

Security

Kawkab al-Sharq, 21 July 1933

Security in Egypt is as untroubled as security could possibly be in any country! And order in Egypt is as settled as order could possibly be in any land. And there is no better proof of how untroubled security is, and how settled order is, than the fact that the Prime Minister is summering and taking the cure in Europe; that the Director-General of Public Security was resting in Rhodes and has now returned so that the Deputy Director-General of Public Security may himself rest—in which island, I do not know, or in which of the seven climes, as the ancient geographers used to say; and that one of the two Under-Secretaries of the Interior has travelled off to rest, even as the Minister of the Interior himself summers, works, and rests.

Had there been in Egypt even the slightest sign pointing to a breakdown of security or a disturbance of order, these gentlemen would surely have settled themselves in the city of Cairo, to oversee everything closely and manage everything closely. But since they have scattered in this fashion, going their separate ways across the land, then Egypt is well, praise God—no danger threatens either its security or its order.

And yet there is news being broadcast and reports being spread, about which the Ministry remains utterly silent, saying nothing and troubling itself to say nothing. The likeliest explanation is that it holds this news in contempt and looks down upon these reports, not even bothering to deny or refute them, let alone seek some explanation or justification for them. For the newspapers tell us that some village mayors are being killed at the doors of their own houses at the close of day and the start of night, so that the pure soil of Egypt is dyed with their innocent blood even as the sun takes its leave of the horizon, leaving behind in Egypt a quiet sorrow mingled, at the scenes of these men's deaths, with a fierce and deep grief. And the newspapers tell us that people are being killed on the public highway as they make their way home in al-Sharqiyya, neither expecting death nor fearing it—yet death was waiting for them, lying in ambush in certain faces and certain quarters. And the newspapers tell us, too, that villages are quarrelling over irrigation, with gunfire breaking out between them and men being struck down—some brushing close to mortal danger, some almost

brushing close to it, and some merely wounded, wounds that, even if not fatal or bringing their victim to the very brink of death, are nonetheless harmful and painful, proclaiming that people no longer hesitate to exchange gunfire and to send death to one another.

The newspapers then tell us, further, that the Ministry of the Interior—which granted leave to one of its Under-Secretaries to travel, and to the other to work on the seacoast, and which granted the Director-General of Public Security a short outing and his deputy a leave of no small length—the newspapers tell us that this same Ministry has, throughout the entire country, cancelled the leave of district officers and of those holding the rank of police commissioner. The newspapers have published this report more than once, and the Ministry has neither denied it nor refuted it, not even by half a refutation.

And the newspapers tell us, too, that the police are organizing demonstrations and military manoeuvres in the city of Alexandria that alarm the people and catch the public's attention, leading Alexandrians who witness these demonstrations and manoeuvres, and Egyptians who read the reports of them, to ask themselves: what are these manoeuvres and demonstrations for, what is this drilling and training for? And they are told—in that passive construction whose agent is never named—that these demonstrations and manoeuvres are simply meant to teach the police how to disperse the people should they gather, and how to put down popular demonstrations should the public undertake them.

And the newspapers tell us of other things besides; and it is certain that the newspapers do not know everything, nor do they broadcast all that reaches them. None of this, of course, indicates any disturbance of security or breakdown of order—it indicates, rather, that security is settled and calm, and that order is untroubled and firm; were it otherwise, the ministers, under-secretaries, and senior officials of the Interior would never have scattered in the manner we noted at the start of this piece.

And there is yet another proof, one admitting of no doubt or suspicion, no argument or dispute—a proof that establishes, for every person of sound mind (and how few are the people of sound mind!), that security has never, on any day, been as untroubled as it is this summer. It is so untroubled that it sleeps with its eyes shut tight, undisturbed by any gunshot, unmoved by the fall of any club, unroused by any assault or

anything resembling an assault. And this radiant, conclusive proof is none other than this lavish and gracious tribute which the offices of the Daily Telegraph fashioned into an elegant, graceful bouquet and presented, with all delicacy and tact, to the Minister of the Interior—after having subjected all his colleagues, the Prime Minister chief among them, to what they would much rather not have received! For the offices of the Daily Telegraph bear witness that the Minister of the Interior is the man of the hour—nay, the man of the day, nay, the man of tomorrow, both near and far—because he has safeguarded security and order, brought matters firmly under his command, and compelled the various authorities to give him credit for superiority, ability, and genius!!

