

Reassurance

The position of Sidqi Pasha's Ministry has never at any moment been stronger or more secure than it is today. It enjoys the favor and protection of His Majesty the King, just as it simultaneously enjoys the complete confidence of Parliament. Yet certain special circumstances and conditions may perhaps lead to modifications within the Ministry, for no ministry can remain forever in office. There is no harm in the Prime Minister joining together these two contradictions in a speech so brief that one reads it in scarcely two minutes. The Prime Minister is weary, and a weary man may perhaps be excused for reconciling opposites. The Prime Minister is also a genius, and a genius may perhaps be pardoned for uniting contradictions. In truth, the reconciliation of opposites and the union of contradictions are privileges granted only to the exhausted whose minds can no longer think straightforwardly, or to the geniuses who rise above ordinary human understanding and speak words beyond interpretation. And our Prime Minister is unquestionably a genius. Our Prime Minister was ill and has now, thank God, recovered from his illness, though he remains fatigued and overburdened. The proof of this—if proof is needed—is that the newspapers overflowed with reports which no one denied. Everyone had agreed that our Prime Minister would be welcomed in a magnificent celebration and would deliver a great political speech upon his safe return, God willing. Then suddenly the political speech itself became doubtful, surrounded by uncertainty and suspicion. Next his secretary arrived a week in advance in great haste, visiting prominent figures among the pillars of this happy era. Before even a single night had passed—God forgive us—the great celebration itself became doubtful and uncertain, and it was said that it had been postponed indefinitely. Delegations had already been organized and were preparing their luggage, only to be told: stay where you are and rest yourselves. Speeches had already been written or were in the process of being composed, only to be told to dissolve into nothingness and let every word return to its source, every meaning to the noble place from which it came. There would be no reception, no celebration, no contest in eloquence and rhetoric, because the Prime Minister is weary and wishes to rest, and no one should burden him further. The Prime Minister has recovered from illness, but both he and Egypt are anxious that the health God has restored to him be preserved for the management of public affairs and the rescue of the country from the dangers now surrounding it on every side. Our Prime Minister is a genius beyond doubt, and he is weary beyond doubt. For one or both of these reasons, he was able to reconcile opposites and unite contradictions. Thus he declared yesterday to the offices of Al-Ahram that the position of Sidqi Pasha's Ministry had never been stronger or more secure than it is today, while in the very same conversation he also declared that special conditions and circumstances might lead to modifications within the Ministry, since no government can remain in office forever. The Ministry is therefore immeasurably strong and immeasurably secure, yet despite this it may still be modified, because no ministry can remain

permanently in office. Such speech may perhaps be understood by the weary or by the geniuses. But neither you nor I are weary or geniuses. We therefore deserve complete forgiveness if we fail to understand these words properly or arrive at the conclusions intended by their author. And indeed, did their author intend anything at all? People like you and me, whom God has mercifully spared from illness and exhaustion—at least for the time being—and denied the gift of genius, merely shake their heads, shrug their shoulders, and either frown at the violation of reason or smile at the abandonment of sound thinking. Then a faint cloud passes across their faces containing both pity for the weary and admiration for the geniuses. For a Ministry whose strength and solidity have supposedly never been greater ought not to admit modification or alteration. Such a government imposes itself upon men, upon time, and upon circumstances until weakness reaches it from one direction or another. And if weakness comes because its Prime Minister has long been ill, or because its policies have failed disgracefully, or because one of its closest friends has been transferred or dismissed, then such a government no longer requires what people politely call “modification.” Rather, it requires what people honestly call change: not the replacement of a few individuals, but resignation and the formation of an entirely new Ministry. Everything suggests to people like you and me—people whom God still permits some measure of health and denies the privilege of genius—that our Ministry now stands in precisely such a situation, one in which change and resignation have become unavoidable. Our Prime Minister has suffered illness for a long time. He has now recovered, but he ought to rest rather than immediately resume political activity. And the policy of our Ministry has failed shamefully. It neither won over its opponents through wisdom and persuasion, nor crushed them through cunning or excessive violence. Instead it now stands exactly where it stood more than three years ago before a strong and determined people who refuse today, just as they refused before, to surrender their demands for justice or their insistence upon governing themselves according to their own will rather than the will of others. Nor has the Ministry failed only in this. The economic crisis worsens until hunger threatens the whole people. Public security deteriorates until people almost fear venturing out after dark. Foreigners grow increasingly insolent, until missionaries meddle freely with the sons and daughters of the nation, and Europe now conspires against us to force us to pay the interest on our debts in gold rather than paper currency, although Europe itself has escaped the burden of gold and many of its states have even escaped the burden of debt altogether. We ourselves have become strangers in our own land. Companies exploit us as they please and drive our workers into hunger and begging. Meanwhile the Ministry smiles serenely and confidently. Laws are enacted only to be ignored, and ministers themselves violate those laws. Favoritism and partiality among officials corrupt everything, destroying confidence and hope and spreading hatred and resentment. Everything in Egypt has decayed until corruption has nearly reached its furthest limits. Indeed, if someone claimed that this Ministry was established only to dissolve the people’s strength, expose their weaknesses, and subject them to every

