenya, Uganda, and the Belgian Congo. Stretching from 700 to 1000 miles across from east to west, and lodged between the Red Sea and Ethiopia on the east and French Equatorial Africa on the west, the Sudan covers an area of 969,600 square miles.¹ This is twenty-six times the area of Indiana and about one-third the size of the United States.

Lying wholly within the tropics, where according to an Arab saying "the soil is like fire and the wind like a flame"² this land, even today, is unsuited for habitation by white men. It is a land of jungles and plains in the south and deserts in the north. Great stretches of land along and to the east of the Nile have now been developed for growing cotton and sugar cane. In the nineteenth century it was a savage wilderness almost untouched

¹The Egyptian Question, 1882-1951: Sixty Nine Years of British Occupation of Egypt and the Sudan (Washington, D. C., 1951), 12.

²Moon, Imperialism and World Politics, 142.

by axe or plow. Its only important export was the Negro population which the Arabs rounded up in large numbers and sold as slaves.

The Sudan is populated by two peoples, Arabs and Negroes. Scholars can only surmise the number of inhabitants there in the 1880's. Today approximately 6,250,000 Moslem Arabs roam the desert regions of the north; 2,500,000 pagan Negroes dwell in the veld and jungles of the south.³ Neither of these two groups can boast a very high level of civilization. The Arabs are somewhat more advanced than the various Negro tribes, but even the Arabs are, in large part, an indolent people, satisfied to live without houses and with only the minimum of clothing. Their wants are few, and they prefer the free life of the desert and the plains to the trappings of modern civilization.⁴ Most of the Negro Sudanese are content to live outside of civilization. They see little or no reason for wearing clothes; they worship bulls, crocodiles, and puff adders; they consult witch doctors and rain-makers; they buy their wives.⁵

Geographically the most important and best known feature of the Sudan has always been the Nile River which begins in the

³"The Settlement in the Sudan Eases the Middle East Crisis," Newsweek (February 23, 1953), 34.

⁴Frank Richardson Cana, "Anglo-Egyptian Sudan," Encyclopedia Britannica, 14th ed. (New York, 1929), XXI, 506.

⁵"Settlement in the Sudan," Newsweek, 36; "Democracy for Dinkas," Time (December 7, 1952), 35.

mountains near Lake Victoria to the south of the Sudan and works its way down the length of this country on its way to Egypt and the Mediterranean. The river brings water and tillable soil to the deserts of southern Sudan and to Egypt. It provided the only transportation other than the camel for these two countries in the nineteenth century, and in large sectors of the Sudan this is true even at the present time. Winston Churchill's description of Egypt as "aut Nilus aut nihil"⁶ aptly expresses the importance of this waterway to both Egypt and the Sudan.

Such was the country conquered in 1821 by Mohammed Ali, the Khedive or governor of Egypt, then a province of the Ottoman Empire. This conquest marked the first political union of Egypt with the Sudan since almost ancient times. From then until 1881, when the Sudan revolted against the oppressive Egyptian rule, it was a breeding ground from which Egyptian slave traders freely picked their human merchandise and the Egyptian government enlisted armies of strong, brave soldiers.

In 1881, A Sudanese Arab named Mohammed Ahmed proclaimed himself the saviour of his country, dubbing himself the Mahdi or spiritual leader of his people. With the help of his fellow countryman, Abdullah, who became his military advisor and political strong man, the Mahdi successfully revolted against the badly organized, impoverished Egyptian government. By the next year,

⁶Winston L. S. Churchill, The River War: An Account of the Reconquest of the Sudan (New York, 1933), 4.

when Britain entered the picture, the Mahdi controlled the southern half of the Sudan and was threatening to overrun the entire country.

England's introduction to the Sudan came in 1882 when she took over the rule of Egypt. At that time many British government officials would have had difficulty finding the Sudan on a map, but because of its interests in Egypt the British empire was soon confronted with a series of problems involving neighboring Sudan as thorny as the wild hashab tree from which the Sudanese tap gum arabic.

The boom of guns from English warships in the harbor of Alexandria marked the advent of British rule in Egypt. The date was July 11, 1882. The chain of events which lead anti-imperialist prime minister Gladstone to take this drastic step began in 1875 when the less conservative minded Disraeli bought 176,000 shares of stock in the Suez canal. These shares, bought from bankrupt Egypt, amounted to nine-twentieths of all the stock in the company.⁷ From this moment England was forced to become interested in Egypt. By paying 4,000,000 pounds sterling for a passageway through this country to the Red Sea, Britain was dedicated to the policy of protecting her investment.

In 1876 the financial difficulties of the Egyptian government led to the establishment of joint Anglo-French control over

⁷John E. Bowen, The Conflict of East and West in Egypt, (New York, 1887), 37.

Egypt. This foreign domination of their country chafed Egyptian nationalists, and in 1881 a native Egyptian colonel, Arabi Pasha, became the leader of a hybrid nationalist-military movement that caused many disturbances in the country. The English government, now headed by "Little Englander" Gladstone, wishing to stay out of Egypt, wanted to invite the Turks to restore order in the country, but this was vetoed by Freycinet, French prime minister. A joint Anglo-French fleet was sent to Alexandria. While Britain and France wrangled over what to do with it, the Egyptian government fell into the hands of Arabi Pasha, who Britain refused to recognize; riots broke out in Alexandria in June, 1882; the French ships withdrew. When shore batteries, which presumably threatened the British navy anchored in the harbor of Alexandria, were strengthened despite British protest, the British bombarded the forts on July 11, 1882. This act occasioned fresh riots, the burning of the city, and the landing of British forces to restore order. A British expeditionary force commanded by Lord Wolseley defeated Arabi Pasha in the battle of Tel-el-Kebir, September 13, 1882; Cairo was occupied.

The British government, itself a mixture of imperialists and anti-imperialists, sanctioned a government in Egypt similarly divided against itself. The Khedive or governor of Egypt remained officially the ruler of the country. He was allowed to govern in all matters in which the British had no interest. To represent the British a consul-general to Cairo was appointed by

England. Sir Evelyn Baring, later elevated to the peerage as Earl of Cromer, held this position from 1883 to 1907. Theoretically Cromer's position was that of advisor to the Egyptian government. De facto he held supreme authority in the country because the British government soon made it clear that his advice was always to be followed. A confidential message from Lord Granville, British foreign secretary, to Cromer, January 4, 1884, reveals the grip of steel control modestly gloved by the term "advisor". Lord Granville wrote:

It is essential that in important questions affecting the administration and safety of Egypt, the advice of Her Majesty's Government should be followed, as long as the provisional occupation continues. Ministers and Governors must carry out this advice or forfeit their offices. The appointment of English Ministers would be most objectionable, but it will no doubt be possible to find Egyptians who will execute the Khedive's orders under English advice. The Cabinet will give you full support.⁸

Britain was gradually forced to abandon the pretense of her advisory position by developments in the Sudan. The pitiful Egyptian army continued, even after British occupation of their country, to fight the Mahdists. On September 8, 1883, a new offensive was begun. The army Egypt sent to battle was in deplorable condition. Colonel Stewart, an English professional soldier hired to train the Egyptians for battle, complained that his officers were incapable of "grasping the meaning of the simplest

⁸Lord Cromer, Modern Egypt (New York, 1908), I, 382.

movement."⁹ He estimated that one-third of the troops could not fire a rifle, and that they would be more effective armed with sticks than with guns. With such resources Egypt attempted to repulse the ferocious Sudanese who were fired with the vision of freedom from Egyptian oppression. The Egyptians were defeated in every battle, until finally on November 18, 1883, General Hicks, English professional soldier and commander-in-chief of the Egyptian army, was killed and his army annihilated. After this battle southern and north western Sudan was controlled by the Sudanese who were threatening to invade Egypt itself.

Prime Minister Gladstone tried to ignore the war. Having allowed England to enter Egypt only under protest, he refused to become further involved by adding the Sudan to his worries. First of all, he sympathised with the Sudanese who he said were "a nation rightly struggling to be free."¹⁰ Moreover, his only interest in Egypt was to save it financially so that other European powers could not interfere in its government on the score of settling what was owed them and thus endangering English control of the Suez.¹¹

Hiding behind the fiction that Egypt was an independent nation, even though British troops occupied Cairo and Egyptian

⁹Ibid., 353.

¹⁰John Morley, The Life of William Ewart Gladstone, 2nd ed. (New York, 1932), III, 144.

¹¹Paul Knaplund, Gladstone's Foreign Policy (New York, 1935), 194.

officials held their jobs only so long as they carried out Britain's commands, the English government refused to deal with the crisis in the Sudan. On May 7, 1883, Lord Granville stated that "Her Majesty's Government are in no way responsible for the operations in the Sudan, which have been undertaken under the authority of the Egyptian government."¹² Cromer continued to get "hands off" orders from London until the situation could not possibly be ignored any longer. As late as November, 1883, a telegram from Granville read, "Her Majesty's Government can do nothing which would throw upon them the responsibility of operations in the Sudan. The Egyptian Government must rely upon their own resources."¹³ However, after November 18 when Englishman Hicks and his entire army were massacred, Britain could no longer remain neutral. Still with no desire to use English soldiers or money to subdue the Sudanese, the foreign secretary instructed the British consul in Egypt to advise abandoning the Sudan.¹⁴ Such advise was not welcomed by the Egyptian governor, but since the advise was repeated with some insistence, the governor had no other choice than to resign. Orders were given to Egyptian garrisons and citizens as well as any foreigners residing in the Sudan to evacuate.

¹²A. B. Theobald, The Mahdiya: A History of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, 1881-1899 (London, 1951), 53.

¹³Ibid., 70.

¹⁴Ibid., 69.

Scattered throughout the Sudan were roughly 50,000 Egyptian soldiers and 5000 civilians who faced possible death or enslavement unless saved from the armies of the Mahdi.¹⁵ This presented a grave problem. The people to be evacuated were living in small groups isolated from one another. Flight would be impeded by the provisions and possessions they must carry, as well as by the presence of large numbers of women and children among the refugees. There were no railways or modern roads. Water was very scarce; the country they must travel was desert land. Even in peace time the problem would have been one of immense difficulty. But it was not peace time. Hostile and victorious armies barred the way, and closely invested the garrison towns. The whole country was in rebellion, and the fanatical warriors of the Mahdi wished nothing better than to catch their enemies in the open.

The British government refused to use English troops to aid evacuation. Neither would it allow the still poorly organized Egyptian army to do this work.¹⁶ Gladstone approved a request to the Ottoman empire for aid, but in the end this government too refused to send troops. Disinterested in the Sudan, the British prime minister, when giving permission to use Turkish troops, told his foreign secretary, "I care more that we keep out of the Sudan than who goes in."¹⁷

¹⁵Cromer, Modern Egypt, II, 31.

¹⁶Theobald, The Mahdiya, 70.

¹⁷Knaplund, Gladstone's Foreign Policy, 219.

But insistent pleas for help from the Egyptians, the fear of losing control of Parliament, and the rumblings of British public sympathy for the people stranded in the Sudan forced Gladstone to take some action. On December 1, 1883, he decided on the expedient of sending an Englishman to investigate the situation and possibly to organize the evacuation. The man he chose was General Charles "Chinese" Gordon.

Onix Gordon had governed the Sudan for the Egyptians from 1874 to 1879. He was also a popular hero in England because of his exploits in suppressing the Taiping rebellion in China, 1862-1864. However, when the Egyptian government and Lord Cromer were asked about sending Gordon, both thought it inadvisable. Cromer thought Gordon too unpredictable for the job.¹⁸ The Egyptian government, as Lord Cromer wrote to Granville on December 2, 1883, was "very much adverse to employing General Gordon, mainly on the ground that, the movement in the Soudan being religious, the appointment of a Christian in high command would probably alienate the tribes who remain faithful."¹⁹ None the less Granville continued to exert pressure on Cromer to approve sending Gordon, especially after the English newspapers began a campaign for Gordon as the man to save the Sudan. On January 8, 1884, W. T. Stead, fiery editor of the Pall Mall Gazette and leading stunt

¹⁸ Churchill, The River War, 39.

