Relief

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Kawkab al-Sharq, 20 October 1933

Dismissal or resignation was a violent shock that stuns the mind, sets the heart racing, breaks the spirit, and sends through the whole body a sharp, excessive pain, blocking all thought and judgment, all deliberation and reflection.

And the great dictator was subject to all this, affected by all this, when two of his former colleagues came to him to announce that they would join the government and enter the new prime minister's ministry. When he met them and heard them, he was troubled, and he rejected what they said, but they sat on regardless, settled into their seats, spoke, and pressed their case, and neither could persuade the dismissed or resigned chief, nor could he persuade them; so they left him, their mouths smiling, their hearts laughing, resolved on their disagreement.

Then they sent word to their old chief that they had done what they had resolved to do, and had entered the ministry without regard for his opinion or deference to his wishes, because the country's interest stood above his opinion and above his wishes.

At that, the chief's temper flared, his fury rose, the cauldrons of his rage boiled over, the fire of his anger blazed, and he announced the dismissal of these two men who had defied him; he gave it no thought, weighed no consequence, for he was too consumed by pain and rage to think or weigh anything. The days passed, and the nights passed after them, and a cool north wind blew, calm and steady, restoring composure to hearts in flight and calm to souls in revolt, and sense to reckless minds, so that the storm around the chief gradually settled. He had wanted to withhold his support from the ministry, but was forced to support it; he had wanted to shut the door of the fold against the resigning chief, but was forced to open it and welcome his beloved deputy; yet even so, he remained insistent on excluding these two men who had defied him and disobeyed his orders. But the days kept passing, and the nights kept passing after them, and a fierce wind blew from every direction, driving before it those hidden, graceful soldiers of the air who carry petitions and set members' hands to signing their names.

And Cairo has, for some days now, been witness to a strange spectacle: some people clamoring and crying out, complaining of injustice and demanding fairness, exposing scandals and revealing what disgraces a civilized country; others waiting for the ministry to listen and to act; others still, whose bodies are worked over by clubs and whips, being driven forcibly to police stations because they took part in the funeral procession of a great departed man they had loved, because he had loved them, and had honored him, because he had defended them.

And still others negotiate with one another, defend one another, scheme against one another, plot against one another, because they want the two men to return to the fold, or want the door of the fold to remain shut against them.

And the ministry kept talking about the million and the distribution of the million, distributing nothing, arriving at no conclusion about this distribution. And the finance minister, each morning, would visit the departments, and each evening, would visit the departments, and when he rested between these visits, would meet with newspaper correspondents and speak to some of them, then deny what he had said, then admit to it again.

Until Wednesday came, and the prime minister traveled to Alexandria to have the honor of an audience with His Majesty the King, and to rest with his family for a day or two. The clubs of the new ministry and the old ministry alike buzzed with talk of reconciliation after discord, harmony after conflict. The minister of traditions turned away from tradition to work at reconciling the rivals, at reconciling the differing formulas for settling their quarrel.

The minister of agriculture neglected agriculture, and the minister of communications neglected communications, both busy returning to the fold in spite of the fold's own members. The finance minister continued visiting some departments, receiving some visitors, speaking with one man or another, and then evening fell on Thursday, and everything had settled and grown calm, and night had not yet fallen before Egypt's affairs, all of them, were running exactly as Egyptians wished.

As for taxes, they must be cut by half, if not by more than half; as for the debt, it will not be paid except in paper currency, however much the French, the Italians, and the English may object. And how could these people say anything, even a fraction of anything, when they are preoccupied with Germany rather than with Egypt, and if they do say

anything, even a fraction of anything, an agreement between Egypt and Germany would surely follow, and these people would find themselves caught between two fires: one coming at them from Egypt, another from Hitler's great country.

As for the mortgage debts, they will be postponed year after year, whatever protests the banks may raise, no doubt about that at all — except among those in whose hearts lies some sickness, those who do not love this happy era and do not deserve to enjoy the good and the blessing it holds.

As for Abu Girg's grievance, it will be lifted from its victims, if it has not been lifted already; as for the grievance of the compulsory teachers, it will be wiped away entirely, and they will be granted complete freedom to wear the turban instead of the tarboush, or the tarboush instead of the turban; and there is something else that will happen tomorrow or the day after, but it is a secret that cannot yet be disclosed, because it will be presented to people as an astonishing gift from the new finance minister.

Night fell yesterday bringing all this to people, because agreement had been reached between the rivals, and because those who had left the fold had all returned to it; so the number was complete once more, unmarked by any loss, untouched by anything that might harm it, and I guarantee you that Egyptians will complain of nothing after today.

For had the ministry not been preoccupied with them by this business of the fold, and the discord that arose among its people, and the man who left and then returned, and the man who was expelled and refused to leave, had the ministry not been preoccupied with this since it first took up the burden of governing, no one would have complained of anything, and no Egyptian would have doubted that the new ministry is a blessing God has bestowed upon them, unlike any other blessing; but God tested Egyptians through their ministry, keeping it from them by occupying it with the affairs of the People's Party, and keeping them from it by the events he loosed upon them.

