Threats to Egypt's Stability
C. D. QUILLIAN,
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Self-Interest of Leadership Blamed for Present Unrest

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NEW YORK TIMES:

I should be grateful if you could spare space for the comment of one newly arrived from Egypt on various points in Professor C. Bradford Welles' letter of Jan. 29.

When I left Alexandria on Jan. 16 the shipping of all nations was indeed passing through the Suez Canal "substantially as usual." But this is not the true picture. In mid-October striking Egyptians brought the docks of Port Said and Suez to a complete standstill. Thereafter the only cargo loaded and unloaded was that handled by the British Navy. As a result goods for Egypt were overcarried to, for example, Aden, and shippers have since refused to accept cargo for canal ports. Also, water, fuel, provisions and supplies and repair facilities were denied to ships of all nationalities. Only those ships possessing their own searchlights could transit the canal by night, thanks to a strike of Egyptian electricians.

There is a great difference between "published legislation passed by the Wafd party since it came to power two years ago" and actual achievement, apart from the fact that much of this legislation had been initiated long before the Wafdists took office. The two new universities exist mainly on paper. Education may be free, but it is far from being universal and far from being education, if that word means anything. Classes often number hundreds of pupils. The standard of teaching is lamentable, discipline is nonexistent, and to make things worse the Wafdists summarily dismissed, last December, over 100 British professors and teachers.

Living Conditions

The social security schemes were prostituted into doles for Wafdist supporters, the "improved working and living conditions" have not been visible to the naked eye, the cost of living has increased so that the masses can barely afford their simple staples, and popular discontent is strong. Taxes have been raised, but have borne most heavily on the poor, and the understaffed Taxation Department is years behind in its work. Commerce and industry have been well-nigh paralyzed by Wafdist corruption and inefficiency.

I think it would be unfair to accuse Egypt of badness and corruption, but I hold that one may fairly accuse the late Wafdist Government of badness and corruption on a scale that it will take Egypt years to recover from. Further, it is the strong conviction of numerous good observers that one of the chief reasons that led the Wafdist party to abrogate the 1936 treaty was the need to distract public attention from Wafdist corruption, which had reduced the country to the lowest levels of misery. The Wafdist party has been notorious for corruption and nepotism, and it has always sought to cover its misdeeds by attacking the foreigner, especially the British.

I am one of many Englishmen who believe that the 1936 treaty needs revision. But the British Government agreed on revision so long ago as 1946. It is also indisputable that Egypt won very wide and solid advantages by that treaty, and it is hard to see why she should not complete her freely agreed upon payments for them.

Soviet Threat

As regards Egyptian lack of our acute sense of danger, it is a matter of fact that the Wafdist Prime Minister, Nahas Pasha, never reads newspapers, knows nothing of the outside world, and could only with difficulty be got to glance at state papers. One of his own Ministers told me a few months ago that the only time the Premier came to life at a Cabinet meeting was when jobs were mentioned! The Wafdist press has consistently described the Soviet threat as a British "bogy" and the British and Americans as warmongers.

We British, like you Americans, long for world peace. When it is in sight we shall be only too glad to evacuate Egypt. Maintaining our troops there is a nuisance politically, militarily, financially, in every way. To leave the defense of the vital Middle Eastern region to the Egyptian or any other regional army would be to imperil the Arab nations and Africa. Egypt is the victim of her geographical situation, not of the British.

C. D. QUILLIAN,
Formerly Cairo Correspondent, The Times, London.
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