¹⁹ Baring, Modern Egypt, I, 424.

journalist of his day,²⁰ had interviewed Gordon. On the following day Stead's paper ran a front page article headed "Chinese Gordon for the Sudan,"²¹ The other papers took up the cry. Action was demanded of Gladstone's government by the press, by British public opinion aroused by the newspapers, and by a large section of Parliament. Weakening in the face of such formidable opposition, Cromer at last agreed that Gordon might be able to do the job. On January 18, Gordon was sent to the Sudan.

Gordon's initial assignment was limited in scope. Granville telegraphed to Cromer that "the only object of his mission is to report on the military situation in the Sudan."²² Gladstone heartily approved this restricted commission. When the prime minister read the above telegram he commented, "if he reports what should be done, he should not be the judge who should do it,²³ nor should he commit us on that point by advice officially given." However, in the instructions which Gordon received from Granville he was also authorized to "perform such other duties as the Egyptian Government may desire to intrust to you."²⁴ This postscript, as it were, to Gordon's instructions very soon became the main body of the commission because the Egyptian Khedive

²⁰Knaplund, Gladstone's Foreign Policy, 220.

²¹Theobald, The Mahdiya, 76.

17 ²²Ibid., 77.

²³Ibid.

18 ²⁴Cromer, Modern Egypt, I. 444.

immediately appointed reporter Gordon as governor-general of the Sudan "with full powers to take whatever steps he may judge best for obtaining the end my Government and Her Majesty's Government have in view. I could not do more than delegate to Gordon my own power and make him irresponsible arbiter of the situation."²⁵ The Egyptian governor also outlined the end he had in view in appointing Gordon as ruler of the Sudan. "The object of your mission," he wrote, "is to carry into execution the evacuation of those territories . . . and . . . to take the necessary steps for establishing an organized Government in the different provinces."²⁶ The British government, apparently unwilling to thwart the Egyptians, and happy to cede the responsibilities in the Sudan to Gordon, acquiesced to this extension of Gordon's powers.

Losing no time after his commission by the British government on January 18, 1884, Gordon set out for Cairo to report to Cromer and the Egyptian Khedive. He left Cairo on January 26 for Khartoum, the capital of the Sudan which is situated at the confluence of the White Nile and Blue Nile rivers. February 18 found him at Khartoum.

In keeping with the desires of the Egyptian government and

²⁵Charles G. Gordon, The Journals of Major-General Charles G. Gordon, C. B., at Khartoum, ed. A. Egmont Hake (Boston, 1885), xxxii.

²⁶Churchill, River War, 40.

his own inclinations, the new governor-general began immediately to plan the achievement of his two objectives: the evacuation of the Egyptian garrisons in the Sudan, and the organization of a native government to replace the rule of the Mahdi. He had already decided that the man to rule the Sudan was one Zobeir Pasha, a man with commanding influence in the Sudan. Churchill informs us that "on the very day of his arrival at Khartoum . . . General Gordon sat himself down and telegraphed a formal request to Cairo for Zubeir Pasha."²⁷ His plans for evacuation were also quickly made and relayed to Cromer. Knowing that he would need outside aid to rescue the people desiring to leave the Sudan, Gordon requested the assistance of British and Indian troops.²⁸ The answers which Gordon received to these requests were a shock both to his emotional character and his enthusiasm. He could have neither troops nor Zobeir.

Zobeir was obviously the man for the job. Not only did Gordon consider him a "sine qua non"²⁹ if the Sudan were to have a satisfactory government, but Cromer also approved him as "the only possible man;"³⁰ the Egyptian Khedive was strongly in favor of him, and Gladstone himself, who saw in such an appointment a

²⁷ Ibid., 42.

²⁸ Gordon, Journals, 96.

²⁹ Cromer, Modern Egypt, I, 456.

³⁰ Ibid., 497.

way to rid himself of the Sudan was a "strong convert" to the idea.³¹ Yet his appointment was not approved. The trouble was that Zobeir was a slave trader, in fact the best known and most successful slave trader in the Sudan. Granville reported to Cromer that British "public opinion would not tolerate the appointment of Zobeir Pasha."³² Despite the powerful argument put forth by Gordon that not appointing Zobeir would not eliminate the slave trade since it would surely flourish under the Mahdi,³³ Parliament refused to sanction the appointment. Public feeling in England was so opposed to slavery that the members of the House of Commons agreed unanimously that "no Government from either side of the House could venture to sanction Zobeir."³⁴ Since Zobeir was the only man who could handle the job, one of the goals for which Gordon had been appointed governor-general of the Sudan was rendered impossible.

Gordon was equally unsuccessful in evacuating the people trapped in the Sudan. An idealist and an emotional man whose heart went out to every person who might be harmed by the Mahdi, Gordon's concept of his assignment differed radically from the viewpoint taken by the more practical minded Cromer and British

³¹Morley, Life of Gladstone, III, 159.

³²Cromer, Modern Egypt, I, 486.

³³Gordon, Journals, 42.

³⁴Morley, Life of Gladstone, III, 159.

officials in England. Cromer's idea was to make the best of a bad situation. As the English agent in Cairo wrote later in his memoirs, "General Gordon was not sent to Khartoum with orders that he was to secure the retreat of every man, woman, and child who wished to leave the Soudan. He was sent to do the best he could to carry out the evacuation."³⁵ Expressing similar sentiments, Lord Granville wrote to Cromer, March 14, 1884, "If Gordon can save the garrisons of Khartoum, of Berber, and of Dongola [the last two cities being situated along the Nile between Khartoum and Egypt], it will be in itself a great feat."³⁶ Gordon, on the other hand, never considered anything short of total evacuation. As a result he not only did not save the people in the outlying districts, but he also failed to bring out the people in the towns mentioned by Granville. This certainly was a sizeable failure since in Khartoum alone there were between ten and fifteen thousand persons who wanted to flee to the safety of Egypt.³⁷

Presuming that the British were honor bound "to extricate the garrisons whatever it costs,"³⁸ and that his government would send the military force necessary to evacuate the entire Sudan,

³⁵Cromer, Modern Egypt, I, 566.

³⁶Ibid.,

³⁷Ibid., 444.

³⁸Gordon, Journals, 115.

Gordon announced on February 27, 1884, that "British troops are now on their way to Khartoum."³⁹ This proclamation, intended as a morale booster, actually only turned the people of Khartoum against the British and Gordon himself since it soon became very evident that not only were troops not proceeding to Khartoum but that the British had no intention of ever sending any such assistance. Gordon's requests for military aid from England, India, Egypt, and Turkey were all in turn denied by the British government. As early as May 17, Granville ordered him to drop the idea of evacuating the entire Sudan and "either to report upon, or, if feasible, to adopt, at the first proper moment, measures for his own removal and for that of the Egyptians at Khartoum."⁴⁰ However, Gordon thought he had no honorable choice but "to see evacuation through."⁴¹ He remained at Khartoum trying to win the support of various Sudanese chieftains and writing telegrams to Cromer requesting military assistance.

A campaign in England to "save Gordon" had begun as early as March, 1884, both in the press and in the House of Commons. Sending a relief expedition was repeatedly discussed, but any such plans matured slowly because cabinet members were deceived by Gordon's earlier optimistic reports that he could leave Khartoum anytime he wished, and because Gladstone's attention was

³⁹Cromer, Modern Egypt, I, 568.

⁴⁰Gordon, Journals, 36.

⁴¹Ibid., xxxii.

taken up with other affairs. As late as August, when Gordon was no longer able even to evacuate Khartoum because of the encircling Mahdist armies, it took the threat of resignation made by Secretary of War Hartington and Chancellor Selborne to force the prime minister to ask Commons for 300,000 pounds to enable the government "to undertake operations for the relief of General Gordon should they become necessary."⁴² On August 26, a rescue expedition was finally commissioned, and British hopes that popular hero Gordon would be saved began to soar.

Avidly the English people followed the newspaper reports of the advance of this army toward Khartoum. Its progress was compared with the rapidly increasing danger to Gordon from the Mahdist forces besieging him. The situation had the suspense of a pulp magazine thriller. However, the race was won by the Mahdists who took Khartoum on January 26, 1885. Gordon was killed immediately and his head sent to Mohammed Ahmed. The British army was still two hundred miles away.

Horried at the brutal death of their hero and disgraced because they had not saved him, the British people raised their united voices to demand all out war against the Mahdi. On the very day that news of the fall of Khartoum reached London, the Times demanded "upholding the national honour at any cost."⁴³

⁴²Sir J. A. R. Marriot, England Since Waterloo (London, 1925) 505.

⁴³The Times (February 6, 1885), 6.

Such was the onslaught of public opinion that Gladstone's government was forced to reverse its policy in the Sudan. Non-intervention had been overwhelmingly condemned; the people demanded a war to the finish. With a vote of censure pending in Parliament, Secretary of War Hartington telegraphed the command to Lord Wolseley in the Sudan, February 9, 1885: "the power of the Mahdi at Khartoum must be over thrown."⁴⁴ Thirteen thousand British and Indian troops were dispatched to the Sudan to "smash the Mahdi" by the government which one year before had refused to send a single British soldier to evacuate Egyptian garrisons and civilians. A railroad was begun from the Red Sea to the Nile to show the Sudanese and the British people "the fact that we are in earnest, and do not mean to leave the country until we have re-established order and a settled government at Khartoum."⁴⁵ The Cabinet realized that only an aggressive offensive in the Sudan would satisfy the wounded pride of Parliament and the British nation. Therefore, throughout February and March everything possible was done to effect what Lord Wolseley called a "counter poise to the Mahdi's capture of Khartoum."⁴⁶

The storm of public opinion aroused by the fall of Khartoum and the death of Gordon had begun to die down by the end of March.

⁴⁴ Cromer, Modern Egypt, II, 22.

⁴⁵ Theobald, The Mahdiya, 128.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

Pressure from the left wing Radicals in Parliament began to swing Gladstone's government back toward its own less expensive "hands off" policy in the Sudan.⁴⁷ The prime minister, who had approved the decision to overthrow the Mahdi only because of the overpowering force of public opinion and parliamentary opposition, now willingly began to look for an excuse for backing out of the Sudan. The opportunity came on April 8th when news reached London that Russian troops had battle with and beaten the Afghans at the battle of Penjdeh. An invasion of India by Russia seemed inevitable. In the panic which resulted in London, interest in the Sudan vanished. Jumping at his chance, Gladstone immediately began to end hostilities in the Sudan. On April 13, Lord Hartington wired to Wolseley, "In the condition of imperial affairs it is probable that the expedition to Khartoum may have to be abandoned, and the troops brought back as soon as possible to Egypt."⁴⁸ Almost at once British troops along the Nile began to retire into Egypt. Two days later orders were issued from London to suspend the construction of the railroad.⁴⁹ By April 21, all British offensive action in the Sudan had ceased; by May 8, British policy was to limit military activities to defending the

⁴⁷ Marriott, England Since Waterloo, 505.

⁴⁸ Theobald, The Mahdiya, 130.

⁴⁹ Cromer, Modern Egypt, II, 25.

Egyptian border;⁵⁰ soon even this fighting was left to Egypt, and the British were out of the war. British policy, which had changed overnight in February from disinterest in the Sudan to an all out campaign to conquer it, underwent this second about face in April. In February the British government had issued a proclamation to the people of the Sudan to the effect that they intended "to destroy the power of the Mahdi at Khartoum."⁵¹ Two months later the British ceded the Sudan to the enemy.

