

EGYPT'S LIBERATION

The Philosophy of the Revolution

PREMIER GAMAL ABDUL NASSER

*Introduction by
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cussed with me in Palestine the future of our country, and the experience which hammered out our ideas as to the possibilities of its fate, the enemy, too, played a role in reminding us of our country and its problems. A few months ago, I read some articles written about me by an Israeli officer named Yeruhan Cohen, which appeared in the *Jewish Observer*. In these articles the Jewish officer relates how he met me during the armistice negotiations.

"The subject which Gamal Abdul Nasser always talked about with me," he wrote, "was the struggle of Israel against the English, and how we organized the underground resistance movement against them in Palestine, and how we were able to muster world public opinion behind us in our struggle against them."

Before February 4th

The seeds of the revolution were present within me long before the episode of February 4, 1942, a day after which I wrote

to a friend, saying, "What is to be done now that the die was cast and we accepted what happened on our knees in surrender? As a matter of fact, I believe the Imperialist was playing with only one card in his hand, with the object of threatening us. But once the Imperialist realizes that some Egyptians are ready to shed their own blood and meet force with force, he will beat a hasty retreat, like any harlot rebuffed."

Such, of course, is the usual practice of Imperialism. As for us, as for the Army, the episode had a new electrifying effect on our spirit and sensibilities. Heretofore officers who had talked only of selfish amusement now began to talk of self-sacrifice and their readiness to die in defense of their honor. They all voiced their regret for not having intervened, despite their obvious weakness, to restore to their country its honor and cleanse it with their own blood.

But for him who waits, tomorrow is close.

Some indeed tried to do something after-

wards by way of retaliation, but the opportunity was irretrievably lost, leaving our hearts full of bitter anger and sorrow. Actually this action (on the part of the Imperialist), or rather this stab, revived the spirit of some of us and brought home to us the fact that when our honor was involved we might be prepared to defend it. It was a lesson, but it was a hard lesson.

And Before 1935

The day of my awakening was even earlier than that explosive period when, as a student, I marched in 1935 with the demonstrators who clamored for the restoration of the 1923 Constitution (which was actually restored), and when I was going around with delegations of students to the homes of Egyptian leaders in an attempt to get them to unite in behalf of Egypt. The National Front was formed in 1936 as a result of those efforts.

I recall that during that period of ferment, I wrote a letter to one of my friends. It was dated September 2, 1935.

"Dear Brother,

"I talked to your father on the telephone on the 30th, asking after you. He told me that you were at school. So I decided to put down in writing what I intended to communicate to you on the telephone. Allah said 'Oppose them with whatever forces you can muster.' But where are these forces we are supposed to have in readiness for them? The situation today is precarious, and Egypt's situation is even worse. We are on the verge of collapse and death, for truly the temple of despair has mighty columns. But, who is to pull it down?" I continued my letter in this vein.

When was the day on which I discovered the seeds of revolution within me? The truth is that these seeds were not only hidden in me; I found them also in the hearts of a great many others, who in turn could not pinpoint the beginnings of their existence. Is it not clear then that these seeds were implanted in us when we were born, and that they were a hope concealed

in our subconsciousness, put there by the generation before us?

Truth . . . and Vacuum

I have made this long digression in order to describe the primary reason for the difficulty confronting me in speaking of the philosophy of the revolution because such a discussion requires the deep research of scholars into the historical origins of our people.

The second reason is that I myself was inside the maelstrom of the revolution, and from those who find themselves in a maelstrom, some of its more distant details are hidden. I was heart and soul involved in everything that happened and the way it happened; how, then, can I deal with it objectively, or with the hidden significance behind it?

I am one of those who believe that nothing can exist in a vacuum; even truth cannot so exist. Truth is that which we feel and know in our hearts to be right, or to be more exact, that which our souls em-

brace. Our souls are the vessels in which everything we are is contained; and everything we are, everything placed in these vessels, must take their shape, even truth. I try as much as humanly possible to prevent my soul from altering the shape of truth very much, but how far can I succeed? That is the question.

Beyond this, I want to be fair to myself and fair to the philosophy of the revolution. So I leave it to history to draw up its outlines as I see them, as others see them, and as they are demonstrated by events — and then to distill from all this the full truth.

Aspirations and Measures

What, then, can I say? I am qualified to talk of two things. The first is embraced in the term "aspirations", which began in the form of a vague hope, then developed into a defined idea, and finally into a practical program at midnight July 23rd.

The second is the measures we have taken to put these aspirations, with all their vague hopes, their defined ideas and their

practical programs, into practical execution since midnight July 23rd up to now.

