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## NEW WAFD LEADER DISCUSSES POLITICAL POLICIES, PHILOSOPHIES, STRATEGIES

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[Interview with Fu'ad Siraj-al-Din, chairman of New Wafd Party, by Muhammad 'Abd-al-Hamid and Usamah 'Ajaj: "With the Return of the Wafd, a Lively Discussion with Fu'ad Siraj-al-Din"]

[Text] The meeting was in the second floor of Fu'ad Siraj-al-Din's mansion, in the broad, expansive living room which witnessed the Wafd Party's days of glory 30 years ago. In spite of that, you feel a melancholy pervading your being if you look at everything carefully. By gazing carefully, you can feel that the palace, the place, and even the inhabitants have been exposed to extraordinary events: the paintings are faded, the walls have eroded, the furniture is delapidated, dust still permeates its folds, and the colors of the precious rugs have gone pale. Everything is old; you feel early old age around you, as if this was a portrait, by fate, of the old Wafd and its ruins.

In spite of that, if you reflect over the conversation of the owner of the mansion, Fu'ad Siraj-al-Din, who is over 70, you can smell the aroma of something new. From his optimistic smile, you hear evidence and indications of the awakening and revival of the New Wafd. At that moment, you can forget the old picture and its memories.

Life is coming back to the old place, now that the second floor has become the New Wafd Party's temporary headquarters for the meetings which start in the morning and end late at night, setting out the plan by which it will enter into, and engage in, the coming People's Assembly election campaign, and determining and discussing the membership applications that are raining down on the New Wafd.

The uninterrupted conversation with Fu'ad Siraj-al-Din, covering a period of 3 hours, was characterized by objectivity. The statements by the owner of the mansion expressed a beginning for an old party with new ideas and a plan of action which was in keeping with the time and the arena of political action.

The place was indeed old, but the person who was speaking with us and describing the past and the hopes for the future to us made us forget the past around us, which had become eroded, as we listened closely to him and talked with him most openly and excitedly.

The natural entree into conversation with Fu'ad Siraj-al-Din, leader of the New Wafd, was from a basic starting point, the absence of the Wafd from the political stage in Egypt over a period of 30 years, following the dissolution of the old parties and the change in the political and social map following the 23 July 1952 revolution, and the political, intellectual and social changes that have occurred in the Egyptian situation, as embodied in the gains of workers and peasants and so forth.

The Wafd's old leading figures, headed by Fu'ad Siraj-al-Din, have witnessed these changes and sometimes felt them, and sometimes the changes have raged around them. They have been brought to trial on the charge of corrupting political life before the revolution, and came to have scores with 'Abd-al-Nasir's era. They then returned to the stage under the name of the New Wafd with the return of the multi-party system in al-Sadat's era; the truce did not last a long time, a clash occurred, and the party's activity was suspended in 1978.

Therefore, the notion arises among many people, especially in the young generations which were born after the July 1952 revolution and did not experience the Wafd after the revolution, that the Wafd's return, with the old figures, might be linked to the settling of scores with the revolution, its accomplishments, and its years and with the era of 'Abd-al-Nasir and al-Sadat. Thus the direct question was asked:

"What does the return of the New Wafd to the political stage 90 days before the People's Assembly elections mean? Is it connected to the settlement of old scores, or has the New Wafd closed the files on the past and opened a new page in political action?"

Fu'ad Siraj-al-Din, exhaling smoke from his cigar, said,

"I can assert that it is not in any way part of our intentions or our political views to waste our time settling scores. In fact, we have been greatly abused, and the Wafd and its leaders and colleagues have been greatly abused, but it is not in any way part of our intention to look back and settle old scores. I feel that many of our scores have been settled in the three speeches I have given, the first at the Lawyers' Union in August 1977, then the al-Jumruk speech in January 1978, and the speech at the al-Sa'diyah school, when I replied to all the facts or matters that had been levelled at the Wafd and the leaders of the Wafd in the past and recently. I even spoke at length about the 1919 revolution, because it has been described as an unsuccessful revolution which did not realize its goals, and from which Egypt did not derive any benefit.

"It was natural, as I said in the Lawyers' Union speech, that I should seize the opportunity to reply in the absence of Sa'd Zaghlul and Mustafa al-Nahas, as they are in their graves and cannot make their defense concerning

the evils or charges attributed to them. I believe that the question has ended at this point, and I hope that I will absolutely not be compelled to return to these subjects, because in reality I see no use in wasting political effort in discussing or stirring up questions which ended and are now up to history to judge."

After a moment, Fu'ad Siraj-al-Din then went on,

"However, I have noticed recently some first signs which I am sorry about and sorry over. I mean the statements made by Dr Fu'ad Muhyi-al-Din in a recent speech about the parties of pashas and feudalists, although in my latest speech at al-Sa'diyah I was careful to avoid this tone of political dialogue, was fair to the government, and stated what was in its favor and disfavor. A lengthy political conversation took place recently between me and our brother Hasan Abu Basha, the minister of the interior, and it was constructive and objective."

AKHIR SA'AH: What issues were raised at this meeting between you and Hasan Abu Basha, the minister of the interior? Did the conversation lead to a mutual understanding over them?

