

Clarity

Al-Siyasa, 13 July 1932 (Today's Talk).

1 It appears that new ties are seeking to form between London and Cairo, grounded to some degree in candor and clarity.

2 Or say rather that London wishes — so it appears — to return to that policy of candor and clarity which once prevailed between her and Cairo, before this ministry now bearing the burdens of government arose and forced her to abandon candor and clarity in favor of evasion and obscurity, thereby corrupting the relationship between two peoples who had been taking broad, far-reaching strides toward genuine amity.

3 Indeed, everything indicates that London wishes to resume the policy of candor and clarity, having grown weary of the policy of evasion and obscurity, or having already satisfied, over two years of the present ministry's tenure, whatever she had wanted from that policy. For some weeks now her various political circles have begun to display a measure of irritation, growing more pronounced and more evident each day, with the official relations now standing between Egypt and England; and the matter of the negotiations has been the source of this irritation and weariness. No sooner had the Prime Minister requested of the English government, in his own peculiar manner, that negotiations begin, than the English political circles showed a sharp aversion, which Al-Ahram conveyed to us some weeks ago, and which Al-Muqattam then confirmed, and which the Daily Telegraph pressed home still further; then the Prime Minister tried, at the close of the parliamentary session, to draw a curtain over the matter of the negotiations. But Al-Ahram was not slow to lift that curtain yesterday, with an article from its own correspondents depicting the view of English political quarters on the negotiations, the free elections, and the national ministry.

4 Al-Ahram's article is beyond doubt an inspired one. It is, then, an approximate picture — if not an entirely faithful one — of the view held by English political quarters on these three questions. As for the negotiations, these political quarters see no way to them with the Prime Minister and his ministry, since neither he nor it represents Egypt, nor can either bind her to whatever agreement might be reached with the English. The Daily Telegraph was candid and clear, declaring that negotiation is not desired with the Prime Minister, because his remaining in power until the treaty's implementation is complete is by no means

assured, and because his opponents among the Wafdists, the Liberals, and the Constitutionalists must inevitably be reckoned with in any agreement concerning Egypt. The English, then, have not changed the position they have declared more than once: that they do not wish to make a treaty with a government, even one headed by Sidqi Pasha, but wish rather to make a treaty with a people. And so long as Sidqi Pasha does not represent the people, nor speak in its voice, nor is able to bind it to whatever agreement he concludes, negotiating with him is a form of futility, and any agreement with him idle talk with no good in it.

5 There is no doubt that the thinking of English political circles on this matter is straight and without crookedness, candid and beyond reproach, and entirely in keeping with the thinking of those Egyptians whom the opposition represents, in what appears the most faithful representation — however little this may please the Prime Minister. For the Egyptians wish to reach with the English an agreement they themselves accept and are not forced into against their will; an agreement founded on sincerity, candor, and honest counsel, neither snatched from them by stealth nor imposed upon them by compulsion. And it is clear that such an agreement cannot possibly be concluded at the hands of the Prime Minister.

6 As for the matter of free elections, it may appear — if what Al-Ahram's correspondent reports is accurate — that the English have despaired of them, believing there is no way to them in Egypt, and that whatever charge is leveled at Sidqi Pasha could equally be leveled at the Wafdists, had they themselves overseen the elections. For this reason, English circles, according to Al-Ahram's correspondent, place no reliance on free elections as a means of learning the Egyptians' opinion of, and consent to, the treaty — and the view of English circles on this matter is mistaken, needing no correction, crooked, needing to be set straight. The sin of this error and crookedness in judging the character of the Egyptians, their dignity, their understanding of freedom, their regard for democracy, and their care for their nascent democracy falls upon the present ministry. For had it not pursued, in its elections, the path which we know and the English know, which we condemn and the English condemn, and which stands between it and negotiation and treaty, the English would never have formed this opinion of the degree to which Egyptians value freedom, dignity, and democracy.

7 Be that as it may, English political circles cannot level at the Wafd a tenth of the charges they can level at the Prime Minister and his

ministry regarding the matter of elections. For it is among the plainest facts, admitting neither doubt nor dispute, that the Wafd never, on any day, surrounded elections with what the Prime Minister has surrounded them with of grounds for doubt and compelling suspicion. The Wafd did not abolish freedom of speech and oratory, did not abolish freedom of movement, did not impose silence and stillness upon its opponents, did not surround them with guards and troops during elections and before them. The Wafd did not deal with officials in the manner the present ministry has dealt with them in the matter of elections. The Wafd did not expose the electoral process itself to what the present government has exposed it to, nor did it suspend the newspapers beforehand. And the slightest honest comparison between the Wafd's elections and the present ministry's elections proves, with full clarity and evidence, that whatever the Wafd's elections are faulted for is natural and familiar in any nascent democracy not far removed from its founding, whose people have not yet grown accustomed to it. But what the present ministry's elections are faulted for is something else entirely — something we cannot say, for fear of the new laws, but which we have no need to say, since the English know it with full knowledge, and are acquainted with it in full, both in its general outline and in its particulars, and are able to pass judgment upon it — and we see no sign that they have done otherwise. The proof of this is that they have negotiated with the Wafd government, while refusing to negotiate with the Prime Minister and his ministry.

8 The view of English circles on our free elections is therefore crooked. And being so, it does not concern us. For the matter of elections is a purely Egyptian matter which the English would do well — indeed are obliged — to leave to us, to dispose of as we like and decide as we wish, so long as they remain confident that those who will negotiate and conclude a treaty with them truly and faithfully represent the people.

9 And here we come to the third question, that of the national ministry which the English await in order to negotiate and reach agreement with it, which the Constitutional Liberals have demanded, and which the whole of the Egyptian people awaits — not for the sake of negotiation alone, but for the resolution of the economic crisis, the organization of administration, and the reform of whatever harm has befallen public and private life over these past two years. It is perfectly clear that every Egyptian who wishes to see his homeland emerge from this impasse into which the policy of counterfeit neutrality has forced it

would be gladdened to see English political circles feel precisely what Egyptian political circles feel — we exclude from this only the Prime Minister himself. For the Egyptians, all of them, want the national ministry, await it, and entreat His Majesty the King to order its formation and entrust to it the rescue of Egypt from the evil in which she finds herself. Nor do we think we err, or go to excess in charity of judgment, when we say, and affirm, that most of those who take refuge with the Prime Minister and support him privately share the view of the Constitutional Liberals and the English political circles regarding the national ministry, and believe that it alone can restore to the country the security, order, dignity, and peace of mind it stands in need of.

10 The Prime Minister alone, in all likelihood, is the one who detests the national ministry and dreads it, because he knows with certainty that he would have no place within it. The Egyptians, for their part, prefer the life of Egypt to Sidqi Pasha's satisfaction. And as for the English, it is theirs to choose, from this very day, between the satisfaction of the Egyptian people and the satisfaction of Sidqi Pasha — and it appears very plainly that they have already chosen, and that their choice is not one the Egyptians will find displeasing.