It is about these aspirations and measures that I wish to speak.

For a long time I have been asking myself: Was it necessary for us, the Army, to do what we did on July 23, 1952?

I have already observed that the revolution marked the realization of a great hope felt by the people of Egypt since they began, in modern times, to think in terms of self-government and to demand that they have the final word in determining their own future. But if that is so, and if what happened on July 23rd was neither a military mutiny nor a popular uprising, why then was it entrusted to the Army, and not to other forces, to bring it about?

I have always been a confirmed believer in the ideal of the military service. It imposes one duty on the Army: that it should die on the frontiers of the motherland. Why did our Army find itself obliged to act in the capital of the motherland instead of on the frontiers?

Again, let me draw your attention to the fact that the rout in Palestine, and the defective arms, and the crisis in the Officers' Club were not the real sources from which poured out the torrent: all these were only contributory factors to the speed of the flow; but, as I said before, they were never the real origin.

But why the Army? I have long asked myself this question; I asked it during the stages of hope, thinking and planning prior to July 23rd, and I have continued to ask it during the many stages of action since then.

There were various justifications before July 23rd which made it clear to us why it was necessary for us to do what we did. We used to say, "If the Army does not do this job, who will?" We also used to say, "We have been used by the Despot as a bogey to give the people nightmares; now it is high time that the bogey be turned against the Despot to shatter his own dreams." We said many other things, but we felt to the depth of our beings this was

our soldiers' duty and that if we failed to discharge it, we would be failing in the sacred trust placed in us.

I confess, however, that the full picture did not become clear in my mind until after a long period of trial after July 23rd. It was the details of this experience which filled in the details of the picture.

The Role of Vanguard

I can testify that there were certain critical occasions since July 23rd when I accused myself, my comrades and the rest of the Army, of stupidity and madness for doing what we had done on that day.

Before July 23rd, I had imagined that the whole nation was ready and prepared, waiting for nothing but a vanguard to lead the charge against the battlements, whereupon it would fall in behind in serried ranks, ready for the sacred advance towards the great objective. And I had imagined that our role was to be this commando vanguard. I thought that this role would never take more than a few hours.

Then immediately would come the sacred advance behind us of the serried ranks and the thunder of marching feet as the ordered advance proceeded towards the great objective. I heard all this in my imagination, but by sheer faith it seemed real and not the figment of imagination.

Then suddenly came reality after July 23rd. The vanguard performed its task and charged the battlements of tyranny. It threw out Farouk and then paused, waiting for the serried ranks to come up in their sacred advance toward the great objective.

Symbol of the Revolution

For a long time it waited. Crowds did eventually come, and they came in endless droves — but how different is the reality from the dream! The masses that came were disunited, divided groups of stragglers. The sacred advance toward the great objective was stalled, and the picture that emerged on that day looked dark and ominous; it boded danger. At this moment

I felt, with sorrow and bitterness, that the task of the vanguard, far from being completed, had only begun.

We needed order, but we found nothing behind us but chaos. We needed unity, but we found nothing behind us but dissension. We needed work, but we found behind us only indolence and sloth. It was from these facts, and no others, that the revolution coined its slogan.

Weapon in the Hand of Hate

We were not yet ready. So we set about seeking the views of leaders of opinion and the experience of those who were experienced. Unfortunately we were not able to obtain very much.

Every man we questioned had nothing to recommend except to kill someone else. Every idea we listened to was nothing but an attack on some other idea. If we had gone along with everything we heard, we would have killed off all the people and torn down every idea, and there would have been nothing left for us to do but sit

down among the corpses and ruins, bewailing our evil fortune and cursing our wretched fate.

We were deluged with petitions and complaints by the thousands and hundreds of thousands, and had these complaints and petitions dealt with cases demanding justice or grievances calling for redress, this motive would have been understandable and logical. But most of the cases referred to us were no more or less than demands for revenge, as though the revolution had taken place in order to become a weapon in the hand of hatred and vindictiveness.

The Evils of Egotism

If anyone had asked me in those days what I wanted most, I would have answered promptly: To hear an Egyptian speak fairly about another Egyptian. To sense that an Egyptian has opened his heart to pardon, forgiveness and love for his Egyptian brethren. To find an Egyptian who does not devote his time to tear-

ing down the views of another Egyptian.

In addition to all this, there was a confirmed individual egotism. The word "I" was on every tongue. It was the solution to every difficulty, the cure for every ill. I had many times met eminent men — or so they were called by the press — of every political tendency and color, but when I would ask any of them about a problem in the hope he could supply a solution, I would never hear anything but "I".

