Dictatorship

Al-Balagh, 18 June 1945.

We wish to believe that the Prime Minister is not satisfied, and cannot be satisfied, with these grave conduct charges now being laid against some of his colleagues, charges the prosecution is investigating in part together with the press.

For we hold an opinion of the Prime Minister that events have not yet changed, and which we hope they will not change: that he detests, more than anything else, whatever tarnishes the integrity of government, be it little or much.

And we wish to believe that the Prime Minister knows full well that in some of these matters now under prosecutorial investigation, when attributed to a senior or junior official, the very first thing the responsible minister must do is suspend that official from his work until the investigation is complete. But when these matters are attributed to the minister himself, suspending ministers from their work is not possible, since it paralyzes public authority, nor is it reasonable for the minister to continue in his post, since this exposes the government's reputation to danger, and exposes the investigation itself to danger as well. There is thus no way to preserve the government's reputation on the one hand and secure justice on the other except that the minister resign, or be made to resign.

We wish to believe that the Prime Minister knows all of this full well, and believes it within himself, and before God, with the utmost conviction.

But we find the Prime Minister declaring to journalists that matters are proceeding along their customary course, and that the ministry is united and in harmony. There is, then, no escaping one of two conclusions: either the Prime Minister has changed entirely, and altered his views on the government's reputation and the securing of justice — and this is most unlikely, for al-Nokrashi Pasha is, thank God, innocent of this dangerous pliability, and of any readiness for such a suspect statement — or he is incapable of conducting affairs as they ought to be conducted, and of removing from his ministry those around whom suspicion hovers, whether this incapacity is temporary or ongoing — and this is the explanation we incline toward. There are, then, overriding

circumstances that suspend the Prime Minister's authority and prevent him from forming his ministry as it ought to be formed.

And everyone knows that the sitting Chamber of Deputies has resolved to forbid both the newspapers and the deputies themselves from openly discussing the report now before the committee investigating the conduct of the previous Wafd ministry. And everyone knows that this resolution taken by the Chamber of Deputies has been respected by the opposition papers and the independent papers alike, and respected by the deputies of the coalition parties and the independent deputies alike, and refused only by one particular faction: the Kutla (Bloc) faction. The leader of this party, who had the report printed and set about broadcasting it far and wide, both within Egypt and abroad, did not respect it. Nor did the Kutla's own newspaper respect it, as it set about discussing it in detailed accounts and publishing lengthy excerpts from it. And the Chamber of Deputies did nothing to compel the Kutla's leader, his colleagues, and his newspaper to respect this resolution.

Either, then, the Chamber of Deputies is content with this conduct — in which case it had no need to adopt that resolution in the first place, and it is only right that it say so openly, so that people may discuss this matter as freely as the Kutla faction does, and so that its opponents may reply openly and freely to whatever the Kutla's paper publishes, whether or not this suits the course of the investigation — or the Chamber of Deputies is incapable of bringing the Kutla's leader, his colleagues, and his newspaper back within the proper constitutional bounds; in which case the legislative authority is suspended in some of its competencies with respect to some Egyptians, just as the Prime Minister's authority is suspended in some of its competencies with respect to some ministers.

And everyone knows that the prosecution issued an order last month forbidding discussion of the matters under investigation by a ministerial committee chaired by the Kutla's leader, a report now before the Chamber of Deputies. The opposition papers and the independent papers respected the prosecution's order, which must by law be respected, while the Kutla's paper refused to respect this order, and discussed it however its fancy pleased.

If, then, the prosecution is content with the Kutla's conduct, it must permit this same conduct to the other papers as well. Nor can we understand the prosecution being incapable of holding the Kutla to respect for the law, and to submission to the order that all Egyptians

must submit to; for this would mean that the judicial authority is itself suspended in some of its competencies with respect to some Egyptians. And when the competencies of the executive authority, the legislative authority, and the judicial authority are all, or some of them, suspended in any country, this suspension has a well-known and famous name, one that democracy neither loves nor accepts, and that the Allied powers — Egypt among them — fought until they crushed it utterly and annihilated it: and that name is dictatorship.

