

Failure ...

Sawt al-Umma, 30 September 1946.

Never, on any day, did the Egyptians expect good from the resigned ministry; for never, on any day, did they believe that its head could win any good for them. The source of this is that they know among themselves, with the certainty of knowledge — not the uncertainty of mere surmise — that Sidqi Pasha is a man who loves himself more than he loves any other person, and prefers whatever benefits, ambitions, and hopes concern himself over whatever benefits, ambitions, and hopes concern other people, whether those people be individuals who cling close to him, or groups who watch him from afar, or a nation that has never looked upon him except with a great deal of caution, reserve, and wariness.

The Egyptians have tested Sidqi Pasha when he was a minister in various cabinets, both before the constitution was promulgated and after it was promulgated, and they found in him shrewdness and intelligence, and they found in him tact and resolve, but they also found in him this grave weakness that stands between him and his being a statesman of real consequence: namely, self-love, and the preferring of immediate, close-at-hand benefits over everything else.

They saw him fight Saad to the furthest limits and extremes of fighting when he was Minister of the Interior, shrinking from neither injustice, nor tyranny, nor scheming, nor deception, nor the shedding of blood.

Then they saw him afterward draw close to Saad and his companions during the Coalition, and they saw him make his way to Bayt al-Umma, waiting in certain circumstances for the Wafd to accept his candidacy for a parliamentary seat in one of the electoral districts — fighting Saad yet not disdaining to acknowledge Saad's leadership, fighting al-Nahas yet not disdaining to declare submission to al-Nahas's leadership, quarreling with Muhammad Mahmoud yet not hesitating to rally beneath Muhammad Mahmoud's banner. Then they saw him, when he carried out the grave constitutional coup in which he abolished one constitution and established another in its place, and in which he corrupted a whole generation of young people with a corruption so deep that its traces have not yet been erased, and in which he shed the blood of Egyptians in the cities and the villages — he shrank from

nothing, held back from nothing, honored no sanctity owed to his nation, nor any right owed to his fellow citizens, and feared none of these bloody shadows that might have been expected to darken his day when he awoke, and to fill his night whenever he tried to sleep ...!

Yes, and they saw him spread espionage against the prominent among his opponents, and against the less prominent among them, planting eyes and watchers everywhere, and enforcing martial law without ever declaring it. Yes, and they saw him degrade human dignity to the furthest limits to which human dignity can be degraded, and the story of al-Baddari still stands vivid in people's minds, and the story of al-Baddari was neither singular nor rare, but rather common and familiar; for in that era of his, Sidqi Pasha permitted Egyptians to abase one another, to exalt themselves over one another, to trample one another's dignity, and allowed rights to be lost among them and sanctities to be violated among them.

Yes, and they saw him manufacture a parliament as one manufactures a thing, cook it up as one cooks a dish, and breathe into it a wicked, sinful spirit that filled the country with evil and abomination. Yes, they saw him afterward, once the flood-tide of authority had receded from him and the flood-tide of tyranny had receded with it, and behold, his own parliament cast him off as one casts off a pit, and mocked him as one mocks a man of no consequence, and behold, his companions scattered away from him to gather instead around his friend and colleague, and behold, those who had once submitted to him, believed in him, and sought the means of access to him, had now become men who plotted against him, schemed against him, and wished to put him on trial ... and accused him of whatever sins and ruinous crimes God willed that they should accuse him of.

I may forget many things before I forget a royal advisor who was then arranging the trial, preparing for it, laboring over it by day and lying sleepless over it by night, and who used to send to me — when I was editing one of the Wafdist newspapers — some of his own agents, who would reveal the particulars of the accusation he was preparing and the scheme he was plotting.

Then the days turned, events followed one upon another, and circumstances changed, and behold, Sidqi Pasha — willingly or unwillingly — brought this very advisor into his now-resigned ministry.

Yes, the Egyptians tested Sidqi Pasha through all these phases, and so they despaired of him, and became certain that he would never win any good for them, and their hearts pleaded with God to turn his harm away from them and withhold his injury from them, and thereafter to grant him whatever happiness he pleased in himself and his own interests. And after these bitter experiences and harsh trials, it would have been fitting for Sidqi Pasha to devote himself to his own person and his own interests, and to depart from politics never to return, and to renounce it for the rest of his days.

But Sidqi Pasha is a bold man who knows no hesitation, and shrinks before nothing; events slide off his smooth nature without leaving any trace in it, just as objects slide across hard, smooth ice without leaving any trace in it. And for that reason he has never once despaired, and for that reason he has never once consented to give rest or take rest. He took part in the 1936 negotiations, and then, hardly had those negotiations ended, than he schemed against them — and who knows, perhaps he schemed against them before they had even ended, and perhaps he schemed against them even before they had begun.

What is certain is that he schemed against the Wafdist ministry of that time, and he kept scheming against it, alone at times, and in league with others at other times, until, when that ministry was dismissed, he took part in the ministry that succeeded it. But his colleagues, who had shared with him in the scheming, and shared with him in the spoils after the scheming, could not bear him for long, and they rid themselves of him when scarcely any time at all had passed since the formation of their ministry. Thereupon he returned to that same business of subversion, instigation, open cunning and hidden cunning. He confined none of this to any one particular ministry, but rather extended it to all ministries alike. He was never once content with a ministry he had no part in, nor was he ever once content with a ministry he did have a part in, unless he could monopolize influence in it apart from its other members.