No further large scale offensives were undertaken in the Sudan until 1896. During the intervening years the Mahdist government retained control of the Sudan except for the land bordering the Red Sea. About three-quarters of the Red Sea littoral remained under Egyptian control in 1885. The remainder of the coast was wrested from the Sudanese in 1891 when the British felt the Egyptian army was sufficiently well trained to attempt an offensive. On February 19th of that year, two thousand Egyptian soldiers, with British permission and British officers, defeated a Mahdist army of seven thousand, inflicting 700 deaths while losing only ten men.⁵²

In the same year another step was initiated which presupposed the ultimate inclusion of the Sudan in the British empire. Preliminary plans were laid for taking Uganda which contains the

⁵⁰ Ibid., 29.

⁵¹ Ibid., 26.

⁵² Theobald, The Mahdiya, 168-169.

head waters of the Nile. Lord Salisbury, British prime minister at the time (August, 1886 - August, 1892), was an imperialist who "was laready thinking of the ultimate reconquest of the Sudan."⁵³ He sent out surveyors to determine the feasibility and cost of a railroad from Mombassa on the coast to Lake Victoria. However, little else was done directly by the government to take over Uganda. The high cost of war persuaded the English to annex this country more slowly through the instrumentality of the Imperial East Africa Company. In 1894, when the company definitely controlled Uganda, prime minister Rosebery, an even more ardent imperialist than Salisbury, transferred the government from the hands of the trade company to the British government. The land became a protectorate of the British empire. England then controlled both extremeties of the Nile, and the imperialist urge challenged them to take the connecting link.

That this final step would be taken eventually, there was little doubt. Lord Cromer writes that if he had been asked he would have set the date for reconquering the Sudan at about 1910.⁵⁴ In any case it seems certain that he did not on March, 13, 1896, expect to be informed that the British government had decided on the previous day to invade the Sudan. Just a few weeks before, the Governor-General had given orders to begin the

⁵³ Langer, Diplomacy of Imperialism, 118.

⁵⁴ Cromer, Modern Egypt, II, 81.

first of a series of projected reservoirs along the Nile in Egypt, a decision which Lord Kitchener, British commander of the Egyptian army and advocate of war in the Sudan, had taken as a clear indication that war had definitely been put off.⁵⁵ It was not the season for desert warfare. The hot summer with its enervating heat was just beginning; the Nile was low making travel in the Sudan very difficult; away from the Nile drinking water would be non-existent. At such a time invasion was certainly far from Cromer's mind, but on that Friday morning a telegram from London ordered him to send the Egyptian army up the Nile into the Sudan.

In London the decision had been hatching for over a week. An occasion for invasion was at hand. On March 1, the Italians had been badly defeated by the Abyssinians whose land Italy was trying to invade. It was stated that unless Egypt attacked the Sudanese along the Nile, the latter might mass their forces against the already harrassed Italian colony of Eritria which had been extending into the eastern Sudan. Giving the reason, therefore, that they had been invited to create a diversion to relieve the pressure on the Italian army, the British sent Kitchener and his Egyptian army up the Nile as far as the town of Dongola, some two hundred miles into the interior of the Sudan.

This decision could not be carried into effect until the end

~~55~~ Churchill, River War, 100.

of April. Plans had to be laid, the army gathered, money obtained. All these matters were left in the hands of Cromer, Kitchener, and the Egyptians, since England preferred to treat the expedition as an Egyptian affair which would primarily benefit Egypt. The British War Office "only spoke when spoken to and accepted no responsibility."⁵⁶ The money and men necessary for the offensive were to come entirely from Egypt. This was possible since Lord Kitchener had trained a very competent Egyptian army and the Egyptian treasury contained a surplus of 2,500,000 pounds.⁵⁷ The only financial complication arose from the fact that Egypt's treasury was controlled by an international debt commission on which Britain, France, Italy, Germany, and Russia were equally represented. However, the requested 500,000 pounds were approved by a 3-2 majority of the commission, Germany and Italy voting with Britain. So the war was on.

With the Egyptian troops supported by Egyptian funds, Lord Kitchener advanced up the Nile toward Dongola. The elements provided the only formidable opposition. A cholera epidemic cost the invaders 343 lives. Contrary winds on the Nile for 40 consecutive days, and floods unequalled in 50 years, caused delay.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Theobald, The Mahdiya, 196.

⁵⁷ Walter Phelps Hall, Empire to Commonwealth: Thirty Years of British Imperial History (New York, 1928), 372.

⁵⁸ Churchill, River War, 142; 147.

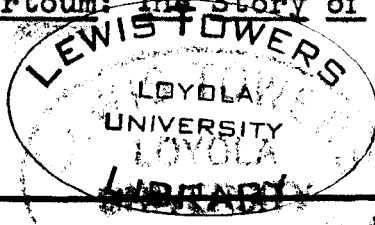
The Mahdist forces, on the other hand, were ineffective against the well trained Egyptians. In a typical battle 1500 Dervishes retired before only 240 Egyptians.⁵⁹ By September 23, Kitchener had taken Dongola with military casualties for the whole campaign amounting only to 169.⁶⁰

Almost a year elapsed after the fall of Dongola before any further advance up the Nile was made. However, that the British intended further conquest is clear. One indication is that soon after the capture of Dongola, a railroad was begun at the Egypt-Sudan border which was to extend to a point on the Nile two hundred miles beyond Dongola. Kitchener built this railroad so that he could more easily move troops and supplies into the depths of the Sudan. The interlude of inaction was not so much a period of indecision as a time in which greater support for the campaign could be amassed in England. This was necessary since it had become evident that the war would require both British troops and British gold.

Economically, Britain ran into a major problem during this period. The Egyptian Debt Commission's grant of 500,000 pounds for the Dongola expedition had been protested by France to an international court of appeal, on the ground that Egyptian surplus

~~A.~~ Hilliary Atteridge, Towards Khartoum: The Story of the Soudan War of 1896 (London, 1897), 112.

~~60~~ Imobald, the Mahdiya, 206.



funds were to be devoted only to public works of a permanent character and not to financing a war.⁶¹ On December 2, 1896, the court ordered the Egyptian government to refund the money to the Caisse de la Dette. The British government, at the request of Cromer, repaid the money, a move which defeated France but which also dismayed many close-pursed Englishmen.⁶² This, plus the prospect of further expenses (the British subsequently loaned Egypt 800,000 pounds⁶³) and of using English soldiers in the Sudan (eight battalions of British infantry, a regiment of cavalry, and a battery of field artillery were sent in 1897⁶⁴) go far toward explaining the lapse of time necessary for the British cabinet to win parliamentary approval for further advance into the Sudan.

In late summer, 1897, the march toward Khartoum began. One army continued up the Nile while another converged on Khartoum from the Red Sea, pacifying the eastern Sudan as it came. By December, 1897, the Kassala region, east of Khartoum, was in Egyptian hands. On September 2, 1898, Khartoum itself was taken in a battle in which Kitchener with a force of 23,000 men massacred a Sudanese army of 50,000. Thirty thousand of the defending

⁶¹Ibid., 195.

⁶²Cromer, Modern Egypt, II, 92.

⁶³Ibid.,

⁶⁴Ibid., 96.

army were killed while the attackers lost only 50 men.⁶⁵

Immediately after his victory at Khartoum, Kitchener pushed on up the Nile toward a village named Fashoda, over 300 miles further up the river. The reason for his haste was that the French were attempting there to put southern Sudan under French rule. Eight Frenchmen and 120 Negro soldiers had arrived there on July 10, 1898, led by the Frenchman, Major Marchand. They had reached Fashoda only after a march of over two years, having started out in February, 1896, just a few weeks before the British had sent Kitchener into the Sudan. Marchand was to have met at the Nile two larger bodies of troops coming from Abyssinia. These reinforcements never arrived, one group because it had no boats in which to cross the rivers and swamps that lay in its path, the other because of fever.⁶⁶ Marchand, however, raised the French flag at Fashoda and declared a French protectorate over the territory.

After Kitchener's arrival, the French government saw they could not hold their position on the Nile without declaring war on England. For a time the two countries were close to war,⁶⁷ but the French on November 4, 1898, abruptly gave way, announcing that the Marchand mission would be withdrawn. On December 11,

⁶⁵ Elie Halevy, A History of the English People in the Nineteenth Century, trans. E. I. Watrin (London, 1951), V, 58.

⁶⁶ Moon, Imperialism and World Politics, 152.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 153.

the small French force which had reached its destination only after fighting its way through jungles and swamps and braving death from fever and savages on a journey comparable in length to a trip from New York to San Francisco, sadly left Fashoda for France. Marchand's departure left the Sudan under Kitchener's undisputed control. Mopping up operations took another year, but by that time the future government of the Sudan had already been determined.

On January 19, 1899, Lord Cromer and the Egyptian foreign minister signed the Anglo-Egyptian Agreement which decreed what government the Sudan was to have. The type of government decided upon was called a "condominium," which Cromer described as a "hybrid form of government, hitherto unknown to international jurisprudence."⁶⁸ The Sudan was to be ruled jointly by England and Egypt. It was a partnership arrangement, with the important reservation that England was the senior partner and Egypt a poor second. When Kitchener took Khartoum, he had been instructed to hoist the Union Jack and the Egyptian flag side by side.⁶⁹ However, this show of equality was belied by such official messages from prime minister Salisbury as the following one sent to Cromer on August 2, 1898: "Her Majesty's Government consider that they

⁶⁸ Cromer, Modern Egypt, II, 115.

⁶⁹ Mekki Abbas, The Sudan Question: The Dispute over the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium, 1884-1951 (London, 1951), 115.

have a predominant voice in all matters connected with the Sudan, and that they expect that any advice which they may think fit to tender to the Egyptian Government in respect to Sudan affairs will be followed."⁷⁰

For all practical purposes, then, the Sudan became a part of the British empire in 1899. Its status remained unchanged until February 12, 1953, when Britain and Egypt ended the condominium by an agreement which gave the British three years in which to turn the government over to the Sudanese who were to decide within the same period whether they wanted autonomy or union with Egypt. As subsequent events have shown, the Sudanese have chosen independence, and they are now experimenting with democracy in the manner of a small child with a mechanical toy it finds attractive but does not know how to operate. *end*

The British exits and entrances in the Sudan make an intricate and intriguing story. In this chapter their history during the last two decades of the nineteenth century has been outlined, with some references to individuals and groups responsible for the policies of Great Britain in the Sudan. The influence of British public opinion, of certain individual statesmen, and of Parliament as a body, were all mentioned in connection with certain moves made either in the direction toward or away from imperialism in the Sudan. Chapter III will deal more precisely

⁷⁰Ibid., 46.

with the problem of where to lay the responsibility for the activities of Britain in the Sudan.

CHAPTER III

PARLIAMENT AND PEOPLE AS POLICY MAKERS

When George Washington's father noticed that a cherry tree was missing from his front lawn, the first question that popped into his mind was probably, "Who did it?" Only when that problem had been satisfactorily solved would he think of investigating the reasons behind the deed. Without a clear answer to the first question, all thought about the second would have been mere speculation, necessarily vague and subject to error. Similarly, in this study of British imperialism common sense demands that we link up each move toward or away from imperialism in the Sudan with definite individuals or groups. It would by no means be sufficient to remain content with such statements as "the British extended their empire" or "the British sent their armies into the Sudan." Here the words which must be clarified before any study of motivation can intelligently be pursued are "the British." Do we mean to hold responsible for Britain's actions in the Sudan certain British prime ministers, the British parliament, the British army, the British voters, several of these groups, all of them, or whom?

This question is not extraordinarily difficult to answer,

but it does demand the examination of each power group which could possibly be involved before an adequate answer can be given. Because some authors have stressed the influence of but one or other group, needless confusion and the errors consequent to oversimplification mark their books. The writings of other men give the reader an abundance of useful information about the causes of British imperialism, but regularly omit any distinctions between causes of major import and those which are minor, between proximate and remote causes, between causes and occasions.

