

Mother of Egyptians, historic title

Safia Zaghloul is the wife of the immortal patriotic leader Saad Zaghloul and daughter of Mustafa Fahmi Pasha, Egypt then prime minister.

Her title "The Mother of Egyptians" refers to the return of leader Saad Zaghloul and his comrades from exile in Malta in implementation of the British High Commissioner's decision.

Zaghloul's return on April 4, 1923 coincided with the closure of Alexandria Port because of the high tide. The whole Egyptian people flocked to the Alexandria Port to greet Saad Zaghloul.

The Eastern Harbor was swarming with thousands of boats carrying the people of Alexandria who insisted to spend the night in their boats so that to accompany the leader's ship while making its way into the port.

Consequently, the military ruler issued a decree prohibiting any chants for Saad or any actions violating peaceful demonstrations. Despite the danger posed by the high tide the small boats sailed to the open sea to become closer to the leader's ship.

In the morning of the fifth of April, 1923 the leader's ship entered the port amid a human naval demonstration for the first time in history.

Overwhelmed by sentiments, Zaghloul stood on board waving to the Egyptians before asking his wife to remove her yashmak (traditional face cover worn by Muslim women) on the grounds that they are her own people.

The crowds understood the meaning of that gesture and they immediately reacted to Safia Zaghloul's response by chanting Saad's name. From this moment Safia Zaghloul became the "Mother of Egyptians"

On the shore, Sayed Darwish, the artist of the people, was singing a mawwal (a non-metric vocal improvisation on a colloquial poetry) he wrote beginning with "Zaghloul ya balah" and the crowds were signing back "ya balah Zaghloul", a pun on the Arabic word of "balah" or dates.

Sayed Darwish then took a hantour (a horse drawn cab) and roamed the city while his loud voice, which needed no loudspeakers that had not been invented yet, reverberated across the city.

King Fouad went out to receive leader Saad Zaghloul in a convertible to salute the masses in a clear attempt to congratulate the people on Saad's return. The crowds were chanting "long live the king and Saad."

Although the chant violated all royal conventions it was welcomed by the king, the palace, and the press and, willy-nilly, by the military ruler.

King Fouad challenged the military ruler by naming Saad Zaghloul as prime minister. Saad broke with convention when he proposed two Coptic ministers in his cabinet instead of a single Coptic minister in each ministry.

The king dismissed Saad's proposal as "a violation of the quota," but Saad's answer was that when the Britons were shooting at the demonstrators they did not discriminate between Muslims and Copts and that they did not apply the quota when they exiled Saad and his companions, as most of them were Copts, prompting the king to agree on the proposed names without reservations.

Long live Egypt a nation living in the hearts of both Muslims and Copts.