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The Sudan Under Wingate

Administration in the Anglo-Egyptian
Sudan 1899-1916

Gabriel Warburg



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THE SUDAN UNDER WINGATE



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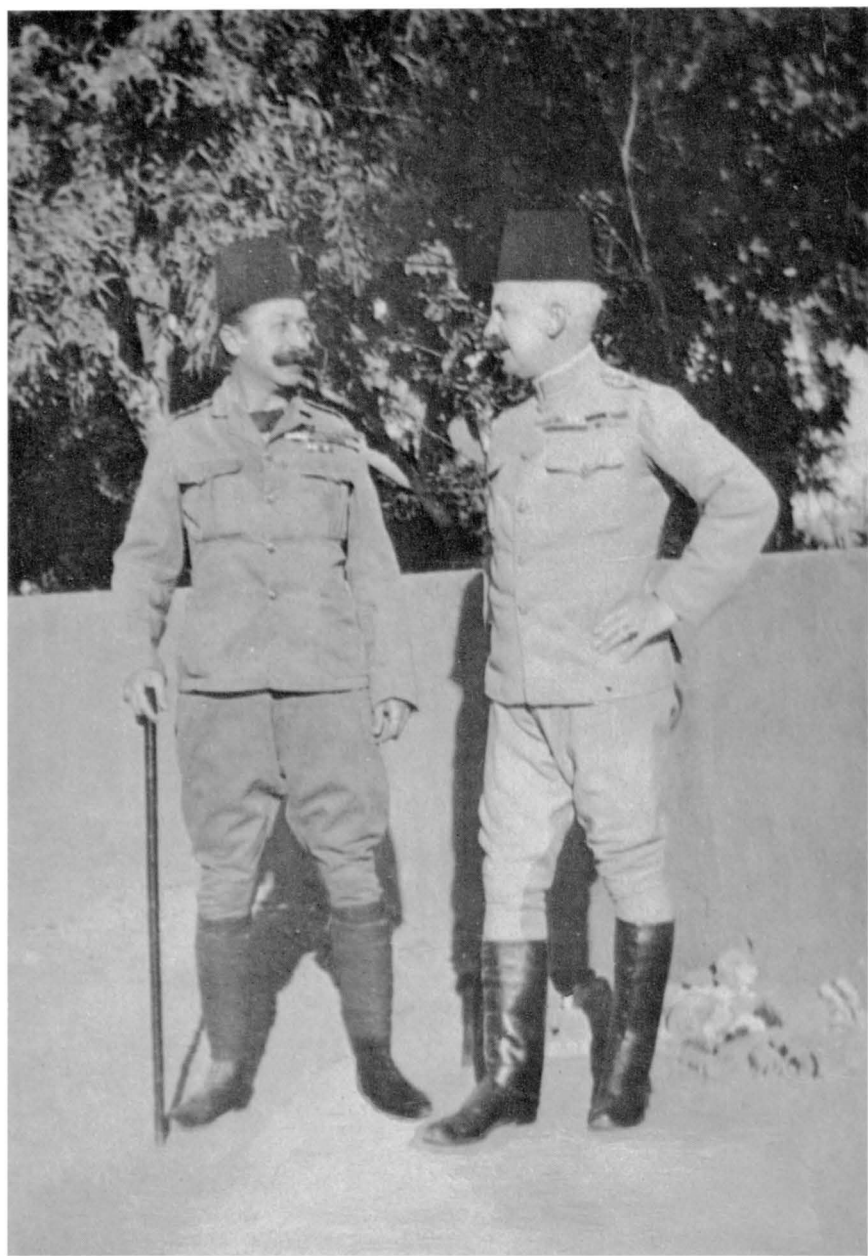
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SIR F. REGINALD WINGATE AND KARL VON SLATIN PASHA

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Administration in the Anglo-Egyptian
Sudan 1899-1916

Gabriel Warburg
Haiifa University, Israel



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Preface

THE purpose of this book is to describe and to analyse the administrative policies in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan during the formative years of the Condominium. The period chosen for this purpose corresponds with the governor-generalship of Sir Reginald Wingate, whose seventeen years as governor-general of the Sudan, had a lasting effect on later developments. This book is therefore primarily about Wingate, Slatin Pasha and a handful of British officials who formulated and executed the Sudan's administrative policy. It also tries to assess the role played by the Egyptian government and its representatives in the Sudan, in shaping the government of a country, of which they were supposed to be co-rulers. Finally, the book attempts to estimate the effects of administration on the population of the Sudan and to find out whether certain groups within the population influenced the development of government policies as time went on.