Economic problems? He alone could understand them; as for the others, their knowledge on the subject was that of a crawling infant. Political issues? He alone was expert. No one else had gotten beyond the a-b-c's of politics. After meeting one of these people, I would go back in sorrow to my comrades and say, "It is no use. If I had asked this fellow about the fishing problems in the Hawaiian Islands, his only answer would be 'I'."

Duties and Responsibilities

I remember visiting once one of our uni-

versities where I called the professors together and sat with them in order to benefit from their scholastic experience. Many of them spoke before me and at great length. It was unfortunate that none of them advanced any ideas; instead, each confined himself to advancing himself to me, pointing out his unique fitness for making miracles. Each of them kept glancing at me with the look of one who preferred me to all the treasures of earth and heaven.

I recall that I could not restrain myself, so I stood up and said, "Every one of us is able in his own way to perform a miracle. His primary duty is to bend every effort to his work. And if you, as university professors, were to think of your students' welfare, and consider them as you should, your basic work, you would be in a position to provide us with the fundamental strength to build up our motherland.

"Everyone must remain at his post, to which he should dedicate all his efforts. Do not look at us — we have been forced by circumstances to leave our posts in

order to perform a sacred duty. If the motherland had no need for us other than to stay in the ranks of the Army as professional soldiers, we would have remained there."

What I did not say at that time was to give them the example of the members of the Revolution Council. I did not want to tell the professors that, before they were called to a greater duty, these men had been devoting all their energies to their jobs. I did not point out to them that most of the Revolution Council were professors at the General Staff College, and that this constituted a proof as to their distinction in their field as professional soldiers.

Likewise, I refrained from pointing out that three of the Revolution Council, Abdul Hakim Amer, Salah Salem and Kemal-Din Hussein, were given exceptional promotions on the field of battle in Palestine. I did not want to mention all this, because I do not want to boast about members of the Revolution Council, they being my brothers and comrades.

The Complete Picture

I confess that this whole situation produced in me a psychological crisis; but the events that followed, and my reflections thereon, together with the real meaning I could adduce from them, tended to ease my distress and set me to seek a justification for this situation, which I found when the whole picture of the motherland's plight rose somewhat clearly before my eyes. This clarification, moreover, brought me the answer to the question which had long bothered me, namely: Was it necessary for us, the Army, to do what we did on July 23rd?

The answer is yes, beyond any subterfuge or equivocation. I can say now that we did not ourselves define the role given us to play; it was the history of our country which cast us in that role.

I can now state that we are going through two revolutions, not one revolution. Every people on earth goes through two revolutions: a political revolution by which it wrests the right to govern itself

from the hand of tyranny, or from the army stationed upon its soil against its will; and a social revolution, involving the conflict of classes, which settles down when justice is secured for the citizens of the united nation.

Peoples preceding us on the path of human progress have passed through two revolutions, but they have not had to face both simultaneously; their revolutions, in fact, were centuries apart in time. For us, the terrible experience through which our people are going is that we are having both revolutions at the same time.

Between the Millstones

This terrible experience stems from the fact that both revolutions have attendant factors which clash and contradict violently. To be successful, the political revolution must unite all elements of the nation, build them solidly together and instill in them the spirit of self-sacrifice for the sake of the whole country. But one of the primary features of social revolution is that

it shakes values and loosens principles, and sets the citizenry, as individuals and classes, to fighting each other. It gives free rein to corruption, doubt, hatred and egoism.

We are caught between the millstones of the two revolutions we are fated now to be going through. One revolution makes it obligatory that we unite and love one another, fighting side by side to achieve our ends; the other brings dissension upon us against our desires, causing us to hate each other and think only of ourselves.

Between these two millstones, for example, the 1919 revolution was lost; it was unable to make secure the results it should have achieved. The ranks which formed in 1919 and faced up to tyranny were soon scattered by the outbreak of strife and conflict between individuals and classes. The result was dismal failure. Tyranny tightened its grip afterwards, overtly by means of occupation troops, and covertly through its masked stooges led by Sultan Fuad and King Farouk after him. The

people harvested nothing except self-doubt, evil, hatred and rancour between individuals and classes.

Only the Army

The hope reposed in the 1919 revolution was thus dimmed. I say dimmed, but not extinguished, because the natural forces of resistance called into being by the great aspirations of our people did not cease to be active and to prepare for a new attempt.

This was the state of affairs which existed after the 1919 revolution, and which singled out the Army as the force to do the job. The situation demanded the existence of a force set in one cohesive framework, far removed from the conflict between individuals and classes, and drawn from the heart of the people: a force composed of men able to trust each other; a force with enough material strength at its disposal to guarantee a swift and decisive action.

