

Question

It is hardly a question one person asks another, because the answer is already inscribed in hearts and visible before every eye. Everyone feels it instinctively, and people differ about it only when they happen to be journalists driven by professional necessity to compose yet another article.

The question concerns the High Commissioner who was recently removed from Egypt: did he succeed in the mission for which he spent years in this country, or did fate condemn him to failure and disappointment?

Ask any Egyptian this question and he will answer without hesitation or uncertainty. The ordinary Egyptian will answer plainly that the departing High Commissioner achieved little or no success.

For the success of a High Commissioner in Egypt may be judged, it seems, from only two perspectives: one Egyptian and the other British.

He succeeds in Egyptian eyes if he manages to reduce the hostility between Egypt and Britain, weaken resentment and suspicion, and persuade Egyptians that the British stand for justice rather than tyranny.

He succeeds in British eyes through precisely the same conduct, because he relieves Britain of Egyptian hostility and enables the British to achieve an honorable agreement with Egypt.

He may also succeed in the eyes of imperialists if he humiliates Egyptians, crushes their dignity, and forces them into obedience without resistance.

But ask any Egyptian today: which kind of success did the former High Commissioner achieve? Did he lessen hostility? Did he erase resentment and mistrust?

Surely the answer requires no deep reflection. Never has Egyptian distrust of the British reached such intensity as it has now—except perhaps during the days of the Revolution itself.

The High Commissioner therefore failed to bring Egyptians and Britons closer together. Instead he drove them further apart and deepened that separation to its furthest limits.

He cannot claim that Egyptians regret his departure. On the contrary, Egyptians openly welcomed his

transfer and rejoiced in it, holding him responsible for the suffering they endured during these past three years.

And if he failed in Egyptian eyes, he failed equally in British eyes. The British today cannot claim that Egyptians love them or feel affection toward them.

Nor did he succeed even among the imperialists who desired complete British domination. He did not frighten Egyptians into submission, nor weaken their pursuit of independence.

This complete failure is what made his removal inevitable. It forced him into the unprecedented position of remaining suspended in uncertainty after traveling to England in March, neither fully confirmed nor fully dismissed.

Egyptians watched all this and understood its true meaning: the High Commissioner had failed. His position in Egypt had become impossible, and even his position in Britain itself had become embarrassing.

The British government hesitated because it did not wish openly to admit his failure lest Egyptians take courage from it, yet neither could it return him to Egypt without worsening matters there still further.

In the end Britain was forced publicly to acknowledge what it had privately known for a long time: that its High Commissioner had failed and that his return to Egypt was no longer desirable.

Some English writers nevertheless claimed that he succeeded because he restored his prestige and authority within the Egyptian Ministry. We do not deny that his influence rose greatly within the present Ministry. The proof is that the British never desired anything from this Ministry without obtaining it.

But the real question concerns his standing among the Egyptian people themselves, and that standing collapsed entirely.

Others claimed that he succeeded in dividing the Egyptian national movement. This claim is even more absurd. Had he truly succeeded in dividing Egyptians, Britain would never have transferred him.

People must not deceive themselves. It was the High Commissioner's total failure—before Egyptians

and before Britons alike—that condemned him to removal.

And this transfer announces something else whose signs will soon appear clearly: a change in British policy itself.

For during these past three years Britain exhausted itself pursuing that policy openly and secretly with every possible effort, only to discover that it had all been futile—a wasted experiment that produced nothing.