# Calm ...

*Mesamarat al-Gayb, 14 April 1946*

The curtain has fallen, and the actors who were performing the storm's own story in New York have dispersed; the audience, too, has dispersed, each returning to some part of this same empty, restful life, to recover some measure of their own energy, and to be ready to turn their own attention once more to the new act the actors are already preparing, whose own curtain will rise again at the start of next week.

Readers, I hope, are now genuinely convinced that the masters of politics, and the masters of war, in world life, can do nothing, at this particular stage of human life, but perform — having worked, throughout these past six years, until they exhausted themselves, and exhausted people along with them. The time has come, then, for them to rest themselves, and let people rest too, for however many years, more or fewer, before they resume any fresh undertaking.

I have already said, more than once, on this same subject, that everything happening in world politics now amounts to nothing but performance — war begins with words, and ends with words too. Let us say, then, that the world now speaks in order to close the Second World War, not to open a third; the interval separating us from this same third war remains genuinely vast, and who knows — it may well prove even vaster than we imagine, vaster than even the pessimists reckon. What matters is that the second act of the Iranian storm's own story has ended peacefully, ending exactly as we reckoned, last week, it would end: the Russians and Iranians announced they had reached agreement, the Security Council found real reassurance in this, after fear had filled it, and panic had seized it, and one result of that same reassurance was postponing the case to next month. But what, exactly, did the Russians and Iranians agree upon? Two entirely clear matters, and other matters shrouded in a great deal of ambiguity. The two clear matters: first, that the Russians would evacuate Iran unconditionally, without restriction; second, that a Russo-Iranian company would be established to exploit petroleum sources in certain parts of Iran.

Evacuation, then, stands an established, undoubted fact, entirely unconditional, entirely unrestricted — but agreement on establishing the oil company stands an equally established, undoubted fact too, one reached before evacuation itself was actually achieved. What most

particularly distinguishes politics is precisely its own love of combining contradictions, feeling none of the discomfort with contradiction that logic itself feels. Could the Russians possibly have evacuated Iran, had agreement on establishing the oil company never been reached? And what, exactly, caused evacuation's own delay, from its original date of the eighth of March, to the twenty-fourth of March instead? Was this delay in evacuation not itself a direct result of the delay in reaching agreement on the oil company? Was the actual beginning of evacuation not itself a direct result of reaching that same agreement? The Russians, then, began evacuating unconditionally, without restriction, only after having already secured exactly the conditions and restrictions they themselves wanted.

Logic may well fail to grasp this same contradiction — but politics finds it entirely palatable, seeing no real trouble in it at all. The British and Americans, with the Security Council behind them, or before them, felt genuine, deep fear that agreement might be reached between Russia and Iran, and that Russian pressure might have played some real part in reaching it — it would hardly do, after democracy's own triumph, after justice and equality between great and small peoples had already been achieved, for pressure to become a means of compelling peoples toward what they do not want. The British and Americans found real reassurance, then, and the Security Council found reassurance alongside them, in the fact that Russia had compelled Iran into nothing whatsoever, had never made pressure a means toward completing the agreement on establishing the oil company — the proof of this being that she postponed evacuation for three whole weeks, only beginning to carry it out once she had grown genuinely certain the oil company would indeed be established.

Whatever the case, Russia has secured exactly what she wanted: she never intended to occupy Iran outright, only to secure her own borders, and take part in exploiting Iranian petroleum. Securing one's own borders is never achieved through occupying Iran, but through agreement with her; exploiting petroleum never requires permanent occupation, only occupation lasting until agreement on it is actually reached. This is exactly why we said the agreement reached between Russia and Iran is clear on some counts, ambiguous on others... clear with respect to evacuation, and exploitation of petroleum sources... ambiguous with respect to securing borders, and Azerbaijan's own autonomy. What, then, was actually settled between the two states on these two same matters? Is there a military agreement between Russia

and Iran, securing Russia's own borders? Is there an agreement granting Azerbaijan her own genuine self-rule? Are there other concessions to Russia, not yet publicly disclosed?

These remain the ambiguous matters still genuinely in need of clarification, and this is exactly why we can say the British, the Americans, and the Security Council all remain reassured and anxious at one and the same time — and there is no need to marvel at this same contradiction, since I have already told you politics loves nothing so much as contradiction itself. The British, Americans, and Security Council feel reassured, since Russian forces are genuinely evacuating Iranian soil, and since the agreement on establishing the oil company was reached within the bounds of the Iranian constitution — yet they remain anxious, fearing something genuinely unknown to them may lie behind all of this, unwilling as they are to remain ignorant of anything whatsoever. This is exactly why the Iranian case was postponed to next month, rather than removed from the agenda entirely.