These conditions could be met only by the Army.

In this way, as I have already remarked, it was not the Army which defined its role in the events that took place; the opposite is closer to the truth. The events and their ramifications defined the role of the Army in the great struggle to free the nation.

I have been aware since the beginning that our unity is dependent upon our full realization of the nature of circumstances in which we found ourselves, the historical circumstances of our country. For we could not alter the circumstances by the mere stroke of a pen, nor could we turn back the hands of the clock, or advance them — we could not control time. It was not within our power to stand on the road of history like a traffic policeman and hold up the passage of one revolution until the other had passed by in order to prevent a collision. The only thing possible to do was to act as best we could and try to avoid being ground between the millstones.

It was inevitable that we go through the

two revolutions at the same time. When we moved along the path of the political revolution and dethroned Farouk, we took a similar step on the path of the social revolution by deciding to limit land ownership.

I continue to believe that the July 23rd revolution must maintain its initiative and ability to move swiftly in order to perform the miracle of traveling through two revolutions at the same time, however contradictory our resulting actions might at times appear.

When one of my comrades came to me saying, "You want unity to face the English, but at the same time you allow the treason courts to continue their work," I listened to him with our great crisis in mind, the crisis of the millstones — a revolution on the one hand which obliges us to unite in one phalanx and to forget the past, and on the other hand, another revolution which demands that we restore lost dignity to our moral values by not forgetting the past. I might have replied that our

only salvation lies, as I said before, in maintaining our speed of movement and our initiative, and our ability to travel through two revolutions simultaneously.

This situation does not exist because I wished it, or because all those who participated in the revolution have wished it. It is brought about by the act of fate, the history of our people, and the stage it is passing through at the present time.

PART TWO

What is it? Bullets talk. One had to go. Cries pursued me. Thoughts in the night. The search for an "Action". A single step. Residue of the past. Driven by storms. A society that is crystallizing. Well then, what is the path? This is our role. The past and the future.

But what is it we want to do? And how is it to be done?

The truth is I have often known the answers to the first question, and I am sure I was not the only one, for it was the hope and dream of our entire generation. As for the second question—the way to achieve what we want—I admit that this has undergone more change than anything else in my thinking. Also, in my opinion, it is the subject on which we are now most divided.

There can be no doubt that all of us dream of an Egypt free and strong. That is something about which there is no dispute between one Egyptian and another. But as for the way to achieve freedom and strength, that is our Gordian knot.

I came up against this problem before July 23rd, 1952, and it has continued to dominate my thoughts ever since. As a result, many of the aspects caught in the shadows have become clear, and horizons obscured by the darkness which for cen-

turies shrouded our country began to resolve themselves before my eyes. As my thinking progressed, I began to realize the great necessity for a "positive action."

What Is It?

But *what* action? To write the words "positive action" on a piece of paper is a simple matter. But in real life, and under conditions besetting our generation, and in face of the ordeals which, like vultures, have dug their talons into the life of our country, this is not enough.

For a brief period, positive action in my estimation meant my own enthusiasm and zeal. But this idea changed, and I began to see that it was not enough for me to merely be enthusiastic; I had also to inspire others to enthusiasm.

In those earlier days, I led demonstrations in the Nahda Secondary School, and I shouted from my heart for complete independence, and many others behind me shouted, too. But our shouts only raised dust which was blown by the wind, and

produced only weak echoes which shook no mountains and shattered no rocks.

Then I began to think that this positive action would be to demand that the leaders of Egypt unite to agree upon a single policy; so we went around in groups, shouting and excited, to visit their houses, demanding in the name of Egyptian youth that they agree on a single policy. But their agreement, when it came, dealt a severe blow to my expectations. The policy upon which they decided was the Treaty of 1936.

Bullets Talk

The second World War and the short period before it fired the spirit of our youth, and moved our whole generation towards violence. I confess — and I trust the Public Prosecutor will not take me to task — that to my excited imagination at that time political assassinations appeared to be the positive action we had to adopt if we were to rescue the future of our country. I considered the assassination of many

individuals, having decided that they were the main obstacles which lay between our beloved country and its destined greatness. I began to study their crimes and to take it upon myself to judge the harmfulness of their actions.

I even considered the assassination of the ex-king and some of his entourage who had such utter disregard for the things we held sacred. And I was not alone in thinking thus. When I had occasion to be with others, we went beyond mere thinking to planning. So many were the projects I made in those days and so many were the sleepless nights spent in preparing this long-awaited positive action!

