

Anxiety...

Al-Wadi (Hadith al-Wadi), November 30, 1934

There is no doubt that it has existed for two days now, and that it has begun to spread and grow until it has all but taken hold of every soul, and that its traces appear plain and clear in people's conversations whenever they meet one another, and in how they interpret the constitutional-political situation in these days. Nor, indeed, is there any doubt that this anxiety is not confined to Egypt, but reaches beyond her to certain English circles in England. For those who read the dispatch from Al-Ahram's correspondents, published this morning, find in it that certain English circles concerned with Egyptian affairs make no secret of their anxiety, and are advising the Egyptians to caution and prudence.

Official circles in Egypt are at ease, and official circles in England profess to be at ease; but the unofficial, here and there, do not hide their anxiety, and do not cease to wonder about the fate of the political situation in this country.

And nothing testifies to this anxiety more clearly than the fact that our colleague Al-Jihad wished, this very morning, to calm it, and to send reassurance into people's hearts — yet did no more than record it, plainly. The people, then, are anxious; they ask what the political situation truly is, and wish to know what the coming days hold in store for them. Do the days hold security, ease, reassurance, an acknowledgment of the nation's right, a recognition of its will, and a setting about the fulfilment of its hopes? Or do they hold fear, turmoil, an attempt at give and take, an attempt at further tests, and a reluctance to satisfy the nation and grant it what it wants? Any journalist who fails to depict this plain fact, and fails to record it faithfully, falls short in his duty to his readers and falls short in his duty to history — for this fact is a real one, on the tongues of all people, quickening in the hearts of all people, stirring the consciences of all people, and it is powerful, far-reaching in its effect, so much so that its traces have crossed the sea, and appeared among those of the English who follow Egyptian affairs closely. I confess I cannot understand the reluctance to declare this fact, nor the hesitation in bringing it to light, recording it, and marking out its effects — for the concealment of truth is in itself an evil; how much more so when this truth is a useful thing, full of lessons and admonitions, fit, once revealed, to steer matters toward a sound and reasonable good.

No one has been able, nor will anyone be able, to doubt the unanimity of the Egyptians in their rejoicing at the coming of the present Ministry, and in their support for it, openly, powerfully, resolutely, and with conviction — for this present Ministry has made its programme the effacement of the system of oppression and tyranny, the restoration of the nation's freedom to the nation, and the acknowledgment of the nation's right to be master in its own land, governing its own affairs, with no individual, answerable or unanswerable, holding arbitrary sway over it, and none deputizing for it save one who represents it in true and proper fashion. The Ministry made its programme the effacement of the system that Sidqi Pasha and his associates established in rebellion against the Constitution and the law, that Sidqi Pasha and his associates enforced in violation of the simplest principles of justice and morals, under whose shadow Sidqi Pasha and his associates squandered a great many of the nation's benefits and rights, and in resisting which the nation sacrificed many noble souls and much pure blood, and endured, in its resistance, harm, pain, and suffering beyond all counting or measure.

It is not strange, then, that the nation should be unanimous in its love for a Ministry that rises to do it justice against this system and its men, and to restore its right to it in full; what would be strange is that the nation should fall short in any of this, or begrudge this Ministry its love and support. And indeed people know that the Prime Minister and his colleagues have expended no small effort, and borne no small toil, and continue to expend that effort and bear that toil, in order to bring the nation to self-command, and to moderation in its joy, rejoicing, and support.

All of this is a truth admitting no dispute. But if it is said to the nation that the Ministry has completed its first task, the abolition of the system, and has submitted the documents of this abolition to the Palace, and awaits only their issuance; and if the newspapers here and there report that certain people are scheming, and others lying in wait, and that these documents may be delayed in their issuance, and may yet be touched by amendment in this clause or that; and if the newspapers here and there go on dwelling upon these notions, plainly at one moment and by insinuation at another — then it is not strange that the nation should read all of this, and reckon that obstacles stand in the way of its Ministry, and that hardships lie before its hopes, and that, when it rejoiced and was glad, it did not reckon that this joy and that rejoicing might meet with what would turn them back into sorrow and dejection. Nor is it strange

that anxiety should seize it, and that turmoil should stir within it; nor is it strange that people should ask one another, whenever they meet: Have the documents been submitted? When were the documents submitted? When will the documents be issued? Has the system been abolished? When will the abolition of the system be completed?

Nor is it strange that the foreigners residing in Egypt should sense the nation's anxiety, and carry what they sense of it across the sea, and that foreigners here should be anxious, and foreigners there should be anxious. None of this is strange; what would be strange is that it should not be so.

It profits no one, then, to deny this plain fact — that anxiety exists, that it is severe, and that it is general and comprehensive, not confined to Cairo but reaching beyond her to the provinces, and not confined to Egypt but reaching beyond her abroad. We should like to know, then, who stands to profit from this anxiety, or to find in it some advantage, or some means to some benefit or reform.

The partisans of the hateful system proved unable to secure their system even when the nation was resigned to despair of reform, throughout the past years. They failed, and failed manifestly — they, who were themselves the most convinced of all people in that system's stability, and who lied, and knew they were lying, when they spoke of it as secure. They failed when strength was theirs, and the English, convinced of their failure, abandoned them to the dissolution that was bound to come; they failed when they were strong — how, then, shall it be with them now that they are deprived of all strength, have lost every support, and despair of every backing? They failed when the nation despaired of any near redress — how, then, shall it be with them now that they have dissolved, now that the nation stands on the very brink of triumph, now that the nation's anxiety may at any moment turn into an open, undisguised indignation? Who, then, stands among those who profit from this anxiety, and benefit from its persistence?

How greatly do those who scheme, and fish in troubled waters, as the saying goes, need to reflect, to weigh the consequences of their own conduct, to learn from experience, and to know that the anxiety of peoples is a danger, and that the despair of peoples is a graver danger still than anxiety — and that the psychology of peoples is neither a slight nor an easily grasped thing, but a difficult matter of the greatest complexity.

I record this anxiety for the sake of truth and of history; but we are confident that it will not last long, for it profits no one, and may harm everyone — indeed, we hope, and press our hope, that this piece will not reach its readers' hands except as a page from the annals of history, recording an anxiety whose causes have passed away, and in whose place calm and reassurance have come to stand.

Yes — we hope, and press our hope, that this piece will not be published except together with the news that the official documents abolishing the system have been signed, and made known to the people.