In this chapter the quest is for the persons, groups, and classes of people who were the really significant, proximate agents responsible for Britain's treatment of the Sudan in the late nineteenth century. Study of the available sources make it possible to reduce these to two policy determining groups, the British government and the British public. Other agents, for example, the armies of the British empire, the English press, the Egyptian government, and the various European powers, are also important, but not precisely as primary efficient causes of British imperialism. Rather they can be termed either influences on the two principle agents, or as instruments by which imperial policies were carried out, as for example the military forces which actually fought in the Sudan.

The really controversial issue which needs clarification here is the proper degree of importance to be given to the parts played on the one hand by the British government and on the

other by the English people. Britain's acts of imperialism were due immediately to the decisions of the men who controlled Parliament. However, since these statesmen were elected, their actions had to meet with some degree of public approval and would to some extent be influenced by the will of the people. It is necessary, therefore, to study the relative importance, and the interaction, of the government and the governed with regard to the actions taken in the Sudan. Such is the problem with which this chapter is concerned.

Many accounts of nineteenth century British imperialism give the impression that Britain determined her foreign policy by popular acclaim. Even a careful reader may be misled by the emphasis given to the popularity or unpopularity of a Parliamentary decision. The way authors describe the growth of imperial enthusiasm throughout England tends to the conclusion that the British government was conducted not in the House of Commons but rather in a modern day counterpart of the Athenian assembly.

The contention here is that it is more important to study the views on imperialism held by the men who made up the British Parliament at the time than to concern oneself with the opinions on the same subject of the English public. In the really important decisions regarding British imperial expansion in the Sudan, historical sources seem to justify the statement that the strength of popular opinion was usually overshadowed by the influence of the men in control of the British government. This

does not mean that public opinion need not be considered at all, but just as it is the officers of an army who determine when the force is to fight, where the battle is to be staged, and whether it is to enter the combat or not, so in a similar fashion it was the British Parliament much more than the English people that directed the country's imperial policy.

Great Britain had two major political parties during the period under consideration. There was the Conservative party which, despite what its name might imply, was the group more inclined toward initiating imperial ventures. Opposed to this party were the Liberals who tended more to cling to the older idea of free trade and the independence of small nations. The Liberal party was in power from 1880 to 1885, the period during which the Sudan was twice abandoned. Sudan for the Sudanese was the policy advocated by the Liberals, a position held despite strong opposition from Egypt and the British public.

To ascertain the political platform of the Liberals during these years is comparatively easy since it was largely the platform of one man, William Ewart Gladstone. As party leader, Gladstone was prime minister during the first five years of the 1880's. His accession to command in the British government brought to power a man who had little or no interest in imperial expansion. He was interested in trade, not territory. Colonies were, in his opinion, a needless burden and an outmoded method of government. As an advocate of free-trade he expected that one

empire would gradually disintegrate. Finding such a prospect attractive rather than otherwise, he was "willing to aid the process by the extension of self-government" to countries in the British empire, as Langer says.¹

Gladstone probably would never have anctioned any intervention in Egypt if he had not felt compelled to protect the British investments in the Suez made by his more imperial minded predecessor in the office of prime minister, Benjamin Disraeli.² In September, 1882, the British government assumed control of Egypt, but from this date until the end of Gladstone's time in office the main theme of British policy in Egypt was to cast off this country from the empire as soon as possible. Chruchill writes that "every act, whether of war or administration . . . [was] intended to be final. Every dispatch . . . [was] directed to breaking the connection between the two countries and winding up the severed string."³

All questions regarding the Sudan appeared to Gladstone as wearisome interference with his hopes for an early end to British involvement in Egyptian government affairs. Throughout the ensuing years Gladstone's government tried to ignore the Sudan situation as much as possible. In the opinion of these men the

¹Langer, Diplomacy of Imperialism, 70.

²Bowen, Conflict of East and West in Egypt, 86.

³Chruchill, River War, 37-38.

Sudan was more bother than it was worth. This state of mind is aptly, though rather sarcastically, caricatured in General Gordon's diary. Gordon puts into the mouths of the Liberal leaders such statements as, "That brute of a Mahdi! . . . [He] will destroy all the well earned repose of Her Majesty's Government."⁴ Again in the same vein Gordon has Gladstone's government comment on the subject of the Egyptian garrisons in the Sudan which Gordon was trying to evacuate, "Those horrid garrisons . . . They ought to have surrendered at once, troublesome people that they are, giving so much bother!"⁵

Fairness to Gladstone demands that it also be added that his concept of nationalism was that each nation, small or large, had a right to its independence. The Sudan, he said, was "a nation rightly struggling to be free." Gladstone looked on the Mahdist rebellion as a nationalist movement. He considered Egypt a cruel and unjust aggressor in the Sudan, and an aggressor, moreover, whose proprietary claims could not be backed up by longstanding or thorough conquest.

"It is no part of the duty incumbent upon us to restore order in the Sudan."⁶ Such were the sentiments expressed by Gladstone on November 2, 1882. Having expressed his mind, his

⁴Gordon, Journals, 54.

⁵Ibid., 50-51.

⁶Morley, Life of Gladstone, III, 146.

only desire was to forget the Sudan and give himself exclusively to the business of domestic government. However, he was not allowed to shake himself free of the Sudan question so easily. The opposition party in the government, more fervently imperialistic, and apparently ready to use the situation in the Sudan as a stepping stone to political power, was clamoring for interference in the Sudan. Gladstone could ignore public opinion, but not a vote of censure in Parliament. This imminent danger to the Liberal party's security goes far toward explaining the first of the token steps Gladstone took in the direction of imperialism in the Sudan.

This first step was his approval of sending Gordon to the Sudan. His reason was not so much to save the Sudanese as it was to save himself and his party. In January, 1884, a vote of censure was pending in Parliament. The motion was finally presented on February 12, 1884, but by this date Gordon was already on his way to Khartoum. Because of this bow to imperialism, Gladstone survived the censure.

The prime minister hoped that the appointment of General Gordon to the task of investigating conditions in the Sudan would prove an easy way out of a troublesome situation. The Liberals hoped that Gordon too would decide the best that could be done in the Sudan was the evacuation of Khartoum.⁷ Such a decision, made

⁷Marriott, England Since Waterloo, 503.

not by the Liberal government but by a man chosen by the Conservatives and approved by popular opinion, would have made it possible for Gladstone to pigeon hole the Sudan problem.⁸

When Gordon failed to oblige the British government by settling for a partial evacuation of the Sudan, Gladstone was very upset, but his policy of nonintervention in the Sudan remained unchanged. He was determined that "under no conceivable circumstances" would he "employ a soldier in the Sudan."⁹ To Gladstone's demand that he come out of the Sudan with the garrison at Khartoum, Gordon responded that he would not because to abandon the other garrisons throughout the country would be an act of "national dishonour."¹⁰ Even this attempt to force Gladstone to send troops to the Sudan did not shake the Prime Minister's resolve to stay out, and when Gordon could no longer leave Khartoum because the Mahdists had surrounded him, Gladstone refused to send in British troops either to rescue Gordon or to save the garrisons and other people trapped in the Sudan. He had been forced to make one concession to imperialism when he approved the sending of Gordon; he would not be so compromised again if he could avoid it. The people, the press, the Queen herself, declared that national honor was involved with the fate of General

⁸Theobald, The Mahdiya, 76.

⁹Cromer, Modern Egypt, I, 386.

¹⁰Marriott, England Since Waterloo, 504.

Gordon. In answer, Gladstone asserted with fiery emphasis in the House of Commons that the invasion of the Sudan would be a war of conquest against a people fighting for freedom. "Yes, those people are struggling to be free," he proclaimed, "and they are rightly struggling to be free."¹¹

It appeared for a time that Gladstone had conquered the appeal for a rescue of Gordon. He had ignored the newspapers and popular opinion; he had stood up to the opposition party in parliament.¹² It was only when members of his own cabinet threatened to resign unless aid were sent to Gordon that Gladstone was forced to permit further British interference in the Sudan. To prevent the resignation of his secretary of war, Lord Hartington, and of the Lord Chancellor, Lord Selborne, Gladstone at last approved a small rescue expedition consisting of only a single brigade. But just as his concession to send Gordon "to report" on conditions in the Sudan had grown into the appointment of Gordon as governor-general of the Sudan with power to evacuate the entire territory and to organize the government of the land, so now this one brigade quickly became an army of ten thousand men, selected from the whole army.¹³ Once Gladstone's decision was announced to the nation and the attention of all England was

¹¹ Strachey, Five Victorians, 267.

¹² Ibid., 275.

¹³ Churchill, River War, 59-60.

centered on it, it was impossible to deny the demands of the officers in charge of the mission.

Still Gladstone was determined that this rescue expedition should not become a conquering army. He desired that the expedition take as little time as possible and leave no trace of its existence behind it. He would not approve the idea of building a railroad in the Sudan as part of the rescue plan. For him such a notion contained "the most formidable difficulties of a moral and political kind."¹⁴ He feared that the "turning of the first sod" of such a railway would be the beginning of British domination in the Sudan, an eventuality which he considered completely unjustifiable and wholly undesirable.

When the expedition failed to save Gordon, a situation arose in England which forced Gladstone to make his third, last, and greatest compromise with his anti-imperialist principles. Here especially authors assert that it was public opinion which forced Gladstone to permit a full scale offensive in the Sudan. A. B. Theobald asserts that "the remarkably strong reaction of public opinion in England to the fall of Khartoum and the death of Gordon . . . largely explains the course of government policy immediately subsequent to the news."¹⁵ But public opinion alone would not have daunted Gladstone. If to the voice of the people

¹⁴Knaplund, Gladstone's Foreign Policy, 238.

¹⁵Theobald, The Mahdiya, 123.

had not been added the recurrent danger of a vote of censure, Gladstone might well have maintained his anti-imperial policy. It was the wounded pride and political maneuvering of Parliament that Gladstone had to worry about rather than the clamor of public opinion. Subsequent events show that the intense public interest in avenging the death of Gordon was of very short duration. Certainly if Gladstone had had only the British populace to talk down he could have done so.

After only three months, and without any real conquests by Britain, Gladstone was able to call off the offensive in the Sudan. On the 28th of February, the government weathered another vote of censure in Parliament. In the following month, Gladstone took the occasion of possible danger from the Russians in Afghanistan to begin to pull British troops out of the Sudan. By April 15, 1885, the government had made public its decision to abandon most of the Sudan. Within another month the entire offensive had been called off and all British and Egyptian troops began to retire from the Sudan.

It is interesting to note that such a withdrawal went counter to the desires of the Queen and of the more fanatical of the British public,¹⁶ but by this time Gladstone had been able to convince Parliament that evacuation was the wisest move to make. Once he had made it clear that he was for abandoning the Sudan,

¹⁶Knaplund, Gladstone's Foreign Policy, 244.

the opposition feared to push their policy of conquest too hard lest it end in ruin for Great Britain, in which case the blame for the disaster would be alid to their account. They could see the force of Gladstone's argument that "while we remain for war in the Sudan all the world can bully us, and they have come to know it."¹⁷

It should be mentioned here that on the occasions when the Conservatives threatened to oust Gladstone's government by votes of censure, their hope was that the people would approve their resistance to the party in power. Public opinion was for ~~them~~ a force to be used to further their own aims, control of Parliament and the furtherance of their desire for imperial expansion. On the other hand, since the Liberals were in control of Parliament through popular vote, it obviously had public approval to start with. It would, therefore, be easier for the Liberals to retain the popularity they possessed than for their political opponents to wrest it from them.