Our life during that period was like a thrilling detective story. We had dark secrets and passwords. We lurked in the shadows; we had caches of pistols and hand-grenades, and firing bullets was our cherished hope. We made many attempts in this direction, and I can still remember our emotions and feelings as we dashed along that melodramatic path to its end.

One Had To Go

Deep in my heart, however, I had not been at all satisfied that violence could serve as the positive action we must take to save the future of our country. I fell prey to perplexity, to a mixture of overlapping factors that ran the gamut of patriotism and religion, leniency and ruthlessness, faith and doubt, knowledge and the lack of it.

Gradually I came to realize that the idea of political assassinations that glowed once in my imagination was beginning to dim and lose its value as a means of bringing about this positive action.

I remember particularly a night which marked a turning point in the course of my thoughts and dreams in this respect. We had planned a course of action and decided that a certain man should cease to exist. We studied his movements and habits before carrying out our plan, which was perfected in all respects. The plan was to shoot him by night on his way home. An execution squad was appointed

to do the shooting, covered by a second squad for protection, and a third squad for the get-away.

The appointed night came, and I went out with the attack group. Everything went according to plan.

Cries Pursued Me

As we had expected, the field was clear. The squads concealed themselves in their assigned positions, waiting for our man. As soon as he was sighted, he was met with a volley of bullets. The execution squad then withdrew, covered by the protective force, and we hurried to safety. I started the motor of my car and drove away from the scene of our carefully planned "positive action".

But suddenly there rang in my ears the sounds of screaming and wailing. I heard a woman crying, a child terrified, and a continuous, frightened call for help.

While speeding away in my car, I was overwhelmed and excited by a multitude of emotions. A strange thing was happen-

ing to me. The sounds were still loud in my ears: the screaming and the wailing and the crying and the frightened calls for help. I was now too far away from the scene to hear the actual sounds, but nevertheless they seemed chasing me — following me.

I arrived at my house and threw myself on my bed, my mind in agitation, my heart and conscience in unceasing turmoil. The sounds of screaming and lamentation and wailing and the calls for help continued to ring in my ears.

Thoughts in the Night

I did not sleep all night.

I remained lying on my bed in darkness, smoking continuously, trying to direct my agitated thoughts, which were no sooner collected than again distracted by the sounds that chased me.

Had I done right? I answered myself with conviction that it was for the sake of my country that I had taken this action.

Was there another way? Again I an-

swered myself, but this time in doubt. What else *could* we have done?

But is it really possible to change the future of our country by eliminating this or that person? Is the problem deeper than this?

Perplexed by the question, I answered myself: the problem appears to be deeper. We dream of the glory of our nation. But which is the better way to bring it about — to eliminate those who should be eliminated, or to bring forward those who should be brought forward?

There on my bed I thought it through with flashes of understanding illuminating my reflections: yes, the important thing is to bring forward those who can build. . . . We dream of the glory of our nation; it is necessary to *build* that glory.

Still tossing on my bed in a room now full of smoke and permeated with emotions, I said to myself: And so, therefore?

I heard an internal voice asking: Therefore what?

This time I answered myself with cer-

tain conviction: I mean that our method must be changed. What we have been doing is not the positive action to which we are dedicated. The problem has roots that are deep, and is too profound to be approached in this negative way.

I felt a serene inner relief. But even so, my mental peace continued to be troubled by the sounds of screaming and wailing and crying and calling for help, striking to the depths of my heart.

Suddenly I hoped that the man would not die. It was strange to find myself at dawn wishing life for the man whom I had wished death only the previous evening!

I waited anxiously for the morning paper. The man whose assassination I had planned was out of danger. I was relieved.

The Search For An "Action"

But the main problem remained. We must find out what the positive action should be.

From that time on, our thinking was

directed to doing something more deeply rooted, more important and further reaching. Thus we began to draw the outline of the picture which materialized on the night of July 23rd: a revolution springing from the heart of the people, expressing their hopes, following the same path they had already envisioned as the great highway to freedom.

I began this new phase with the following two questions: first, what is it that we want to do? Second, what are the means to it? As I said before, the answer to the first question was to achieve freedom. But the second question — how to achieve this hope — was the point of long discussions until the very day of July 23rd.

A Single Step

Did the events of July 23rd realize all we wanted? The answer is definitely no. Those events were but the first step!

In fact, I was not diverted by the joy at our success. That joy was not enough to convince me that our hopes could now be-

come real and that the spring of a new life had come to Egypt. I felt almost the contrary.

Every time the revolution achieved a new success, a new and heavy burden was also thrown upon my shoulders.

