

# Disgrace

*Sawt al-Umma, 10 August 1946*

...This, then, is exactly what the British gentlemen now offer us — and it is said some Egyptians actually wish to accept it, seeing in it nothing but the fullest measure of honour, and the fullest measure of pride. Should the anticipated treaty be signed, the British will thereby acquire the genuine right to spill Egyptian blood, without any consultation whatsoever, without any real review, should any country neighbouring Egypt ever face some danger or other.

These same dangers remain genuinely numerous, genuinely varied, genuinely distinct from one another — they might arise, for instance, from rivalry between the English and their own current victorious allies, over the former Italian colonies, in which case Egyptians would find themselves genuinely obligated to spill their own blood, sacrifice their own effort, wealth, and infrastructure, in order to perpetuate England's own domination over Cyrenaica, and her own continued presence, crouched upon Egypt's own western border. They might arise, too, from British insistence on some genuinely abhorrent policy in Palestine, one the Arabs themselves reject, since it suits neither their own rights, nor their own interests. And there may well exist, among the nations and peoples of the earth, those genuinely moved, by chivalry and by a real sense of solidarity, to assist these same wretched Arabs.

Nor need this same nation necessarily be Russia, whose own name is never mentioned except paired with suspicion, and genuine alarm — there exist other nations, on this earth, that might well sympathize with the Arabs, might well consider assisting them, should the English persist in this same policy of toying with rights, with blood, and with minds, in Palestine. These same nations might well be Arab nations, not European ones at all — and there, exactly there, Palestine finds herself exposed to danger, in the British own view, and there, exactly there, Egyptians would find themselves obligated to spill their own blood, and sacrifice whatever effort and strength they possess, to support their own British allies, and defend their own policy — a policy directly contradicting Arab hopes, demolishing Arab rights.

Everything remains possible, in international politics: British power might well find itself endangered in Cyrenaica, might well find itself endangered in Palestine, along exactly the lines I have already indicated,

or along some other lines entirely. And it would then become the genuine duty of Egypt's own victorious armies to march forth, defending British imperial interests, here and there, for no reason whatsoever, except that a certain group of Egyptians apparently wish, as it is said, to conclude this same magnificent, brilliant alliance with the English. Egyptians are no better than Indians, after all, nor is Egyptian blood any nobler than Indian blood — and Indians did indeed spill their own blood defending the British Empire, across every country on earth, throughout both world wars. What, then, prevents Egyptians from spilling their own blood defending the British Empire, in Libya, and in Palestine?

Is it not, indeed, genuinely incumbent upon Egyptians to compose entire odes of praise for their own English allies, precisely because they do not require us to spill our own blood defending their own interests, should those interests ever be attacked in some country genuinely far from Egypt?! They favour us, after all, over India, granting us privileges they never granted India. They know full well we dislike exile, and dislike dying on foreign soil — and so they graciously permit our own sons to die defending them, genuinely close to their own homeland instead. Do you not agree with me, then, that they grant us exactly the kind of favour deserving, in return, that we sign this same treaty with genuine gratitude?

As for the treaty we signed ten years ago, its own time has genuinely passed — it has become unsuited to present circumstances, though never with respect to Egypt herself: Egypt's own circumstances hold no real interest for the British, except insofar as Egypt remains a genuine centre of imperial defence, and a genuine resource for that same defence.

As for Egyptians' own love of evacuation, and their own aspiration toward genuine independence over their own affairs — these remain sweet hopes, and genuinely alluring dreams, ones Egyptians might well dream, asleep or awake, and speak of, once God grants them genuine health, rejoicing in their own past trial of illness — for even the healthy man may rave, exactly as the feverish man raves.

The old treaty, then, hardly suits English circumstances at all: experience has already shown that the English never sent Egyptian troops to drive the Italians and Germans from Libya, or from North Africa — so the new treaty must grant them exactly this same privilege, while still retaining the old treaty's own privileges for use, whenever their own interests find themselves endangered in some other country of the

Middle East, or the Near East. Should their own interests find themselves endangered in Turkey, or in Iran, for instance, Egypt would then find herself obligated to place her own entire infrastructure under their own obedient command — and something, after all, is better than nothing.

British colonialism must proceed, in these very days, with genuine calm, taking genuinely moderate steps. She secured, from Egypt, under the old treaty, assistance that never required a formal declaration of war, whenever Great Britain herself declared war, or war was declared upon her — and she shall secure, from Egypt, under the new treaty — should Sidqi Pasha so wish — Egypt's own compulsion into immediate participation in war, under certain circumstances, and into peaceable, or belligerent, assistance, under others.