When Gladstone was succeeded as prime minister in June, 1885, by the Conservative party leader, Lord Salisbury, opposition to imperialism was waning in the British government. During the remaining 15 years of the nineteenth century, the Liberals, never completely separated from their anti-imperial tenets, held the reins of government only for two brief periods, totalling a little

¹⁷Ibid.

less than three and one half years. Moreover, even during these few years of power Gladstone, who still lead his party during most of this time, found his following splitting up over the issue of imperialism. His most formidable antagonist within the Liberal party was the outspoken advocate of imperial expansion, Lord Rosebery, Gladstone's most important rival for party leadership and the man who assumed control of the party in 1894.

Rosebery, who as secretary of foreign affairs under Gladstone, forced his captian to give up the idea of evacuating Egypt in 1892,¹⁸ openly decried Gladstone's "Little Englander" ways. In a speech which he delievered on October 25, 1894, Rosebery deplored the "party of a small England, of a shrunk England, of a degraded England, of a neutral England, of a submissive England."¹⁹ The fact that Rosebery gained control of the Liberal party over Gladstone showed that imperialism was winning out over free-trade and independence for small nations in Parliament.

Rosebery saw Great Britain's place as the greatest world power threatened by the imperialism of France and the efficiency of Germany.²⁰ In 1888 he championed colonialism in a speech in which he pointed out that "we formerly did not have in our foreign affairs to trouble ourselves with colonial questions, because

¹⁸Langer, Diplomacy of Imperialism, 124.

¹⁹Ibid., 78.

²⁰George Malcolm Young, Victorian England: Portrait of an Age (Garden City, N.Y., 1954), 246.

we had a monopoly of colonies. That monopoly has ceased."²¹ He continued to show himself inimical to Gladstone's platform in 1893, when he was still Gladstone's foreign secretary, by arguing for further imperial expansion in an address to the Colonial Institute. On this occasion he denied that the British empire was large enough to supply the future needs of England. He stated that "we are engaged at the present moment, the language of mining, 'in pegging out claims for the future.' We have to consider not what we want now, but what we shall want in the future."²² In 1900, Rosebery was still preaching imperialist doctrine as his address to the students of the University of Glasgow shows. In this speech, a forthright exposition of nationalism and imperialism, he cried out exultantly that "we are a conquering and imperial race. All over the world we have displayed our mettle. We have discovered and annexed and governed vast territories. . . . We have inoculated the universe with our institutions."²³ Finally in 1909, he is to be found exhorting the delegates of an imperial press conference to return to their homes as "missionaries of Empire--missionaries of the most extensive and the most unselfish Empire which is known to history."²⁴ In following such a leader the Liberals were certainly accepting ideas diametrically opposed

²¹Langer, Diplomacy of Imperialism, 77.

²²Ibid., 124.

²³Ibid., 78.

to those of Gladstone.

The Conservative party, which was in power during the entire period during which the Sudan was finally conquered and incorporated into the British empire, was unitedly imperialistic. The man at the head of this party and who, therefore, was the Conservative prime minister during the three periods in which this party was in power in the last twenty years of the nineteenth century, was Lord Salisbury. For Salisbury the reconquest of the Sudan dominated all questions regarding British policy in Egypt.²⁴ His interest in Uganda, for whose inclusion in the British empire he was largely responsible, was motivated by a desire to control the whole of the Nile River valley.²⁵ Salisbury's concern, like Gladstone's, was with trade, but he differed from Gladstone in believing that English economy would be better served by the extension of empire and monopoly of trade within imperial lands than by free trade and dissolution of colonies.²⁶ In 1895, when Salisbury became prime minister for the third time he had behind him a government strongly in favor of imperialism in general and of reconquest of the Sudan in particular. His position was so strong that there was little danger of his losing control of the

²⁴ Lord Rosebery, Miscellanies: Literary and Historical (London, 1921), II, 237.

²⁵ Langer, Diplomacy of Imperialism 110.

²⁶ Ibid., 118.

²⁷ Ibid., 79.

government before he had realized any plans for imperialism he might have devised.²⁸ As a matter of fact, he remained prime minister until 1902, by which time the Sudan issue had been determined decidedly in favor of imperialism.

By 1890 the British government was definitely inclining toward the eventual absorption of the Sudan into the British empire. Less hesitation or reluctance was shown toward using British troops in the Sudan, at least during the periods of Conservative government. In 1888, a small British force was sent to the Sudanese coast to drive off Mahdist troops then besieging the Egyptian held port.²⁹ These troops were sent despite the fact that the Egyptians could have handled the situation unassisted, a way of acting quite at variance with Gladstone's opposition to sending a single British soldier into the Sudan even when such intervention was the only way in which General Gordon or the tens of thousands of Egyptians trapped in the Sudan could be saved. Again in 1889 British troops were sent to help repulse an attempted Mahdist invasion of Egypt, though here again their presence was not necessary.³⁰

In 1891, Salisbury's government decided to sanction an Egyptian military advance southward along the Red Sea coast into

²⁸ Churchill, River War, 99.

²⁹ Cromer, Modern Egypt, II, 63.

³⁰ Ibid., 68.

Mahdist held territory. This sudden reversal of the British policy of abandonment established by Gladstone indicates clearly the parts played by government and people in many of Britain's decisions regarding imperialism. The offensive was motivated primarily by the Conservative party's desire to bring under British control the entire Sudanese Red Sea littoral. They saw an opportunity to do so when Uthman Digna, the Mahdist commander in that sector, was off on a tax collecting expedition accompanied by his army. Success here would not only put all the financially important ports of the Sudan in British hands but also would help to open the way for more extensive conquest of the Sudan. A secondary consideration was the effect this move would have on public opinion. Like any military venture, there was the possibility of failure, which, in this case, might turn the British people against the Conservative government and occasion its quick collapse in favor of the Liberal party. However, if the Egyptian armies were victorious, Salisbury felt confident that the British would be so delighted by the manifestation of their country's power that they would give increased support to the Conservative party and not notice at all the change of policy so little warranted by conditions in the Sudan.³¹

The people of Great Britain were not even informed of the move until it was made. Nor would the invasion have been popular

³¹Theobald, The Mahdiya, 169.

if announced beforehand, since not only was it a military offensive entered into suddenly without any special pretext for war,³² but it was also a step to be taken by a still only partially trained Egyptian army and supported financially by an Egyptian treasury as yet only convalescent. The British people, then, did not suggest or sanction the offensive beforehand, and afterwards they were easily satisfied as to the moral aspects of the move as long as their armies were in any way victorious.

When the reconquest of the Nile valley began in 1896, again public opinion was not consulted, nor was the plan inaugurated in any way by popular acclaim. Here again the decision was made solely by Parliament. Although the statesmen responsible for this course of action felt confident they could arouse public approval of the plan once it was underway, this was more a condition than a cause of their action. They were motivated primarily by a fear that the French would take over the Sudan unless they moved quickly. The government, therefore, made the decision for the British people, and relegated to a secondary position the problem of what the people would think of their action.

Several facts show clearly that the decision to commence reconquest of the Sudan was made independently of, and to some extent in opposition to, public opinion. In preparation for the invasion, prime minister Salisbury went counter to the will of

³²Ibid., 166.

the people by pursuing a conciliatory policy towards Russia, a strategem whose purpose was to wean this country away from France so that when the Anglo-French clash in the Sudan would occur, the French would find themselves alone.³³ When the decision to send troops into the Sudan was announced, it came at first as a not too pleasant surprise to the British public. In general, the people regarded it as a somewhat rash move, especially since it came at a season of the year not suited for desert warfare, and at a time when the British populace were very much interested in the economic, political, and military progress Egypt had been making, progress which a war in the Sudan would disrupt.³⁴

Public reaction was a factor which the government had to consider, but it was a factor which they felt confident of controlling, if their armies met with any degree of success. The British cabinet was quite apprehensive when, almost before the campaign was underway, their invading army, lead by Lord Kitchener, came close to ruin due to floods and dust storms. During this period newspaper correspondents were "chained to headquarters" to prevent the British people from hearing this disturbing news.³⁵ However, once the army began to move forward, it took very little to arouse public enthusiasm. When a small skirmish

³³Churchill, River War, 314.

³⁴Atteridge, Towards Khartoum, 328.

³⁵Churchill, River War, 148.

in which the Anglo-Egyptian army suffered only two casualties was presented to the people as a major victory, Englishmen cast aside most of their resistance to the invasion. Very soon any carping criticism was lost in the general approval of their government's course of action.³⁶

At first, it was announced that Lord Kitchener would proceed only as far as the town of Dongola, about 100 miles up the Nile into the Sudan. It was only after this point had been reached that Kitchener was told to proceed further. This procedure was followed, at least partially, with an eye to public approval. It was possible to take Dongola almost entirely with Egyptian soldiers and Egyptian money. Total conquest of the Sudan, on the other hand, would mean spending British pounds and endangering British troops, two considerations always unpopular with the British citizenry, as they are with any people.

In view of possible public disapproval, Salisbury might not have sanctioned any immediate advance beyond Dongola if this gesture toward invasion had driven the French out of the Sudan. However, it is important to note that the Government was responsible for the invasion, and that it was planning eventually to continue the conquest of the Sudan until the whole country was in British hands. This is indicated not only by Salisbury's long standing desire to control the entire Nile river valley, but also

³⁶Ibid., 155.

by the fact that the prime minister approved the building of a railroad which extended 200 miles beyond Dongola, at a time when Dongola was the only definite term of the invasion. This railroad, which was to bridge a huge bend in the Nile river, would have been useless unless Britain took much more territory than the publicly announced objective.³⁷

After Dongola had been taken and it was seen that the French had no intention of leaving southern Sudan, Parliament resolved to send their armies at least to Khartoum, the country's capital. This move, the result of involved diplomatic dealings with the French,³⁸ was largely the work of Parliament, which also saw to it that public enthusiasm for the move was fostered. As part of this propaganda campaign, General Kitchener was brought back to Great Britain to do battle against the anti-imperialists on the home front and to fire the enthusiasm of the people for the cause of conquest.³⁹

Once the Egyptian and British armies were sent on their way to Khartoum, there was little doubt that they would continue past the city and take over the entire country. The French, entrenched at Fashoda, deep in the southern end of the Sudan, had to be driven out. This was the conviction of British public

³⁷Cromer, Modern Egypt, II, 94.

³⁸Halévy, History of England, V, 35.

³⁹Theobald, The Mahdiya, 208.

opinion as well as of Parliament. So, with the solid approval of his government and fellow citizens, Kitchener advanced in the manner already described and secured the whole country for Great Britain.

Thus it may be said that although the actions of the British government were clearly conditioned by the pulse of popular opinion, it was Parliament, or in many cases more precisely the British cabinet, which was responsible for the direction of imperial policy in the Sudan.

Armed now with a knowledge of Britain's activities in the Sudan during the late nineteenth century and with some idea of who was responsible for these activities, it is at last possible to attack more directly the motivation behind these activities. In chapters IV and V the two most important motives will be treated. Chapter IV will discuss the influence of economic considerations on British imperial policy in the Sudan.

CHAPTER IV

A RUN FOR THEIR MONEY

The last two decades of the nineteenth century witnessed the final lap in the race of the European powers for colonies. Early in the race Great Britain had pulled out ahead due to a combination of centralized, orderly government and effective industrialization. Most Englishmen had no fears about the outcome of the contest until the 1870's. Then they saw that their free trade policy, which had looked so promising in the mid-nineteenth century, was not working out as planned. The European powers were not adopting Manchesterism in its entirety. As professor Langer has written, "England had equipped the other nations to be her competitors, and now, with the English markets wide open, they were pouring their products into what ought to be a British preserve."¹ On the other hand, Britain found her own exports unwanted by foreign nations.

