

Two Leaps

Both were far-reaching and profound in their effect, marking a momentous transformation in Egypt's life — a transition from an age of submission, hesitation, and apprehension to one of strength, courage, self-confidence, and reliance on one's own will.

The first of these was when the Revolution proclaimed in its provisional constitution that judicial rulings, decrees of governance, and laws would henceforth be issued **in the name of the nation**. I have no doubt that, deep within their hearts and consciences, Egyptians felt a long-desired emotion that had so often eluded them — the emotion of **pure national dignity**, of **uncompromising Egyptian pride**, and of the power that would, from that day onward, allow Egypt to act without having to account for any authority beyond her own will, in all that she undertakes, plans, or decides.

All Egyptians know well, and remember vividly, how their statesmen, leaders, and rulers once lived in constant anxiety over what the King might say, or think, or how the Palace might react — with approval, with anger, or with suspicion. They also remember that in many perilous moments, such questions extended beyond the King and Palace to the **British**, as officials asked themselves whether the British would approve or disapprove, whether they would trust or doubt, and what consequences might follow. Such servility sapped courage, dulled resolve, bred hesitation and confusion, and instilled in every Egyptian the sense that the fate of their country did not truly lie in their own hands — that it rested instead with the cloistered ruler in his palace, or with the occupying power that suffocated the life of the nation and almost denied it the freedom to breathe.

All that has now **collapsed completely** and passed into oblivion.

Egypt has regained her full and unblemished dignity: she has dared to say “**No**” to her King, and to send him and his throne across the sea.

Then, six months later, she dared to say “**No**” to the British, compelling them to accept Egypt's view that the Sudanese people must be free to choose their own destiny — without fear or enticement, as free and honorable men.

This was the **second leap**, completing the first. Together, they made Egypt's dignity, pride, and independence not merely dreams or illusions, but **living realities** — seen by the eye, heard by the ear, and felt by the beating heart.

The Revolution said to the former King: *Seek a life elsewhere, for Egypt is no longer your domain.* And he could only listen — and obey.

Then the Revolution said to the British: *The Sudanese must be free to choose their future by their own untainted will.* The British delayed and dissembled, resorting to their old ways — twisting, promising, and excusing. But the Revolution stood firm, unwavering, faithful to its word, unmoved by deceit or maneuver. It reached out directly to the Sudanese, kindling in their hearts the same spirit of pride, honor, and independence that it had awakened in the hearts of Egyptians.

When the British looked around, they found every path blocked, every avenue of intrigue closed, every excuse exhausted. They yielded, at last, to the will of Egypt and Sudan alike. And so **Naguib** and his comrades could say “**No**” to the British as they had said “**No**” to the King — not as a mere word on their tongues, but as a conviction uttered by their hearts and consciences, ready to face whatever consequences might come.

They achieved what they and their nations had sought — without exile, without bluster, without frenzy. Calm, steadfast, and smiling, they neither threatened nor boasted. They simply stood firm, said “**No**”, and waited for its outcome, whatever it might be. And the outcome was what they — and Egypt — had desired.

To them, and to their country, go the truest, warmest, and most heartfelt congratulations.

Yet I wish Egyptians would pause to ponder this great lesson the Revolution has taught them. It has opened before them vast horizons and grand hopes, showing that dignity, pride, courage, firmness of will, and clarity of purpose are not realized through loud words or restless activity, but through **steadfastness of conviction, firmness of plan, and calm endurance of hardship** until one’s goal is attained. As the ancient poet said:

When a man sets his loss before his eyes
And turns away from thoughts of consequence,
He consults no one but himself,
And takes the naked sword for his companion.

The Revolution’s lesson has not only restored to Egyptians and Sudanese their dignity, but has also laid the straight path for solving all their remaining problems. The same spirit that drove the British to accept Egypt’s will on Sudan, and that sent the former King into exile on July 26, is the very spirit that will, before long — perhaps sooner than the most hopeful or the most doubtful expect — drive the **occupation army from the Canal Zone**.

Sincere intent, clear vision, firm resolve, and devotion to good alone — with these qualities, **no obstacle endures** for long, and no barrier remains standing. The stronger the bond between the Revolution and the people, the deeper the people’s faith in themselves, their rights, and their dignity, and the greater their readiness to sacrifice for the truth — the nearer and easier will be the attainment of their goals.

For the first time in countless years, we now hear judges pronouncing their rulings **in the name of the nation**, and read laws and decrees issued **in the name of every Egyptian**. We feel deeply and truly that the authority now belongs to us — that we govern ourselves, no longer ruled by a single despot nor constrained by any foreign power. The authority that now issues judgment is the very one we have entrusted with our rights, and that will, when the transitional period ends, restore that trust to its rightful owners — for it believes with unshakable faith that **God commands believers to render trusts to those to whom they are due**.

And for the first time in long ages, we have said to the British, firmly and without equivocation, *Answer us plainly — yes or no*. And they have answered, *Yes*, without deceit or delay — though they are the most cunning of nations in both.

These two leaps, then, are the first of many to come. With the first, we overcame not merely the former King but **the very spirit of tyranny** — in him and within ourselves. For the victory over oneself is the highest of triumphs. With the second, we overcame the British — calmly, silently, without turmoil or noise. In doing so, we conquered our own passions first, mastering ourselves through reason, resolve, and purity of purpose. And again, victory over the self is the noblest victory of all.

But let no Egyptian deceive himself or rest content with what has been achieved. Let him know that this is only the beginning of the road. The life of nations has a beginning, but no end, and it does not always flow as their desires would wish.

By these two leaps, we have gained much — yet much more remains to be gained.

The British must withdraw. Reform — swift, decisive, and comprehensive — must extend to every aspect of our national life. To achieve this, we must deepen our faith in truth, pursue it unflinchingly, without fear, hesitation, or self-interest, forgetting ourselves entirely in the service of justice and renewal, caring neither for hardship nor consequence.

When foes assailed me, I returned their blows —
Was I then unjust, O sons of Yemen?
When heart and sword unite in one,
The proud shall never taste oppression.

— Ṭāhā Ḥusayn

Al-Ahram, February 15, 1953