In Part One of what I am now writing, I said that before July 23rd I had imagined that all the nation was on the alert and ready. I thought that the nation was only waiting for a vanguard to tear down the barrier that stood in its way and would then consolidate behind that vanguard in an ordered, organized move.

I also said that I had thought that the part of vanguard was our only role, which, having been achieved in a few minutes, the ordered and organized ranks would begin to move forward.

In Part One, I also gave a picture of how dissension, chaos, vindictiveness and selfishness were unleashed at the very first moments. Every man wanted selfishly to benefit by the revolution and attain certain individual aims.

I said, and I shall continue to say, that that was the greatest shock of my life. But I must admit that I should have expected that to happen. It is impossible for hopes to come true simply by pressing an electric button. It is impossible for the accumulated consequences of long centuries and successive generations to disappear in the blink of an eye.

How Easy To Shed Blood

It was at that time easy — and it is still easy — to shed the blood of ten, twenty or thirty people, and thus strike fear in many wavering hearts, thereby forcing them to suppress their greed, vindictiveness and selfishness. But what would have been the result of such action?

I believe that whatever the problem is that must be faced, the right way to effect its solution is to trace its elements back to their origins and by such analysis get the true root of the matter through discovering the causes.

It would have been unjust to institute a

rule of blood without regard for the historical circumstances through which our people have passed, and which have given us those characteristics which make us what we now are.

I have said earlier that I did not wish to claim the chair of a history professor. Nothing is further from my mind. But like an elementary student, I can only try.

Return to the Past

It fell to Egypt that she should be the geographical crossroads of the world. So often were we a channel for the invader! So often were we the prize of covetous adventurers! It is impossible to account for the many factors involved in the psychology of our people unless we carefully analyze the many circumstances that have historically beset us.

To my mind, it is not possible to disregard the Pharaonic history of Egypt, or the interaction of Greek culture and our own. Then there came the Roman invasion and the Islamic conquest, together with suc-

ceeding Arab waves of immigration.

I believe that we must also dwell at length on our history through the Middle Ages, since it was the vicissitudes of that period which contributed so much to what we think and how we act today.

If the Crusades were the beginning of the Renaissance in Europe, they were the beginning of the dark ages in our country. Our people alone bore most of the sufferings of the Crusades, out of which they emerged poor, destitute and exhausted. In their exhaustion they were simultaneously destined by circumstances to submit to and to suffer further indignity under the hoofs of the Mongol and Caucasian tyrants. They came to Egypt as slaves, murdered their masters and became masters themselves. They were driven into Egypt as Mamelukes (i.e., owned) but shortly they became kings in our good and peaceful land.

Tyranny, oppression and ruin characterized their rule in Egypt, which continued for many dark centuries. During that period, our country was transformed into

a jungle ruled by wild beasts. The Mamelukes considered it an easy prey, and they struggled ferociously among themselves about the sharing of the booty. The booty was our souls, our minds, our wealth and our land.

Residue of the Past

Sometimes when I re-read the pages of our history, I feel a tearing grief because of that period — a period during which we were the victims of a tyrannous feudalism which did nothing for us except suck the life-blood from our veins. Nay, even worse — it robbed us of all sense of strength and honor. It left in the depths of our souls a complex which we will have to fight for a long time to overcome.

In fact, it is that complex, in my estimation, that is responsible for certain aspects in our political life. Many people, for example, stood to one side as mere spectators, observing our revolution, as though they had nothing to do with it. They only waited for the result of a strug-

gle between two opposing forces, neither of which concerned them.

Sometimes I resent this. Sometimes I demand of myself and my comrades: why don't these people come forward? Why don't they come out of their hiding places to speak up and to act? This is only to be accounted for, in my opinion, by the numbing effects of the Mameluke rule. The Mameluke rulers had fought each other, and their warriors had met in fierce battles on the streets, while the people would stampede to their houses, locking themselves in, and thus avoiding a struggle which was not their concern.

It sometimes appears to me that we content ourselves overmuch by wishful thinking. In flights of fancy we fulfill our desires and enjoy in imagination things which we never bestir ourselves to realize. Some of us are still susceptible to such day-dreams. Such people have not yet fully realized that the land is actually theirs, and that they, and none other, are their own masters.

Once I tried to find out the meaning of a chant which I had so often shouted in my childhood, whenever I saw an airplane in the sky: "O, Almighty God, may disaster take the English!" (Ya 'Azeez, Ya 'Azeez. Dahiya takhud al-Ingleez). Later, I came to know that that phrase had come down to us from the days of the Mamelukes. Our forebears of that day had not used it against the English, but they used a similar one against the Turk: "O God, the Self-Revealing! Annihilate the Turk!" (Ya Rabb, Ya Mutajelle, Ahlik al-'Uthmanli) My use of it was but an adaptation of an old form to express a new feeling. The underlying constant continued the same, never changing. Only the name of the oppressor was different.