It is then said, after all of this, that British policy has lost whatever tact, and cunning, it once possessed. Not at all — British policy has lost nothing whatsoever of its own tact, and its own cunning. What I genuinely, deeply fear, rather, is that Egyptian nationalism itself may have lost some part of its own monopoly over every heart, some part of its own confidence in its own complete right to complete independence, some part of its own faith in the very capacity to secure that same right. Nothing proves this more clearly than the fact that certain Egyptians, it is said, actually wish to sign this same treaty, granting the English exactly this same triumph, recording, upon Egyptians themselves, this same disgrace, binding them, under the treaty's own terms, to march off to war, light and heavy alike, whenever the English themselves wish them to march off, light and heavy alike.

Egyptians once believed that sovereignty over the Sudan, exactly like sovereignty over Egypt herself, belonged to the people of the Nile Valley, represented in the Egyptian throne itself, which is exactly the throne of the Nile Valley. The English themselves once claimed to be our own mere partners in administration, never in sovereignty! But matters have now changed, the English have taken yet another step forward, and certain Egyptians have accepted it from them, it is said — they no longer recognize a single sovereignty, over a single valley, under a single crown, but wish, rather, to divide it into two sovereignties: one for Egypt, which they themselves diminish through their own participation in defence; the other remaining some kind of trust, held, I do not know, in their own hands alone, or in their own hands together with some other people's, or some other demons'.

What matters here is that they deny the Nile Valley the very unity of her own sovereignty over herself, insisting, instead, on dividing it, and sharing in it — sharing as sole possessor, in the Sudan, and sharing as equal partner, in Egypt herself. And there exist Egyptians willing to accept exactly this from them, willing to have it formally recorded on their own behalf, willing to sign it with their own noble hand. What is genuinely strange is that the English bear every genuine horror imaginable, defending the sovereignty of their own contrived empire, yet refuse, with every genuine refusal imaginable, to let the Nile Valley defend her own natural sovereignty, upon her own soil, along the banks of her own river — a river once genuinely precious, to herself, and to others — now grown so genuinely cheapened, in her own eyes, and in the eyes of others.

As for this whole story of "joint defence," it stands as the very wonder of wonders — though we ought not, perhaps, to wonder at anything at all, so long as there remains, among us, someone genuinely willing to accept this same treaty, to sign it, and to record, against us, this same disgrace, and humiliation, for long years to come. People read, every single day, without any doubt, that Russia is demanding Turkey organize a joint defence, between the two, of the Straits — and the Turks refuse, with every genuine refusal imaginable, to yield to this same demand, or even to discuss it, with the English themselves backing them in this same noble stand, even showing themselves ready to declare war, in support of Turkish independence, and in her own protection from exactly this same hateful "joint defence."

The Suez Canal holds no less real significance than the Straits, nor are English interests beyond the Canal any more genuinely sacred than Russian interests beyond the Straits. Yet "joint defence" becomes sin, crime, and outright violation of sanctity, the moment Russia demands it of Turkey — while becoming right, justice, and the very confirmation of independence, the moment Great Britain demands it of Egypt. Nor is there anything genuinely strange in this: Russia occupies Turkey, and Britain occupies Egypt. Turkey has no ministers, no negotiators, genuinely eager to grant Russia what she wants — while Egypt has ministers, and negotiators, few or many, I do not know, genuinely eager to grant Great Britain what she wants.

Turkey has a people genuinely holding sole sovereignty over her own soil, shared by no one, overpowered by no one. Egypt, meanwhile, has a people whose own overwhelming majority has been set entirely

aside, a genuinely tiny minority monopolizing every decision instead, a minority whose own numbers could be counted, without the slightest real difficulty. It is this same minority that commands, and forbids, concludes, and rescinds; this same minority that negotiates with the British over the people's own fate, having already deprived this same people of even the simplest, most natural right imaginable — the right to remain free, to declare what it wants, and what it does not want.

What wonder is there, then, in "joint defence" proving a genuine crime, when the Russians demand it — and genuine right, genuine good, genuine justice, when the English demand it instead?!

So God has willed it — and once God wills a thing, nothing can turn it aside. There remains nothing for Egyptians to do, then, but implore God, in their own mosques, their own churches, their own temples, to lift from them this same disgrace the negotiations now threaten them with — exactly as they implore God, in their own mosques, their own churches, their own temples, to lift from them this same destruction the Nile's own flooding now threatens them with. What is genuinely strange is that Egyptians do not even possess the freedom to make even this same supplication to God: their own ministers stand united with the Prime Minister in accepting the treaty, and Egyptians will never be permitted to implore God, in mosques, churches, and temples, for anything the Prime Minister himself happens to dislike.

Let Egyptians, then, implore God directly, in the innermost recesses of their own souls, in the very depths of their own conscience — and let them hasten to do so. For who knows? Perhaps the Prime Minister himself might yet devise some means of extending his own authority over the very depths of conscience, and the innermost recesses of the soul, as well.