Fu'ad Siraj-al-Din said,

"It was a long conversation which took place in an atmosphere of total affection and mutual understanding. Each party expressed his viewpoint on the matters to which the conversation addressed itself most truthfully and clearly, according to his belief and thinking. When the conversation began we were friends who understood one another, and when it ended we were still friends."

It appears that the point of the tone of political dialogue in the future concerns the Wafd and Siraj-al-Din greatly, because he soon went on to speak about this point specifically, wondering:

"Why shouldn't our political discourse be like that all over the world, objective? I hope, with the most sincere desire, to adhere to the style of proper political discourse, proper in expression and pure in intention, which has no goal except the public interest."

He then said,

"We are not the professional advocates of a policy nor do we want to govern. We are active in politics and are sacrificing everything we own, and the most precious things we own, which is our health, for politics' sake and for the sake of Egypt. There is no need to go beyond the recognized bounds. Dr Fu'ad Muhyi-al-Din can criticize the pre-revolutionary parties, but in a political manner. I say that we have absolutely no intention of speaking further on these matters, which are finished with, and we must not waste our time on that. The country has no interest in their being raised. In general, we must look forward, not back. It would become a good thing if we were to devote our time to looking forward."

AKHIR SA'AH: Does that mean closing the old files and opening a new page on political action as far as the New Wafd goes?

Fu'ad Siraj-al-Din: Of course that is the general principle. There is however nothing to prevent me, in the opposition, if there is something that happened in the past, whose effects have endured, and which I believe are harmful, there is nothing to prevent me from talking about it, talking about it in the context of something that exists and is in effect. However, and this is the language of discourse, I should not talk about things that happened 30 years ago and are now totally over with. I hope that what the parties all follow, and the government also, I hope that the National Party this year, so that no other party will revert to language that I do not like, the language of political discourse whose expressions are not proper and are far removed from purity of intention.

AKHIR SA'AH: That might be a reason for statements being circulated to the effect that some of the party's supporters, following the issuance of the recent ruling, went about shouting slogans and uttering phrases that are connected to old scores.

Fu'ad Siraj-al-Din: I attended two sessions of the latest case. I did not hear any slogans of the kind. It is true that I did not attend the last session, in which the ruling was issued, but I learned about everything that went on in it. Some members recorded it, since it was a historic ruling. I heard the slogans that were circulated. They did not at all go beyond the affirmation of democracy and a fair judiciary, and affirmations of Egypt. None of the slogans were related to that type we are talking about, especially since party commitment is something that has been rigorously imposed, and any member, whatever his status might be, who violates this commitment will be writing up the concomitant circumstances of a ruling against himself. I myself cannot violate commitment to the party's stipulated conduct or plan; if I do, they will have to look for another chairman. The Wafdists all know my opinion on this case, and we have absolutely no interests, and Egypt has no interests, in our raising old scores or attacking any party in Egypt. We are not attacking any body that is involved in political activity.

I told our Wafdist brothers who write in the newspapers sometimes "I would not like to read any attack by you against anyone. Write about democracy, about public freedoms, and about the constitution." Nonetheless before anyone ventures to publish an article, I must read it. Reviewing it is not a violation of democracy or public freedoms; rather, the purpose is to ensure that the article does not contain any attacks in any case.

AKHIR SA'AH: In the conversation between you and Hasan Abu Basha, the minister of the interior, did you obtain specific guarantees on the neutrality and freedom of the coming elections?

Fu'ad Siraj-al-Din: Actually, this conversation did not address itself to elections in particular. Mention of them might have appeared in the course of the conversation, since the government's position on the Wafd is not a hostile one, and the government has not opposed the establishment of the Wafd. Rather, the position is just a legal one.

AKHIR SA'AH: Dr Fu'ad Muhyi-al-Din, the prime minister, asserted this to us in his latest conversation.

Fu'ad Siraj-al-Din: President Mubarak himself has stated it. He has asserted that no previous decision against the Wafd exists nor did the political leadership oppose its establishment. I have confidence, and the source of my confidence is the statements by President Mubarak, and I say this in every meeting because I have great confidence in this man and am confident that he is truthful with himself and with people. I observed this impression at the first meeting after our emergence from the detention center in Turah. He was frank and clear. We all sensed his truthfulness. He stated and said that he wanted free elections, as did the minister of the interior, in whom I also have confidence, and who I believe is truthful and will observe neutrality. What happened in Alexandria gives rise to confidence. I was there and I heard things which would underline this tendency from one of the officers with whom I have a family connection. He told me, "There are emphatic instructions that there is to be no interference on behalf of any candidate and that all candidates are to be treated equally."

Siraj-al-Din then added:

"It would have been possible to deface a thousand ballots, as happened before, and get 90 percent of the vote, rather than 8 or 10 percent. In addition, the small number of voters who attended the elections is indicative of noninterference. These are all signs which indicate that the elections will take place with total neutrality."

Fu'ad Siraj-al-Din then said,

"I demand, indeed I hope, that the phenomenon of the appearance of governors at National Party candidates' meetings will not happen again. Yes, they do belong to the party, but the fact that they are in the top position of authority in the governorates means that this presence will have an influence on their subordinates in the form of the village heads, paramount elders and so forth."

