

A Petition . . . — 2 —

Al-Wadi (Hadith al-Wadi), November 12, 1934

Sire,

Nothing in these heavy days has pained the Egyptians so much as this strange contradiction which they feel and which wounds them most grievously, which grieves them most deeply, which stirs their consciences to denial and to indignation — and this, when they read what the English newspapers broadcast on the one hand, and what the Egyptian newspapers broadcast on the other. The English newspapers broadcast, at the prompting of the Foreign Office at times, and without such prompting at other times — but broadcast, in any case — that the English consider Egyptian opinion to have matured, that the time has come to satisfy the Egyptian people, and that this has become a necessity; and that they take the position they now take out of a defense of foreign interests on the one hand, and a desire to satisfy the Egyptian people on the other.

The Egyptian newspapers, meanwhile, broadcast — quoting the sitting President of the Senate one day, and the sitting President of the Chamber of Deputies the next — that Your Majesty holds most firmly to the system of government that Sidqi Pasha instituted, and refuses most firmly to allow this system to be touched by change or alteration. The Egyptian people repudiate this system and reject it today, as they repudiated and rejected it yesterday, and as they will always repudiate and reject it. They have borne heavy suffering for this cause, and have sacrificed for it much of life and money, of benefit and utility, and remain ever ready to continue this sacrifice, however heavy it grows, whatever its consequences and its results may be.

The Egyptian people suffer most grievously in seeing these two contradictory things: seeing the English display courtship toward them, recognition of them, a drawing near to them, while seeing certain men, responsible and irresponsible alike, among the partisans of this present system, broadcast among the people, without scruple, without reserve, without fear of contradiction, let alone fear of punishment, that Your Majesty holds fast to a system the people do not love, supports an era the people have come to hate, and refuses to permit the opening of an era for which the people wish no substitute.

The Egyptians know, among themselves, that what the partisans of this present system broadcast is false, and that what they attribute to Your Majesty is fabricated and invented; and yet, even so, it pains them — for they hate to see attributed to the King of Egypt what ought not to be attributed to him, to see laid upon the King of Egypt what ought not to be laid upon him, and to see those who make these attributions and lay these burdens drawn from men whose very positions ought to compel them to truthfulness, whose very offices ought to bind them to honesty and sincerity, and whose offices forbid them absolutely from working mischief and corruption between the people and their sovereign.

The Egyptians believe, in full faith, that the source from which good ought to come to them, from which kindness ought to reach them, from which contentment ought to be granted them, is none other than the Egyptian throne — which they raised up with their own arms, which they surrounded with their affection and their hearts, and sacrificed for — and for which they remain ever ready to sacrifice themselves and their wealth. They believe, in full faith, that the throne ought to be first among all in seeking their satisfaction, most eager of all in securing their interests, more inclined than the English to respect their will and to acknowledge it — for the throne is of them and they are of it, the throne belongs to them and they belong to it, whereas the English are, in any case, foreigners and adversaries; the bond between us and them may improve, and may worsen, but the bond between us and the throne can be, and ought to be, nothing but good, always.

The Egyptians wish, then, that Your Majesty would graciously command that these schemers be restrained from their scheming, that the tongues of ill will be stopped from broadcasting ill will, and that those who work mischief between the people and the throne be prevented from working mischief between the people and the throne.

The Egyptians know full well that their sovereign is a man of the highest culture, distinguished by penetrating insight, sound judgment, and far-sighted vision; that he knows the history of modern Egypt with true knowledge; that he understands well the life of nations and the phases through which they pass; that he knows that nations do not turn backward but press ever forward; and that the Egyptian people, who rose more than half a century ago seeking reform and constitution, who bore, for the sake of reform and constitution, all that they bore from the first Revolution until the Great War had passed, until the second Revolution came, until the English acknowledged their independence and recognized

their right to reform and constitution — this people cannot turn backward, nor accept a rule founded on anything but its own will, conducted according to anything but its own wishes, resting upon men unaccountable among the men of the palace, and upon accountable men who cannot measure up to responsibility, who cannot properly rise to duty, who do not place the people's will above the will of a single man, and who do not favor the people's satisfaction over the satisfaction of the holders of prestige and power.