As the colonial race neared its climax, France, Italy, Russia and Germany began to make their bids, and France and Russia allied themselves against England in 1894. All these European powers fought their way to the finish line in a whirl of tariffs,

¹Langer, Diplomacy of Imperialism, 76.

colonial land grabbing, and investments abroad. Experienced muddler England, seeing her lead threatened, battled with all her experience and mature strength to pull away. Spurred on by desire for the victor's honors and purse, England pushed ahead and across the finish line. The contest was the race for empire; the main prize, three million square miles of land in Africa; the first place winner, England.

The manner, time, and location of this colonial race were determined mainly by the forces of profit and pride. Saving a study of the latter motive for the following chapter, we will here investigate the influence of the pound sterling on British imperialism as illustrated by its manifestations in the Sudan.

A series of graphs would show that the British policy in the Sudan of "alternate slaughter and scuttle"² varied, at its most important stages, in closely paralleling proportion to the rise and fall of the possibilities for British economic profit. The Sudan was abandoned when its conquest would have been costly and relatively unprofitable. It was taken when the move gave promise of large economic returns and low overhead cost. Self-interest was the keynote of British policy in the Sudan. The decisions regarding this country were correctly characterized by the statement made in 1883 by a member of the House of Commons that: "The

²Hugh E. M. Stutfield, "The Position of Affairs in the Eastern Sudan," The Fortnightly Review, XLIX (April 1891), 386.

first object you [Mr. Gladstone] had when you went to Egypt was to establish English interests. It was for the gospel of selfishness that you went, it was for the British interests."³

In 1883 the British government did not want the Sudan. To take it would have been costly; to keep it, unprofitable. Conquest would have been expensive because the fanatical Mahdist revolutionaries would have to be defeated by British money and British soldiers, a policy which England avoided whenever possible. A nation which had won its empire largely by means of trade companies or native troops, England was averse to spilling its own blood or spending its own money to gain territory. In the Sudan the question was, could the country be conquered with Egyptian resources. In 1883 the answer was definitely in the negative. Egypt's national debt had grown to over 100,000,000 pounds,⁴ and the Egyptian army could not even defend the parts of the Sudan as yet not captured by the Mahdi.⁵ Colonel Stewart, an able British officer in Egypt, reported that this country "had not money enough nor fighting men enough"⁶ for the task.

Conquering the Sudan would have saved the lives of many of the declared enemies of the Mahdi in this territory, a group of

³Charles Chaille-Long, "England in Egypt and the Soudan," The North American Review, CLXVIII (March, 1899), 571.

⁴Hall, Empire to Commonwealth, 367.

⁵Abbas, The Sudan Question, 35.

⁶Morley, Life of Gladstone, III, 145.

at least 55,000 people which included Egyptian garrisons and civilians, foreign businessmen and missionaries, Sudanese who opposed the revolutionaries. British military interference could have established an orderly, humane government in place of the Mahdist reign of terror. However, such a policy held no promise of immediate economic returns for England. As a literary publication of that time stated, "The Sudan was still looked at through financial spectacles; it did not pay its way, and was therefore worthless--not worth the life of a British grenadier; it was a long way off and might therefore be ignored."⁷ Prime Minister Gladstone wrote in February, 1884, that the British government had no desire "to incur the very onerous duty of securing to the people of the Sudan a just future government."⁸ And, as it turned out, very little was done even to evacuate the Egyptians and others in the Sudan who desired safe escort out of the country. Lord Cromer himself testified that "the withdrawal was for the most part never effected at all."⁹

In 1896 the economic situation was quite changed. The Sudan could then be conquered with very little expenditure of British money or men; at that date seizing the country appeared very

⁷"England and Egypt in the Sudan," The Quarterly Review, CLXI (October, 1885), 488.

⁸Knaplund, Gladstone's Foreign Policy, 238.

⁹Cromer, Modern Egypt, II, 31.

profitable to England. So it was seized.

When Parliament decided on March 12, 1896, that the Sudan should be invaded, it knew Egypt could do the job without extensive help. Egypt had the money and soldiers necessary to defeat the Mahdists. Financially Egypt had not only eliminated her national debt during the years of British occupation, but she had accumulated a surplus of 250,000 pounds. Egypt's battle against bankruptcy had been won by Lord Cromer in 1888 when financial equilibrium took the place of an annual deficit in that country.¹⁰ Militarily, too, Egypt could stand on its own feet. By 1899 the Egyptian soldiers no longer ran away at the first hint of battle with the Mahdi. Rather they were standing up to and defeating Sudanese armies which greatly outnumbered them. In this year the Egyptian army came of age at the battle of Toski where 2000 Egyptian soldiers, trained and lead by British officers, defeated a horde of over 13,000 Sudanese. In this battle, fought along the Nile some 40 miles inside Egypt, the Mahdists lost about 10,000 men while the Egyptian dead and wounded amounted to only 165.¹¹ By 1896 Egyptian troops were competent to handle almost any force the Sudanese could send against them.

Since Egypt could do the job, the British government decided that Egypt was the one to do it. Since the invasion was pre-

¹⁰F. M. Sandwith, "Egypt and the Egyptian Sudan," The Cambridge Modern History, XII (New York, 1910), 445.

¹¹Cromer, Modern Egypt, II, 70.

sented as a move to retake for Egypt a territory which rightfully belonged to her, England decided that Egypt could "justly be called upon to bear the expenses,"¹² of the war and to supply the soldiers necessary for the operation. When Kitchener began his advance toward Dongola, his army consisted solely of Egyptian troops. As Lord Cromer comments: "A British battalion was sent from Cairo to Wadi Halfa [on the Egypt-Sudan border], more as an indication that in case of need English help would be forthcoming than for any other reason. Some British officers were temporarily lent to the Egyptian army but beyond this assistance, it was decided to employ only Egyptian troops in the Nile valley."¹³ In matters of finance or logistics the British War Office maintained the discrete silence of a friendly but disinterested power. The war was not only fought by Egypt but it was directed as far as possible from Egypt. In a life of Lord Kitchener we read that the British home government "only spoke when spoken to and accepted no responsibility. To Kitchener fell the executive, but in Cromer was vested absolute control . . . To and through the Agency [in Cairo] passed all demands for men, materials, stores, and money, and the Agent's [i.e., Cromer's] endorsement was all that was required to assure their delivery."¹⁴

¹²Ibid., 85.

¹³Ibid., 86.

¹⁴Theobald, The Mahdiya, 196 [quotations cited from Sir George Arthur, Life of Lord Kitchener, I, 190].

Eventually some British funds and fighters were needed when it was definitely decided that the whole of the Sudan should be retaken as soon as possible. The British contributed 800,000 pounds during the Sudan campaign to supplement the Egyptian expenditure of 1,554,000 pounds,¹⁵ and 8,200 British troops marched with the 17,600 Egyptian soldiers in the advance toward Khartoum.¹⁶ But as Winston Churchill has written, "English history does not record an instance of so great a national satisfaction being more cheaply obtained."¹⁷

Satisfied indeed was the British government with the economic returns from their investment. First of all, they were able to add to their empire a very sizeable territory in which British trade and investments could bring a consoling profit in the years to come. Although the Sudan did not live up completely to the description in Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine which stated that it was a land one had but to "tickle with a hoe" to make it "laugh with harvest,"¹⁸ yet it was by no means the "useless country"¹⁹ General Gordon had claimed. The Sudan provided a fine

¹⁵Cromer, Modern Egypt, II, 105-106.

¹⁶Churchill, River War, 249.

¹⁷Ibid., 362.

¹⁸"The Recovery of the Soudan," Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, CLII (October, 1892), 875.

¹⁹Gordon, Journals, 117.

outlet for British investments, thus helping to supply England's most pressing economic need at that time.²⁰ It also became a fairly lucrative market for British manufactures as well as a welcome source of the raw materials Britain needed. It became a chief source for gum arabic; it exported ivory and hides in sizeable quantities; it was to become the second largest producer of cotton in the British empire.²¹ The majority of these exports were bought by England who in turn supplied at least one-third of the Sudan's imports.

Secondly, England was able to incorporate this backward and debt ridden country into its empire without worrying about the Sudan's financial difficulties. By the ingeniously arranged dual control of the country, England was able to assume the executive powers in the country while shunting all the money worries onto Egypt. During the first decade of condominium rule, Egypt payed this annual deficit in the Sudanese budget, amounting to a total of 2,750,000 pounds.²² By the end of that period the Sudan was solvent.

Thirdly, possession of the Sudan supplied a long link in the coveted chain of British lands stretching from Cairo to the Cape of Good Hope. A Cape-to-Cairo railroad was often in the minds

²⁰Langer, Diplomacy of Imperialism, 73.

²¹Abbas, Sudan Question, 96.

²²Moon, Imperialism and World Politics, 155.

and on the lips of British imperialists of the late nineteenth century. Economically such a railroad would have been a boon to British trade in Africa. It is interesting to note that Lord Kitchener seems to have had the Cape-to-Cairo railway in mind from the very beginning of his invasion of the Sudan. Kitchener insisted, according to one of his biographers, that the guage of the road bed he laid in the Sudan conform to that used in South Africa so that the two sets of tracks might eventually be joined without difficulty or added expense.²³ Though this continent spanning railroad was still a thing of the future, taking the Sudan did have the immediate commercial value of opening "an uninterrupted highway . . . for commerce from the Great Lakes to the Mediterranean, throughout the entire length of the valley of the Nile."²⁴

These reasons why the British were satisfied with the economic value of the Sudan were important, but they were far outweighed by another consideration, which was that possession of the Sudan protected the British hold on Egypt, the country which contained the Suez canal. Historians generally admit that "if there had been no British India, there would have been no Anglo-

²³Theobald, The Mahdiya, 210 [the biographer referred to is Sir George Arthur, Life of Lord Kitchener, I, 207].

²⁴Stutfield, "Affairs in the Eastern Soudan," Fortnightly Review, XLIX, 392.

Egyptian question,"²⁵ or, in other words, that Britain probably would not have taken the Sudan if she were not interested in protecting her route to India.²⁶ Obviously, such concern over a trade route was motivated in great part by economic considerations. And it is certainly true that the financial worth of Britain's eastern empire depended vitally on the Suez canal.

A well founded fear that Germany, Belgium, or, particularly, France might take over the Sudan worried English statesmen during the 1890's. This was a serious matter because anyone of these powers could have ruined Egypt financially merely by diverting the waters of the Nile before they reached Egypt. As long as the Mahdists had control of the Sudan there was no danger of this for the Sudanese were not much interested in international affairs nor were they sufficiently organized or rich enough to build the dams and reservoirs necessary for such tactics. This fact more than any other explains why England allowed the Sudanese to break off from Egypt in 1883 but decided to reattach it to Egypt in 1896. If France or any other nation could bankrupt Egypt, the

²⁵"English Policy in the Soudan and Egypt," The British Quarterly Review, LXXX (July, 1884), 129.

²⁶Abbas, Sudan Question, 25; Bowen, Conflict in Egypt, 198; Paul Knaplund, The British Empire: 1815-1939 (New York, 1941), 331 & 345; Langer, Diplomacy of Imperialism, 108; William F. Moneyppenny and George E. Buckle, The Life of Benjamin Disraeli (New York, 1929), 1313; Frank Richardson Cana, "The Anglo-Egyptian Sudan," Encyclopedia Britannica, XXI (New York, 1929), 511; Samuel W. Baker, "African Development: the Sudan," The Fortnightly Review, XLVI (November, 1889), 572.

nation controlling the Sudan might easily take over Egypt on the same pretext England had used, to restore peace and prosperity to Egypt.

