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THE RESIDENCY 455 456  
C A I R O .

March 22nd 1919.

No. 125.  
(8816)

My Lord,

I received your telegram No. 309 of March 7th during the night, and on March 8th I requested Major-General Watson, General Officer Commanding Force in Egypt, to arrest with as little delay as possible for deportation and internment in Malta the following leaders of the Nationalist agitation.-

- Saad ZAGLUL Pasha
- Ismail SIDKY Pasha
- Mohammed MAHMOUD Pasha
- Hamad el BASIL Pasha.

These arrests were carried out without incident during the afternoon, and the prisoners passed the night in Kasr-el-Nil Barracks. They were taken in closed motor cars to the 11 o'clock train for Port Said next morning, March 9th, and embarked on the "CALEDONIA", which sailed that evening.

The political crisis had now lasted for nearly four months. It had inevitably had an unsettling effect on the mind of the educated Cairo population and created a general feeling of uneasiness. When definite action was at last taken, it was only to be expected that some form of unfriendly manifestations would take place. These, as was natural, took the form of demonstrations by the students with whom Saad Zaglul was popular. On Sunday morning the students of the

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the Higher Colleges, Law, Agriculture, Engineering and Commerce made noisy demonstrations, entered the Medical School and forced the students to join them. I should report that during this incident Dr. Keatinge, Director of the School of Medicine and of Kasr-el-Aini Hospital, was knocked down, but received no injury. The Police dispersed this demonstration with difficulty and made 310 arrests.

The nature of events of March 9th showed that it might be necessary to call in Military assistance for the police. The General Officer Commanding, therefore, made arrangements for troops to be available early in the morning of the 10th who could be moved in motor lorries to the seat of disorder in case the City Police required reinforcement. Trouble began early and the mounted troop of the Cairo Police were roughly handled in trying to stop the El Azhar students, who had now joined the other students, coming to the centre of the City. The Commandant of Police was obliged to call for help, and at 9 a.m. General Watson took over the town. Prompt measures were taken for the protection of the Residency, bridges over the Nile and other important points. Pickets with machine guns and lewis guns were posted at convenient corners. The students were joined by the town roughs and a considerable amount of rioting, chiefly confined to breaking glass and uprooting trees in public gardens took place. The trams were smashed by the mob in the centre of the town and entirely ceased running in the course of the afternoon. The Military were compelled to fire and slight loss of life occurred.



occurred. Rowdiness died down in the evening and the night was quiet.

Next morning, March 11th, rioting recommenced in several parts of Cairo. At an early hour the rioters - mostly Azhar students and riff raff - gathered in the central parts of the town and marched down towards the railway works with the intention of bringing out the railwaymen. They were met by troops in the Station square, and after a few shots had been fired the mob dispersed with casualties. Twenty-one of the ring-leaders were arrested. While this was going on, disturbances took place in other parts of the town. Shops were pillaged and much damage was done in the Mousky Street.

A more serious feature than the rioting was the way in which Government Offices began to show signs of being affected by the general movement. The clerks of the Ministry of Public Works and Education yielded to pressure both by partisans of the movement outside, and by elements in the Ministries themselves, and left their offices.

I need not here report in detail the movement set on foot by the members of the Bar with a view to the suspension of the Administration of Justice. This matter has been fully reported in my despatch No. 113 of March 16th.

So far the Provinces had remained quiet; and it was only from Shebin-el-Kom, the chief town of Menufia, that disquieting reports were received. Here students were reported to have left their schools and prevented a train from leaving. Later in the day the train



train was allowed to proceed.

It was, however, by now obvious that the unrest might spread to the Provinces, and General Watson made arrangements for the despatch as soon as possible of detachments of British troops to the various important provincial centres and the Fayoum, to reassure the population and protect foreigners should occasion arise.

