Conclusion

Kawkab al-Sharq, 8 April 1933

All Egyptians are anxious and fearful! No day settles for them, and no night brings them sleep. I do not think they have ever known a feast like this feast, in which they took no joy in the pleasures of life, and in which they did not go to one another with the greetings and congratulations they are accustomed to exchange; for they are wholly preoccupied, away from the feast and its pleasures and its greetings, by this pressing anxiety, this calamity beyond which there is no calamity…! God forgive me — no, I do recall one feast in which the Egyptians were preoccupied, away from the pleasure of life and from greeting and congratulation.

That was before the Great War, when the fire of war blazed between Turkey and the Balkan states, and when the Balkan armies drew near to Constantinople and exposed the seat of the Caliphate to danger. There, the Egyptians were preoccupied, away from the feast, and their souls attached themselves to the capital of the Caliphate, feeling for it and wishing it deliverance. And God answered these souls that day: the enemy armies did not break through the Muslim lines, and the Muslims tasted the pleasure of life in what remained of the days of the feast..!

As for this feast we are now in, the Egyptians have been kept from it in one continuous preoccupation. And though the newspapers never ceased, but continued to carry them news and broadcast reports, they remained anxious and disturbed, their souls swinging in the sky between despair and hope: which of the two adversaries would triumph in this ferocious war whose fire has blazed, whose heat has flared, around Samannud..? Is it the victorious army, or the visiting chairman…?

The high command at the Ministry of the Interior fell silent, issuing no official communiqués detailing the attack and the defence, or the struggle that took place between them. Only the Wafd’s newspapers went on speaking, setting out the matter in detail; and the people read, and feared for the state’s army, and expected the worst from this silence in which the state had submerged itself so utterly..!

This engagement lasted three days, and ended yesterday afternoon, and the Wafd’s chairman returned to Cairo surrounded by ten senior officers, an armed train behind him, and to the right and left of the train

scattered soldiers and unfurled banners! And so it seemed to people, when the Wafd's chairman arrived at Cairo station, that our victorious army had indeed triumphed, and that our high command would issue an official communiqué to set hearts at ease throughout the South, announcing this dazzling victory, declaring that it had brought the whole engagement to a close, and had brought the Wafd's chairman a prisoner to the capital...!

But the high command remained submerged in silence, saying nothing at all, and remained submerged in stillness, doing nothing at all! And the Wafd's chairman went off wherever he pleased, and will go off wherever he pleases, watched by eyes and overseers, on condition that he not leave Cairo — or else the campaign will be renewed, and the army and police mobilised once more.

So which of the two adversaries triumphed? Did the government triumph, bringing back its adversary a prisoner? Did the Wafd's chairman triumph, going and coming as he pleased? A matter open to question... But the one thing beyond doubt is that the Minister of the Interior's heart has settled back into his breast since yesterday; and this is no small thing, for you know that when the Minister of the Interior's heart beats, Egypt's heart beats for him, and when the Minister of the Interior's brow furrows, Egypt's brow furrows for him; and that all of Egypt's happiness is hostage to the Minister of the Interior's contentment, and all of Egypt's misery is hostage to the Minister of the Interior's anger.

So Egypt must now grow calm, for the Minister of the Interior has grown calm! And Egypt must now rejoice, for the Minister of the Interior is content! And the flags must now be raised, and the towns and villages decked out, for the Minister of the Interior has triumphed, and the Wafd's chairman has fallen prisoner into his hand...!

Do you not see that the matter has reached the furthest extreme of farce?! And arrived at the utmost limit of absurdity?! Upon the stage of a genuine parliament?! Does this parliament, then, wish to be an obedient follower of its wise government, content to have won this government's confidence?

Had this farce, beyond all description, occurred in a country that valued its own dignity and was jealous of the government's standing within it, the Ministry would have had to answer for it before Parliament in a most severe reckoning. And the Ministry would have been forced, before Parliament's indignation, to resign; and had it not done so, it

would have been dismissed and compelled to step down from the seats of power.

For everyone knows that ministries exist to look after the interests of nations and protect their welfare; they exist for earnest purpose, not for play; they are established for work, not for performance.

And everyone knows that ministries may stray from their purpose, and wander from the right path, corrupting when they ought to reform, harming when they ought to benefit — yet they still preserve, in every case, the government's standing and the state's dignity, because preserving this standing and dignity is a fundamental condition for the stability of security and order. As for our present Ministry, it has squandered what it has squandered of the country's interests, and neglected what it has neglected of its welfare, and the people have taken exception to this, but they bore with it, believing that it would at least preserve for the government this standing without which no government can stand. But now it squanders this standing too, and now it makes the authority of the state a subject for mockery, and exposes the state's army and the state's police to ridicule and contempt.

Those in charge of this country's affairs must know that all Egyptians have come to harbour a deep and dangerous derision for these absurd manoeuvres into which our soldiers and officers were driven these past three days. For only a raid upon the borders could have justified the mobilisation of troops, the dispatch of armed trains, the requisitioning of river vessels, and the denial to officers of their natural right to rest during the days of the feast. A raid upon the borders, or the outbreak of revolt — these alone could have justified the government in doing what it did in these recent days. But that the Wafd's chairman should travel to visit his parents' grave, and meet his family and his nearest kin, is a trivial matter, far too trivial to force the government into all this mobilisation.

It is one of two things: either ordinary daily order is powerless to protect the government from the Wafd chairman's journey to Samannud, in which case the Ministry must resign, having confessed its powerlessness to protect order and establish security. Or ordinary daily order is fully capable of protecting the government from the chairman's journey to Samannud, in which case the Ministry must resign, having toyed with the army and the police, and made the dignity and authority of the state an object of contempt and ridicule!

Had the present Parliament truly wished to discharge its duty, it would have called the Ministry to a severe reckoning over this absurd position it has taken, and would have forced it to resign, so that another Ministry might rise in its place to protect this new order, now that our ailing Prime Minister and our droll Minister of the Interior have proved powerless to protect it.

But it appears that this new order can only be protected and preserved in this very manner, for it draws its strength not from the nation's faith in it, its support for it, and its confidence in it, but from the Prime Minister alone; and the Prime Minister has fallen ill, and the Ministry has fallen ill with him, and Parliament has fallen ill with him, and so the order itself must inevitably fall ill too — and ill it is. And what illness could be graver than that a single man should travel to a single town, and the government should send a thousand troops after him, and cancel, for that purpose, the leave of a group of officers, and command, for that purpose, two provincial governors not to leave their provinces..!

What illness could be graver than this illness? And yet those who support the Prime Minister, and lend him their backing, remain content with this state of affairs, delighted by it, expecting good to come of it...! As for Egypt, she is sorrowful, profoundly apprehensive of this state of affairs, hoping no good from it, expecting from it nothing but harm.

The Prime Minister rose up to stamp out chaos utterly, and yet his Ministry now does everything to spread the sway of chaos over the land... And if the Prime Minister had wished to make his Ministry the sport of the frivolous and the game of players, he could not have succeeded more completely than in his choice of his new Minister of the Interior...! But where is the Prime Minister? Is he truly in touch with people and events? Does he truly know what is happening? If so, then the Prime Minister has lost, since his illness, the very quality that most distinguished him: close oversight of his Ministry's affairs, and precise control over the conduct of these affairs.

The present Ministry now most resembles a ship that has lost its captain, whose captain's mates are powerless to steer it, and which finds itself upon a turbulent sea, fierce with storms, its waves clashing..! It sails without guidance and without order! The waves toss it about and the wind buffets it — so let this be known to those who hold the power to support ministries or abandon them, for there may be some benefit in this knowledge.