Driven by Storms

With the same unchanged spirit we used to express the same meaning, and it did not make much difference if the word "English" was substituted for the word "Turk" in accordance with the unhappy political

fortunes that overtook Egypt in the interim.

And then what happened to us after the Mamelukes? The French expedition came and smashed the iron curtain which the Mongols had erected around us. New ideas flowed in, and new horizons opened up before us, of which we had been unaware.

Mohammed Ali's dynasty took over all the habits of the Mamelukes, but did attempt to clothe them in garments that were a little better suited to the nineteenth century. Thus our contact with Europe and with the whole world began anew. And thus the modern reawakening began—but it was accompanied by a new crisis.

As I see it, we were like a sick man who had been shut up in a closed room for a long time. The temperature of the closed room rose high until he was almost choked. All of a sudden a storm blew and shattered the door and windows. The currents of cold air rushed in and the perspiring sick body shivered with chill. The sick man was, to be sure, in need of a breath

of air, but it was a powerful gale that blew over him. The frail and exhausted body succumbed to fever.

This was exactly what happened to our society. For us, it was a perilous experience, whereas the Europeans had evolved by an orderly process, gradually bridging the gap between the Renaissance which followed the Middle Ages and the nineteenth century. The stages of evolution there came naturally.

But with us everything came as new and strange. We had been living in isolation, cut off from the rest of the world, especially after the trade with the East had changed routes and traveled via the Cape of Good Hope. Then, suddenly we were coveted by the countries of Europe, since we became for them the bridge to be crossed for their colonies in the east and the south.

Waves of thoughts and ideas came over us while we were not yet developed enough to evaluate them. We were still living mentally in the captivity of the 13th century, in spite of a few manifestations

of the nineteenth, and afterwards of the twentieth century. Our minds tried to catch up with the caravan of human progress, although we were five centuries or more behind. The pace was fearful and the journey was exhausting.

There is no doubt that this situation is responsible for the lack of a strong and united public opinion in our country. The differences between individuals are great, and between generations they are still greater.

I used to complain that the people did not know what they wanted and could not agree on any program to be followed. Then I realized that I was demanding the impossible and that I had disregarded the circumstances of our society.

We live in a society that has not yet taken form. It is still fluid and agitated and has not yet settled down or taken a stabilized shape. It is in the process of an evolution, striving to catch up with those other nations that have preceded us on the road.

With no intention of flattering, I believe that our people have nonetheless achieved a miracle. It is quite possible that any other nation, under the same conditions, would have faded away, drowned by such currents as have but submerged us. But we have stood firm against the violent flood. It is true we have almost lost our balance on certain occasions, but it is our destiny never to have fallen but that we rose again.

Sometimes I examine the conditions of an average Egyptian family among the thousands of families living in Cairo. It may be that the father is a turbaned farmer who has been born outside the city, in the heart of the countryside. The mother is a descendant of a Turkish family. The sons are being educated at an English style school, while the daughters attend schools run on the methods of the French. And all this is being backgrounded by a curious mixture of thirteenth and twentieth century ways of life.

I consider all this, and feel a deep under-

standing of the confusion that besets our national life and of the disorder from which we plan escape. Then I reflect: this society will develop form, consolidate and become a strong, homogeneous and unified whole. But first we must make ourselves ready to survive and make growth through the period of transition.

These are the origins of our present conditions. These are the sources from which our difficulties flow. Add to these many social and economic elements, the circumstances under which we ousted Farouk, and our natural desire to liberate our country from foreign troops—then you will realize how extensive is the scope of our necessities. Our position is blown upon by the wind from all directions. We are on a field roaring with hurricanes, dazzled by lightning and shaken by thunder. On top of all this, it would be monstrous to impose a rule of blood.

What Is The Path?

Which, then, is the right way?

What role must we undertake to achieve that way?

The way is that of political and economic freedom, and our role is that of a guardian, no more and no less. And our guardianship is only for a specified and limited time.

Our people are now like a caravan which seeks to follow a certain route, but the route is long, and the diversions to be encountered are many. Thieves and highwaymen may hold it up, and the mirage mislead it from the true way. The caravan, as a result, might be dispersed. Groups might go astray one way or the other, and individuals scatter in different directions.

This, then, is our role, the situation being what it is—to gather together the scattered and strayed parts to help them take one way, the right way. When this is done, when dangers are allayed, the caravan is left then to proceed in peace and security along the proper way.

