# A Petition . . . — 1 —

*Al-Wadi (Hadith al-Wadi), November 11, 1934*

I raise it with reverence and veneration, with sincere loyalty and true devotion, to the exalted station of His Majesty the King. It is the right of every Egyptian to raise to His Majesty his plea, should he have need of a plea; his prayer, should he have need of a prayer; and his honest, faithful counsel, should he feel that national duty commands him to offer His Majesty honest, faithful counsel.

And I believe that in raising this plea to the gracious royal station, I do not raise it on my own behalf alone, but raise it on behalf of all Egyptians; for all Egyptians harbor for His Majesty the King the same love I harbor for him, place in His Majesty the King the same faith I place in him, and expect from His Majesty the King the same things I expect from him: that he listen to us when we entreat, answer us when we call, and hold in regard the views we raise to him borne on wings woven from the reverence, the veneration, the love, the loyalty, and the devotion that fill our hearts. We Egyptians, all of us, have always preferred not to speak of our griefs and our hopes to His Majesty the King except by way of speaking of them to the ministers whom the constitution has set as the link between His Majesty and the people; we held to this with the utmost care, we labored at it with all the effort in our power, and we have always wished, and still wish, that His Majesty the King remain apart from the disputes and every variety of conflict that our griefs and hopes stir up. But the cabinet has resigned; there is no use now in speaking to it, and no other cabinet has yet been formed to which we might address our words, that it might carry them up to His Majesty. And the adversaries of the popular majority have taken it upon themselves to speak of His Majesty the King and to address him directly, without scruple, without reserve, without caution. We Egyptians, all of us, have believed, and wish always to believe, that His Majesty the King looks upon the sons of the people with an equal eye, favoring no faction over another, giving ear to no group above another, but rather favoring them all alike with his love and his counsel, and treating them all alike in his kindness and his care. If, then, a faction among the Egyptians — representing nothing but a small minority we shall not trouble to name — has taken it upon itself to speak of His Majesty the King and to address His Majesty openly, it is the right of the majority — indeed, it is incumbent upon the majority — to speak to His Majesty the King of its griefs and its hopes, to raise to His Majesty

the King its views and its demands, and to expect that His Majesty the King will graciously receive what it raises to him with the attention and consideration it deserves.

And the majority complains to His Majesty the King of sins committed by men who bear responsibility, and by men who bear none, and it hopes that His Majesty the King will look into this complaint, that he will graciously order the plain truth of the matter to be made clear, and that he will graciously order thereafter that matters be restored to their proper place, that justice return to its seat, that the wronged be given redress against the wrongdoer, and that the guilty wrongdoers be visited with the punishment they deserve.

The first thing the majority raises to His Majesty the King in this regard is this: that a man called Sidqi Pasha came forward, years ago, claiming himself capable of reform, ready to serve country and King, with a justice unmatched by any other justice, a fairness unequaled by any other fairness, an order unlike any other order. Egypt at that time possessed a constitution she had accepted, loved, and followed, and had elected her deputies and senators, her truest representatives, to carry it out and to labor in its shadow. These deputies and senators had come to Parliament and sworn a sincere oath of fidelity to the constitution and the King, and had gone on to fulfill that oath, serving country and King with integrity, with pure hearts, clean consciences, and a resolve that knew neither weakness nor faltering. And even as they remained so, this man came forward, claiming what he claimed and saying what he said; and His Majesty the King graciously chose to test him and try him, charging him with forming the cabinet and laying upon him the burdens of government. He accepted the charge, though unfit to accept it; he took up the trust, though incapable of bearing it. No sooner had matters settled in his favor than he squandered the people's rights outright, abolished the people's constitution outright, and dissolved the people's Parliament outright. He went on then in varieties of injustice that knew no bound and reached no limit, save that they filled the people's hearts with hatred, rancor, and resentment, and branded Egypt's life with a shame and disgrace unbefitting the dignity of a free people, and unbefitting the reign of His Majesty the great King.

And yet, through all this, no obstacle rose up before this man in what he attempted, no difficulty appeared to turn him from what he intended. The people's constitution contained an explicit, unequivocal provision that any amendment to the constitution, where amendment was

possible, could not take effect, could not be made to take effect, except with the approval of the joint assembly formed from the two houses of Parliament. This man paid this provision no heed; he did not stop at it, did not turn to consider it, did not scruple to override it and exceed its bounds — though he had sworn an oath to keep faith with this constitution and to preserve it. He did not recall his oath, or did not trouble himself to honor it, and abolished the constitution outright, and had a new constitution promulgated, which he took as a cloak for the worst kind of rule, the ugliest forms of injustice, the most appalling varieties of wrongdoing. He came, in the end, to failure, and others came after him who were no better than he, and no worse than he, following in his footsteps, breaking the oaths they had sworn to the constitution, taking the constitution as a cloak for the ugliest kind of rule, fearing nothing, ashamed before no one — until the wheel turned upon them, as it had turned upon those who had gone before them into injustice and oppression.

