Return...

Sawt al-Umma, 27 October 1946.

1 This is the one certain prize that Sidqi Pasha ought to content himself with from his short, arduous journey. Praise be to God that safety was decreed for him in his departure and his return, and that this illness which befell him in London has lifted from him and brought him back to us safe and sound. This is all the good that can be noted in this journey of his, into which he plunged headlong, heeding neither the opinion of his friends nor the opinion of his opponents.

2 We must note, before anything else, that there is a struggle between Sidqi Pasha and the Egyptian people that will certainly end, as every struggle between a people and individuals ends, in the victory of the people and the defeat of the individuals. Sidqi Pasha has so far won an apparent victory in this struggle. The people told him: do not take up the burdens of government unless you rely upon constitutional trust free of all falsity — but he paid no heed to what the people told him, and knew only how to say "no" to it, and how to take up the burdens of government while the nation turned away from him, shunned him, and found no assurance in him. And the people told him: do not proceed to negotiate with the English until you have established with them a forthright basis for negotiation, one that bars them from toying with our rights, from wasting our time, and from wearing down the people's strength through delay, procrastination, and waiting. But he paid no heed to what the people told him, and proceeded with his negotiations without verifying, without examining, without securing anything — and he knew how to say "no" to the people.

3 And when the British negotiators grew excessive in their delay and procrastination, the people told him: let it be enough for you that returning to the right path is better than persisting in error — so break off the negotiations, and let the people pursue whatever path of struggle it wishes for the sake of its demands, its rights, and its hopes. But he paid no heed; he only knew how to say "no" to the people. He continued what had broken off, and renewed what had worn thin, measuring out an arm's length for every finger's width, or less, that the English measured out; until the negotiations became mere idle talk, toyed with by Egyptians and non-Egyptians alike.

4 And the Egyptian negotiators themselves told him: let it be enough for you — you have humiliated us, and we were not created for humiliation; you have exposed us to disgrace, and we were not created for disgrace; you have stirred the people's anger against us, and it is our right to avoid the people's anger; you have whetted the English's appetite for exploiting us, and it is our right to rise above the English's appetite; you have made foreigners laugh at us, and it is our right to arouse in foreigners nothing but sympathy and respect. And the people told him: let it be enough for you — you must listen to your colleagues; you may be the head of their delegation, but you are one of them, and ought not to tyrannize over them, nor monopolize judgment apart from them. But he paid no heed, to either of them, and he knew how to say "no" to the people and his colleagues alike — until, when the pressure grew, he resigned, and then his resignation was rejected. At that point he resolved upon a course that the people warned him against, and that the negotiating delegation warned him against, but he paid no heed to the people's warning nor to the delegation's warning; he traveled to London, unmoved by what was said to him — that it was the British Foreign Secretary who ought to have come to Egypt, since he had resolved upon that and promised it, and that it was not proper for Sidqi Pasha to go to him, for in that there was a diminishment of Egypt's standing, a squandering of her dignity, and an unseemly eagerness toward the English.

5 But he knew how to say "no," and went straight ahead, turning aside for nothing and heeding nothing, until he reached London. There he met Mr. Bevin, and together with him he met the illness that caused us fear on his behalf, and from which we thank God he has recovered.

6 And many a harm brings its own benefit, for Sidqi Pasha went to Mr. Bevin at the British Foreign Office, but the illness forced Mr. Bevin, more than once, to go to Sidqi Pasha at the Claridge's Hotel instead. There was, in this forced visit, something resembling a consolation.

7 What matters is that Sidqi Pasha traveled because he wished to travel, despite the people's and his fellow negotiators' insistence that he not travel. And he returns to us today — returning with what? With the return itself alone, nothing more, indeed less. Egyptians ought not to be deceived by all this empty talk, with which the telegraph wires buzz, with which some newspapers rave, which some mouths chew over, and which some sickly minds concoct. For Sidqi Pasha traveled to London carrying nothing, because the Egyptian people entrusted him with nothing; and

Sidqi Pasha returned from London carrying nothing of what the Egyptian people wants, or of what the Egyptian people can accept or regard as worthy of consideration.

8 For the Egyptian people — whether or not it trusts Sidqi Pasha — wants things that are utterly clear, perfectly plain, admitting no ambiguity or vagueness, no taking or leaving, no argument. It wants an evacuation that is unconditional, undelayed, and unexposed to any procrastination. And the certain thing, beyond doubt, is that Sidqi Pasha has not come back pledged to this evacuation. I do not know whether he has come back with an evacuation at all or not, but whatever evacuation he may have come back with is an evacuation of his own making, suited to his own taste and temperament, and has nothing whatsoever to do with the Egyptian people.

9 And the Egyptian people wants pure, unmixed sovereignty for the people of the Nile Valley over themselves, their land, their river, their skies, and their sea — a sovereignty untainted by the Condominium, unclouded by joint administration, undeceived by any word however glittering, unseduced by any juggling of formulas or infatuation with fine phrasing. And the thing beyond doubt is that Sidqi Pasha has not come back to us with this sovereignty. Perhaps he has not come back with any sovereignty at all. Perhaps he has come back with, in one of his bags, a box of silver or gold or copper or glass, containing some kind of sovereignty that suits his own luxurious nature and his own delicate taste, but that has nothing whatsoever to do with the Egyptian people.