Now that peace has been made and the fold has recovered all its members undiminished, Egyptians will see that the gates of heaven have opened for them with good and blessing since yesterday, and that they will complain of no harm and meet no evil, and will find, from the people of earth and heaven alike, morning and evening, nothing but what they love.

Yet it would be an exaggeration to say that the door of the fold closed yesterday upon all its members complete, for one man slipped out of it, a man like no other, a rare figure unlike any other rare figure, a minister unlike any other minister, a governor unlike any other governor, a leader unlike any other leader, and an orator none can rival — the former minister of agriculture, director and great leader of the People's Party, its eloquent orator, its clear-spoken writer, His Excellency Mohamed Allam Pasha.

He slipped out yesterday, but he will return today, for he has learned patience from the party leader, and knows how to grow angry only to be appeased, how to storm and rage only to calm and settle; and if the fold's people were short one man yesterday, there is no doubt he will be restored to them today, or tomorrow, if he has not already been restored this very moment.

For he left with no cause to leave, and took offense with no grounds for offense: he was told that his party colleague, the former minister of communications, His Excellency Tawfiq Doss Pasha, had told people that one of the two great ministers accused him of having profited materially from the party, and his pride was wounded by this, his indignation stirred by it, and he has every right to be angered and to take offense, being a man who sacrificed in the party's service just as Sidqi Pasha sacrificed his time, his effort, his competence, his health.

And perhaps he did sacrifice, and perhaps Sidqi Pasha sacrificed alongside him in the party's service with money as well, but friends' words are light, however heavy they may seem, and colleagues' accusations are sweet, however bitter their taste; and this was said at the end of the day or the start of the night, and the sun of today had not yet risen before it dissolved away, as storytellers say.

And so Sidqi Pasha has been at peace since yesterday with the return of the two ministers to the fold, and was not at peace with their removal from it; and the People's Party was at peace with the two ministers' return to the fold, and was not at peace with their departure from it. And do not say that Sidqi Pasha was forced into this peace against his will, or that the People's Party was compelled into it by necessity; that is the talk of the resentful and the aggrieved.

The plain truth, beyond doubt, is that Sidqi Pasha removed his two dear colleagues reluctantly, and restored his two dear colleagues gladly. And had there been no scheming by schemers, no gossip by gossips, no

flare of anger, no shock of resignation, no thought of consequences, no reflection on what the days might yet reveal, there would have been no removal and no restoration, no expulsion and no return, no advance and no retreat.

Nor say that Sidqi Pasha has surrendered to fate, submitted to the prime minister, become one who commands after having been commanded, one who obeys after having been obeyed; that is the talk of those who know nothing of tradition. The plain truth, beyond doubt, is that Sidqi Pasha has never on any day been stronger than he is today, just as his ministry was never on any day stronger than on the day it was forced entirely from power. For Sidqi Pasha holds power — not over the party he forced into submission yesterday, but over the ministry that forced him and his party into submission.

Sidqi Pasha could tell Abdel Fattah Pasha, "Resign," and he would resign, but he will not say it, because he wants to vex his Wafdist rivals, so he leaves Abdel Fattah Pasha in office after having failed himself to remain in office; and Sidqi Pasha will, from today onward, impose his own will upon the ministry, and you will see him force it, tomorrow, into things it could never have forced itself into; the tribute Egypt pays to Sudan will be reduced, because Sidqi Pasha has ordered it so, and woe to the ministry if it does not submit to the great dictator's order.

There is no doubt that those who rebelled against Sidqi Pasha yesterday will support him from today onward, and that the two ministers who returned to him will represent him in the ministry to the best effect, will watch over the ministry most closely, and will manage the affairs of state alongside the prime minister; for behind them stands Sidqi Pasha, backing them if they obey him — and whom Sidqi Pasha backs, no one can bring down — and abandoning them if they defy him — and whom Sidqi Pasha abandons, no one can support; for Sidqi Pasha leads the parliamentary majority, and because that majority trusts him and submits to him. His Excellency Erfan Pasha told him yesterday that his own men support him more now that he has left power than they supported him while he held it.

And so affairs of state will, God willing, be settled in the office of the People's Party, and Sidqi Pasha will govern Egypt after his resignation just as he governed it before it, no doubt about that at all; but ask yourself, ask people, ask the days too: how far can Sidqi Pasha, his ministry, and his parliamentary majority manage to govern the affairs of

state? And to what extent can these ranks, drawn up yesterday — God willing — carry their banner high and force the people into what it does not want?

For my part, I see in yesterday's reconciliation nothing but what I saw weeks ago in that reconciliation reached over tea in the interior minister's house: I saw that it was a reconciliation built on deceit, proving nothing, erasing nothing, signifying nothing; for those who quarreled and then made peace at the interior minister's house, and those who quarreled and then made peace within the People's Party, hold very little of the matter in their own hands; discord is dressed up for them, and they fall into discord; reconciliation is dressed up for them, and they fall into reconciliation; and rest will soon be dressed up for them too, and they will rest.