Then the door of this crisis was thrown wide open, and you graciously, Sire, commanded the head of your High Cabinet to offer the premiership to another Egyptian, a man who had shared in none of the injustice, taken part in none of the oppression, broken no oath — who had merely counseled to the full extent of his power, and who, when he saw himself unable to act, withdrew and resigned. And the Egyptian people learned, Sire, that no sooner had your gracious command to offer him the premiership reached him than he hastened to answer it, and did not hesitate to comply. Yet in this, too, he remained a sincere counselor to his country and his sovereign, as he had been before, both when he served and when he withdrew from service. He judged that his counsel to country and sovereign required certain conditions, without which he could not undertake the governance, nor succeed in resolving the problems Egypt faces, problems stirred up by the injustice of the unjust and the incapacity of the incapable; and so he laid these conditions before the gracious royal seat, and waited. And while this man waited, and the people waited with him, the partisans of this new regime — proclaimed without the constitution's sanction, and imposed by force upon the people, a regime the people have never, for one single moment, approved of — these partisans, foremost among them the President of the Chamber of Deputies and the sitting President of the Senate, took to broadcasting among the people, through the newspapers and through public statements, that Your Majesty was most devoted to this regime, and most firmly refused its abolition.

The President of the Deputies and the President of the Senate have claimed to the people, Sire, that they heard this from Your Majesty when they had the honor of standing before you. And the Egyptian people, Sire, do not believe them, and do not credit that they have accurately conveyed Your Majesty's true opinion — and this is only natural, for the Egyptian people cannot understand, cannot believe, that Sidqi Pasha should have succeeded in doing what he did — abolishing a constitution the people trusted — without finding in it any hardship or difficulty, while Nessim Pasha fails to achieve what he wishes — the abolition of a constitution the people never trusted — obstacles rising up before him instead, difficulties appearing before him, problems being stirred up at every turn.

The Egyptian people, Sire, cannot understand how the repeal of a single article of this constitution could be impossible, when no impossibility, nor anything resembling impossibility, appeared in the repeal of the entire old constitution. The Egyptian people, Sire, believe that the same circumstances which made it easy to change the old constitution without recourse to the joint assembly can equally permit the changing of the new constitution before it reaches ten years of age. The Egyptian people, Sire, utterly reject what the advocates of ill will broadcast — that your exalted will, in these circumstances, contradicts the will of your loyal and faithful people.

The Egyptian people, Sire, believe with complete faith that if the matter were portrayed to Your Majesty as it truly stands, then your love for your country, your regard for your nation, and your wisdom, which is Egypt's very refuge, would together be sufficient to restore to every rightful claimant his right, and would carry Your Majesty to act in accordance with your own gracious nature, which favors justice and right, which wishes this country nothing but good, and wills for this people nothing but that it be honored and dignified. The Egyptian people, Sire, trust with complete confidence that your gracious command will issue at the earliest possible moment, opening the doors of hope to these millions from whom despair has withheld both hope and rejoicing for so many long years, sending the birds of ill omen back to their nests, silencing the tongues of those who spread alarm, and proclaiming to the world now watching Egypt that the occupant of the Nile's throne and the people of the Nile Valley stand in the fullest accord, between whom no discord could ever arise — for the occupant of the throne harbors for his people nothing but love, tenderness, and regard, and the children of the Nile harbor for their sovereign nothing but loyalty, devotion, and

veneration.

Yes, Sire — these are but hundreds of men of vested interest, who go about the land as corrupters, spreading among the people words of ill will, seeking nothing but immediate advantage; and these are fourteen million Egyptians, who raise to Your Majesty their love, their devotion, and their plea that you make the word of the people supreme, and the word of the tyrants base, and that you restore Egypt, in her own eyes and in the eyes of foreigners, to the dignity, the honor, and the refusal of injury that are her due.

And I, Sire, am confident that the Egyptian people's hope in you will not be disappointed.

Taha Hussein

Al-Wadi, November 11, 1934.