AKHIR SA'AH: Are there specific facts which support your view regarding the status of governors and administrators, as far as the impartiality of elections goes?

Fu'ad Siraj-al-Din said,

"I learned that one district official was also the brother of a member of the People's Assembly. In Bani Suwayf, specifically, there are three People's Assembly members whose brothers occupy the position of official in the districts to which their own brothers belong. How can we have confidence in this official's impartiality in the elections?

"I also learned that the three people took part in the preceding elections while they were in their regular positions. Even when they are promoted they stay in their regular positions.

"They reached the level of village chiefs and still are in the district, and have not been moved about by any transfer processes. This is what I have learned about Bani Suwayf. This situation might be found in other districts. What is required is that this situation be corrected so that there will be impartiality, because impartiality produces a feeling on the part of the voter that the government has no interests in supporting one group and opposing another one."

He continued his statement,

"Some people might raise the point that governors in America are also members of the ruling party, but they forget that governors in America are elected directly, as is the president, while in Egypt governors are appointed. If they want to belong to a party, why don't they obtain their positions by election? I would rather the governors were removed from politics, because their powers are broad, amounting to those of the prime minister, in their supervision of agriculture, supplies, housing, and all public services."

AKHIR SA'AH: What is your opinion on the point other opposition groups have been raising, to the effect that there must be a transition cabinet to carry out the elections?

Fu'ad Siraj-al-Din: No party that participates in the elections can fail to accept this, especially since it is a major guarantee, because, as I have said, the administrative system is influenced by the cabinet that is in being, not just now but at all times. Neutral cabinets are not a novelty.

From 1924 to 1952, 12 elections took place. Half of them were carried out by neutral cabinets and in those the Wafd won an absolute majority. The remaining elections, which were six in number, were carried out by party cabinets, and these elections did not result in the expression of the people's real opinions. Rather, I can say that a neutral cabinet is not sufficient for neutrality in the elections. In the last election held before the revolution, in January 1950, a neutral cabinet carried them out, under the premiership of the late Husayn Sirri, and we as the Wafd suffered severely from these elections. Husayn Sirri was anxious to create a balance among the parties and at the same time was anxious that the Wafd Party not obtain an absolute majority, but just a plurality of no more than 40 percent along with the other parties. His hope was for a coalition cabinet that he would head. In a private meeting with him, I told him, "Husayn Pasha, in Arabic, you don't have any interests in having history remember and record that you trumped up the elections in order to stay in power, so that you could be at the head of a future coalition cabinet. We will not accept that. Therefore you have no interests in committing fraud." In spite of that, we obtained a majority, and the talk about balance was a failure. In my opinion, there is something stronger than a neutral cabinet for holding elections.

AKHIR SA'AH: What, in your opinion, is a stronger guarantee of elections than a neutral cabinet?

Fu'ad Siraj-al-Din said,

"I demand that the judiciary supervise the elections. This, in my opinion, is an important matter. Indeed, I consider that that has a high degree of importance. It might be said, once an adequate number of members of the judiciary are provided to chair the general and branch committees, it will be possible to remedy this deficiency by carrying out elections over a period of 2 days, or, if the situation requires, 3 days. There is a precedent which occurred in 1928. The late Muhammad Pasha Mahmud held elections over the space of 2 days, 1 day in Lower Egypt and another in Upper Egypt. He also sought the aid of the forces of the army, along with the police, to maintain order."

AKHIR SA'AH: The Wafd Party, through you, declared that it would enter the election campaign in all districts. Do you have an adequate number of candidates?

Fu'ad Siraj-al-Din said,

"The problem with us is that what we now have is more than the number needed. By looking for example at any election district in which there are 10 candidates, half of whom will be workers and peasants and the other half from other groups, we find that we have twice that number, and they are all qualified. Our current problem is to choose, although I do not consider that really to be a problem, because all the members of the Wafd are accustomed to giving, and not to taking. Our problem has not reached the point where people get angry, leave the Wafd and join another party in the event they are not chosen."

Fu'ad Siraj-al-Din continued his statement:

"Yesterday, we had a delegation from the city of Port Said. I was surprised to see a National Democratic Party deputy from al-Manakh stand up and declare that he was joining the Wafd. By all this, I mean that we have adequate personnel to run as candidates in all electoral districts. In spite of that, we still get applications from persons asking to join the party. However, there is a point I would like to concentrate on. If the person applying to join comes in just because he wants to run as a candidate, here I might tell him, thanks, and I might consider that he is totally fit to run as a candidate, but in all cases the decision is with the higher board, which is made up of 35 members."

AKHIR SA'AH: You are concentrating your statement on the large number of applications to join the Wafd Party, bearing in mind that it was absent from the political stage for close to 30 years. Is it possible to explain this phenomenon?

Fu'ad Siraj-al-Din said,

"I consider that normal. The Wafd has a history of persevering against the British and the palace, and of being on the side of freedoms and protection of the constitution. The Wafdists still hold these positions. Even the young people who have not read and learned anything about the Wafd or al-Nahhas have heard of its history from their mother, their father or from relatives,

through pictures of Sa'd Zaghlul or Mustafa al-Nahhas hanging on the wall. During my visit in the evening you will find large numbers of young people, totalling more than about 300 citizens. I recall in one of his speeches in the main chamber, the late President Jamal 'Abd-al-Nasir said, and I was listening to the speech, 'We are teaching the young people in the schools in a specific way, and they go home and hear different things.'"

