

Conflict

Its subject is this heavy inheritance that the Prime Minister will leave behind when he resigns in the very near future, according to the political correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph*. Although this inheritance is neither rich nor profitable, neither easy nor light to bear, the competition over it is intense, the conflict surrounding it even fiercer, and the quarrel over it violent beyond measure, scarcely calming before erupting once again.

This conflict appears openly and clearly in London, where rivalries are thought useful and political struggle is considered beneficial whenever faith in the power of the people weakens, contempt for the rights of the people grows stronger, and the parties seeking power—or eager to preserve it in their own hands—become convinced that reliance upon the people is useless because the people either possess no authority over their own affairs or ought not to possess any.

No matter how often the British government proclaims its neutrality, and no matter how insistently it repeats this declaration, those who are entrusted with ruling Egypt—or who seek to retain rule—know perfectly well that the British government cannot tolerate decisions regarding Egyptian ministries being made without its knowledge, without consultation, or without its advice carrying immense weight and decisive influence.

For this reason they remain calm in Egypt while speaking loudly in England. Why should they agitate in Cairo or speak openly in Egypt when they see that the people of Cairo and of Egypt endure the present Ministry despite deep dissatisfaction and strong resentment, without possessing any means of freeing themselves from this burden in which they place no confidence?

The people of London and England, however, appear to possess a voice that matters, and their opinion on Egyptian affairs seems to carry greater influence and more far-reaching consequences than the opinion of the people living in Egypt itself.

Those engaged in dispute and rivalry in London are divided into two groups. One group is already united in power, while the other merely hopes to unite. The first group consists of these parties—or quasi-parties—that govern or imagine themselves to govern, together with those who live in their shadow and revolve around them. The second group consists of others who wish to unite, then dream of what they wish, then imagine that their dreams have already come true. They prepare themselves to enter government offices, sit in ministers' chairs, receive congratulations, begin directing affairs, and

enjoy the pleasures of exercising authority.

Both groups circulate reports in London, then transmit them to Cairo so they may be spread throughout Egypt, after which they wait anxiously to observe their effect upon the people.

Since the symptoms of weakness first appeared in the present Ministry, and since illness struck the Prime Minister, the political “shares” of both groups have risen and fallen in London. At times *The Times*, the *Daily Telegraph*, and other English newspapers raise these shares so high that their holders imagine themselves triumphant beyond measure. At other times the same newspapers lower them so sharply that their holders nearly despair completely.

Yet the amusing irony is that all these political shares, despite their rises and falls in London, are in fact worthless in Cairo and throughout Egypt. Almost no one in Egypt pays attention to their fluctuations except a tiny class of people who have devoted their lives to revolving around ministers and aspiring ministers.

The people themselves remain steadfast in their position, determined in their rights, confident in their aims, persistent in pursuing them, patient in their suffering, and unyielding in their endurance. They mock both those who quarrel before the English and the English themselves who laugh at these quarrels.

English newspapers once considered abandoning the ruling coalition in favor of another coalition to be an absolute necessity and a great benefit. At times they hinted to Sidqi Pasha, at other times spoke to him directly, sometimes gently and sometimes harshly, always urging him to resign. Then they would reverse themselves, support the Prime Minister openly or indirectly, attack his opponents openly or indirectly, and urge him not to resign.

Whenever these newspapers adopted one of these positions, the fortunes of one faction rose while those of another declined. Faces brightened among some and darkened among others. There is no doubt that the article recently published by the *Daily Telegraph* and transmitted to Egypt has again raised some fortunes and lowered others, bringing smiles to some faces and bitterness to others.

It now appears that the *Daily Telegraph*, or at least its political office, believes that the present ruling coalition—or what imagines itself to be ruling—must remain in power, or at least continue to enjoy the illusion of power, and that those who dream of replacing it ought to abandon such hopes and spare

themselves the effort.

Yet not long ago the *Daily Telegraph* held precisely the opposite opinion, until the Prime Minister himself was compelled to interrupt his rest and silence in order to send the paper a telegram reproaching it gently and requesting fairness.

The only meaning of this new position after the previous one is that those competing for the approval of the *Daily Telegraph* and similar English newspapers have intensified their struggle and competition. Two weeks ago the hopeful rivals succeeded in winning favor; yesterday the current rulers succeeded in doing so. And no doubt the hopeful rivals still possess enough influence and persistence that tomorrow, or the day after, or next week, another article may appear in the *Daily Telegraph* or elsewhere pleasing them instead and attacking those presently in office.

This conflict will therefore continue fiercely until destiny itself judges between these rivals. Yet two aspects of the matter deserve particular reflection. One inspires sadness and grief; the other revives hope and strengthens expectation.

The first concerns the position of the Prime Minister after his illness had continued so long that both friends and enemies became convinced that caring for his health would benefit him more than remaining in office. His resignation now appears almost certain. His friends in Egypt confirm it, his friends in England confirm it, and both groups console themselves surprisingly easily over the necessity of their friend's resignation.

Even the Prime Minister's own newspaper in Egypt repeats this morning the possibility of resignation and seems more delighted by the prospect that power—or the illusion of power—will remain among his associates than sorrowful over the resignation itself. Indeed, if the prophecy of the *Daily Telegraph* proves correct and power remains with its ■■■■■■, its joy will likely be greater than its regret over the Prime Minister's departure.

This reveals a painful truth: people's loyalty to one another is limited, human faithfulness is short-lived, and people often prefer themselves even above those who once served and benefited them. Such relationships are built not upon enduring principles but upon immediate interests.

Thus the Prime Minister exhausted himself in labor and struggle until illness overwhelmed him and resignation became inevitable, only to find his friends calmly abandoning him so long as power may

remain in their hands.

The second matter, however, revives hope. Those revolving around power in Egypt and England exert all possible effort without finding any escape from the dilemma into which they have trapped themselves by imagining that Egypt's affairs could be settled without Egypt's consent.

A thousand signs have appeared proving that the Prime Minister must resign, yet a thousand difficulties arise concerning who should succeed him, because those currently surrounding power refuse to return the matter to Egypt itself. As long as this remains the case, confusion and instability will continue among those now united in power—or in the illusion of power—and those who seek to unite around it.

These present rulers may remain where they are, or others may replace them. But Egypt's affairs will continue in confusion and disorder until those who aspire to rule finally reconcile themselves with reality and acknowledge that the age has passed in which peoples could be governed against their own will.