And so he continued to be rarely content and often indignant and forever in opposition, until this blessed era came about, and he was among its builders and the raisers of its pillars; yet he had no share in the spoils, so he was content with no one, and no one was content with him. Scarcely months had passed since this blessed era began before Sidqi Pasha became an adversary of the Minister of Finance in every matter of money, and an adversary of the Prime Minister in every matter of policy — opposing a little in parliament, opposing a great deal in the

newspapers, and opposing, at the Muhammad Ali Club, in an opposition that never came to an end.

He was the most insistent of men in demanding the evacuation and urging haste for it while al-Nokrashi Pasha was Prime Minister, and he was the most impatient of men with the slowness of the negotiations, accusing them of merely buying time, and the harshest in denouncing what he called the conspiracy of silence, while al-Nokrashi Pasha was Prime Minister. And he kept at al-Nokrashi Pasha until he had spoiled the atmosphere around him, in that absurdity which people used to call the Political Committee, and then al-Nokrashi Pasha fell, and the Egyptians were taken by surprise by a ministry headed by Sidqi Pasha.

As for the naive among them, and the fools, and those who remember today only to forget tomorrow, they believed him when he announced to them that he had shed his old skin and put on a new one. But as for those who are alert to events, who profit from lessons, and benefit from misfortunes, they knew that the man had raised around himself a wall whose outward face showed mercy, while within it lay torment, and scarcely weeks had passed before the torment spread through the whole wall, within and without and all around it, and we found ourselves back at Sidqi Pasha's first ministry, and corruption poured down upon Egypt in torrents, seeping into the whole of her life — corruption in internal life, for freedom was wholly erased, and the business of government proceeded upon a tyranny that shrank from nothing and held back from nothing, and saw in the constitution and the law nothing but a curtain behind which the sins of assaulting freedom and scorning rights could be committed.

Then came the absurdity of the negotiations, and the Egyptians came to know Sidqi Pasha's desperate eagerness for the absurdity of the negotiations, and the Egyptians saw to what degree Sidqi Pasha had been sincere when he used to press for haste in the evacuation, grow enthusiastic for independence, and demand the unity of the Nile Valley. I do not wish to go back over the story of the negotiations, nor over what trust — or lack of it — used to prevail in them between Sidqi Pasha and his fellow negotiators; but I do wish to remind the Egyptians that the crisis of the negotiations which forced Sidqi Pasha to resign was truly a crisis of trust — a crisis of trust not only between the Egyptians and the English, but, before all else, between the Egyptian negotiators and their own chief.

Matters reached such a point that a party among the negotiators came to doubt everything their chief said to them, or said about them, until they wished to bind him — indeed, they did bind him — with fixed, written words, and then they did not keep this doubt to themselves, but broadcast it in their own conversations, and the newspapers broadcast it on their behalf, so that the Egyptian people should know that among the negotiators themselves there were men who doubted as he doubted, who were suspicious as he was suspicious, and who feared as he feared.

Whatever the case may be, Sidqi Pasha truly failed in this ministry of his, a failure so flagrant that it corrupted Egypt's internal life, for all his constant talk of a desire for reform; he claimed he wished to fight poverty, ignorance, and disease — so let the Egyptians look to themselves and ask themselves to what degree Sidqi Pasha protected them from poverty, ignorance, and disease. And he corrupted the manifestations of Egypt's national struggle by the silence he imposed upon the press, and by the shackles and restraints he imposed upon public and private freedom, even as he declared that he wished to achieve the evacuation and the unity of the Nile Valley.

Let the Egyptians look to themselves and ask themselves, and let the negotiators look to themselves and ask themselves: what did Sidqi Pasha actually achieve of the evacuation and the unity of the Nile Valley? And then let the Egyptians, and the negotiators among them especially, consider to what degree Sidqi Pasha preserved for the Egyptians their dignity before the English, and their reputation in the outside world, in the East and the West alike.

Let the Egyptians believe me, and the negotiators among them especially: while in Europe, I used to shrink and feel humbled whenever the Egyptian government was mentioned. And why not? For it is the government that restricts public freedoms by administrative means, and is not even content with that, but goes on to legislate laws restricting these freedoms, and when parliament fails to oblige it, issues these laws in its absence. And I assure my readers, the negotiators, and Sidqi Pasha himself, that those who feel humbled by the Egyptian government abroad are not few!

And now that this ministry has resigned, and this ordeal has been lifted from the Egyptians for a day, or part of a day, what might events yet reveal for this wretched, unhappy country? It is said — and how much is said! — that Sidqi Pasha may form a new ministry, and that he may

continue in his wise policy. If what is said is true, then Sidqi Pasha may rest assured that his new ministry will be no more fortunate than his resigned one.

O you who believe, be patient, and vie in patience, and stand firm, and fear God, that you may prosper.