Fu'ad Siraj-al-Din gave another dimension of the phenomenon, from his viewpoint, and said,

"That is true, and it can be seen in every Wafdist home. Every Wafdist would talk about the Wafd inside his own home. In addition, I noticed in recent years great concern on the part of young Egyptians to read political books and articles, in addition to the young people's choice of the New Wafd movement.

"There are other factors, which are not just peculiar to Egypt but are worldwide, in every democratic country, such as finding solutions to the problems citizens are suffering from, and also a desire for change. This all really and truly indicates the intense receptivity to joining the Wafd."

Fu'ad Siraj-al-Din smiled as he said,

"Some time ago an American journalist was here, and he asked me the same question, in his perplexity over failing to explain the young people's receptivity to the Wafd, in spite of its lack of modernity. At that moment my young grandson, who is 3, came in. I told him, 'Long live what, Sharif?' He said, very quickly, 'Long live the Wafd!' The American told me, 'I have heard the answer to my question.' I told him, 'What you heard here you can hear in every Wafdist home.'"

AKHIR SA'AH: Many people, especially young people, who heard your latest speech at the al-Sa'diyah School, did not find themselves reflected in your statement, which went on for more than 2 hours. You spoke about the Wafd more than you spoke about the problems and issues that have been raised on the stage!

Fu'ad Siraj-al-Din said,

"That observation is correct. The meeting was not political or social but rather a commemoration of Sa'd Zaghlul and Mustafa al-Nahhas. It was necessary to present their positions against the British and the palace and on behalf of the general interests of the people. However, if the meeting is political, you will find me, just as you will find others beside me, talking about Sa'd Zaghlul and Mustafa al-Nahhas for 5 minutes and the rest of the time about politics and programs for the future."

AKHIR SA'AH: Does the leadership of the Wafd Party realize the magnitude and depth of the many changes and developments that have occurred in Egyptian society in the last 30 years, during which the party was away from the stage of political action? Is that awareness reflected in the party's program?



Fu'ad Siraj-al-Din said,

"There is no doubt that a great change has occurred in the political climate. In addition, the same change has occurred in the language of discourse. It is not possible for me to address the Egyptian people or the citizen in the language of 1932 or 1943. Appearances all indicate that the political climate is different, that political notions are different, and that the conditions of society are different. In 1978 we set out the New Wafd's program. It was presented to the committee on the establishment of parties, in accordance with the law on parties. There was a stipulation that the program be distinctive, in the sense that each party's program be different from the others, which was not an easy point. In addition, there was a stipulation that 20 members of the People's Assembly establish the party along with you. By God's grace, a committee found something distinctive in our program. I can say that our program addresses itself to all the questions a person could think about. The program contained the articles of the constitution that we demanded be amended bearing on public freedoms, democracy and human rights. Another part dealt with all Arab, foreign and domestic political issues, in the form of housing, agriculture and the economy. We also addressed ourselves to women, young people, and all aspects of life in Egypt."

Fu'ad Siraj-al-Din then added:

"In spite of all that, this program will now be reviewed. While I say that changes have occurred between 1952 and 1978, they have however also occurred, in perhaps different form, between 1978 and 1984. These changes occurred in political areas, whether Arab, international, economic or otherwise, in the domestic context. The amendments will be made by specialists who belong to the party, and there is no doubt that it will require great effort. This is part of our present concern, in addition to other urgent matters, such as preparing for the elections, issuing a newspaper, and providing headquarters for the party. From now until next June or July, the public will need to know our opinions, our ideas and our future policy so that there will be a compact and a bond between the party and the public, and so that its choice will be made out of knowledge and awareness, and we will truly be committed to the promises we present, whether the party or the opposition is in power."

AKHIR SA'AH: The Wafd is returning to the stage, and only 90 days remain till the next election campaign. That means that the opportunity is limited and there is not enough time to organize ranks and mobilize partisans. Why did the Wafd enter this election campaign, in all districts? Can it be sure of the results?

Fu'ad Siraj-al-Din said,

"The Wafd was not established for one election campaign, or to win one round; rather, we are working, and will work, for the future. Here each party exerts all its effort in the quest to govern, and for executive power, on condition, however, that that take place legitimately, through the legitimate route."

AKHIR SA'AH: What is the Wafd's position on former ministers who come forward to join it, out of the ambition to run as candidates and to acquire gains through the new party in the elections?

Fu'ad Siraj-al-Din said,

"I have not yet run into such persons seeking personal gain. I have not spoken or said that these people are joining the Wafd for the sake of running as candidates or out of ambition for positions. Rather, there is the condition that the Wafd accept people who are fit and that the Wafd do the nominating. However, if a person who joins the Wafd demands that he has done so in order to be nominated for elections, at that point we will tell him, 'We are sorry, there is no place for you in the Wafd!'"