I have tried to evaluate the impact of the British and Egyptian governments in formulating policies in the Sudan. However, I limited myself to administrative aspects without trying to assess the political implications of the reconquest. Certain spheres of administration have been dealt with quite briefly. The development of education in the Northern Sudan has been covered adequately by Mr. Mohammed Omar Beshir, while Dr. L. M. Sanderson has devoted her research to education in the South. In view of these works, and also the fascinating autobiography of Shaykh Bābikr Badrī, the founder of girls' education in the Sudan, I have decided to limit myself only to those aspects of education which had a direct bearing on other fields of administration. Similarly, the development of communications and transport has been described by Mr. R. L. Hill and Dr. O. M. O. Abdu, while the beginnings of a medical service were dealt with by Dr. H. C. Squires. Finally, the economic financial and agricultural policies during the early years of the Condominium, have been admirably dealt with by Mr. J. Stone, Dr. A. W. Abdel Rahim and Mr. A. Gaitskill.¹

The source materials used in writing this book are primarily the official and private papers of the Sudan government officials who worked in the Sudan until the end of the First World War. Most of these papers have been stored at the Sudan Archive in

the School of Oriental Studies, University of Durham. Other collections are those of the Church Missionary Society in London, the Anti-Slavery Society at Oxford, private and official records at the Public Record Office, London, and the *Sudan Intelligence Reports* at the War Office Library, London. This brings me to a major shortcoming, namely the lack of adequate source material of Egyptian or Sudanese origin. Ample use has been made of the few existing autobiographies written by inhabitants of the Sudan. Nonetheless, in the absence of adequate sources, I tried to assess the reactions of the Sudanese to their new rulers through the reflection of their views in the private papers of the administrators. I can only hope that further evidence will emerge and enable historians to shed some light on this problem.

For the spelling of Arabic names and terms I have followed the accepted system of transliteration which will enable readers to find these terms in Arabic publications and dictionaries. The only exception is in regard to names of larger towns which are spelt in the conventional form, e.g. El Obeid, Khartoum, Suakin.

Acknowledgements

My thanks are due to many who assisted me in writing this book and in preparing the thesis, on which it is largely based. In the first place I acknowledge my gratitude to Professor P. M. Holt, who guided me throughout my research and made many suggestions with regard to the final form of this book. I owe many thanks to Professor G. Baer, whose initial encouragement prompted me to undertake this research, and who offered me invaluable advice. Professor G. N. Sanderson, Dr. H. Shaked and Dr. N. Rose read the manuscript and offered many recommendations regarding its structure and contents; numerous suggestions have been included in the book and improved its final form. However, none of the above hold any responsibility for any errors or shortcomings the book may still hold.

I express my gratitude to Mr. I. J. C. Foster, keeper of Oriental books at the University Library, Durham, who enabled me to pursue my research at the Sudan Archive. I am also grateful to the librarians of the War Office, the Public Record Office, the Church Missionary Society, and the keeper of the Anti-Slavery archive, for allowing me to use their valuable collections.

For valuable assistance I would like to express appreciation to the late Sir Harold A. MacMichael who placed his vast experience of the Sudan at my disposal. Also Lady C. Bonham Carter, who answered my inquisitive questions regarding the work of the late Sir Edgar Bonham Carter, first legal secretary of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan.

Quotations taken from Crown Copyright records in the Public Record Office and other archives appear by permission of the Controller of H. M. Stationery Office. I would like to thank the editors of *Asian and African Studies* and *Middle Eastern Studies* for allowing me to include parts of two of my papers, which had previously been published in their journals, in the present volume.

My thanks are extended to the Central Research Fund of the University of London, the Friends of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in London, and the Haifa University College, whose financial generosity enabled me to pursue my research in the most favourable conditions.

I am gratefully indebted to Mrs. J. Reinhold who prepared the book for print and assisted me in eliminating many remaining mistakes. Finally, I would like to thank my wife Rachel without whose constant encouragement and immeasurable help this book could never have been written.

GABRIEL WARBURG

Haifa University.
November 1969.