Yes, Sire — whatever trials may be brought to bear upon them, whatever tribulations may beset them, whatever terror may be poured upon them, the Egyptians cannot deny themselves, cannot disown their past, cannot forget their sacrifices, cannot relinquish any part of the right they have won, cannot fall short in seeking what remains to them of that right. They believe they were created to live honored and free, and they are resolved to live honored and free. For this reason they cannot submit to any great man, whoever he may be, even were he al-Ibrashi Pasha; nor bow before any formidable minister, whoever he may be, even were he Sidqi Pasha or Abdel Fattah Yehia Pasha; and they can understand the men of state as nothing but servants of the people, and the men of the palace as nothing but servants of the King:

And they refuse, most firmly, that the men of the palace should overstep themselves so far as to meddle in what is not theirs to meddle in, or that they should turn the men of state to the service of anything but the authority of the people and its plain, unmixed interests. They have proclaimed this since the coup, indeed have proclaimed it at various times since the Revolution, and proclaim it now, and stand ready to proclaim it again tomorrow and the day after; but they wish that Your Majesty would spare them the need, by keeping the men of the palace to the service of the palace, by leaving the men of state to the interests of the state, and by leaving the people to the authority of the people.

There is not, Sire, among the Egyptians — cultured man of great standing or of small, of high position or of low — one who does not believe, with the utmost conviction, that the age of tyranny has passed and cannot return; that nations are governed only by the system they wish and approve, and in the manner they wish and approve; that systems of government are not granted to peoples, nor sent down to them as revelation from heaven, but are established by peoples themselves, ratified by peoples themselves, and changed by peoples themselves should they wish to change them; and that peoples prevent whatever

amendment or reform they do not want — from the people alone does all this issue, and to the people alone does all this return; no one has the right to impose upon them, of all this, what they do not want, whatever it may be, however much force may support it, however favorable the circumstances.

The Egyptians have believed all this in this age, as the Europeans believed all this before this age, and this faith will never be torn from Egyptian hearts, for they, as I have said, press ever forward and never turn back. They see, without hesitation, without doubt, without question, that Sidqi Pasha was a rebel when he leapt to power, and was a rebel when he altered the constitution in disregard of the constitution's own principles; and they wish that Your Majesty would graciously command the repair of what Sidqi Pasha and his associates corrupted, would graciously command the erasure of the traces of this rebellion against the people's rights, and the lifting of the burden of this aggression upon the nation's authority; would graciously command the restoration of the constitution which Sidqi Pasha never truly abolished, since he never possessed the power to abolish it; and would graciously command the removal of this present system, which Sidqi Pasha could not, and which no one else will ever be able to, impose lawfully upon the nation — for systems of government are not imposed upon peoples, but issue from peoples.

The Egyptians, Sire, regret most bitterly that the rebellion of rebels, the mischief of schemers, and the tyranny of tyrants should corrupt the people's internal affairs, and occupy them with disputes they would prefer not to be occupied with, not to waste their time and effort upon — time and effort they would rather devote to the disagreement between themselves and the English, that they might apply themselves fully to resolving the dispute between themselves and the English, and find, in achieving an Anglo-Egyptian agreement, the means of securing for Egypt her complete independence.

The Egyptians trust that Your Majesty will attend to all this, and will adopt such wise decisions as will secure for the people its contentment and its freedom, protect it in future from all aggression and tyranny, and enable it to achieve this loftiest of aims — complete independence. And the Egyptians, their hearts now filled with trust and hope in this, pray that no day or days may pass before their hopes become realities, and their plea becomes certainty. They wish for Your Majesty a life of ease and happiness, all of it a blessing to Your Majesty and to the people, who

raise to Your Majesty the truest tokens of love and devotion.

Taha Hussein

Al-Wadi, November 12, 1934.