AKHIR SA'AH: What is the Wafd's position on the opposition style of the other parties present on the stage, which sometimes tend to be provocative and non-objective and resort to twisting the facts, in brief, opposition for the sake of opposition, and not for the public benefit, which results in many excesses and departures from the bounds of constructive political dialogue?

Fu'ad Siraj-al-Din said,

"I cannot say that the opposition is not staying within these bounds now. I was misunderstood after the meeting with Minister Hasan Abu Basha; my position is not one of making evaluations, especially since the opposition might adhere to this, or more. However, I do believe that what I said is a rule that we must adhere to, any opposition that respects itself.

"In response to the question that the Wafd was not represented in the general committee for freedoms, or the defense of democracy, I can say that what happened was that two members of the Lawyers' Union, most of whom are Wafdists, attended one of these meetings and in the minutes of the session stated that they had attended in their capacity as board members of the Lawyers' Union, in a personal capacity. We were not in our capacity as members of the Wafd Party. However, unfortunately, one opposition paper published the news that so-and-so and so-and-so had attended for the Wafd, and it published the names. The publication did not correspond to reality. They had declared, in the official minutes, that they represented not the Wafd but themselves."

AKHIR SA'AH: As was the case in the Muharram Bey elections in Alexandria?

Fu'ad Siraj-al-Din:

"Exactly. A Wafdist from the workers' group came forth and declared that he was running for election on the principles of the Wafd. It was clear in his pamphlet that he was a Wafdist. The confusion was reiterated in the district. A distinction was not made between the Wafd candidate and a Wafdist candidate. I cannot tell people 'You are not a Wafdist,' because that is a belief. However, I can tell him, 'You are not a member of the Wafd Party.' I cannot tell someone, 'You are not a Moslem,' but I can tell him, 'You are

not a member of the Moslem Brothers.' Political belief is not granted by decree or removed by decree. Rather, what is granted and removed is membership in the party. This is the case in any organization. When I found that there was a confusion, and a blizzard of telephone calls were made, and everyone had asked if the Wafd had nominated anyone in the Muharram Bey district, since we were not concerned with this campaign, and if we were at some other time we might enter it as a candidate of the Wafd Party, as happened in the al-Jumruk district in 1978, when we entered with our whole weight, and in addition, the district was no more than 2 or 3 months old, and the council would be dissolved, and we had to save our public for the big campaign, we said, "'Umar,' who was the candidate, 'withdraw the nomination because there is a decree on that from the higher committee.' He said, 'I am committed,' and declared his withdrawal."

AKHIR SA'AH: What is the Wafd's foreign policy outlook, especially as regards Egypt's position between the two great powers, and the special relationship between Egypt and America? This is because one or another of the existing opposition parties exploits this point for the sake of auctioneering from time to time.

Fu'ad Siraj-al-Din said,

"This issue is very clear in the special party program. The Wafd has had a fixed policy, even before 1952, and it is the same as its present one. That is that Egypt should pursue a balanced policy with the two blocs, a neutral policy."

Fu'ad Siraj-al-Din said, exhaling smoke from his famous cigar,

"The Arab situation is as unfortunate, sorrowful and sad as it can be. Israel could not have dreamed of this if it had spent billions of pounds and sacrificed hundreds of thousands of soldiers. It has gotten where it is now because of fragmentation in Arab ranks, and for this there has been absolutely no precedent since the Arab League opened. The Arab countries are fighting one another. The country itself is fighting itself, and its people are fighting one another. We look for the reason but cannot find it. Who is benefitting from the civil war in Lebanon, though it has been going on for 7 years? What group has benefitted from the war? This is unfortunate and sad. Israel is gaining and profiting without spending money, or having a soldier's blood spilled!"

AKHIR SA'AH: It has been observed that the more the story of the return of Egypt to the Arabs, or the return of the Arabs to Egypt, comes up, the more the issue of the Camp David agreement is raised. Some people adopt it as a pretext for making excuses, while others use it as a "hanger" for all the Arabs' errors as a result of their rifts and fragmentation. What is the Wafd's position on Camp David, and what is its view of the results and effects of the agreement, especially since some opposition parties are using it as material for auctioneering?"

Fu'ad Siraj-al-Din: As far as Camp David goes, our view has been clear since 1978. We met here, and with us in the higher board were ranking authorities

in international law and constitutional law. We studied the agreement in a scientific, legal manner before a political study was made, and we set out a number of observations on this agreement. We did not reject it in principle, but we set out observations on it. We made a printed memorandum on it which was distributed among the members of the People's Assembly by some deputies. We had about 15 deputies. It was presented to the assembly and included among its documents. We said that we criticized the agreement for such-and-such a reason and asked that these points be taken into consideration. The assembly formed a committee of members to review the agreement. The strange thing is that the committee set out the same observations we did. In fact it may have added some points to them. Mr Fikri Makram 'Ubayd, the minister of People's Assembly affairs, stood up and thanked the opposition for this memorandum, and promised that it, and the memorandum of the competent committee, would be the object of the government's attention. It was a very nice, patriotic position, a competent minister praising the committee memorandum. Unfortunately, when the treaty was signed, it was drawn up without any corrections based on the observations of the committee, either the opposition memorandum or the memorandum of the People's Assembly, and we met a second time and made a legal memorandum again, which was carefully studied, and distributed it in the assembly.

