

Here and There

Mesamarat al-Gayb, 17 February 1946

Let us begin with what is happening there, before speaking of what is happening here — the subject of these pieces has always been tied to the affairs of world politics, and I believe world political affairs are genuinely studied there, not here, genuinely conducted in London, not in Cairo. Indeed, I very nearly believe the Egyptian government's own knowledge of what happens there remains genuinely limited, perhaps extending no further than the knowledge of any ordinary individual who reads the newspapers, and listens to the radio.

Nothing proves this more clearly than that genuinely painful position the Prime Minister found himself in, in the Senate, on Tuesday, when asked whether Mamdouh Bey Riad's own statement to the Security Council was consistent with right, justice, and dignity, or entirely at odds with all of it — whereupon it became clear the Prime Minister knew nothing whatsoever of Mamdouh Bey Riad's own statement to the Security Council, beyond exactly what the rest of us already knew.

The government's own opponents cited what al-Ahram had published; the Prime Minister answered them with what the Progrès Égyptien had published; and it became clear to everyone that the general reading public and the Prime Minister himself stood on entirely equal footing — equally informed, and equally uninformed — about whatever events were actually unfolding at the Security Council, and at the United Nations Assembly!

Since these same pieces have always remained tied to the affairs of world politics, seeking to give readers real insight into the true facts of these same affairs, it is only natural that we speak of what is happening there, before speaking of whatever is happening here, in connection with these same affairs.

The most significant events and matters unfolding there concern the Security Council itself: three genuine cases were brought before it. The first: the Iranian case, raised by Iran's own resigned government — genuinely influenced by the British, as the Russians believed, or genuinely uninfluenced by them, as the British themselves claimed. This case was discussed at the Security Council in a debate one could scarcely call either lengthy or profound — one might, rather, say it concluded in

two visible results: the first, leaving Iran and Russia to themselves, to resolve whatever problems exist between them through private negotiation, with the Security Council to be kept periodically informed of whatever agreement or disagreement these same negotiations reveal.

What this means is that Russia genuinely triumphed in this case: Russia, after all, possesses the strength and might, and negotiations between the strong and the weak have already well-known outcomes. It is not certain Russia genuinely intends any open, violent aggression against Iran — it seems far more likely Russia intends, rather, to safeguard her own political and economic interests, and to hold Iran within this same old-new innovation called "spheres of influence."

The second result: this same Iranian case granted Russia the chance to hold her own Western ally, Great Britain, to real account, a genuinely difficult account, and to present, before world public opinion, the genuinely serious problems Great Britain herself faces, presenting them in a manner not without real force. Russia went on to raise a second case: the Greek case. Some might well believe Russia failed in this same case — real debate raged around it, matters grew genuinely tense, and the two allies stood in a position bordering on outright hostility, before Russia finally withdrew her own proposal, and the matter, on the surface at least, ended there.

What is certain, though, is that the world has genuinely witnessed the disagreement between the two allies, first of all; and that leftist elements among the Greek people have genuinely hardened their own position, resolving to boycott the elections, unless their own stated conditions are met. The Greek question, then, has not ended at all — nor does its own real nature remain hidden from people, nor from the Greek people themselves.

The Iranian case then granted Ukraine the chance to raise the Indonesian case before the Security Council as well. Discussion of this case grew genuinely lengthy, genuinely complex, its own ramifications genuinely extensive, concluding yesterday with the rejection of whatever Ukraine had requested — yet Russia still achieved, through it all, exactly what she wanted: she demonstrated the disagreement between the two great allies, demonstrated the reasons behind that disagreement, and positioned herself as the very defender of weak peoples, the very advocate for their own freedom and independence. This may well be genuinely true, or it may not — but what admits of no doubt is that

peoples never investigate, never scrutinize, never conduct their own inquiry; whenever they find themselves in need of assistance, they seek it wherever they can find it, and they see Russia showing genuine sympathy, and genuine support, toward them — and all of this carries its own far-reaching consequences.

It seems most likely Russia is genuinely aiming at exactly these far-reaching consequences, far more than at anything else — Russia was never so naive as to imagine the British would actually withdraw their own troops from Greece, or from Indonesia. This is, rather, a policy of needling, on the one hand, and genuinely endearing herself to weak peoples, on the other.

