# Bribery

*Kawkab al-Sharq, 21 May 1933*

Let not the Ministry be angered, nor the Prime Minister, nor the Public Prosecution, nor Parliament — for it is not we who speak of bribery and set out its particulars in detail, nor is it we who do injury to Egypt's good name and diminish her worth, portraying her to the world in this odious likeness, in which her government stands upon bribery, buying the consciences of men, and men selling her their consciences for money. It is not we who say any such thing, nor commit any such thing; rather, we write only to give some faint account of the bitter pain and searing grief we feel when such words are spoken of Egypt, and when Egypt is painted for the world in such a likeness.

A great English newspaper, well known for its affection toward the sitting Ministry and its partiality to it — we do not say fondness and warmth, but say rather excess in championing and support — does not scruple to declare that the Prime Minister, sensing his Ministry's weakness before his illness, and then sensing its utter collapse in that weakness after God granted him some measure of recovery, wished to restore to his Ministry some measure of strength, and so contrived to that end bribery, resorting to the purchase of consciences — purchasing them from civil servants with bonuses and promotions, and purchasing them from the peasantry with those very funds he claimed to be spending to ease the weight of the crisis upon the fellahin!

So said the Daily Telegraph, adding that the Prime Minister, in resorting to this bribery, had further burdened an already burdened Treasury, adding disorder to its disorder and confusion to its confusion, and declaring, further, that there was no path to continuing along it. And so it is set down today, in the great English newspapers that once professed love for the Ministry and loyalty to it, that the order of government in Egypt rests upon bribery and the buying of consciences! And before that, the Times had published, this past summer, something of the same kind. What manner of publicity, then, is this that is broadcast of Egypt, and what manner of promotion is this that promotes Egypt?

The sitting Ministry squanders the funds of the state in shameful excess to trumpet itself abroad in every hue of advertisement, granting the foreign press vast sums of money to publish on its behalf pieces written in Egypt and prepared in government offices — pieces which,

once published, the government itself buys up, bringing them back in towering, teetering stacks to broadcast in its own bureaux to its own civil servants, that they might read them — though they read little or nothing of them at all! Nor was it any mark of original thought or sound understanding that civil servants should write for civil servants, nor that the Ministry should hoard its own praises within its own offices. And while the funds of the state are squandered on this folly, while ministers and civil servants write for themselves, and while ministers and civil servants proclaim themselves unto themselves, the Daily Telegraph publishes this piece in which it declares that the Prime Minister builds his Ministry upon the bribery of civil servants and peasants, and the purchase of consciences from civil servants and peasants.

And this talk is broadcast in England, broadcast in Europe, broadcast in America, and read by people who have not read what the Ministry has spent, in thousands of pounds, proclaiming itself, its rare competence and its dazzling skill! And had some of those who read the Daily Telegraph also read this folly which the supplements publish at such extravagant cost, such lavish expense, then what the Daily Telegraph publishes might well have erased its traces from their minds, and shown them that it is nothing but a kind of false publicity and contrived, foolish advertisement.

Nor does the government stop at this. It further invites lecturers and orators, convenes conferences in Cairo, and sends delegations to conferences convened outside Cairo, spending on all of this vast sums of money — sums which, had it kept them and their like instead of squandering them on such follies in the name of publicity for Egypt, advertisement of Egypt, and the contrived effort to show Egypt as other than she is, the government would not have needed, had it kept this great wealth which it sins in casting to the wind every day, to hold back bonuses and promotions, then make exceptions, then find the matter turning against it, until embarrassment forced it to fling open the doors of bonuses and promotions wide!

Indeed, had it kept this money which it spends on this false and fruitless publicity, it would have been an easy thing to lighten the burdens of the fellahin without recourse to bribery or anything resembling it. But the government conducts its affairs upon a policy that can be described, at the very least, as far removed from wisdom, innocent of good success.

All this, and we have not even addressed what the Daily Telegraph said, to know whether it be true or false, whether it be error or truth. All this, and we have not even addressed what the Daily Telegraph published, to show its shameful effects upon our moral and political life, whether it be correct or incorrect. For it is certain that not one soul among the people failed to understand this sudden course the government has taken with its senior officials as anything but a kind of reward and encouragement — a kind of reward for their worthy service in degrading the people under the pretext of preserving order, and a kind of encouragement to persist in degrading the people under the pretext of preserving order! Otherwise, who is it that claims any of the directors or senior officials of the Interior truly stood in need of promotion or a raise?