I say that the talk about Camp David has become redundant and now is in the realm of history, far removed from reality. Israel has violated everything in Camp David. Is its conduct on the West Bank compatible with Camp David, and its stipulations? Is the invasion of Lebanon compatible, or the settlements it is building on the occupied territories? Has it given autonomy to the Palestinians on the occupied territories, especially since the stipulated 5 years have elapsed? After 5 years, they were to have been given the right to determine their own destiny.

AKHIR SA'AH: Let us go back to the Wafd, and talk about the party newspaper. Has the party specified a date for issuing the paper before the coming elections?

Fu'ad Siraj-al-Din said, after thinking briefly:

"The party paper is the most important problem now. We have two points before us, first the issuance of the paper and then the provision of headquarters for the party. Although my home is the present headquarters, it does not meet the purpose. I am concerned that there be a place in which there be a large number of rooms for the administrative, information and technical apparatus, meetings and places for files and folders, as with any party.

"On the first problem, which concerns the newspaper, we are now exerting concentrated efforts to solve these two problems, and we are trying to issue a newspaper in March. It will be a weekly, then a biweekly, and will end up being daily. You know the magnitude of the problem facing the issuance of a paper, in terms of presses, the editorial staff, paper, and financing. However, these difficulties will not divert us from our path."

AKHIR SA'AH: It was said in 1978 that more than a million pounds had been set aside to finance the party paper. What is the degree of truth in that statement?

Fu'ad Siraj-al-Din: They accused us of obtaining financing from some Arab countries. I can assert that the million pounds amounts to a million mil- liemes. In this period, we did not apply ourselves to accumulating money; rather we were involved in the struggle for establishment; especially with the former president, al-Sadat, the struggle took all our time, in terms of defending and responding. Now we are concerned with the issue of financing. We have even formed a special committee, and the early signs appear to be good, because the Wafdists are famous for sacrificing themselves. A few days ago I found a member putting his hands in my pocket. I was amazed, and put my hand in my pocket and found 100 pounds. He went off before I could learn his name. You will not find that in any party. Therefore, we are not concerned about this problem. Every Wafdist gives as much as he can, generously, to the party. As far as the paper goes, if it is weekly, where will I publish it? All the presses are overworked. However, that will certainly be arranged. The position of editor in chief is still open.

AKHIR SA'AH: It is said that Ahmad Abu-al-Fath has been nominated for this post.

Fu'ad Siraj-al-Din: There are many reasons and circumstances bearing on Ahmad Abu-al-Fath, especially health circumstances, that prevent Ahmad Abu-al-Fath from being the editor in chief, although he is one of us and there are no doubts about his loyalty to the Wafd. However, until next March we will issue bulletins, which is the party's right, on condition that they are not for sale and that they are for distribution to the members of the party. The second condition is that they not be regular or periodical -- they are bulletins to provide Wafdists with information about the party and its resolutions. What does not appear in other papers, because their pages do not have room, we will publish in the party bulletin; that is, it will be a means of communication.

AKHIR SA'AH: Is there a party publicity plan for the Wafd among workers, especially since it is well known that the Wafd's broad base was among the peasants before the revolution?

Fu'ad Siraj-al-Din: Of course, without a doubt, especially since this question offers a chance to explain an important aspect. If we think about the Wafd's organizational structure before 1952, we will find a strange phenomenon. We will find that the rich people in the party were an extremely small minority. There were 15 or 16 leaders. Even in the Wafd's parliamentary body we find that the capitalists were a limited minority. The overwhelming majority was from the toiling groups and bodies, workers, peasants, young people, merchants or lawyers. The Wafd, and every party in the world, must put some capitalists in its ranks, because parties depend on contributions and dues.

Since it is not allowed to engage in commerce, the Wafd's dues are 6 pounds per year. Our working members have had the right to attend the general

assembly, aside from the millions of partisans. With 40,000 members, the volume of the dues comes to 300,000 pounds.

In the past, when the Wafd needed a lot of money, I would assemble the parliamentary body of the Wafd, explain the political circumstances to them, and raise the issue of financing without pressure or coercion. In half an hour I would collect 80,000 pounds, in the form of checks, coin or currency which would come the next day. One person would pay 50,000 pounds, another would pay 50 pounds, and this was a force in the Wafd's board, which contained 15 leaders. Some of them were big capitalists, like Mughazi Pasha, al-Wakil Pasha, and Sayyid Bey Bahnas, and there were leaders who had nothing, big lawyers. This is the Wafd, and this is the secret of its strength. When the parties were dissolved in 1953, the Wafd's bank balance, which was handed over to the government, according to the dissolution law, was 104,000 pounds, while the other parties handed over 500 pounds, and some handed over 600.

The Wafd does not need government support, or headquarters either.

AKHIR SA'AH: The Wafd is using the second floor of the Siraj-al-Din mansion as its temporary headquarters. Will you ask the government for headquarters like the other parties, or what?