That there were other nations interested in the Sudan for the above reason is easy to verify. All of the big powers were interested. Russia was only a remote threat; Italy was near at hand in Eretria, but she was too weak to worry about. In fact England had encouraged Italy to expand into Abyssinia and, temporarily, into the Sudan to keep France out of those sectors.²⁷ In 1888 Germany had made a rather abortive attempt to take the Lake Victoria region and northern Sudan. In this year the German Karl Peters led an expedition into the Sudan ostensibly to aid an Egyptian army which was still battling the Sudanese revolutionaries. Peters tells us in his books that what Germany actually wanted Emin Pasha, the Egyptian commander, to do was to extend his dominion southward to Lake Victoria and German East Africa. "The German Emin-Pasha expedition," says Peters, "was no pleasure trip, but a large-scale colonial, political expedition."²⁸

In 1890 Belgium sent an expedition from the Congo to the Nile to claim territory which the Anglo-Belgian MacKinnon Treaty of 1890 allowed them. This was something England had permitted on paper but which she had no wish to see materialize.

²⁷ Moon, Imperialism and World Politics, 144.

²⁸ Langer, Diplomacy of Imperialism, 125.

Therefore, even before 1896 England had had her worries about European interference in the Sudan, but until that date she had been able to handle the situation by diplomacy, treaties, assertions that the Sudan was her "sphere of influence." But then France began to take serious steps to take over southern Sudan. As has been seen, no sooner did Major Marchand start for the Nile than England launched an attack on the Sudan. As early as March 28, 1895, Sir Edward Grey, under-secretary for foreign affairs, had warned France publicly that "the whole Nile valley was a British sphere of influence, and that the advance of any French expedition, marching under secret orders into this region would be an 'unfriendly act.'"²⁹ During the "River War" of '96-'98 "protection of Egyptian rights" was emphasized more than the British sphere of influence,³⁰ but whatever the diplomatic approach, the fact was that England would not allow France to take possession of any part of the Nile valley. One of the major underlying reasons for this was the danger involved to the economy of Egypt and the subsequent danger to England's hold on the country.

From what has been said, therefore, it seems evident that economic considerations were among the most important motives behind the British imperialistic policy in the Sudan. It is

²⁹Moon, Imperialism and World Politics, 148.

³⁰Halevy, History of the English in the Nineteenth Century, V, 59.

impossible in such matters to weigh exactly the primacy of motivation, but without doubt the factor of finance and the motive to be treated in Chapter V, national pride, were the two major influences in the history of British imperialism in the Sudan during the last 20 years of the nineteenth century.

CHAPTER V

PRIDE OF PAUPERS AND PRIME MINISTERS

The profit motive alone will not adequately account for the manifestations of British imperialism in the Sudan. Financial gain will not explain the enthusiasm for imperial conquest among so many nineteenth century Englishmen. Ordinary citizens do not lay down their lives or spend their tax money to fight purely economic wars. Nor should the members of Parliament who favored imperialism be accused of acting solely from a motive of economic expediency. Recourse must be had to something more stirring than a financial report to explain a war fought by a free people. The brutality of war must be ennobled by the presence, actual or artificially injected, of honorable goals. Some less patently pragmatic philosophy must be sought which would justify the actions of the British in their own eyes.

Such idealism was infused into the British territorial aggrandizement known as imperialism by another "ism" called nationalism, which phenomenon must be understood if England's activities in the Sudan are to be explained. Nationalism has been described by professor Hans Kohn as a state of mind which leads men to give their "supreme loyalty" to their nationality.¹

Further clarification of the notion is given by Carlton J. H. Hayes who speaks of nationalism as a "proud and boastful habit of mind about one's own nation, accompanied by a supercilious or hostile attitude toward other nations." It is, he continues, "a kind of extended and exaggerated egotism . . . it is patriotic snobbery."²

Nationalism, then, is first of all a close identification of the citizen with his country. It implies the belief that whatever benefits the country benefits the citizen. Whatever territories the nation receives are views as personal possessions or achievements by the nationalist minded citizen. England's vast empire, for example, was referred to as "our empire" alike by British paupers and ministers of government. The vast areas colored red on the map of the world caused the breasts of the propertyless as well as of the wealthy to swell with pride.

Secondly, nationalism engenders the conviction that one's own nationality is superior to all others. Here too imperialism found a strong bulwark in nationalism. Colonies were viewed as "manifestations of national greatness,"³ or, as Disraeli put it with regard to the British empire, they were a proof of the

¹Hans Kohn, The Idea of Nationalism: A Study of Its Origins and Background (New York, 1951), 16.

²Carlton J. H. Hayes, Essays on Nationalism (New York, 1941), 275.

³David Thompson, England in the Nineteenth Century: 1815-1914 (Baltimore, 1953), 203.

"commanding spirit of these islands."⁴ Extension of empire could be seen as a natural consequence of "certain qualities in our national character."⁵

Such a notion further implies a certain divine mandate to conquer and to rule others. It justifies imperialism as a task assigned by God, which opinion Kipling expresses in his poem Recessional when he writes:

God of our father, known of old,
Lord of our far-flung battle-line,
Beneath whose awful Hand we hold
Dominion over palm and pine---⁶

Tracing the cause of imperialism back to God in this way also allowed easy acceptance of the idea that incorporation into an empire was the greatest of boons for the conquered. Thus Lord Curzon could declare that "the British Empire is under Providence the greatest instrument for good that the world has seen,"⁷ and Kipling could describe the imperialism of his country as a self-sacrificing mission of mercy to the underprivileged. His poem, The White Man's Burden, epitomized that characterization of imperialism, and its popularity shows the extent to which this idea was accepted by the British of his day.

⁴Langer, Diplomacy of Imperialism, 70.

⁵Alfred Milner, England in Egypt (London, 1892), 435.

⁶Rudyard Kipling, Collected Verse (New York, 1914), 219.

⁷George Curzon, Problems of the Far East (London, 1894), 111.

The wide-spread acceptance of such notions goes far toward explaining nineteenth century imperialism. Money alone was not at stake but national pride as well; and these two ingredients were so skillfully intermingled that they became components of the same reality. It is not too surprising, then that Englishmen were not only willing to swallow such a mixture but actually begged for more.

A further consideration which made imperialism even more popular as a means to maintain national pride and security was that few persons of the imperialist nation actually had to sacrifice life or limb to attain these gratifying results. In the taking of the Sudan, for example, the vast majority of the British people were in the stands, not on the playing field. Or, as The Spectator somewhat ecstatically commented: "We may say, indeed . . . as the Scotch laird said of tree-planting.---'They grow while you're sleeping.' While the public here have been sleeping, the ever advancing lines have been giving us new provinces and adding new territories to what Mr. Kipling has toasted as---

'The last and the largest Empire,
The map that is half unrolled.'⁸

After the first victories of Kitchener's Egyptian army on its march toward Dongola in 1896, when the British public began to shout from the safety of pub or club for further advances into

⁸"Our Policy in the Upper Nile," The Spectator, LXXXI (September, 1898), 329.

the heart of the Sudan, a newspaper man who accompanied Kitchener's army wrote, "it was strange to hear the light-hearted way in which stay-at-home tactitians arranged the immediate destruction of the Khalifa's power."⁹

Whether or not the English would have gone to war so enthusiastically if it had entailed more danger to themselves it is difficult to say. The fact is that throughout the last twenty years of the nineteenth century the British took action again and again in the Sudan to defend, augment, or vindicate their national pride or prestige.

When Great Britain allowed the Sudan to break away from Egyptian control, they did not see that their honor was involved. They could at that time utter such altruistic statements as that made in the British Quarterly Review which stated, "Our only interest in the Soudan is the interest which we feel in liberty and good government all the world over."¹⁰

However, the situation was altered in November, 1883, when the Mahdists killed an Englishman named Hicks who was in command of an Egyptian army. This shedding of English blood, even though it was the blood of a man hired by a foreign power to fight a foreign war, was seen as an affront to English honor. Lytton

⁹Atteridge, Towards Khartoum, 329.

¹⁰"English Policy in the Soudan and Egypt," The British Quarterly Review, LXXX (August, 1884), 134.

Strachey says that "a wave of warlike feeling passed over the country."¹¹ "The newspapers," Strachey writes, "became full of articles on the Sudan, of personal descriptions of the Mahdi, of agitated letters from colonels and clergymen demanding vengeance, and of serious discussions of future policy in Egypt."¹² After Hick's death, the Mahdist conquests began to be viewed as an insult to British pride. The evacuation of the Sudan became for many Englishmen a point of national honor.

Howls of rage and cries of excitement rang out in England when the British citizenry caught the scent of what they considered a national outrage. Newspapers and people milled around in search of a way to repair the damage. When the Pall Mall Gazette put up General Gordon as the man to vindicate their honor, public opinion took up the idea with full-throated insistence. When Gordon was finally sent to the Sudan "the nation was delighted."¹³ Here was a man who could save their imperial pride.

Gordon was just the man to keep the motive of national honor alive. His activities at Khartoum were followed avidly by the British public. When it became evident that his life was in danger, the clamor for a rescue expedition was loud enough to drive even anti-imperialist Gladstone into action. Churchill writes

¹¹Lytton, Strachey, Five Victorians (London, 1942), 262.

¹²Ibid., 248.

¹³Churchill, River War, 40.

that "The Government . . . was driven to the Soudan by the cries of shame at home."¹⁴ The national disgrace involved if Gordon were killed was unthinkable.

When the unthinkable happened, nothing short of a full scale offensive against the Mahdi would satisfy the wounded pride of the British. As one authority has put it, the British government "decided, contrary to all arguments of reasoned prudence, on a forward policy in the Sudan," because it was "swayed by the tide of public passion." and was "conscious of its own weakness to stand against such a current."¹⁵ The British army had failed to rescue General Gordon. Therefore, a British force of 13,000¹⁶ must take the field to erase what Queen Victoria called "the stain left upon England for . . . [Gordon's] cruel, though heroic fate!"¹⁷

Three months of fighting, heavy expenses, numerous casualties, and a Russian threat of invasion in India which caused a stock market crash in London,¹⁸ went far toward banking the fiery demands for vindication of honor. The British called off the offensive in the Sudan, but Churchill tells us that it was done

¹⁴Ibid., 59.

¹⁵Theobald, The Mahdiya, 125.

¹⁶Ibid., 127.

¹⁷Strachey, Five Victorians, 293.

¹⁸William L. Langer, European Alliances and Alignments, 2nd ed. (New York, 1950), 313.

with eyes averted" in shame and confusion from the valley of the Nile." He concludes his description of a disgraced England with the words, "stopping her ears to the gibes and cat-calls of the Powers, she turned toward other lands and other matters."¹⁹

Englishmen did not forget their disgrace. Their pride had been severely jolted and their military ability seriously questioned in 1884 and 1885 when British armies had failed to save Gordon from the Mahdists, and then failed again in their attempt to avenge their hero's death. In 1896, therefore, many Englishmen were still anxious to settle this score. Although avenging Gordon was not a direct reason for the decision to reconquer the Sudan at precisely that time, it did supply "a strong motive to the British soldier and was a source of satisfaction to the British public."²⁰ A Protestant missionary in the Sudan at the time referred to this notion of vengeance as the "dominant idea" in the minds of many Englishmen.²¹ Certainly, "avenge Gordon" was the most popular battle cry of the campaign.

Also rankling in the hearts of the British was the fact that, as Lord Cromer has written, "during a period when British influence was paramount in Egypt, certain provinces, which had before been open to trade, and which might have been subjected to the

¹⁹Churchill, River War, 89.

²⁰Abbas, The Sudan Question, 40.

²¹Robert W. Felkin, "The Soudan Question," The Contemporary Review, LXXIV (September, 1898), 482.

influences of civilization, had been allowed to relapse into barbarism."²² Cromer continues, "National honor was touched."