Abbreviations

- CAO* Sudan Government Civil Administration Orders.
CMSA Church Missionary Society Archive.
DNBS Dictionary of National Biography, Supplement.
GGC Governor-General's Council, minutes of meetings.
GGR Reports on the Finances, Administration, and Conditions of the Sudan, (Confidential).
FO Foreign Office Archives.
Hill, BD R. Hill, *A Biographical Dictionary of the Sudan* (2nd ed.) London 1967. Reprinted by Frank Cass & Co. Ltd.
SAD Sudan Archive, at the School of Oriental Studies, University of Durham.
SG Sudan Gazette.
SIR Sudan Intelligence Report.
SNR Sudan Notes and Records.
SPS Sudan Political Service, 1899–1929, Khartoum 1930.



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The Governors-General, Kitchener and Wingate

The reconquest of the Sudan and the Condominium Agreement

'... ON 4th September [1898] the British and Egyptian flags were hoisted with due ceremony on the walls of the ruined palace at Khartoum . . .' and the Mahdist state came to an end.¹ The overthrow of Mahdism had been propagated for many years by some of the senior British officers of the Egyptian army. Most notable among them was Major Wingate,² head of the intelligence department, whose book *Mahdism and the Egyptian Sudan* was the beginning of a concerted effort to revive British interest in the reconquest of the Sudan. When on 13 March 1898, the British government ordered Kitchener³ to advance into the Sudan, public opinion in Britain was well prepared for the forthcoming campaign. Britain was furnished with a pretext for the expedition by the defeat of the Italian forces at Adowa on 1 March 1896. However, subsequent evidence has proved that the British decision of 11-12 March was prompted by European reasons connected with the Triple Alliance. Egyptian interests in the Upper Nile played no role in the government's considerations, nor did the struggle for the control of the Nile, which became a dominating factor only in the later stages of the reconquest.⁴ The military campaign which brought about the collapse of the Mahdist state started on 18 March 1896 and came to its successful conclusion on 24 November 1899. It was planned and executed by Kitchener, the sirdar of the Egyptian army, assisted by the information supplied by Wingate, Slatin,⁵ and the intelligence department. However, the crushing defeat of the Khalifa's army in the battles of the Atbara, Karārī, and Umm Diwaykarāt, was first and foremost the result of the technological superiority of the advancing conquerors.

The overthrow of the Mahdist state forced the British government to determine the status of the reconquered Sudan as well as its future administration. Until June 1898 there was every indication

that the British government intended to restore Egyptian rule in the Sudan. In June 1898 Cromer pointed out to Salisbury that after the conquest of Omdurman the French might be encountered in the Upper Nile. In that case the Anglo-Egyptian commander would have to lay claim to the territory in the name either of the Egyptian government or of the British government, or of both. Thus, in July 1898 the 'two flags' policy was adopted which marked the beginning of Anglo-Egyptian rule in the Sudan. The Condominium Agreement which came into being as a result of this policy excluded Egyptian and international authority from the Sudan and vested the supreme civil and military command in the British-nominated governor-general. On 19 January 1899 Lord Cromer and Buṭrus Ghālī Pasha signed the 'Agreement for the Administration of the Sudan', and on the same day Lord Kitchener of Khartoum was appointed as the first sirdar and governor-general of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan.⁶

Kitchener's governor-generalship

The relationship between the governor-general of the Sudan and the British agent and consul-general in Egypt was largely determined during the short period of Kitchener's governor-generalship. Following the battle of Karārī, the relations between Cromer and Kitchener reached a crisis. Cromer had just completed the first draft of the Sudan agreement. Included in it were two articles relating to the control of the consul-general over Sudanese affairs. Kitchener strongly objected and during his visit to England persuaded Salisbury to alter the proposed constitution. In a letter to Cromer, Salisbury summed up Kitchener's arguments:

... the Governor General of the Soudan is to govern and is to spend the money he has. In both cases he is, of course, to obey orders received from you ... but he shall not by a formal document be forbidden to pass an Ordinance or to spend 100 £ without preliminary approval ...'

As a result of this letter the original draft of the proposed Condominium Agreement was amended. This draft had contained, under article IV, a passage stating that the governor-general of the Sudan could not promulgate laws or regulations without the prior consent of the Khedive and the British consul-general in Cairo. Article VI stated that in all financial matters the Sudan would be controlled by the Egyptian ministry of finance. Both these articles were deleted from the final text of the agreement. The financial regulation of the Sudan government thus became a separate document. This gave a much greater latitude to the governor-general of the Sudan who was empowered to make

appointments of personnel and changes in the budget, with the only proviso that, should such changes entail any increase in the liability of Egypt, they must be approved by the ministry of finance and the Egyptian council of ministers.⁸ The signed agreement, as amended, contained no mention of the control exercised by the British consul-general in Cairo over the governor-general. Salisbury, therefore, suggested that ' . . . it will be necessary to take an acknowledgement from each new Governor-General, on his appointment, of his subordination to the British Agency . . .'.⁹ In the absence of any clearly defined regulations, it was left to Cromer and Kitchener to find a workable *modus vivendi* for the future relationship. On 19 January 1899 Cromer wrote to Kitchener stating the principles of his relations with the Sudan: ' . . . Generally what I want is to control the big questions, but to leave all the detail and execution to be managed locally . . .'.¹⁰ However, it was soon apparent that these general regulations were open to misinterpretation.