The people had been expecting that some among them would be dismissed from their posts, and that some would be called to account for what their hands had wrought; instead, behold, they are rewarded for what they have done, and behold, they are encouraged to continue in what they do. Nor was the government in any way fortunate in the matter of these bonuses and their granting before Sidqi Pasha's journey; rather, its conduct in this resembled nothing so much as that of a traveler who distributes gratuities only as he is about to quit the hotel in which he had been staying. Thus did it do ill by itself, and ill by the dignity of its officials, and ill by Egypt's good name, and thus did it enable the Daily Telegraph to broadcast to its many readers that the order of government in Egypt rests upon bribery and the buying of consciences, and that the state of the Treasury will not permit the government to continue in bribery and the buying of consciences, and that the good lies in this Ministry's fall and the coming, in its place, of another Ministry that buys no consciences, corrupts no morals, and spends the funds of the state on nothing but the benefit of the state.

And this talk of the Daily Telegraph is not read only in England, Europe, and America, but is translated in Egypt too, and read by those who read the newspapers across every rank and station of culture, wounding them thereby in their national dignity, filling their hearts with grief that this should be the opinion foreigners hold of them, and the judgment foreigners pass upon officials and peasants alike; casting them, further, into doubt of the Ministry's integrity; stripping from their souls, further, the assurance that the government prefers justice and fairness; and weakening, further, in their souls, that awe and respect which ought to be due the government.

And you yourself may judge the effect of all this upon our moral and political life, and may judge, too, what the Ministry claims for itself when it professes to wipe out chaos entirely and to establish order firmly in its place.

No — this Ministry's conduct paves, better than anything else could, the way to the ugliest forms of chaos, and to the most shameful demolition of order, for it fills souls with turmoil and doubt, and erases from them all confidence in those who oversee public affairs and those who direct them.

There is another truth, no less bitter than this one, nor any less shameful, which is that the Englishmen who used to claim neutrality for themselves, and who used to proclaim that they had left Egypt's affairs to the Egyptians, have now taken to declaring openly what they used to keep secret, and to revealing what they used to conceal, proclaiming that their neutrality was never anything but illusion, and that Egypt's independence in her own affairs was never anything but a delusion, saying, in a candor as injurious as it is shameful, that it is the High Commissioner's absence that counsels hesitation in changing the sitting Ministry. Had they said this as we ourselves say it, it might, for all its weight and odiousness, have been bearable; but they carry candor to excess and go too far in showing their strength, invoking His Majesty the King himself, and claiming that if His Majesty hesitates to change the Ministry, one source of that hesitation is the High Commissioner's absence from Egypt.

And how much do Egyptians of every party and persuasion, however much they differ among themselves, cherish keeping the King's name apart from these disputes and quarrels — not in Egypt alone, but especially outside Egypt.

But the conduct of the sitting Ministry, and all the corruption and disfigurement of everything to which it has led, has exposed Egypt to injury at the hands of the foreign press in her political and moral dignity, broadcasting that the order of government in her rests upon bribery, and that His Majesty the King cannot settle the matter of the Ministry because the High Commissioner is absent from Cairo.

Do you suppose, reader, that the Ministry's remaining in the seats of power is worth this exorbitant price which Egypt pays from her peace, her security, her good name, and her dignity? No — the Ministry's remaining is a lesser thing than that such words should be said of Egypt;

the Ministry's remaining is a lesser thing than that Egypt should suffer what she suffers. And if the Prime Minister is not troubled by what is said of him in England, and if the ministers are not troubled by what is said of them — that they are incompetent, unfit to remain in power, unworthy to bear its burdens — and if the Prime Minister and his colleagues are not distressed by this predicament into which they have been forced, nor persuaded that their own dignity compels them to resign, then Egypt is injured by what is said, injured by what is broadcast, injured by what befalls her, injured by becoming a topic for the readers of the foreign press, who mock her, jest at her expense, deride her, and scorn her dignity.

All this injures her, even as she remains confident that His Majesty the King loves her too well and is too gentle and too jealous of her dignity ever to leave her exposed to such scorn — whether the High Commissioner be absent or present, whether the Prime Minister travel abroad or remain.

*Kawkab al-Sharq, 21 May 1933*