On March 12th, I felt myself in a position to inform Your Lordship by telegram that the general situation appeared more favourable. Cairo was outwardly quiet and life was normal except that the trams were not running. The employes of the Ministries who had left their posts on the 11th had returned to their offices, and there were indications that the strike of the advocates would be speedily settled. Shebin-el-Kom was reported quiet, and the only disturbance was in Tanta - always a nationalist hotbed. Here some three thousand demonstrators tried to rush the Railway Station, but British troops who had arrived by armoured train assisted the police in restoring order. They were obliged to use their machine gun, killing 11 and wounding 51. (Fifty-one).

Though no events of importance occurred on March 13th, the general atmosphere appeared less satisfactory than on the previous day. The movement showed signs of being better organized and more widely spread than had been expected. Some rioting and pillage took place in Cairo, chiefly in the Azhar quarter. Disturbance in this part is always difficult to handle, as it is desirable to prevent British troops approaching too near





near the Azhar Mosque. I had a long discussion with General Herbert, Officer Commanding Egyptian Army in Cairo, as to whether it would be advisable to employ Egyptian troops in this area. We finally decided that it would be best not to use them. Though General Herbert was of opinion that discipline would prevent Egyptian troops actually going against us, he could not but admit that the sympathies, both of the Egyptian officers and of the men, inclined towards the nationalists.

On March 14th the general situation was more serious. An armoured car on patrol in the Saida Zenab quarter of Cairo was attacked by a large crowd, and in the end was obliged to fire. Thirteen natives were killed and twenty-seven wounded. Later on in the morning five looters were caught and summarily shot. There were other disturbances throughout the City, but on a small scale.

Reports now began to come in that there was considerable unrest in the Provinces. Riots occurred in Damietta, where the Mamur reported the situation serious, and asked for the immediate despatch of Military assistance. The Police Station at Manouf was attacked, one man was killed and some wounded. Disquiet was reported at Beni-Suef, and some disorder at Mansura, following a procession of students demanding "Independence". Reports of isolated attacks on telegraphic and railway communications in different parts of the Delta gave indications of how widespread the agitation was, and that a most serious situation would arise if it continued. Upper Egypt and the Fayoum were reported quiet.



The situation grew rapidly more serious during March 15th. Organized attacks on communications were made in all directions. By mid-day all telegraph and telephone lines North of Cairo, except a Military line to Alexandria, had been cut. Crowds attacked the Station at Bulaq Dacrour, just South of Cairo, broke up the signal box and cut all telegraph wires: at Qaliub just North of Cairo, they pulled up the lines, thus severing the main railway communication between Cairo and Alexandria and Port Said. At Qaliub a crowd stormed the Station and attacked a passenger train. They were beaten off by British Officers with revolvers and finally dispersed. Many casualties were suffered by the mob and one British soldier was killed.

Grave news was received from the South. A horde of natives and Beduin from the Fayoum, estimated at nearly 7,000 attacked Markaz Wasta, disbanded the police, seized their arms, marched on the railway, and began to pull up the lines between Wasta and Recca Stations, a distance of about ten kilometres. The morning express from Cairo was attacked at Recca, where the mob smashed the windows of the train and sacked the mail van. Europeans in the train were robbed and roughly handled. The train eventually returned to Cairo.

Meanwhile the morning train from the Fayoum was attacked at Wasta Station, and Europeans in it - including an Inspector of the Ministry of Interior - narrowly escaped with their lives. They had to hand over all their money and anything of value to the mob. A British railway official on arrival at Wasta in his railway







telephone or rail communication whatsoever between Cairo and the Provinces. Many Stations on the suburban lines were burned and the track damaged. Some natives of Minet el Gahn, between Benha and Zagazig, attacked the Station which was guarded by British troops, who were compelled to fire, and an aeroplane assisted. Thirty were killed and nineteen wounded. There were no incidents in Cairo on the 16th, but the feeling of uneasiness seemed to increase as the various reports from the Provinces began to be known.

Reports received from Alexandria showed that the City was normal. A peaceful demonstration was held on the morning of the 16th, and a procession through the town cheered in front of the French, Italian and American Consulates, and abused the British.