Fu'ad Siraj al-Din said, as he sipped on a cup of coffee without sugar,

"We can ask for places for party headquarters, since these headquarters are left over from the Socialist Union. This is what other parties have done. However, we will not do this, though I can say that this building belongs to me, is my property, like the Sa'dist Clubhouse. That was taken over, and it is now being occupied by a department or bureau of the Ministry of the Interior. Here the house could be given back to the Wafd Party and the department could be moved to another place. From this starting point, I will present an application in the coming days on this matter, and I hope it will meet receptive ears, because it is a reasonable, just request."

AKHIR SA'AH: You stated previously that your role in the party would be restricted to the founding stage, and that after that it would be up to the Wafd to complete the mission.

[Answer] I am totally convinced of that. Our task now is to help in the establishment of the party, because it is difficult to establish the party without the old Wafdists. I can say that after the establishment of the Wafd, our task will be to bring up a new political generation, because most unfortunately there were no parties in the last 30 years and, as the natural result of the absence of political schools, whose role in the context of the party system was to train and graduate politicians, statesmen and rulers, as I pointed out in the al-Sa'idiyah school speech, the president's task in choosing ministers has now become a difficult one. Before the revolution, it was easy to find more than five figures who were each suited for the cabinet, no matter how meager the party. Each party would have an adequate number of ministers in the event it came to power. Even in the cases of coalition cabinets, the situation did not constitute any problem for the parties.

Fu'ad Siraj-al-Din said,

"This subject prompts me to mention the story of al-Nahhas Pasha, when he wanted to meet the king to appoint 'Abd-al-Majid Pasha 'Abd-al-Haqq minister of state in 1951. The king used to stall on every request al-Nahhas made. We asked al-Nahhas Pasha to make the representation for the first time in his life, if he was concerned about this appointment. I asked him to write down the names of six candidates to this position, provided that the first one be 'Abd-al-Majid 'Abd-al-Haqq, and to put a card with the names on it before the king, in a manner which would cause him to observe the names and present 'Abd-al-Majid's name. At this point he would not protest, because he would find other alternative names. The plan succeeded, and 'Abd-al-Majid was appointed minister of state. Our method in the past was to choose deputies to work as vice chairmen of parliament. This process in itself constituted training for these figures so they would amount to a reserve for any cabinet, after constant refinement. These experiments were a success and yielded a crop of useful, proper figures."

He continued his statement,

"Let me talk once again about my staying for a specific time in the chairmanship of the party. Our current task is to get proper personnel started on the road. During this period, we will act as their guides and mentors. I remember when we were preparing the internal program for the party in 1978, I set out a provision that provoked everyone's amazement. I said that the first term for the chairman of the party should be just 1 year from the date of the establishment of the party, with the condition that he can be re-elected. 'Abd-al-Fattah Hasan was amazed because party chairmen did not have a specific term, as long as they were able to work and as long as they were the object of trust. I said, 'Is there anything to prevent me from being re-elected?' Dr Mustafa Khalil also raised this issue with me, but I held to my position, and it was actually realized. The young people are the pillars of every party that wants to last."

AKHIR SA'AH: The Wafd was distinguished by the presence of a number of political wings, the most prominent of which was the "Wafdist vanguard." What is the Wafdist Vanguard's position on the new party?"

Fu'ad Siraj-al-Din said,

"I can assure you that there was nothing in the history of the Wafd called the 'Wafdist Vanguard.' I was secretary general of the party, and there were no such titles among its staff. Some members of the student executive committee gave themselves this title. There was a magazine called RABITAT AL-SHABAB from whose owner they obtained a permit. To tell the truth, they were committed party members as Wafdist students. They were with us every day in the al-Sa'di Club and al-Nahhas' home, and at commemorations and conferences. I personally nominated their chief, Mustafa Musa, member of the Chamber of Deputies in 1950. Even though he had a bachelor's degree in engineering, he won, with the aid of the students, against Sayyid Jalal. We had nothing against young people being active under the name of the Wafdist Vanguard or the Wafdist Youth, but they did not have an independent view or

an independent identity. This issue ceased to be important after 1953. However, it reappeared and was brought back into being by 'Abd-al-Muhsin Hammudah, who was not in the Wafd Party and did not submit an application to join the party in 1978, and has not done so yet. In 1978 a warning was sent, by courier, to the minister of the interior at that time and also the chairman of the Committee on Parties and the chairman of the People's Assembly warning them not to give the name of the Wafdist Vanguard to any party, since that name was to be reserved for a party, with its chairmanship. Where is its party? Where is its activity? I say that there is no organization called the Wafdist Vanguard. Even all the members who were with him on the students' committee joined the Wafd Party."

AKHIR SA'AH: There are people who say that the leaders of the Wafd Party stole the commemoration of Sa'd Zaghlul and Mustafa al-Nahas from the Wafdist Vanguard.