There remains a fourth case brought before the Security Council: the Syrian-Lebanese case, and it stands entirely clear that Russia will position herself in support of our own Syrian and Lebanese brothers in it — unless this same case is resolved through negotiation, and the Council finds no real need to examine it at all. What admits of no doubt whatsoever is that the Security Council, established to guarantee peace, and secure peoples' own right to freedom, justice, and equality, has shown itself, up to now, genuinely capable of exactly two things: first, enabling the great powers to compete with one another, and expose one another's own hidden dealings; second, enabling these same great powers to hold fast to whatever strength and authority already lies in their own hands, and retain their own troops wherever they please.

The Syrian-Lebanese case will prove a genuinely decisive test for the Security Council, or for the great powers' own true intentions. Should these same intentions prove genuine, the British and French would evacuate these two countries immediately; should they prove otherwise, and should the Security Council prove genuinely serious, genuinely productive, it would compel the British and French toward this same evacuation. Should it fail to do so, every last doubt would vanish entirely, and weak peoples would grow genuinely certain that everything unfolding in London amounts to nothing but mere play.

This is some of what is happening there. As for what is happening here, it is genuinely curious, not without its own real humour — though a genuinely bitter, wounding humour. Egypt has her own delegation to the United Nations Assembly, and this same delegation represents her, too, on the Security Council, since her own election as a member of it — yet Egypt herself, government, parliament, and people alike, scarcely knows

a single thing of this same delegation's own policy in London, receiving nothing but surprises, arriving with the news, one morning or another evening, throwing her into real turmoil, genuine confusion, filling the newspapers with real uproar and clamour, filling parliament with real denial and protest, prompting the resignation of certain ministers — before the storm finally settles, and matters return to calm, as though nothing had ever happened at all.

This happened once, when the Foreign Minister made whatever statement he made, to the point people believed everything had come genuinely undone — then matters settled, and the Foreign Minister was elected a judge on the International Court of Justice, at which point the Prime Minister sent him his own congratulations, and his own colleagues' congratulations, his own appreciation, and his own colleagues' appreciation — including those very colleagues who had, only shortly before, resigned.

This happened again when Mamdouh Bey Riad spoke before the Security Council — the newspapers grew genuinely agitated, parliament grew genuinely tumultuous, some objected on the basis of what al-Ahram had published, the Prime Minister objected on the basis of what the Progrès Égyptien had published, al-Ahram insisted what it had published was accurate, attributing it to its own responsible source — while the Progrès Égyptien has said nothing whatsoever, up to now.

What matters, though, is that Egypt's own political reputation has been exposed to genuinely serious harm. The Foreign Minister declared the Security Council had no jurisdiction whatsoever over Arab affairs — whereupon Syria and Lebanon decided to bring their own case, and the Palestinian case, before the Security Council regardless. This meant, in effect, that they had rejected the Egyptian Foreign Minister's own view — and it is said certain Arab governments have themselves objected to that same view. This meant, too, that the unity of the Arab League itself had been exposed to some genuine harm, prompting Radio Moscow to declare that its own capital had shifted from Cairo to Baghdad, and prompting Le Monde — France's own leading newspaper — to declare that Egypt's own representative on the Security Council might well prove unable to support Syria and Lebanon at all, since he might well be asked, in turn, about the British position in Egypt herself.

Mamdouh Bey Riad then spoke, doing nothing more than showing Egypt in support of the English and the Dutch — a genuinely twisted,

roundabout support, yet support all the same. It was Egypt's own genuine duty to prove quicker than Ukraine in supporting Indonesia; it was Mamdouh Bey Riad's own genuine duty to prove quicker than Comrades Manuilsky and Vyshinsky in supporting the Indonesian people; it was the Egyptian government's own genuine duty to draw up a precise, detailed plan for her own representatives, and to remain precisely, thoroughly informed of exactly what these same representatives say, and what they do.

But when we wish to make excuses for the Egyptian government, and think well of her own members and representatives — since they remain, after all, Egyptians — we find ourselves compelled, most regrettably, to excuse them on grounds that please neither us, nor them: that they remain genuinely new to international politics, never having practised it, never having been trained in it — and so find themselves entangled, every now and then, in genuinely painful error.

Would that we had never been elected to the Security Council this year!