

Two Doctrines

Kawkab al-Sharq, 30 July 1933

One of them is followed by people in every civilised country, ever since the age of democracy began, at the very least. The other is followed by a certain party of people in this dear and fortunate country of ours; and the two stand in the sharpest possible contrast to one another.

The doctrine of the Egyptians is, without doubt, the sounder of the two, and, beyond all argument, the nearer to what is right, since Egypt has, for the past three years, become the mightiest country on earth, the most advanced, and the most deserving to assume the leadership of progress, and to guide the peoples of the world toward the realisation of the highest ideals of freedom, dignity, and independence.

It has indeed become a duty upon every people that loves progress and aspires to it to look toward Egypt, to be shaped by her example, and to follow her path; and should any people do so, it will attain, God willing, all the perfection it desires.

As for the first, mistaken doctrine, held by people across the countries of the earth — those countries of the earth influenced by the philosophy of the philosophers and the principles of the French Revolution — it holds that government exists solely to establish security in the country in which it exists.

And security, according to these mistaken people who fill every country of the earth except Egypt, means nothing less than the security of the people as a whole: over its life, its interests, and its confidence that no foreign people, whoever they may be, will ever raid it, do it harm, diminish its territory, encroach upon its rights, belittle its dignity, or bring any manner of misfortune upon it in any aspect of its life.

And the security of individuals over themselves, their property, their dignity, their sanctities, their beliefs, their opinions, their morals, and their honour.

And the confidence of these individuals, whatever their station, whatever their doctrine in politics or religion, that their persons are inviolable under the force and authority of the law, save should they commit a crime and thereby open a path for the law against them; that their liberty is guaranteed under the force and authority of the law, save

should they commit a wrong and thereby open a path for the law against their liberty; and that their property is preserved for them, taken from them only by right, and touched only as the law commands.

This is the doctrine held by people in general, in their understanding of governments, their understanding of governments' duty, and their understanding of the bond between government and people.

But the other doctrine, held by a certain party of Egyptians — which is nearer to the truth, and closer to what is right — takes an entirely different direction in judgment, understanding, and evaluation.

For government, according to these Egyptians, exists to establish security — but to establish its own security, before the security of the people. And it exists to protect life and property — but to protect its own life and its own property, before the lives and property of the people.

It does not object to securing the people, but securing the people is a voluntary act, not an obligation — or it is a secondary duty that comes after the first duty, and to which the government devotes itself only once it has discharged that first duty.

It does not object to protecting the lives and property of the people, but only after it has protected its own life and its own property, and reassured itself, most thoroughly, that it need fear no harm and dread no misfortune.

And you may not yet have grasped the vast difference between this mistaken doctrine, which the entire civilised world persists in, and this correct doctrine, which a certain party of Egyptians holds dear.

For elsewhere than Egypt, people hold that if a Ministry feels a pressing need to protect itself, it is bound to resign; for ministries were not created to protect themselves, but were created to protect the people; they were not made to serve themselves, but were made to serve the people.

And if it feels a need for protection, this means that the people do not protect it through their love for it, their trust in it, and their confidence in it. And so it does not wish to serve the people against the people's will; and so it is compelled to resign, that the people may find for themselves a Ministry that pleases them, that they trust, and that they protect with their love, their affection, and their confidence.

But the champions of the modern Egyptian doctrine hold that if a Ministry feels a need to protect itself, it is bound not to resign — rather, it must cling to power all the more fiercely, bind itself to its seats with ropes and cords, and press into service the army of the state and its might, the power of the state and its force, and the wealth of the state and its riches, in order to protect itself even from any passing illusion, any fancy that flits through dreams.

And it is permissible, according to the champions of the modern Egyptian doctrine — indeed, it is a duty — that the Ministry place the protection of itself above the protection of the people. If it senses, from its political adversaries, a danger to itself, and senses, from the adversaries of the social order, the enemies of public security, and the criminals who spread corruption in the land, a danger to the lives of individuals and communities, and to the protection of their persons and property, it has the right — indeed, it is bound — to place the protection of itself, and its own preoccupation with that protection, and the subduing of its political adversaries, above the protection of the people and the subduing of criminals.

On this basis, the champions of the modern Egyptian doctrine explain the abundance and persistence of crime in Egypt, and these varieties of aggression committed against persons and property, which the present Ministry proves powerless — we do not say to prevent before they occur, but to pursue after their perpetrators and those implicated in them have already acted — because the Ministry is occupied with contesting the Wafd, pursuing it, monitoring its chairman and its members, and spreading agents and watchers over them, rather than occupied with monitoring criminals, apprehending them, and stopping their hands.

And along these same lines, the champions of the modern Egyptian doctrine proceed when they demand that the Ministry legislate harsh exceptional laws to wear down its political adversaries, silence them, and force them into stillness and quiet — because the Ministry's protection of itself from these adversaries is more urgent than the Ministry's protection of the people from the enemies of security and order.

And so the champions of the modern Egyptian doctrine demand that the Ministry legislate these harsh, exceptional laws to pursue them and eliminate them, without delay and without hesitation.

We should like to know which doctrine our Ministry holds on this grave matter: is it the doctrine of the civilised world, or the doctrine of Egypt's innovators?

If it is the former, then we find our Ministry excessive in its concern for itself, and immoderate in devoting its efforts to the war it wages against its adversaries.

And if it is the latter, then we should like the Ministry to reconcile its own doctrine and conduct with what is taught to the young in the schools, and in the Faculty of Law — so that when this Faculty sends forth its students, who will one day hold power in their hands, it sends them forth already knowing what they are duty-bound to do.

Nor is the matter confined to internal security; for it is a certainty that our Ministry concerns itself more with what the foreign press writes about the length or brevity of its own survival than it concerns itself with matters of far greater consequence for the life of Egypt.

Our ministers have never given speeches on the question of religion as they gave speeches on the question of the "Daily Telegraph"; our ministers were never as distressed at the collapse of negotiations over the question of religion as they were distressed by the Daily Telegraph dispatch; our ministers were never as energetic on the question of missionary activity and the missionaries as they were energetic over the Daily Telegraph dispatch.

They are, then, quicker to turn their thoughts to protecting the Ministry from its Egyptian political adversaries, and from those among foreigners who might contest it, than they are to turn their thoughts to whatever corruption and disorder befalls security and order, and to whatever befalls the people's interests and welfare, and Egypt's freedom and dignity, at the hands of foreign aggression, or the excessive disregard of foreign powers for Egyptian rights.

Can we, then, understand from all this that the modern Egyptian doctrine has succeeded in becoming official policy, so that our Ministry now believes in it, trusts in it, and adopts it as its own doctrine, and holds that it was brought into existence for its own sake before it was brought into existence for the sake of the people?

A question admitting of two answers:

One of them is what people see, feel, and witness every day, and it is: yes.

The other is what is written in the newspapers, and said in official and quasi-official statements, and it is: no.

People are free to accept whichever of these two answers they please.

As for myself, I accept them both together; I believe our ministers when they conduct themselves in the manner of one who believes in the modern doctrine, and I believe them equally when they speak in the manner of one who believes in the old doctrine.

And I judge the Ministry to possess such skill and competence, such cleverness and genius, that it is capable of reconciling contradictions and harmonising opposites — capable of preferring itself over the people when it acts, and of preferring the people over itself when it speaks.