Fu'ad Siraj-al-Din said:

"That is not true. It is well known that the Lawyers' Union has been holding this commemoration. It started in 1976, 'Abd-al-Fattah Hasan, Ibrahim Faraj and Muhammad Salah-al-Din spoke at it, and we are still holding it, every year. I spoke at the 1977 commemoration. We contented ourselves with this, because political circumstances did not allow more than this, until the circumstances changed and we entered into a democratic climate that I cannot deny, in addition to the presence of freedom of opinions and assembly, and we asked to hold it. However, the minister of the interior, al-Nabawi Isma'il, asked that it be in a closed place, and we said that it was not a mourning observance, or the commemoration of the 40th day after a funeral, and that it had to be given the dignity it deserved. Agreement was reached that it should be held at the 'Umar Makram Mosque. There we found extreme difficulties, such as the fact that loudspeakers had not been set up and pictures of al-Nahas and Sa'd Zaghlul had not been put up. This year, I myself requested that it be held, and, after negotiations with [the Ministry of] the Interior, it agreed that it could be held in the al-Sa'idiyah school. It was a successful meeting, and the policemen were responsive. This was conveyed to the minister of the interior and the governor of Giza. So what have we stolen from 'Abd-al-Muhsin Hammudah?"

AKHIR SA'AH: In the context of the whole world's tendency toward specialization, does the Wafd have the wherewithal to provide ministers who are specialized in all technical areas, such as economics, for instance, and depart from the pattern of the political minister who is just committed in party terms, and who is chosen just because he is a leader of the party?

Fu'ad Siraj-al-Din said,

"Certainly, like all political parties, it is necessary that there be specialized technical personnel in its committees, which can formulate the party's viewpoint on all the issues raised, in the realm of economics, finance or housing. However, I have a point of view on this issue, based on my pursuit of politics. By all standards, a party minister is better than a technical minister. If a person can combine technical specialization with



party leadership, that is far better. There are examples that confirm what I say. If a doctor is appointed minister of health, he will consider that he is the greatest of all people to talk about and understand all health problems. That opinion will keep him from listening to advisory opinions and counsel, whereas the minister who is not specialized will always resort to the reports and opinions of his advisors. For example, Murqus Pasha Hanna, a lawyer, assumed the Ministry of Works for a period. Everyone knows that that was one of the most prosperous eras of the Ministry of Works. A decree was issued appointing a technical advisor to the minister and a bureau chief for technical affairs from competent engineering personnel in the ministry, and each body would send its reports out in a specific area, and set out all solutions and alternatives in its report, which was presented to the minister's technical advisor, who would study the issue thoroughly, and set forth the decisions that the minister could take regarding it, then present the report to the chief of the technical bureau so that he in turn could express his opinion, so that the picture would be come clear in complete form before the minister, who would take the decision that was in keeping with the interests of the masses."

Fu'ad Siraj-al-Din went on,

"In my opinion, the minister's is a political position. Everyday routine work is carried out by a group of deputy ministers and advisors to the minister. This method must be followed in our selection of ministers."

AKHIR SA'AH: There is much that has given political activity a bad odor in Egypt, especially the calumny in the language of political discourse between the parties and the opposition. How do you view the function and the style of the opposition's practices?

Fu'ad Siraj-al-Din said:

"I cannot evaluate the style and form of action in the current opposition, but if we look at the need to have rules for political discourse, we can gain a thorough understanding of them by glancing at the parliaments before 1952, where criticism of the government took place in regular, carefully studied form in the Chamber of Deputies. An opposition member would describe the reasons for his objection to the law or decree that was presented in a scholarly, carefully studied manner. However, after the session ended, with the approval of the government's view or the success of the opposition, they were all full friends.

"I can assert that part of the function of the opposition is to help the regime, because it participates in a specific manner in taking decisions. It often happened, before the revolution, that a minister would come to me and present me the draft of a decree or law he was going to present to the chamber, and would ask an opinion on it as someone responsible for the opposition. I can assert that after it was studied in a scholarly manner, at the highest level, the minister would accept all additions generously, and would declare in the session that he would present a specific decree, and, with agreement with the opposition, added other parts, then would thank the opposition for its help in arriving at a solution to the problem.

"I state frankly, is this method being observed now? More frankly, no. What is happening is that opposition for the most part takes place under the slogan 'opposition for the sake of opposition.'"

AKHIR SA'AH: A final question at the end of the conversation. Would you prefer that everyone call you "Fu'ad Pasha," or "Mr Fu'ad?"

Fu'ad Siraj-al-Din said, smiling,

"The title of pasha disappeared 30 years ago. I prefer the name 'Mr Fu'ad.' I have a long story to tell. When I was in Turah Prison, the method of recreation we detainees used was to have convocations, which we would hold behind the bars. Everyone called me Fu'ad Pasha! I asked everyone to call me Mr Fu'ad, and anyone who called me Fu'ad Pasha I would not answer. One day I declared that I was giving up the title of pasha to Mr Kamal Ahmad, founder of the Nasirist Party, who was in the adjacent cell, and I asked him not to answer anyone unless they told him 'Kamal Pasha.'

"Frankly, we cannot go back. The era of pashas has ended, and will never return."

Members of the Wafd: Mumtaz Nassar, 'Awwarah and Former Ministers

Fu'ad Siraj-al-Din, after his lengthy interview with AKHIR SA'AH, said that Mumtaz Nassar and Ibrahim 'Awwarah, members of the People's Assembly, and some former ministers, whose names he refused to mention at the present time, until he found out what they thought about having their identities divulged, were some of the political and public figures who had recently joined the Wafd Party.

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