Kitchener's aims were clear when he became governor-general. He had avenged the murder of Gordon and proved that the Egyptian army could fight. Now, his first priority was to re-establish the seat of government in Khartoum, in the palace where Gordon had ruled, and to transfer the remnants of the population of Omdurman back to the former capital. The rebuilding of Khartoum was ordered by Kitchener in November 1898, while enjoying a hero's welcome in England. Inadequate sums had been set aside for this project in the Sudan budget, and Kitchener set out to find the necessary funds through less conventional methods. On 26 January 1899, he directed Wingate to ' . . . loot like blazes. I want any quantity of marble stairs, marble pavings, iron railings, looking glasses and fittings; doors, windows, furniture of all sorts . . .'.¹¹ Again he ordered Wingate not to send any of the Sudan accounts to Gorst, the financial adviser of the Egyptian government. Even Maxwell,¹² the new governor of Khartoum province, was left in the dark and complained to Wingate that everything was sacrificed in order to facilitate the rebuilding of Khartoum. Cromer attempted to interfere, but to no avail. On two occasions Kitchener's obstinacy had far-reaching consequences. First, he decided to stop the field allowance granted to the Egyptian army serving in the Sudan; Cromer's order to renew this allowance went unheeded. Secondly, Kitchener adamantly refused to cancel some of the trainloads of building materials destined for Khartoum which were needed to supply grain for the famine stricken provinces. *The Times* correspondent who wrote in April 1900 that the building of Khartoum was executed ' . . . by the autocratic will of a single man . . .' was therefore not far from the mark. But he made the following

criticisms. Firstly, owing to hasty legislation, most of the town's lands had passed into the hands of a few speculators. Secondly, Kitchener's assumption that the population of Omdurman would move to Khartoum proved fallacious. Khartoum remained an empty city, while the inhabitants of Omdurman were completely neglected.¹³

The Anglo-Egyptian administration of the Sudan started before Kitchener became governor-general. The reconquest had taken more than two years, during which period the new administration was slowly extended, first to Halfā and then to Dongola and Berber. By April 1899, the reconquered territories of the country had been divided into five provinces and three districts, each under the governorship of a British officer, with Egyptian officers acting as *ma'mūrs*.¹⁴ A number of ordinances were promulgated, dealing mainly with tenure of property, taxation, the licensing of firearms, and the sale of alcoholic liquors. Kitchener also sent a set of instructions to all governors, inspectors, and *ma'mūrs* laying down his principles of government.¹⁵ The main premise of these instructions was that '... The absolute uprooting by the Dervishes of the old system of government has afforded an opportunity for initiating a new administration more in harmony with the requirements of the Soudan ...' The new administration was to be built by '... individual action of British officers, working independently, but with a common purpose, on the individual natives whose confidence they have gained ...'. Kitchener warned his governors that this could be achieved only through the '... better class of native, through whom we may hope gradually to influence the whole population ...'. Furthermore, the governors were warned against trusting the people of the Sudan who make things appear as pleasant to their superiors as possible. The treatment of the inhabitants was to be just but severe: '... The Government should do nothing which could be interpreted as a sign of weakness, and all insubordination must be promptly and severely suppressed ...' The memorandum included also detailed instructions to the Egyptian *ma'mūrs* who were warned against accepting bribes, and were ordered '... to make the government of your district as great a contrast as possible to that of the Dervishes ...' Lastly, the memorandum mentioned the three main principles to be observed by the Sudan government in the coming years. These were: the toleration of domestic slavery, low taxation and the encouragement of Orthodox Islam as opposed to Sufism.