In 1896 there was a third and most pressing threat to British prestige in the danger of France taking over the Sudan. On this point, Samuel W. Baker, one time governor of the Sudan, commented, "It would be a shameful attitude for England to stand by as a spectator, and see a foreign Power march into those territories which Egypt won, but which England deliberately abandoned."²³ All England was determined not to let France trample on British honor in this way. Winston Churchill says that when Englishmen discovered that Frenchmen were actually occupying Fashoda and claiming much of the Sudan, "a deep and bitter anger . . . filled all minds." He finds it "pleasing to remember that . . . [this] great crisis found England united. The determination of the Government was approved by the loyalty of the Opposition, supported by the calm resolve of the people."²⁴ This general horror at the thought of England losing out to France in the Sudan prompted the Chancellor of the Exchequer to declare, "There are worse evils than war."²⁵ The Chancellor meant by this that he considered national honor worth fighting for. In this he was

²²Cromer, Modern Egypt, II, 79.

²³Samuel W. Baker, "African Development: the Soudan," The Fortnightly Review, XLVI (November, 1889), 571.

²⁴Churchill, River War, 318.

²⁵Theobald, The Mahdiya, 205.

seconded by the British Parliament and people.

Though much more could be written about the growth of national feelings at all levels of English society toward the close of the nineteenth century, this brief account gives a sufficient indication of the influence of nationalism on British imperialism in the Sudan. The point of this chapter has been made if it is now clear that nationalism gave the British the moral justification and emotional conviction they needed to approve and abet their country's imperial policy.

The aptness of the description of man as an "acquisitive animal" is shown in the political sphere by the wars of aggression which accompany the march of men through history with the regularity of footprints. These wars have always been motivated by the desire for the power and wealth that increase of territory brings. However, aggressors of the Christian era have found it necessary to clothe these less than noble instincts in more respectable raiment. The most popular disguise which modern countries have found for the age old policy of aggrandizement has been nationalism. Throughout the past hundred years national pride has served the British as well as the other great Powers of the world as the alchemic element which can magically change base imperial desires for power and plunder into a golden, selfless duty to spread the advantages of one's own culture to backward countries, or into an obedient following out of a divinely inspired mandate to rule.

The investigation of the motivation behind British imperial activity which has been pursued in the last two chapters completes this quest for answers to the questions which vex any man who wishes to assess imperialism intelligently. The sole remaining task is to hand down some judgement on the morality of British imperialism in the Sudan. This will be attempted in the concluding chapter of this study.

CHAPTER VI

A NEED FOR INJUSTICE

Even 60 years after Britain's invasion of the Sudan, it is difficult to give a much better analysis of the British activities recounted in preceding chapters of this study than that written about 1820 by Mohammed Ali, then governor of Egypt. This Egyptian khedive or governor said, "The great fish swallow the small, and Egypt is necessary to England. . . . England must some day take Egypt as her share in the spoil of the Turkish empire."¹ Since Egypt did not at that time possess the Sudan, he did not foresee that the British would take not only Egypt but this land also.

England needed the Sudan to protect her hold on the Suez. She needed the raw materials and markets of the Sudan; she needed this link for her projected chain of colonies stretching the length of Africa. For these and other reasons, England needed the Sudan. So she took it. Although one may sympathize with Great Britain as she fought to maintain her economic superiority against the powers of Europe, this sympathy should not blind the

¹Felkin, "The Soudan Question," 483.

historian to the patent violation of divine law involved in Britain's conquest of the Sudan.

On some mound or mountain appropriately close to the Suez canal and within the boundaries of Egypt, almighty God gave to Moses a set of principles in which we find the starting point for a judgment of British imperialism in the Sudan. One of these principles, which has been preserved in the inspired book of Exodus, is known to men as the seventh commandment. It reads, "Thou shalt not steal." This commandment, which Britain violated in her dealings with Egypt and the Sudan, is an objective condemnation of British imperialism. Because she wanted and needed the Sudan, England took it even though it belonged to someone else.

Hidden beneath a maze of excusing causes and confused reasoning lies the untenable doctrine of British imperialism which one writer has expressed in the formula, "laissez prendre." This expression of the principle followed by Great Britain in extending her empire into the Sudan was written in 1884 by a clear sighted Englishman. Further developing this notion as it was used at that time, this writer comments, "Nowadays accordingly the only question seems to be, who is the first taker, as to any town or country possession of which seems likely to prove advantageous. Our interests demand it is the cry of the present generation."²

²H. Ganem, "Europe's Stake in the Soudan," The Fortnightly Review, XXXV (May, 1884), 654.

One justification advanced for Britain's assumption of power in the Sudan is that this territory was a res nullius and therefore open to the first taker. This idea is implicit in the 1899 Agreement which asserted that Britain's claim to the Sudan rested on the right of conquest. The same premise was acted on by Britain several times in the early 1890's, as, for example, when she entered into agreements with Belgium and Italy by which these countries were allowed to occupy parts of the Sudan.³ These agreements implied that the Sudan, as a res nullius, could be divided or conquered by Great Britain in any manner she found convenient.

All arguments in favor of the Sudan as a res nullius at this period are specious. They only exemplify the diplomatic reasoning of the day. If Britain upheld the position that the Sudan belonged to no one, she more frequently took the contradictory stand that the Sudan belonged to Egypt. These conflicting lines of argumentation can be unified only by the need Britain felt she had for the Sudan. Convinced of this need, her diplomats and ministers of state used any reasons which would help them attain their ultimate end.

When France attempted to claim southern Sudan as a res nullius, and offered as proof of her claim the Egyptian proclamation issued in 1884 "restoring the Sudan to its chiefs,"⁴ the

³Abbas, Sudan Question, 54; Langer, Diplomacy of Imperialism, 108.

British replied that this was meant to be only a temporary surrender of Egyptian rights. But Britain's most persuasive rebuttal was the unanswerable one of military might. She made it clear that she intended to take over the entire Sudan unless France could buttress her appeal to international law with the more convincing argument of force.⁵ In the end it was superior military strength that settled the fate of the Sudan in favor of Great Britain.

It seems evident that in 1896 the Sudan was an independent country. The Mahdist revolt from Egypt in 1883 had certainly been justified. Egypt, who could not even rule herself, had given the Sudan a government which was economically burdensome and patently not interested in Sudanese rights or needs. Although it is true that the absolute dictatorship which supplanted the Egyptian rule was, in its tyrannical infancy, no improvement, by the time of the British conquest of the Sudan the Sudanese had less cause to complain about their government than they had had for centuries. Abdullah, who had become the real ruler of the Sudan, had for several years conducted himself in a manner which augured well for the future of independent Sudan.

Due to the efforts of this Sudanese Khalifa, the development of agriculture had advanced considerably. In sharp contrast to

⁴Theobald, The Mahdiya, 244.

⁵Cromer, Modern Egypt, II, 118; Theobald, The Mahdiya, 246.

the famines of the first years of Sudanese independence, the 1890's found this country plentifully supplied with grain, and its people well fed.⁶

With regard to law and order, Father Ohrwalder, a missionary who was held captive in the Sudan for ten years, commended the Khalifa's reorganization of the Mahdi's chaotic system of justice.⁷ It appears that in the suppression of crime Abhullah's government ordinarily acted honestly and with the good of the people at heart.

In the matter of taxation it is true that on occasion the Khalifa made large and sudden demands on his people. It is safe to say that when these special levies were added to the regular taxes, the people were often more heavily burdened financially than they had been under Egyptian rule. However, the lessening of the ordinary taxes, added to the fact that now their money at least remained in the country, made the Sudanese prefer the government of the Khalifa to that of Egypt.⁸

Even more important is the consideration that even those Sudanese who were working for the overthrow of the Khalifa did not want to hand their country over either to Egypt, their long standing enemy, or to non-Mohammedan Great Britain. Their

⁶Theobald, The Mahdiya, 183.

⁷Reverend Ohrwalder, Ten Years Captivity in the Mahdi's Camp, (London, 1892), 214.

⁸Theobald, The Mahdiya, 182.

national independence, which Egypt had recognized in the proclamation of 1884, as well as on a later occasion when the Egyptian High Commissioner was sent to the Mahdi to determine the boundary lines between the two countries,⁹ was something the Sudanese heartily wished to preserve.

Because England would benefit economically by control of the Sudan, and because the Sudanese government could easily be overthrown, the British refused to consider the possibility of the Sudan's right to its own government. Little or no consideration was given to the subject of possible injustice to the Sudanese inherent in the British conquest. On the other hand some lip service was paid to the Egyptian claims to this country. Britain sought to placate the Egyptian government as far as she could, consistent with her determination to maintain the real control of the country herself. The 1896-1899 campaign, fought for the most part with Egyptian money and men, was put forth as a venture aimed at returning the Sudan to Egypt. It was, therefore, necessary to give Egypt some part at least in the government of the Sudan. To achieve this end the condominium form of government was decided on by Great Britain. Lord Cromer explains that this British invention made the Sudan "Egyptian to such an extent as to satisfy equitable and political exigencies."¹⁰

⁹Abbas, The Sudan Question, 72.

¹⁰Cromer, Modern Egypt, II, 115.

However, the Egyptians were not pleased either with the condominium or even with the conquest of the Sudan itself. The Khedive and the Egyptian nationalists opposed the British instigated invasion of the Sudan from start to finish.¹¹ When the British informed the Khedive of their decision to retake the Sudan, he saw the action as one meant to further British rather than Egyptian interests. Certainly it was not instigated "at the request of Egypt"¹² as Britain claimed. Religiously, the Moslem Egyptians did not approve of their own army, officered and supplemented as it was by Christians.¹³ Economically, they felt their country needed further financial stability and such improvements as dams and reservoirs much more than it needed the Sudan at that time.¹⁴

Egyptian opposition to the decision to reconquer the Sudan was slight in comparison to their chagrin and helpless anger at the form of government Great Britain forced them to accept for the Sudan. Botrus Ghali Pasha, the Egyptian foreign minister who signed the 1899 Agreement, was assassinated. The Agreement itself was seen as a diplomatic trick by which Britain got the

¹¹Abbas, Sudan Question, 72.

¹²Moon, Imperialism and World Politics, 150.

¹³Abbas, Sudan Question, 57.

¹⁴Churchill, River War, 100.

Sudan and Egypt got the bills.¹⁵ With some justification the Egyptians felt that they might not have been accepted as co-rulers of the Sudan if that country had not been a financial liability. Actually, Egypt had little part in the government of the Sudan. The highest offices held by Egyptians in the Sudanese condominium government were those of mamurs, in reality assistants to assistant district commissioners.¹⁶

It must be admitted that British control of the Sudan did in many ways benefit both Egypt and the Sudan. Egypt had no longer to worry that a foreign power might interfere with the waters of the Nile. Also she was spared the difficulties of ruling the Sudan at a time when she required British assistance to govern even her own territory. As for the Sudan, the British provided the country with the best government it had ever known. As one modern scholar has written: "The Sudan has been very fortunate in attracting high quality British imperial administrators of a kind which inspired the epigram of the late H. A. L. Fisher: 'The Sudan, gentlemen, is a large country populated by blacks and governed by blues.'"¹⁷ The slave trade was abolished; agriculture was encouraged on a grand scale; taxes were appreciably lowered; the natives were to some extent educated and prepared for even-

¹⁵Abbas, Sudan Question, 52.

¹⁶Ibid., 51.

¹⁷Andrew Roth, "Dilemma in the Sudan," The Nation, CLXXIV (May 24, 1952), 499.

tual self-government.

Nevertheless, unless the principle is admitted that the end justifies the means, this episode of British imperialism must stand condemned. Either the Sudan was an independent country or it belonged to Egypt. In either case, the British conquest was an act of aggression flowing out of a series of similar acts by which Great Britain had unjustly maintained control of Egypt itself. It was an injustice which England thought necessary to maintain her position as a world power; it was an injustice approved by British nationalism; it was an injustice which brought definite benefits to both Egypt and the Sudan. But it was an injustice.

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APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by Clyde B. Kelly, S. J., has been read and approved by three members of the Department of History.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

May 9, 1957
Date

Charles H. Metzger, S.J.
Signature of Adviser