

International Dictatorship

Jaridat al-Wafd al-Misri, 29 June 1945.

People did not receive the San Francisco Conference with the joy and delight one might have expected them to receive it with, nor did they follow its proceedings with the care and attention one might have expected them to follow them with. Nor, afterward, did they welcome its charter with the satisfaction and gladness one might have expected them to welcome it with. Rather, a strange, stifling atmosphere of pessimism and doubt, then of caution and fear, then of despair and hopelessness, surrounded the conference before it convened, during its proceedings, and after it dispersed.

And the reasons for this are perfectly clear; for the conference the three leaders held in the Crimea was a prelude to San Francisco, and people understood from this prelude that it had laid down the rules from which the delegates at San Francisco ought not to deviate, and that it had imposed the will of the strong victors upon the weak victors, and upon those who had not joined the war until it was almost over. For this reason France held back, hesitated, and refused the invitation extended to her to take part in convening the conference, and had it not been for her dread of isolation and her concern to take part in every international undertaking, in deference to her own standing among the great powers, she might well have carried her hesitation and reluctance much further. As for the other states, they came to the conference reluctantly, half-heartedly, almost as if driven to it by force, moved to attend by prudence toward the future, caution toward the present, curiosity, a desire to keep pace with the strong, and the wish that the world should hear their voice regardless.

And these doubts, which filled the air around the conference before it convened, were only increased by the three leaders' decision that participation in this conference would be confined to those who had taken part in the war, and that any neutral state, or any state that had not fought, wishing to take part in this conference had only one path open to it: to declare war on the Axis powers, even though the war in Europe was then on the verge of ending.

And so Turkey entered the war, and the countries of the Near East entered it, and some South American states entered it as well, and all of this was a kind of suspect enticement, or a kind of frightening coercion.

Then the conference convened, and no sooner had it begun its work than disagreement appeared between the great European and American powers on many questions, and it became clear to people that the weighty, consequential business of the conference was in fact being conducted behind closed doors, out of the sight of the delegates as a whole, and it became clear to people too that the entire matter revolved around achieving a balance between the interests of the great powers, with no evident concern for the hopes of the smaller ones.

And for this reason disagreement would flare up from time to time between the Anglo-Saxons and the Russians, so that everything was thrown into disorder and everything came to a halt, until matters were set right and the disputing parties reconciled, whereupon the ship of the conference sailed on with a favorable wind once more. And the small states would raise their voice from time to time in favor of this opinion or that, and the great powers would listen to them, smiling, then turn away from them, smiling, then insist on what they themselves had wanted, smiling, whereupon the small nations would submit, sometimes smiling and sometimes scowling, but submitting all the same. Then the conference completed its work and signed its charter; and the nations felt neither joy nor delight, though the delegates themselves spoke words that depicted joy and delight. Then they dispersed, the curtain fell, and this morning news reached us from Switzerland that both the neutrals and the belligerents in Europe had received the conference's charter with a very great deal of coolness.

And so the world was thrown into turmoil for months, then returned to calm, as though it had never been troubled at all. People were told that a new world would arise at San Francisco; then people saw that San Francisco had done no more than reorganize the old one. And people met all of this — I do not say with coolness, as the news from Switzerland puts it, but rather, I say, with sorrow and dejection. For people had expected a great deal from the triumph of democracy, and had been confident they would attain what they expected; then they looked, and found they had attained nothing, and scarcely hoped to attain anything at all.

And so humanity gave what it gave, endured what it endured, and sacrificed what it sacrificed — not that comprehensive and complete justice might take the place of exhausting and destructive oppression, but that the strong victors might achieve, among themselves, whatever balance of interests and parity of advantage ought to be achieved. And if we must note that the San Francisco Conference did create something

new, we may note that what it created is the great international dictatorship — and this is indeed something new, something the last great war could not create, and the last League of Nations could not create either; for Europe, in the aftermath of the last war, had not submitted entirely to Germany, and the English, the Americans, and the Russians had not then stood in the place of liberators and saviors over the whole of her, for victory then was shared, with France, Italy, and Belgium taking a strong part in it, so that each had the right to have her say. And so Europe was able to emerge from that uneven victory, which never rose to the level of a dictatorship, nor to anything resembling one. But now the whole of Europe has submitted to Germany, and the three powers have come to her as liberators and saviors, and the three powers have forgotten what terror Europe and the rest of the world endured, and have dictated their own terms to the liberated nations just as they dictated terms to the defeated ones — and thus this dictatorship has come to be realized, which places the affairs of the whole earth in the hands of the three, when they met in the Crimea, and in the hands of the three, when they orchestrated the San Francisco Conference, and in the hands of the three, when they meet in Berlin, to approve what was decided at San Francisco, and to lay down the rules that will be imposed on the peace conference when it convenes tomorrow or the day after.