On the 17th a demonstration of quite 10,000 people paraded the streets of Cairo, and cheered the French, Italian and American Agencies. The procession was led by Azhar students, who were followed by other students and apparently all the riff raff that could be collected in the town. The proceedings were well organized, and no incident occurred until at the very end, when a party of soldiers had to interfere with the demonstrators, and a Greek shot dead a student carrying a banner. The procession then dispersed. The Greek was arrested and is to be tried by Court Martial. In Alexandria there was trouble in the dock quarter of the town, where the employes of the Khedivial Mail Company endeavoured to join the students. The Military had to fire on the mob. Fourteen were killed and twenty wounded.



Cairo being now entirely isolated except by air, the situation in the Provinces became rapidly worse during March 17th and 18th. Sharkia province alone remained quiet. Gharbia, Menufia, Dakalia and Behera were all in a state of open revolt. Riots occurred in practically every markaz town. Most railway stations were burned and agricultural roads destroyed. Rosetta Markaz was burned on the 17th. Zifta was practically in the hands of the mob. Teh-el-Barud was in a state of siege and the Markaz captured. The Turkish flag was hoisted on the Shebrekit Markaz. Ibrahim Halim Pasha, Mudir of Behera, was knocked down while trying to quell the riots at Damannour on the 17th and received severe injuries, but I am glad to learn he is recovering. A British detachment was despatched from Alexandria to Rosetta and a strong force to Damannour to deal with the serious position which had arisen there from the rising of the Beduins in Western Behera.

Since March 20th the situation in the Delta, though still unsatisfactory, may be said to have improved. Pillaging, looting and cattle stealing have continued, but to a reduced extent. Communication on a limited scale has now been restored with Alexandria and Port Said both by rail and telegraph. British troops have arrived in all parts of the Delta, and it is hoped that they will be able to restore order very shortly.

No definite news has been received regarding the attitude of the Beduin in Western Behera and elsewhere. At Medinet-el-Fayoum on March 19th they attacked the town, but were driven off by a British force with 400 casualties. The Commander-in-Chief has issued a severe warning to them to remain in their encampments,



encampments, and it is hoped that this will have the desired effect; but if they recommence raiding on a large scale, they will have to be repressed with severity. Since the above incident at Medinet-el-Fayoum, the Fayoum has remained quiet.

During the last four days Cairo has remained outwardly normal: The *trams* are running again under strong military guards, and except for an attempt to destroy material at the Bulac railway crossing in Cairo, nothing of note has occurred. This latter disturbance was soon quelled, but the troops had to fire and there were many casualties. On March 19th the women of Cairo endeavoured to make a large demonstration in the streets but they were dispersed. The leading ladies eventually called at the American Agency in closed carriages and received an ovation from crowds of students who had collected outside. A general cabo strike was declared on March 20th, but the men began to return to work on March 22nd.

Very little news can be obtained of the situation South of Beni-Suef since March 16th, and such reports as have been received give reason for anxiety. On that day Minia was reported to be quiet. In my telegram No.410 I reported the news of the train having arrived at Beni-Suef from the South, in the guards' van of which were discovered the naked and mutilated bodies of six murdered British officers. No details have yet been received of this shocking incident; and it is feared that the loss of life in this train may have been greater than was at first thought. A British column is already on the way to Assiut, and it is hoped that



it will be able to throw further light on this affair.

It appears that outbreaks of disorder have occurred at various places in Southern Egypt, but have generally been of a less violent character than those north of Minia. Reliable information shows that the railway telegraph and telephones in Assouan Mudiria have all been cut, but otherwise little damage done. The sugar factories in Upper Egypt are said to be safe.

Seventy-one passengers from Luxor have arrived at Wady-Halfa by river.

The above brief description compiled from reports received from official sources will, I trust, give Your Lordship a rough picture of events in Egypt during the past fortnight. Much of the information received day by day proves to be inaccurate and exaggerated later, but in the present despatch I have been careful to include only such details as are almost certainly true.

I have the honour to be,

With the highest respect,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's most obedient, humble Servant,

*M. Cheetham*