This is our role, and I cannot conceive it to be otherwise. It would be illusion

if I thought that we could solve all the problems of our country, and I do not hold with illusions. We are simply not competent to do that job, nor do we have the necessary experience.

To repeat and emphasize, our task is but to mark the way, to shepherd the strays so that they may start and remain together on the right path; to point out to those who may go off after the mirage the emptiness of their delusions.

From the start I knew that this would never be an easy task, and I realized beforehand that it would be accomplished at the expense of popularity. We had to be blunt, outspoken, armed with reason whenever we addressed the people. Our predecessors were skilled in deluding people and telling them what they liked to hear. How easy it is to appeal to people's emotions and how difficult to appeal to their reason!

We all have the same emotions—whereas our minds differ widely. The politicians of Egypt in the past were smart and capi-

talized on this fact. Their oratory left reason severely alone, to wander aimlessly in the wilderness. We could have done the same. We could have smothered the public with resounding words which were compounded of delusion and fancy. Or we could have inflamed them to hasty action without any planning or preparation. We could also have left them to shout themselves hoarse with such slogans as: "O, God Almighty, may disaster take the English!" just as our forefathers shouted themselves out in the days of the Mamelukes, exhorting, "O God the Self-Revealed—annihilate the Turk!" But nothing would have been resolved by such sound and fury.

But was this the mission with which Fate had entrusted us? What would we have really achieved if we had followed this course?

I noted earlier, in Part One, that the success of the Revolution depended on the recognition by the people of the realities that faced them; it depended on its

swiftness; and now I would like to add that to maintain its success it also depends on freeing ourselves from the captivity of glittering phrases. Our revolution must be sustained by our having the courage to embark on whatever is deemed necessary, no matter what loss of popularity and applause and cheers such action may cost us. Otherwise we will have failed in our trust as leaders of the revolution.

This Is Our Role

Frequently people come to me and say: "But you are arousing certain people's resentment." To which I always reply: "The resentment of certain people is not the important factor. The real question is always: is what they resent good for the nation, or bad for themselves?"

I know that we have aroused resentment in large landowners. But was it possible not to anger them—to abandon to them the soil of our country? There were those among us who were owners of tens of thousands of acres, while others did not

own as much land as would be enough for their graves.

And I know that we have angered the politicians of the old regimes. But was it possible not to, and simply leave them our country, a prey to their selfishness, corruption and struggles for the fruits of authority?

And I know that we have aroused the resentment of many government officials. But was it possible to devote more than half of our budget to their salaries and thus make ourselves unable to allot forty million pounds for the productive projects we have already undertaken? What if we had opened the treasury—as others before us did—and given it all away to the government employees? And after that, what? They did not look forward to the following year when the government might find itself totally unable to pay their salaries.

Nothing would have been easier than to placate these people, and many others. But what a price our country would have

had to pay out of its hopes and its future.

The Past and the Future

This is our role as determined for us by the history of our nation. There is no choice, no matter what the price we may have to pay. We are under no illusion concerning the task we are to achieve, or the nature of the duties imposed upon us. We removed the former king without consulting anyone because he was an obstacle in the clear way of our caravan. We began our plans for expelling the English from Egypt because their presence here weighs upon us and our progress, and leads many among us off the right track and into emotional detours.

There are the steps that had to be taken in correcting the legacy of the past. We have proceeded on the way and borne all the responsibility for everything.

But when the time came that the future of our country was to be discussed and fashioned, we said that it was no right of ours alone. To make secure the political

life of our country in the future, we sought leaders of opinion from different classes and beliefs. We said to them: "Draft for the country a constitution that will preserve things held as sacred to its people." A committee was set up to do this.

And to be sure about our economic welfare, we asked the most eminent professors in various fields of experience to create a program to insure the prosperity and well being of our country so that each and every individual might be certain of his daily bread. As a result, the Permanent Council for the Development of National Production was set up.

There are no limits beyond which we will not go. Our task is the removal of rocks and obstacles from off the way. This is our only duty. The future and all its challenge is work that is open to all patriots with ideas and experience. This is a duty and a privilege demanded of them. We cannot perform the whole task. It is our cherished duty, our moment of historical responsibility, to thus bring our people at

long last together, and weld them in unity for the future—the future of Egypt—strong and free.

PART THREE

Geographical limits. A role in search of a hero. The first circle. Positive efforts in the Arab circle. Impressions on the field of battle. Imperialism and its results. Necessity of the common struggle. Numerical balance sheet of power. The interior of the dark continent. Islamic Parliament.