

And Now

The sea was humble and submissive, the sky bright and radiant, while between them the ship advanced with an air of pride and self-admiration. The crowd waited in reverence and solemn respect. Small boats moved across the liquid plain between the vessel and the city, almost weighed down by the burden of loyalty and devotion they carried toward the “Prime Minister.”

Meanwhile Destiny and Egypt watched all this with smiles and with irony, for they knew how carefully it had all been arranged, how skillfully prepared, and they knew as well how it would all end and toward what conclusion events were moving.

The Prime Minister himself observed everything with a smile upon his lips whose meaning was double: one meaning for himself and another for the people. Within himself he was weary of the entire spectacle, inwardly mocking it, fully aware of how it had been staged and where it must ultimately lead. But before the public he affected a composed joy and a measured satisfaction. He did not wish the people to see his despair or impatience, nor to sense his discomfort or embarrassment. He wished them to see only the calm endurance expected of a patient and disciplined man.

All those gestures described by the newspapers—the greetings offered to those boarding the ship, the private meeting with the deputy acting for the Prime Minister, the descent into the launch and the smiles exchanged with those welcoming him, the journey to Ras al-Tin, the exhausting obligations that politics imposes upon its practitioners through meetings with supporters and allies, listening to words of no importance and answering them with words that meant nothing, then rest, then the royal audience, then the return home, and finally the sigh of a man freed for a moment from pretense and left alone with himself to think and recover—formed part of this elaborate performance.

A shadow of sorrow hung over all of it, covering the scene with a veil that filled the welcoming crowds with melancholy and gloom. At the same time a strange, bitterly laughing irony hovered over all Egypt, placing upon people’s faces expressions of joy and sadness simultaneously.

The joy sprang from the failure of this detestable policy imposed upon Egypt for three years—a policy that achieved nothing except to strengthen Egypt’s certainty, deepen her faith in her rights, reinforce her determination to attain them, and intensify her resolve to pursue them. In the end it concluded with the English themselves admitting failure and transferring their representative to a place where he might serve his own country without earning for it the hatred of nations and the resentment of peoples.

It also ended with the Prime Minister's own acknowledgment of disappointment and inability to continue governing, compelling him to submit to His Majesty the King his desire to step down and seek rest. Peoples have every right to rejoice when plots against them fail, when conspiracies are devised against them yet do not succeed in destroying them.

But the sadness accompanying this joy upon the faces of the people sprang from another source entirely. This hardworking, energetic people—whose labor, hope, energy, and determination make them worthy of a noble and dignified life, deserving of full freedom and complete independence—looks around and sees its rights wasted, its dignity violated, and its affairs governed contrary to its wishes. It is neither consulted nor asked. Even when it expresses its will, no one listens, as though it did not yet exist, or existed only to be exploited and humiliated, used merely as a means for satisfying ambitions and appetites, securing benefits and interests, enabling those rushing toward power to enjoy prestige and authority, and allowing foreign imperialists to extend their influence and fill their hands with wealth.

Peoples have every right to feel sorrow when they sow goodness but harvest only evil; when they strive for freedom and independence only to be forced by opportunists into humiliation and submission; when they spend all their strength and effort proving themselves sincere and honorable, seeking harm against no one, only to discover that others confront them with twisted intentions and corrupt consciences, wishing them nothing but harm and suffering.

Yes, peoples have the right to rejoice when the schemes of plotters fail against them, and they have the right to grieve when evil is imposed upon them despite their innocence. The Egyptian people have every right to rejoice when they see the policy of Sir Percy Loraine and the government of Sidqi Pasha ending in the transfer of one and the resignation of the other.

But the Egyptian people also have every right to feel sorrow when they see the political sky filled with clouds, noise, confusion, agitation, and secret maneuvering carried on for more than a week merely because a single individual either wishes—or does not wish—to retain power, and because others either wish—or do not wish—him to remain in office.

As for the people themselves—the people who labor and struggle, who work and hope, the people without whom there would be neither state nor government—they are not considered worthy subjects

of thought or concern. They are treated instead as something neglected in a corner of political life, expected to bear calamities, endure hardships, and suffer the heaviest burdens and most terrible events, while a small circle of rulers and aspiring rulers decides among themselves whether authority shall remain in these hands or pass into those.

This is indeed grievous and sufficient to sadden the nation. Yet it remains far from capable of weakening the people's faith in their rights or diminishing their determination to demand and attain them.

The Prime Minister has announced his intention to resign, and he has submitted to His Majesty the King his request to resign. Since then, public discussion has spread concerning the future of government after Sidqi Pasha's departure: will power pass to the coalition parties together, or to the Union Party alone without the People's Party? People speak endlessly about whether the methods of government established under the Prime Minister will continue unchanged or undergo partial or complete transformation.

Yet the Egyptian people would prefer that public discussion concern something else entirely: that the affairs of government should finally be returned to the people themselves, and that the people at last become the true subject of the deliberations and plans secretly and openly prepared by politicians.

Too much time has passed during which ministers and prime ministers alone have been the object of political planning and conversation, while the affairs of the people have been managed contrary to their wishes. The moment has now come when the affairs of the people ought finally to be conducted according to what the people themselves desire.

Yes, the neglect of the nation in the calculations of politicians has lasted far too long, and everything has shown that such neglect can lead neither to good nor to success. When, then, will God inspire politicians to follow the natural and upright path toward government, reconciling authority with the hopes, aspirations, and rightful claims of the nation to freedom and independence?