

To the Senate

Al-Nida, 30 March 1948

It is said that politics is, before all else, a genuine precaution for the future — and it is said, for exactly this reason, that no one has ever set out, for the statesmen of peoples and the leaders of nations, their own guiding principle in a single, comprehensive, concise phrase, one striking in its own precision, its own truth, and its own brevity, quite the way the ancient Arab poet did, when he said:

*Judge well your own foot's own place, before you take the step —
for whoever climbs a slippery slope unwarily, slips.*

It is said, for exactly this same reason, that caution, and precaution, and genuine reflection on consequences, before ever undertaking any action, all remain hostage to genuinely discerning insight, genuinely sharp minds, genuinely broad culture, and a man's own knowledge of what he ought to do, and what he ought to leave undone.

Those of dull insight, closed minds, narrow culture, and limited knowledge remain the very least capable of governing peoples, and most deserving of being turned back, firmly, from ever attempting it, kept at a genuine distance from it, without hesitation, without delay, without reluctance. These same principles apply to domestic policy exactly as they apply to foreign policy — yet their own significance, in foreign policy, proves genuinely greater still, their own observance genuinely more essential, and failure in this same regard leads to varieties of genuine difficulty admitting no real escape, to varieties of genuine sin the homeland may find no way out of at all, burdens many generations may well carry, without ever finding any real way of lightening their own load.

An incompetent government may well err, in managing domestic affairs — yet the capable government that follows it might still be granted the chance to correct the error, and set right whatever was crooked, and the people, in the end, suffer no real further harm in bearing the consequences of their own genuine shortcomings, and enduring their own hardship for having allowed incompetent governments to seize control of their own affairs, dominate their own infrastructure, and shoulder the burdens of governance over them.

And a people's own suffering, under such incompetent, inadequate governments' own errors, may well yield a genuinely useful lesson for its

own future — teaching it that the affairs of governance ought never be entrusted, except to those genuinely qualified for them, genuinely capable of bearing their own burdens.

An independent people can genuinely bear the consequences of its own errors, and reap the fruits of its own correct choices, so long as the matter never extends beyond itself, to other peoples besides, and never extends beyond the present generation, to generations still hidden within the unknown future. Matters of foreign policy, though, prove genuinely, thoroughly different — since they expose a people's own independence to real danger, expose friendly peoples' own independence to real danger too, and burden future generations with genuinely unwarranted restrictions, and chains. If shortcomings in domestic affairs might genuinely be tolerated, shortcomings in foreign affairs ought never to be tolerated, nor accepted, from any government whatsoever, whatever its own character might be.

For all these same reasons, the educated have genuinely praised the Senate for two particular positions, ones the Egyptian Parliament may well have never known the equal of, since parliamentary life first began in Egypt. The first of these same positions has already reached its own conclusion, and reached it well, in the very best manner such matters could conclude: the Senate's own position regarding the petroleum affair. Professor Fuad Serageddin Pasha was granted the fullest possible share in this same magnificent, noble stand — it was he who first raised this same question, raising it in a genuinely remarkable spirit of precision, patience, and thorough investigation, of confidence, resolve, steadfastness, and determination, of moderation in opinion, moderation in speech, moderation in delivery, and moderation in his own parliamentary conduct itself. All of this together allowed him to convince his own fellow senators, Wafdist and non-Wafdist alike, and to carry the Senate toward compelling the government back to its own proper course, obliging it to respect the constitution, on the one hand, and to genuinely safeguard, and preserve, the people's own rights, on the other.

This same petroleum affair appears genuinely simple, on the surface — yet this young senator knew exactly how to probe it deeply, and how to enable his own fellow senators to probe it deeply too, and grasp its own real bearing on Egyptian foreign policy. Petroleum is, without any doubt whatsoever, among the most consequential elements shaping world politics itself. Any state possessing some part of its own petroleum sources, then granting the exploitation of these same sources to foreign

companies, without taking the most careful, most precise precaution for its own political and economic future, does nothing more than impose upon its own people political abasement, and economic abasement, both at once. Those who praise Fuad Serageddin, and the Senate, for this same firm, noble stand, will never exaggerate, nor go too far, however much praise they might offer them.

The second position is the Senate's own position on the Sudan question — genuinely noble, genuinely remarkable, at present, though I do not know how it will develop, nor where it will ultimately lead. But I genuinely hope the Senate will remain faithful to itself, and to its own homeland, in this matter, exactly as it remained faithful to itself, and to its own homeland, in the petroleum affair. And since the Senate has already shown itself first to genuinely sense its own duty, first to genuinely weigh the higher political interests exactly as they ought to be weighed, first to compel the government back from error, once already entangled in it, and to guard against error before ever being driven toward it — it seems only right that we should turn to the Senate, both to assist it, and to seek its own assistance, at one and the same time.