form of evil, he would scarcely be accused of exaggeration. And Egypt has gained nothing from all this immense evil and evident ruin. The English remain exactly as they were. They neither negotiated nor concluded a treaty, nor even displayed any serious desire to negotiate. Instead they increased their domination over Egypt both openly and secretly, treating Egypt like a milch cow whose milk must be extracted endlessly until the milk itself becomes mixed with blood. Do you imagine that this situation is what has made Sidqi Pasha's Ministry stronger and more secure today than at any previous moment? Or do you think that this situation is precisely what has made the Ministry liable to change, because no ministry can remain forever in office? The Prime Minister said both things, and he believes both things. He believes his Ministry stronger than ever before, and he also believes it may be altered. Most likely he simply wished to avoid answering the unavoidable question directly while still saying what had to be said. But the undeniable truth is that matters have slipped from Sidqi Pasha's hands—or are about to slip from them—and that his Ministry has weakened because it can no longer direct events effectively. Even more amusing than this contradiction is the Prime Minister's assertion that his Ministry enjoys the confidence of Parliament. It is therefore supposedly stronger than ever before. As for the confidence of His Majesty the King, we would very much like to understand how the Prime Minister reconciles his enjoyment of that confidence with his declaration that the Ministry may still be modified because no government remains forever in office. We would also like Sidqi Pasha, his colleagues, and his supporters to speak more sparingly of the King's confidence and favor. We know perfectly well that the Egyptian people themselves enjoy the love of His Majesty, his concern for their welfare, and his preference for the interests of the nation over the survival of ministers in office. It would therefore be better for ministers not to drag the confidence of His Majesty into political discussions which are naturally open to debate and disagreement. Equally amusing is the Prime Minister's insistence that replacing the High Commissioner will not alter British policy. This resembles the speech recently delivered by one of his colleagues in the People's Party, who declared that the High Commissioner had not been transferred for political reasons but merely for personal ones. Our Prime Minister likewise informed the offices of Al-Ahram that he possesses the strongest assurances that the policy of the British Foreign Office has not changed. Yet British policy toward Egypt has revolved in the same circle ever since the Revolution. That circle remains intact and unchanged. If British policy truly remains unchanged, this does not require the survival of the present Ministry. On the contrary, it may require its disappearance just as it required the departure of the High Commissioner himself. The circle continues turning, but Sidqi Pasha and Sir Percy Loraine have been cut away from it. If the Prime Minister imagines that these assurances deceive anyone, he is mistaken. Such assurances deceive only those who cling desperately to illusion. The Prime Minister himself is not deceived by them, since he admits that his supposedly powerful and secure Ministry may yet be altered because no ministry can remain in office forever. How much better it would be for the Prime Minister and his supporters to show courage,

recognize reality, and acknowledge the truth. Their policy and the policy of the High Commissioner have both failed, and they themselves must therefore be replaced just as the High Commissioner was replaced. Time is stern and uncompromising. It knows neither weakness nor hesitation, neither mercy nor pity. It will pass judgment upon them just as it passed judgment upon the High Commissioner, whether they accept it or resent it. So let the Prime Minister be reassured—for time itself is perfectly reassured as well.