Confession

Al-Wadi, 26 June 1934

We record it for the first or second time after the thousandth, or after the two-thousandth, that our Prime Minister is a good man — a good man whose goodness knows no bounds. A good man. Time has never known a good man like him, and we do not think it will ever know a good man like him, on any day to come. A good man, who indulges contradictions and digests them, and wishes others to indulge contradictions and digest them too, seeing no harm in it, finding no difficulty in it, and taking no account of its consequences.

The chief thing praised in him, since he took up the burdens of government, was that he is not like Sidqi Pasha, who says what he does not do, and promises what he cannot deliver, and is satisfied with what men of resolve and determination are not satisfied with — these half-measure solutions that resolve nothing, but rather tangle everything up, that benefit neither Egyptians nor their treasury, but rather benefit foreigners and their banks, and that ruin Egyptians' own affairs for them, because they lead them to imagine their problems have been solved, until, when the truth appears to them in all its ugly, frightening reality, they find it has only grown harder and more tangled. And so their opinion of themselves turned bad, and their opinion of their rulers turned bad, and their opinion of their foreign guests turned bad as well.

That was Sidqi Pasha's policy, which the good man never loved, nor approved of, and which he used to declare his contempt and mockery of, in his private gatherings and in his conversations with the newspapers, and in the speeches he used to deliver at the clubs, and in the statements he used to present to Parliament. And we must admit to ourselves a measure of shrewdness, for we never once, on any single day, believed the Prime Minister, nor took comfort in what he used to say, nor credited that he was able, or would be able, to arrive at complete, decisive solutions. Not because we doubted that he is a good man — rather, precisely because we believe that he is a good man, and believe that the minister capable of finding complete, decisive solutions is precisely the minister who wins the nation's complete, decisive support, and who trusts in the people's unquestionable love, boundless confidence, and unimpeachable devotion.

And our Prime Minister is, as he well knows, and even though he is a good man, as far as can be from winning this support, this confidence, and this love from his own nation, and so, by his very nature, he is incapable of arriving at any firm or decisive solution. Yet he used to say this himself, and repeat it, and pride himself on it, and hold himself above his friend and rival, the great Dictator, by repeating it — and our brilliant Finance Minister was no less loud in proclaiming this, no less insistent in it, nor less self-satisfied by it.

And long months passed while the decisive solutions were announced but never came, awaited but never arrived, called for but never answered — until the interpellation the Deputies had submitted came due. As for the Finance Minister, he rose some days ago and delivered to the Deputies words that were the meager effort of a man of little means, the strength of the weak, the capacity of the incapable — then he rested, and took his ease! As for the Prime Minister, he rose yesterday morning, confident in himself, as he has always been confident since he first took up governance, trusting in his own competence, as he has always trusted since the ministry was entrusted to him, or he was entrusted to it. And when he rose, eyes fixed upon him, as they always fix upon him, and hearts clung to him, as they always cling to him, and ears attended to him, as they always attend to him, and famished souls prepared themselves to hear the word that would bring fertility, ease, abundance and prosperity — and this bewitching word was uttered, but it enchanted no one, and brought no fertility to a barren soul, no abundance to a constrained one, no ease to a troubled heart, no hope to a man deprived.

The Prime Minister spoke his word, and behold, it stands recorded, in every sincerity, ease, good-heartedness, purity of soul, and clear conscience, that he is like Sidqi Pasha — no less than him, no more than him — that he does not arrive at decisive solutions, though he had promised them, and cannot reach them, though he had coveted them; and how many people covet, after all, to climb to the clouds and seize the stars with their own hands! But the Prime Minister recorded this confession against himself, content with it, at ease with it, and proclaimed it as one proclaims that the heat is intense in summer, and the cold is intense in winter, forgetting all he had once proclaimed and boasted of, all his covetousness and ambition, all his censure of Sidqi Pasha, and his disdain for Sidqi's incomplete solutions. Do you want a clearer proof than this proof, that our Prime Minister is truly a good man,

in the fullest sense that word can bear?

And the Prime Minister's goodness is contagious — it did not stop with him, nor confine itself to him, but spread even to the Finance Minister, who likewise wanted decisive solutions, and would be satisfied with nothing less — and then accepted incomplete solutions, and thanked God for safety and wellbeing. Indeed, the Prime Minister's goodness is so contagious that it spread even from the ministers to the Deputies, for the Deputies, and those among them who had brought the interpellation, would be satisfied with nothing but decisive solutions specifically, and would accept nothing but that our mortgage crisis be untied like a knot in a headband — yet the Prime Minister's goodness touched them yesterday with its gentle wing, and they accepted the incomplete solutions, and moved on to the order of business. Might it not be possible for this contagion to spread to wider bounds and further horizons still, touching the opposition too with its gentle wing, until they all, together, accept the incomplete solutions, and despair of the complete ones, and come to believe that nothing better could possibly have been achieved? And why should Egyptians covet complete solutions, when Roosevelt himself has proven incapable of them, despite all he has expended and all he will yet expend of effort, and despite his power and his capacity, and his vast, far-reaching authority? Egyptians may well be excused if despair has not yet reached them, for Roosevelt's incapacity does not concern them, and does not persuade them, because they have a Finance Minister sharper in intellect than Roosevelt, broader in competence, further-sighted, and more capable of setting matters right — and how could one compare Sabri Bey to Roosevelt? And how could Egypt be measured against America? Sabri Bey is the leader of the revolution in matters of finance, and Egypt is the land of marvels! Indeed, how could Egypt be compared to America, when America's affairs are managed by reason and logic, while Egypt's affairs are managed by baraka — divine blessing? And who could doubt that baraka is more effective in resolving crises than reason, logic, and economics?

Egyptians ought not to despair, for the mortgage debt crisis will be resolved, and the public debt crisis will be resolved, and all their crises will be resolved, God willing, so long as the good man remains at the head of the ministry — for God did not create good men in vain, but rather created them so that their blessings might pour forth upon the people, and all that is asked of Egyptians is that they wait, and be patient, and endure misery, hardship, and hunger — for none of this poses any

danger, so long as the good man's goodness may yet touch them with its gentle wing one day, and fill their land with milk and cream, and it will be enough for you, the wealth of being sated and quenched.

God have mercy on Egypt — how long will her affairs remain a plaything in the hands of the players?

Taha Hussein

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