Having laid down these general principles, Kitchener left his new governors to use their own initiative. He was not concerned with central administrative measures, and even refused to consider the *Sudan Annual Report*, which he ordered Wingate to compile in

his name.¹⁶ In general, this system of decentralization might have been acceptable in a country like the Sudan, devoid of effective communications and hampered by immense distances, provided that the governor-general enjoyed the respect and trust of his provincial governors. Unfortunately, Kitchener's relations with the British officers were predominantly based on fear. Hence the criticisms they offered never reached his ear, but were received by Wingate, who could only offer his sympathy.¹⁷ Cromer, who knew Kitchener well, attempted to change the latter's attitude to his subordinates. In a private letter sent on the day of his appointment as governor-general, Cromer warned Kitchener, '... In the first place, pray encourage your subordinates to speak up and tell you when they do not agree with you. They are all far too much inclined to be frightened of you ...'¹⁸ It was not only fear which disturbed the relationship between Kitchener and his subordinates. They also lost faith in his ability to construct a civil administration and were concerned over his absolute absorption in the rebuilding of Khartoum to the exclusion of everything else.

When in 1899 famine broke out in the Sudan, conditions were still unchanged. Kitchener had received ample warning as to the coming plight. Towards the end of 1898, over seventy Sudan notables presented him with a petition in which they complained that the people of the Sudan had been robbed of all they possessed. Moreover, they claimed that owing to the compulsory recruitment of agricultural slaves into the army, cultivation was at a standstill, and hence famine was imminent.¹⁹ As early as April 1898, Talbot²⁰ wrote to Wingate: '... I fancy we've skimmed the people pretty well. I hope they will have enough left for seed ...'²¹ By April 1899, Talbot reported that on the White Nile '... people live upon water and nuts and are dying in large numbers ...'²² Yet, despite these warnings and Cromer's repeated demands, Kitchener refused to take any measures to alleviate the people's plight. He maintained that the famine aided his policy of depriving the Khalifa of local support, and left for a two months' vacation in England. This same attitude prevailed in Kitchener's treatment of the Egyptian army. The army was employed in constructing the Sudan railways and in the works' department, without receiving additional remuneration. But it was not only in the financial sphere that Kitchener's attitude manifested itself. He also regarded the Egyptian officers with profound distrust, as expressed in his *Memorandum to Mudirs*. Before leaving the Sudan, he reiterated this distrust to Maxwell, who duly reported it to Wingate:

... the last thing he said to me was to keep this in mind. The fact is they [the Egyptian officers] are not to be trusted and he always said

even a British officer with no experience whatever would be better than a discontented intriguing Egyptian . . .²³

Kitchener's treatment of his officers, and his administrative measures, had won him the fear and mistrust of most of his subordinates. The destruction of the Mahdi's tomb, and the treatment of his remains, turned certain sections of public opinion in Britain against him. The Mahdi's tomb was erected in Omdurman, according to the Khalifa's orders, on the spot where he had died and was buried. It became a centre of worship and of pilgrimage, thus replacing the pilgrimage to Mecca, which had been discontinued during the Mahdia. The order issued by Kitchener to raze the tomb to the ground and to cast the Mahdi's bones into the Nile, caused widespread resentment in Britain. Throughout the crisis, Cromer and the British officials in the Sudan fully backed Kitchener's order to destroy the Mahdi's tomb. Kitchener argued that the destruction was dictated by political considerations, and that it was fully backed by the orthodox Muslim leaders.²⁴ This attitude prevailed when a few months later a Mahdist insurrection was reported from the Blue Nile. On 27 August, Muḥammad Sharīf (one of the Mahdi's Khalifas) and two of the Mahdi's sons were killed, and fifty-five prisoners taken. The insurrection seems to have been a minor affair, only three men of the Egyptian army force being slightly wounded. Yet Kitchener, fearing that any leniency might be interpreted as weakness, decided to execute all the prisoners and to arrest all those implicated in the revolt. Rodd, who was acting consul-general in Cromer's absence, refused to comply with Kitchener's demand, because ' . . . of the effect on public opinion in England of a wholesale execution . . .'²⁵

Kitchener's term of office as governor-general should probably be regarded as an extension of his work as sirdar, rather than as a new venture of a civil administrator. His desire to leave the Sudan was first expressed in September 1898, and persisted throughout his governor-generalship. Hence, it could hardly be expected that he would devote his time and his talents to the tedious details of long term government. The glory of rebuilding Khartoum and the governor-general's palace, and the foundation of Gordon College, were bound to appeal more to Kitchener who regarded his sojourn in the Sudan as purely temporary. Cromer, who originally proposed Kitchener's appointment as governor-general, soon changed his mind. He realized that the details of civilian government were beyond Kitchener's comprehension and hence did not insist that he should remain in the Sudan. On 18 December 1899 Kitchener was appointed as Lord Roberts's Chief of Staff in the Boer War, and a week later he sailed for South Africa. To his successor he

left a skeleton staff, a famine-stricken country and an army rife with discontent. It is no wonder, therefore, that when he expressed his wish to return to the Sudan after the Boer War, Cromer objected strongly and wrote: '... He would not be able to hold the Soudan without a large British force...'²⁶