Let us assist it, then, in exactly this same arduous, genuinely serious task it appears determined to carry out well, this very year: protecting the government from itself, and from the circumstances surrounding it, and protecting the people from the government's own error, or its own deviation from what is right. And let us seek its own assistance, too, with certain genuinely serious political problems very nearly confronting Egypt, if they have not already confronted her — problems that, should Egyptians fail to remain alert to them, might well drive them toward disasters, or bring down upon them disasters admitting of no real accounting whatsoever.

I shall speak, in this same piece, or in whatever remains of it, of only a single problem — one that seems to me the gravest problem now confronting independent countries, in these very days. How much graver, then, for a country that has not yet secured its own complete independence at all? This same problem arises from the very dispute now raised between Soviet Russia and capitalist America, and the other states now divided between these same two powers, monopolizing, at this particular stage of the world's own development, real strength, real reach, and real authority.

Russia has already established her own union across Eastern and Central Europe, annexing to it whatever states she has annexed, through her own particular means — genuinely harsh means, or genuinely gentle ones, I do not know. The United States of America has likewise established her own particular union in Western Europe, or annexed to it whatever states she has annexed, through her own particular means — genuine enticement, or genuine intimidation, I do not know either... Russia looks toward the Near East with real hesitation; America looks toward the Near East without any hesitation at all. Russia has no allies genuinely connected to the Near East; America has allies genuinely connected to the Near East — the English, and the French.

The Russian hand, then, remains somewhat distant from the Near East — yet capable of extending toward it, any day. The American hand, meanwhile, lies genuinely, entirely close to the East, already extending toward it, in fact, every single day, indeed every single hour — extending toward it directly, at times, and through her own allies, at others. Real conflict already exists in Greece, between Russia and her own followers, and the United States and her own followers, in that same country — and it seeks, or attempts, to establish itself in Turkey too, the Mediterranean itself serving as the very site of this same struggle. People have, for over a year now, begun speaking of an Eastern union, meant to resist Russian expansion — Greece and Turkey, it is said, are the ones who will lay the very foundation for this same union, agreeing upon it between themselves first, a process already underway, before then inviting the Arab states to join, a process, it is said, already in motion too. Should this same Eastern union come into being, relations would then be organized between it and the Western union, establishing a genuinely powerful front to resist Russian expansion across the entire earth.

This is exactly what people are talking about, and it seems most likely that most of it is genuinely true. And here we arrive at exactly what Egypt genuinely requires, in the way of caution, vigilance, and precaution: Egypt holds interests, and rights, that must genuinely be respected, and it remains her own genuine right, over her own statesmen, her own leaders, her own decision-makers, that they never expose any part of her own interests, or her own rights, to real danger, nor drag her into political adventures that might well end, in the end, in the genuine catastrophe of a devastating, crushing war, sparing nothing and no one — for no reason whatsoever, except that Soviet Russia and the United States of America are contending over influence, and

authority.

The very gravest danger of all is that some Egyptian government, whatever it might be, should find itself driven into exactly this same adventure, genuinely swayed, as other governments have already been swayed, by intimidation, and enticement, by temptation, and fear.

The very first thing incumbent upon the Senate, I genuinely hope, is that it take up a genuine stance of caution, and vigilance, neither sleeping itself, nor allowing anyone else to sleep, until this same crisis has genuinely cleared. Egypt stands in no real need whatsoever of being made to burn in the fire of war, so that this side or that might triumph — she stands, rather, in genuine need of completing her own independence, and devoting herself entirely to whatever genuine reform she requires.

There remain two matters Egypt ought never to forget, nor ought she speak of any alliance, or any union, before genuinely, completely settling them first. The first: that she secure her own particular independence, complete, in full measure, entirely free of any blemish — an independence never to be achieved, except upon the very foundation of evacuation, and the unity of the Nile Valley. The second: that the outstanding questions between the Arab East and the European-American West be resolved fully, and honourably — resolving the Palestinian question in a manner genuinely guaranteeing the Arabs their own dignity, and their own right to a free, honoured life in their own homeland; resolving the outstanding problems between Iraq and Great Britain; and resolving the outstanding problems between North Africa and France.

Should both these same matters be settled, Egypt would then be genuinely free to consider, on her own terms, whether to ally, or not to ally, whether to unite, or not to unite. Before that, though, any thought of alliance, or union, amounts to nothing but a thought of subjecting Egypt, and her own neighbours, to the American-European authority's own domination. The Roman Senate, in Rome's own days of glory, was once accustomed, whenever the state found itself exposed to some genuine danger, to issue that same well-known, historic decree, containing exactly this same formula: "Let the two consuls see to it that the Republic comes to no harm."

Let the Egyptian Senate, then, revive this same ancient Roman tradition — let it remain genuinely vigilant, and compel the government to remain vigilant alongside it, so that Egypt never comes to any harm at

all!