

Decision

Al-Gumhuriya, 6 January 1957

Our own souls had genuinely longed for it, our own hearts had genuinely aspired to it, our own conscience had genuinely believed in it — and perhaps our own tongues, too, had spoken of it, now and then, in the company of a trusted friend, alone. We had already heard God, exalted be He, say:

*"Perchance you dislike a thing,
and God places within it much good."*

We knew full well that God's own word was true, and His own promise true — yet we found ourselves watching for whatever the government would do, and would say, growing genuinely impatient with the pace of its own action, and the loosening of its own tongue, until the very start of this new year, when we finally saw it act, and speak, and found ourselves genuinely satisfied with what it did, and what it said. How very deeply we had detested — genuinely, profoundly detested — the British and French aggression against Egypt; how our own souls and hearts had genuinely constricted, under its weight. Yet despair never found any way toward us: we held firm against the trial, triumphed over the ordeal, and waited for the aggressors to meet their own punishment for this same aggression — to meet it, this time, at our own hands, having already met it at the hands of circumstance, and events.

The British have already met some measure of that same punishment, through this very decision the President of the Republic issued at the start of the year, making it the very finest gift with which Egyptians might greet this new turn of time's own cycle. I say "some measure" of punishment — though it proves the most painful, the harshest, the most deeply felt of all, upon British hearts — since I still hope the civilized world will genuinely reckon with this same aggression, and everything it produced: broken pledges, violated agreements, spilled blood, extinguished lives, destroyed infrastructure, and horror poured down upon the peaceful and the secure.

I still hope the civilized world will genuinely reckon with all of this, and punish those who perpetrated it — yet I shall not speak now of this same hateful aggression, and its own abominable consequences, but of this very decision Egypt has issued, abrogating the agreement that once

stood between us and the British, the very agreement the British themselves violated, on the day they sought to harm Egypt through scheming and treachery — their own scheming closing back in around them, their own treachery turned back upon them. And God has spoken true, and remains ever true, in telling us that evil scheming closes in on none but its own authors.

It is almost as though the sheer horror of the aggression, the government's and the people's own preoccupation with repairing its own aftermath, the countless events unfolding across the countries of the earth, expected in the near future or the distant, and the countless, divergent reports we hear, and read, morning and evening — as though all of this together had left Egyptians no genuine chance to pause, and truly reflect on the abrogation of the Egyptian-British agreement, and weigh its own immense significance. Had they truly paused, and genuinely weighed its own significance, they would have rejoiced in it, and celebrated it, far more than they actually have.

They greet this same new year of theirs, then, with their own independence restored to them, complete, its own essence pure, its own record clean, entirely beyond reproach, delivered to them without a single blemish. It is restored to them, in this very manner, for the first time in their own modern history, since the Ottoman Turks first attacked them, in the early sixteenth century. And it is restored to them, too, under genuinely honourable circumstances: they receive it as no one's own gift, but win it, rather, with their own hands; its own affairs managed by no foreign minds, as they once were managed, in the days of the Mamluks, or the days of other independent states that once made Cairo their own capital, but managed, instead, by genuinely Egyptian minds alone, resting upon a genuinely Egyptian authority, arising from Egypt's own very core, never arriving from across the sea, nor across the desert.

We were, of course, already independent before the aggression — there is no doubt of that. But our own independence was never entirely free of some real blemish: this same agreement between us and the British genuinely stirred doubt in certain souls, invited genuine bewilderment in certain minds, and exposed the very safety of the Egyptian homeland to a measure of real danger, should Britain ever find herself compelled to join some war, in defence of certain Eastern states that concern us neither near nor far, and that would feel no real reluctance whatsoever in scheming against us, plotting against us, and turning against us.

It would have taken no more, for instance, than the Turks facing something they themselves disliked, and their own British allies rushing to their own defence, for us to find ourselves exposed, once again, to British occupation, whether brief, or prolonged. This same burden has now been lifted from us; this same weight cast off — and we have become free, with a complete, genuinely pure freedom, exactly as our own souls had always wished.

The problems of the British and the Turks now concern us no more than any other problem raised across the near or distant world — we make peace with whomever we choose to make peace with, freely; we quarrel with whomever we choose to quarrel with, freely; we prefer neutrality, freely, with no authority overriding our own will in our own country, no fear for our own independence upon our own soil, beyond whatever human solidarity itself demands, among free and independent states. We had always rejected alliances, with Eastern Europe or Western, with either of the two rival blocs, regarding such alliances as a means of interference in our own affairs, a remnant of foreign colonialism's own remnants. Yet some of those entangled in these same alliances used to deceive themselves, and deceive certain people, telling themselves, and telling these same people: Egypt opposes alliances, yet remains bound by her own agreement with the British — entangled in something that, if not an alliance itself, resembles one strongly enough, or at least somewhat.

We have now erased this same illusion, from their own minds, and from the minds of their own agents; cut off this same argument, from beneath them; removed this same suspicion, from around them; and become free, in the fullest sense the word "freedom" can possibly bear, in this modern age — capable, now, of rejecting alliances, and opposing them, without granting anyone the slightest opening to say otherwise. Certain deceivers had imagined to themselves, and to certain other people, that the British technicians once overseeing the military base's own affairs at the Canal remained nothing but a lingering shadow of hateful British occupation, mere soldiers dressed in civilian clothing.

That same shadow has now vanished; those same technicians have departed, alongside the aggressors; the military base itself is gone; and Egypt's own sun now rises over the Canal, and everything around it, illuminating nothing but genuinely Egyptian soil, purified now of occupation, and of occupation's own shadow. The whole of Egypt has returned, then, to a freedom entirely free of any blemish — exactly as she

once knew, in the days of the ancient Pharaohs — for the first time since that same age of the ancient Pharaohs came to its own end.