



حبر أبيض
WHITE INK



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Urabi and Abdul Hamid II

Some would see this title as an interesting title; how would we compare Urabi to Abdul Hamid II; as the first is merely a military leader in the army of the State or Khedivate of Egypt affiliated to Ottoman Empire whose Sultan is Abdul Hamid II?

In fact, comparison or opposition is required and important here. It is a comparison between nationalism concept, represented here by Urabi, which is considered one of the most important symbols of Egyptian patriotism, and concept of Islamist International, represented here by Abdul Hamid II with his project which he called "Pan- Islamism" i.e. unity of Islamic World, even those countries which are not under Ottoman sovereignty.

Urabi was basically a soldier in the Egyptian army. Such army was established by Mohammed Ali according to modern European systems, after he had applied the rule of compulsory recruitment to Egyptians. Then, Urabi was promoted to ranks of officers in reigns of Sa'id and Isma'il. It is necessary, here, to mention a historical story narrated about Mohammed Ali; army commander, Ibrahim Basha who is at the same time the son of Mohammed Ali, asked his father to allow promotion of Egyptian soldiers to ranks of officers. However, Mohammed Ali refused this, he told his son, Ibrahim Basha, that: "the first Egyptian who will be promoted to ranks of officers will work on a coup against us or our family afterwards". Mohammed Ali, actually, referred to the role of soldiers regarding the growth of national spirit.

Indeed, as soon as Egyptians were allowed to be promoted to ranks of officers, their national consciousness, and their sense of contradiction between them and senior officers of Turks and Circassians started. Blood which was shed by Egyptian soldiers in various battles helped them to gain self- confidence, and to feel that this land on which they live belongs to them, not to the Turks. Thus, slogan of Urabi Revolution "Egypt for Egyptians" has emerged. Military wing represented by Urabi and his fellows of Egyptian officers started to coalesce with Egyptian civil wing. Facts of the well-known Urabi Revolution started. Revolution promulgated the first constitution of Egypt regulating the nature of political relations in the country. Voices rose calling for removing Khedive Tawfiq himself. It was as if Egypt was on a date with the first light of Egyptian nationalism.

European countries considered this as a threat to their interests in Egypt, especially Suez Canal. European fleets began to move towards Alexandria. At that time, Urabi asked Sultan Abdul Hamid II to send reinforcements of Ottoman army in order to support Egyptian army to stand in face of English fleet. However, Abdul Hamid II refused this as he deemed that Urabi Revolution is a national revolution that contradicts with the concept of Pan-Islamism which he promoted; and that the victory of Urabi might arouse enthusiasm of other nationalities in the rest of Ottoman states. On the other hand, Abdul Hamid did not want to provoke Britain.

Moreover, Britain requested from Abdul Hamid, in his capacity as Ottoman Sultan and Caliph of Muslims, to declare the disobedience of Urabi so that he would be delegitimized. Abdul Hamid did not hesitate to do so, on the pretext that Urabi did not follow his advice to stay calm and turn in his weapon.

Consequently, Urabi has been defeated; Britain invaded Egypt in 1882 AD; and its occupation remained until an evacuation agreement was concluded in 1954 AD.

Story of Urabi and Abdul Hamid is the story of a struggle between nationalism and Islamist International during the second half of the nineteenth century.