For the provisions of the constitution and the general laws are at times superseded by martial law, under which the general military governor sees to their enforcement — but we have seen that even the authority of the military governor himself is suspended, for he cannot rid himself of some of his own colleagues, nor compel his colleagues and some of their newspapers to respect the law. The constitution and the general laws are thus suspended in Egypt twice over: suspended by martial law, which is a lawful suspension we detest and wish to be free of, but a lawful suspension nonetheless; and suspended by these circumstances that nullify the three authorities, in some of their competencies, with respect to some Egyptians. What, then, might these hidden circumstances be, that have created in Egypt a dictatorial order living side by side with the lawful democratic order, encroaching upon it little by little, devouring it bit by bit from one day to the next? And who, pray, might be the dictator these hidden circumstances have imposed upon Egypt, imposing his will in turn upon those who represent the three authorities?

People say that these hidden circumstances are nothing other than the coalition on which the ministry rests; for were the Prime Minister to enjoy his full constitutional right, which would allow him to remove from his ministry those around whom suspicion and doubt hover, this very enjoyment would expose the ministerial coalition to fracture, and should the coalition fracture, the whole present order would collapse entirely. Egypt is thus faced with a choice: either to endure the suspension of the three authorities, the open defiance of the Chamber of Deputies' order, the open defiance of the prosecution's order, and the loss of any sense of respect for authority and law, so that this coalition may be preserved and the ministers may continue to govern and the deputies to legislate — or to refuse this endurance and insist upon the constitution, the law, and respect for order, in which case the coalition fractures, the ministry falls, and the Chamber of Deputies is dissolved.

Egypt is faced with these two alternatives, and it is certain that, were its own opinion given any weight, it would choose the second; but its own opinion is itself suspended in these days, just as the three authorities are themselves suspended in these days.

So until God grants Egypt that day when her own word becomes the highest word, we may venture to propose to the Prime Minister an opinion, the least that can be said of which is that it would conceal this grave breach of the democratic order in Egypt, and give Egypt a government with a single head, not two. This opinion is a very simple one, and the Saadists themselves demand it: that the Prime Minister reclaim his right to form his ministry as it ought to be formed, to extend the authority of the law and the constitution over all Egyptians without distinction, and to enable the Chamber of Deputies' resolutions to be respected. And none of this costs the Prime Minister anything beyond being, as people have always known him, a man of decision, resolve, and firmness, who fears no one's blame in pursuing his own opinion, and employs no pliancy or softness in carrying it out.

He commands a majority in the Chamber of Deputies; let his party, then, govern on its own, so that it may learn how to bear responsibilities, how to face difficulties, and how to work its way through problems, and bear its own burdens without also bearing the burdens of others. And if coalition cannot be avoided, let it ally itself with the peaceable, those who do not misjudge their own worth, who do not aspire to dominance, nor covet anything beyond governing itself — though it would be better still for his party to govern alone, for the Prime Minister and his Saadist colleagues have a particular temperament averse to coalition, just as coalition is averse to them.

And it is only fair to note that the Prime Minister's adoption of this opinion would open before him grave doors of endless maneuvering, scheming, and mischief-making; for the Kutla party would oppose him, and not with the opposition of a friend, since the Kutla party has no friend, and this hostile opposition would add itself to the harsh popular opposition whose fire the Prime Minister is already enduring now. But the Prime Minister knows full well that bearing the burdens of government is no fine sport, nor a gentle stroll for the soul's comfort, but rather effort and struggle, patience and endurance, a forcing of the self to do what it does not love, and a compelling of it to bear what it dislikes.

And the Prime Minister would agree with us that everything is bearable except that his authority be exposed as nominal, so that he bears the responsibility without enjoying the freedom that ought to accompany it; and that everything is tolerable except that the decisions of the Chamber of Deputies or its bureau be openly and publicly defied; and that everything is endurable except that the prosecution's orders be disobeyed, and the decisions of the judicial authority go unheeded.

Let the Prime Minister, then, place his trust in God, resolve his affairs, and form a ministry of firmness, determination, and earnest purpose; let him gather the whole of constitutional authority into his own hands, and spare himself and his homeland this state of affairs which leads people to imagine that Egypt has a visible government and another, hidden one; that behind Egypt's democratic order lies a hidden dictatorial order; and that government in Egypt has two heads: one that appears smiling at times and frowning at others, and another whose traces appear in word and deed alike.

Let the Prime Minister rely upon God, and strive that the people's opinion of him not change; for his name, whenever mentioned, has always been understood by people to mean a seriousness that knows no frivolity, a candor that knows no jesting, and an uprightness that loves no crookedness.