Russia was never satisfied with this same procedure — a door, after all, ought to remain either closed, or open; but to remain something genuinely "in between," neither closed nor open, is exactly the thing that proves genuinely intolerable, since it places a great power under genuine suspicion, hanging over her own head a sword that may prove neither sharp, nor genuinely frightening — yet whose mere suspension remains genuinely humiliating, regardless.

And so, between acts, the actors have managed to prepare themselves for the very next act, whose own curtain will rise at the start of next week: Russia has requested removing the Iranian case from the agenda entirely; the British and Americans, it appears, refuse this same request. Both sides offer their own reasons, and excuses, but the real reason is that the Anglo-Saxon allies combine reassurance and anxiety at once, accepting postponement, yet refusing outright removal. Stranger still, Iran's own ambassador himself resists removal, content with mere postponement, even though he has already announced the agreement between the Iranian and Russian governments as complete. Stranger still than even this, a spokesman for the Iranian government, in Tehran, has declared the Iranian ambassador's own new position was never issued on instructions sent to him by his own government at all. Matters, then, remain genuinely confused, and the Security Council will find, before it, genuinely excellent material for further performance... Russia will press insistently for removal; the English and Americans will press insistently

for rejecting that same request. And who knows — perhaps Comrade Gromyko will walk out of the Council once again.

There remains another story, though, taking shape between these same acts, no less strange than the Iranian one: victorious democracy has resolved to erase fascism from every corner, and the United Nations body, in London, has already declared the existing order in Spain fundamentally opposed to democracy, and that Spain can never be admitted to the United Nations body, so long as she retains this same order. But there exist certain nations genuinely zealous in their own democratic conviction, wanting democratic resolutions taken with real seriousness, not treated as mere play. France resolved to become one of these same nations, requesting, with real moderation, the severing of political relations with the existing Spanish government — but this same request failed to please the English or the Americans, so she requested instead that the matter be brought before the Security Council; her own second request was rejected, exactly as her first had been. Poland then came forward, with Russia naturally standing behind her, actually bringing the case before the Security Council. Should Poland's own request be accepted, democracy will have genuinely agreed with herself, carrying her own resolutions through to their own proper conclusion — yet interfering, in doing so, in the affairs of independent peoples, exposing genuinely significant economic interests, English and American both, to real danger, lending support to extremist democratic influence in Western Europe, and opening doors to communism that had remained closed, with their own keys held in General Franco's own hands. Should the Polish request, instead, be rejected, Russia will grow genuinely angry, Poland will grow genuinely angry, France will grow genuinely angry too, and democracy will contradict herself outright, revealing herself frivolous, not genuinely serious, in her own fight against fascism.

Readers can see, then, that the Security Council has genuinely enough to occupy itself with, and occupy people along with it, in the coming sessions — sessions that Egypt's own representative will preside over. Statesmen, after all, must speak, and must fill the stage of politics with real movement and activity.

And the world, too, must go on watching whatever unfolds upon this same stage. What state would the world find itself in, after all, should statesmen ever fall genuinely silent, genuinely still — broadcasts finding nothing to fill the radio with, wire services finding nothing to fill the newspapers with, writers finding nothing whatsoever to offer their own

readers?

There remain, too, certain matters unfolding on the very margins of the Security Council, in preparation for eventually being brought before it, one way or another: the Greek story has never truly ended, even though the elections have already been held — half the Greek people reject them, the other half accepts them; the Regent to the Greek throne has resigned, though the English would genuinely prefer he retain his own regency; the Transjordan treaty has already been signed, though Arab peoples remain genuinely dissatisfied with it; negotiations will soon begin between Egypt and Great Britain, though the results of these same negotiations may well fail to satisfy Egyptians. The Russians, meanwhile, have already begun broadcasting that they are evacuating the countries they themselves liberated in Asia and Europe, demanding that Britain and America likewise evacuate the countries they liberated, or assisted the Allies in the course of the war.

And so the political atmosphere appears, in these very days, entirely calm — but it is exactly the calm that precedes the storm. Nor ought these same storms themselves cause any real alarm, since they will amount to nothing more than mere storms of words, until peoples recover their own strength, and rest from the burdens of war. What matters, in the end, is that the Security Council will work, and will speak; that radio will grow active, and broadcast; that the telegraph will spread across every corner of the air, filling the newspapers with dispute and discord; that writers will write, orators will orate in their own parliaments, and the world will emerge from one crisis only to enter another, until God brings about a matter already decreed. And the very matter the world awaits God, exalted be He, to bring about, is this: that al-Mutanabbi's own words should finally be shown mistaken, when he said:

*Injustice is among the very nature of souls — should you find a man of genuine restraint,*
*it is only for some reason of his own that he refrains from wronging others.*