10 And the Egyptian people does not want a military alliance with the English — or with anyone other than the English — before it has secured its full independence, and enjoyed its freedom unmixed, and entered into alliance out of insight and consent, not out of fear and coercion. And the thing beyond doubt is that Sidqi Pasha is returning to us with a military alliance, one without whose acceptance the evacuation will not be completed. Sidqi Pasha, then, does not merely return with a negative return — he returns with a positive return containing a great evil, one that Egyptians do not wish to accept and cannot accept.

11 It is, then, neither exaggeration nor propaganda, what I said at the start of this piece — that Sidqi Pasha ought to content himself, from his short, arduous journey, with the return alone; for the return is the one certain prize granted him from this long journey and this great exertion.

12 I said that there is a long and heavy struggle between the Egyptian people and Sidqi Pasha, in which Sidqi Pasha has so far won an apparent victory; for he has known how to say "no" to the Egyptian people in everything the Egyptian people put to him by way of order, counsel, or guidance. The time has come, from this very day, for the Egyptian people to win a certain, not merely apparent, victory over Sidqi Pasha, and to make him hear that very word he has so often made it hear from him: the word "no." What a vast difference there is between this word when Sidqi Pasha utters it and when the people utters it! It is graceful, elegant, almost amusing, when uttered by prime ministers and directed at peoples who were not created to have their servants tell them "no," but rather were created to have their servants tell them "yes," and to have their servants tell them "we hear and we obey" — but it is earth-shaking, thunderous, when uttered by peoples, for it forces prime ministers to resign, and to return to their own homes to attend to their own private interests, having failed to manage the public interest. And Sidqi Pasha has failed to manage the public interest — there is no doubt of that, however full his bags may be with memoranda, proposals, formulas, and texts, for there is no use whatsoever in any of this.

13 The utmost that Sidqi Pasha could possibly have won from Mr. Bevin is British acceptance of the memorandum that the Egyptian negotiators submitted more than two months ago, which the British had not accepted — and it is most likely that he did not even win acceptance of this memorandum. And suppose he had won this acceptance: this memorandum itself does not satisfy all the negotiators, and among them are some who protested against it most strongly. It certainly does not satisfy the Egyptian people, nor can it satisfy them. So if Sidqi Pasha has won from the English acceptance of this memorandum, let him enjoy this victory alone, or let his friends — who represent no one but themselves — enjoy it along with him; but the people rejects it, denounces it, is indignant at it, and disdains even to look into it. How much more so, since I would wager with anyone, on anything, that Sidqi Pasha has won acceptance of neither this memorandum nor anything resembling it.

14 Let the Prime Minister and his few supporters believe me, and let all my readers believe me, that the return is the one certain prize that Sidqi Pasha ought to content himself with from this short, arduous journey.

15 And now, what might the coming days bring us by way of news of Sidqi Pasha?

16 He will present what he has brought from London to his fellow ministers and to his fellow negotiators. I do not know with which of them he will begin, nor with which he will end, but he will present what he has brought to both of them. If they accept what he has brought them, then what might he do: present it to the present Parliament, so that the conspiracy is completed and tightened, and the Egyptian people is subjected to a continuous dictatorship, long or short in duration, built upon suspending instruction in institutes of learning, depriving Egyptians of the freedom to assemble, the freedom to speak, and the freedom to write as well, and unleashing fear upon free men whenever they speak, write, or move? But such dictatorships are of no avail, and cannot endure, and their fate is always known and inevitable.

17 His fellow ministers may refuse what is presented to them of these gifts he has brought from London; will he, then, resign, and will the people's affairs be returned to the people?! Or will he remain, to punish the people, and to punish the negotiators for refusing these gifts he has brought from London? There is no way for him to remain, and no way for him to punish the people, except by relying on the dictatorship that shackles Egyptians so they cannot work, that binds their tongues so they cannot speak, and that fetters their pens so they cannot write. And Sidqi Pasha knows that such dictatorships cannot last, nor endure long, and I think he has tried such dictatorships before, and knows their consequences and their results.

18 Sidqi Pasha, then, has a choice between two things: either he resigns, giving rest and finding rest, and may God forgive him for the harm he has brought upon the Egyptian people and the misfortune he has poured upon it; or he remains, and imposes upon the people a strict dictatorship, one from which the people knows how to emerge, as it has emerged from the likes of it before.

19 Did I not tell you that the struggle between Sidqi Pasha and the people has gone on for a long time, and that Sidqi Pasha has won in it an apparent victory, and that the time has now come for the people to win a certain victory over Sidqi Pasha?!

20 And who knows? Perhaps Sidqi Pasha did not breathe in, in London, only the cold air that brought him his hateful illness, but breathed in with it a breeze of democracy as well, one that cast into his mind the thought that the age of dictatorships has ended, and that peoples are not ruled by oppression, nor seized by violence, nor driven by

force to what is wanted of them; and perhaps he has come back with, in his bags, alongside his many documents, one small but momentous document, which he will submit to His Majesty the King, that His Majesty might graciously permit him to retire to his own home, to rest and find rest, and leave the people free to struggle for what it wants.