Wingate's governor-generalship

Wingate was appointed governor-general of the Sudan and sirdar of the Egyptian army on 23 December 1899. Up to the battle of Karārī, Wingate had been in charge of military intelligence and so had played an important role in preparing the reconquest. He had established close relations with many of the Sudanese shaykhs and with the help of Slatin and Na'ūm Shuqayr²⁷ had succeeded in providing valuable information for the advancing Anglo-Egyptian forces. With the battle nearing its end, Wingate knew that the importance of military intelligence was bound to decline. He, therefore, decided to seek a post which would secure his future in case Kitchener decided to leave. In a letter to Kitchener, Wingate explained his views about the reorganization of the intelligence department and its division into quite distinct military and civil branches. He suggested that he should head the civil branch in Cairo, and coordinate policies with the British agency.²⁸ Wingate was at this stage next to Kitchener on the Egyptian army seniority list. His presence in Cairo in close proximity to Lord Cromer and at the head of the Sudan office, could therefore place him in a better position when the next governor-general was appointed. In a letter to Rodd, Cromer's first secretary at the agency, Wingate stated his views as to his future prospects:

... The departure of Hunter has placed me in the position of second in command of the Egyptian Army; I do not say for a moment that in the event of the departure of the present Sirdar, I should be selected to succeed him; at the same time I should not submit to any other officer now in the Egyptian Army being given the preference over me to succeed the present Sirdar. It seems to me quite possible that some senior general from outside the E.A. [Egyptian Army] may succeed, but under any circumstances I should, as head of the Sudan Office, be in a better position to have my claims considered ... if I were an Anglo-Egyptian than if I were a purely British official ...²⁹

Cromer had mentioned the possibility of Wingate's appointment to the governor-generalship as early as May 1899. He had known Wingate for fifteen years and held his achievements in the intelligence department in high esteem. Moreover, Cromer knew that Wingate would be easier to control than a general nominated

by the war office, whose appointments Cromer regarded with complete mistrust. The appointment of a civilian governor-general was not considered at that time, as the whole country was ruled by military officers. For these reasons, when Kitchener was ordered to leave for the Boer War, Wingate's nomination for the governor-generalship seems to have been unopposed.

Wingate's appointment was greeted with satisfaction by many of the Egyptian army officers, who had suffered from Kitchener's autocratic methods.³⁰ *The Times* correspondent in Khartoum described the atmosphere which was created by the appointment as '... a general expectation as of something springlike and mild ...'.³¹ Even *al-Ahrām* accepted Wingate as the best possible choice, though commenting that it would have been better to appoint an Egyptian.³² For Wingate himself, the initiation into the long-cherished post of governor-general could hardly have been more difficult. Many of the veteran officers who had been administering the provinces had left to take part in the Boer War, and before Wingate could wind up his affairs in Cairo, a mutiny of a Sudanese battalion broke out in Omdurman. Furthermore, the country was impoverished by continuous wars culminating in the famine of 1899. Cultivation and trade were practically at a standstill owing to the decline in population, the tribal policy of the Khalifa 'Abdallāhi, and the trade and agricultural policy adopted by Kitchener. These were some of the difficulties faced by Wingate when, with a handful of British officers inexperienced in administration and with little knowledge of local languages, aided by Egyptian officers and officials whom he did not trust, he set about to build up the civil administration of the Sudan.

Wingate's powers as governor-general and sirdar were the same as those of his predecessor. The following definition which appeared in *The Times* is a fairly accurate summary :

... Everything derives from the will of the Governor General ... He unites in himself, and delegates from himself, all legislative, executive and judicial powers ... He 'notifies' his ordinances to the joint Sovereigns, but he is under no obligation to attend to their advice ...³³

The governor-general was, to a certain extent, controlled by the British consul-general in Egypt, but apart from that his authority was not limited either by representative bodies or by public opinion. The consultations which did take place on an executive level, were undertaken by Wingate voluntarily, at least until 1910 when the governor-general's council was instituted. During the seventeen years of Wingate's governor-generalship, the underlying principle emerging was one of reconstruction. Development was slow, and consistent, but lacking in outstanding episodes. The Sudan emerged