For all these reasons, we were not mistaken when we wished that the San Francisco Conference should follow the peace conference rather than precede it, so that nations might come to this conference already knowing what was theirs by right and what was owed by them, and might advance with clear sight and hold back with clear sight. But now the small and middling nations have been bound by the San Francisco decisions, and so they will not be free when the terms of peace come to be dictated to them and to the defeated alike. For all these reasons we did not hesitate to advise the Egyptians, and to press this advice upon them most insistently, not to entangle themselves before securing their full rights, and freeing themselves from these bonds the treaty imposed upon them before the war, bonds the war itself has only strengthened, tightened, and weighted further. But those charged with managing affairs did not listen, did not heed, and went straight ahead without looking back, until they signed the charter along with those who signed it, and we then looked, and found Egypt facing the most intricately complicated problems; and the late Ahmad Maher Pasha had informed Parliament that he would try to resolve the outstanding questions between Egypt and Great Britain before the conference convened, but

death overtook him before he could. We do not know what his successors did about this, but we do know that the matter between us and the British stands exactly as it stood, and that we have already signed the charter at San Francisco, thereby adding problems to problems, and complication to complication.

And since we have no choice but to continue advising the Egyptians — those who have taken up the burdens of government and those who have been spared them alike — we press upon them most insistently not to ratify this charter, nor to burden their homeland with the obligations and commitments it contains, before first freeing their homeland from the obligations and commitments imposed upon it by the treaty between us and the English.

The Egyptians must know — and it is our duty to inform them — that binding ourselves to the rules and conditions contained in this charter will close off the path before us, should we wish to reorganize our relations with our allies, were our allies then to refuse to reconsider that arrangement. Let us, then, first set these relations in order, and erase every disagreement between us and the English, and only then proceed to whatever international cooperation this charter requires of us — as free and honorable people, neither coerced nor bound.

Do the Egyptians know that our allies are entitled, under the treaty, to keep their army in Egypt for ten years, so that only once this term has expired may we even negotiate with them over evacuation?

And do the Egyptians know that the charter, should we accept it, obliges us to place all our facilities at the disposal of the United Nations — that is, of the great powers — whenever the circumstances of peace require it?

And do the Egyptians know that this means Egypt may come to be subject to a double occupation, one British, required by the treaty, and the other international, required by the charter?

And do the Egyptians know that, should we fail to settle the question of the Sudan before concluding the charter, we will then be unable to resolve this question except with the consent of our British allies?

And do the Egyptians know that the League of Arab States, whose founding they rejoiced over and whose support they were so anxious to secure, will be unable to repel any aggression against itself or against

any of its members by force, unless that aggression should come from Germany, Italy, or Japan — but should this aggression come instead from one of the victorious powers, there will be no way to repel it unless the aggressor itself consents?

These are things the Egyptians must know, and the leaders of opinion must bring them fully to light, so that the people may know where they are being led, and to what danger they are being exposed. And these are things the government knows full well, and that Parliament will come to know fully on the day they are placed before it. And those bearing the burdens of government, and those managing the affairs of state in the ministry and in Parliament, are Egyptians before all else, and after all else, and above all else. We are asking nothing great of them, nothing strange, we are imposing upon them no excessive demand, nor burdening them with any real hardship, in asking that they not ratify this charter until they have resolved the outstanding questions between us and the English, in a manner that befits the people's dignity, secures their satisfaction, and guarantees them a free and honorable future.

And the one thing we can affirm with full and complete confidence that we are not mistaken in affirming, is that the people will never approve this charter, nor be satisfied with those who approve it, unless the outstanding questions between us and the English are resolved before its ratification, in an honorable manner that guarantees the people their right to complete freedom and full independence throughout every part of the Nile Valley.