Now, the offices of the Daily Telegraph did not simply send out this statement at random, nor did they invent it out of their own imagination. Most likely, the trusted source that informed them that all the other ministers are afraid of their own shadows—all save the Minister of the Interior, who alone strikes fear into people, and who alone strikes fear into shadows—this same trusted source, given that it is to be trusted in what it says of the Ministry and the ministers, and in what it says of the government's lost prestige because the ministers fear their own shadows, and in what it says of sheer folly alone having driven two important ministers from this present Ministry, and in what it says of change having become an absolute necessity and an inescapable certainty—given that this source is to be trusted in all of that, it must equally be trusted in what it conveyed to the offices of the Daily Telegraph by way of testimony to the Minister of the Interior's skill, talent, competence, and genius.

And I, for my part, believe the offices of the Daily Telegraph, and I believe the source that gave them this testimony. The Minister of the Interior is undoubtedly talented and skilled; the Minister of the Interior is undoubtedly competent and brilliant. And the proof of this—a proof none but a stubborn lover of contention would deny—is that opinion has never been so unfavourable toward the untroubled state and stability of security in Egypt as it is now. For it hardly inspires confidence in the untroubled state and stability of security that news of killing and bloodshed should be broadcast so openly and so often; nor does it inspire such confidence that the leave of district officers and police chiefs throughout every province should be cancelled; nor does it inspire confidence that the Ministry of the Interior should not content itself with banning political gatherings, in violation of the constitution, but should

go so far as to ban religious gatherings as well, in mosques built for Muslims to fill with the remembrance of God and with mutual exhortation to goodness, right guidance, and decency. Nor does it inspire confidence that the European Director-General of Public Security should display an activity so strange and so unprecedented—visiting cities, touring the provinces—at a time when the Egyptian Director of Security himself rests in Rhodes or some other island of the sea.

None of this inspires confidence in the firmness of security, the stability of order, or the Ministry's assurance regarding that security and that order; nor does it inspire confidence in the strength of the government and its firm grip on the reins of affairs, as they put it, that houses should be besieged, that members of the Delegation and those connected with them should be kept under watch, and that people should be taken off the street to police stations simply for having walked near the house of the Acting Prime Minister. Indeed, nor does it inspire confidence in the stability of security and order that abduction, the arming of trains, the digging of trenches, and the encircling of cities with earthworks and motorcars should be the means relied upon for safeguarding security and establishing order.

And yet all of this has indeed come to pass, and all of it has been brought about by the present Minister of the Interior; and if all this is not proof that the present Minister of the Interior has shaken the confidence of Egyptians and foreigners alike in the untroubled state of security and the stability of order, then what further proof could one possibly want?

And if all this is not conclusive, genuine evidence that the present Minister of the Interior has attained the greatest possible measure of skill and talent, of superiority and genius, then what further evidence could one possibly want? The offices of the Daily Telegraph have indeed spoken the truth, and the source that inspired and informed them has indeed spoken the truth: the Minister of the Interior is a great man—but it is precisely this greatness of his that makes his resignation, like that of his colleagues, something to be wished for with every degree of wishing, indeed something altogether necessary, if Egypt is to be thought well of, along with its Ministry, and if it is not to be broadcast throughout the lands of the earth that Egypt is a home of dread and fear, that its ministers are afraid of their own shadows, and that the leave of its district officers and police chiefs is cancelled for the entire summer

season.

Those who love this country, and who are truly anxious that security be genuinely settled within it, that order be genuinely secure within it, and that it be known to the world as a land of calm and peace, ought to think this matter through, and to think it through quickly, without waiting for autumn to come—for this Ministry has not merely reached the limit of its tenure, but reached that limit long ago and went well beyond it long ago, having proved utterly incapable of the very simplest task for which governments exist, namely securing people in their lives and their property; it has come to hold the reins of affairs in a hand so loose and slack that it can neither manage them nor direct them. And if this Ministry itself remains unaware of this incapacity, or unfeeling of it, the people—both Egyptians and foreigners—are declaring it, and insisting on declaring it, while the Ministry proves incapable even of denying what they declare.

As for the rest, it makes no difference to us whether the source that informed the offices of the Daily Telegraph is trustworthy or suspect; what matters to us, and to those who truly love Egypt, is that the Ministry's incapacity has become too obvious to need pointing out, and that its replacement has become an absolute necessity, however much those who say otherwise may talk and persist in their stubbornness.