

Aspiring Peoples

Mesamarat al-Gayb, 21 October 1945

A people's own aspiration is one thing; actually attaining what it aspires to is quite another — and between these two things lies, at times, mere frivolity and play; at other times, real scheming and deceit; sometimes, real grief and sorrow; and sometimes, too, blood, toil, tears, and sweat — as Mr. Churchill himself put it, years ago now...

The truth is, if you look upon humanity, following the end of the Second World War, you will see genuine aspiration everywhere — yet you will see, too, that the pursuit of exactly the goals peoples aspire to varies enormously, according to the varying temperaments, and the varying circumstances, surrounding these same peoples. In Europe, there exists a genuine popular aspiration toward social justice, varying in its own strength, or weakness, according to whatever measure of advancement these same peoples enjoy, and according to their own varying temperaments, their own varying readiness for calm, or intensity, for stagnation, or activity. These peoples want to achieve a socialist democracy; those peoples want to achieve a communist democracy; and other peoples still remain caught, unsettled, between the two.

There exists, in Europe, a genuine political aspiration too: some peoples enjoy independence, and dominion over the nations of the earth; some peoples enjoy simple independence, entirely free of any dominion; some peoples lost their own independence after defeat; others lost their own independence after victory itself — and every one of these same peoples aspires to more than what already lies within its own hands. The dominant peoples want to expand their own dominion; the independent peoples want to add dominion to their own independence; the peoples who have lost their own independence want to reclaim it — and matters grow genuinely, thoroughly confused among all of this, throughout Europe, filling many a soul with real pity for man himself, whom vanity once led to imagine he was capable of anything, only for the actual, established facts to reveal he is scarcely capable of anything at all!

What is now happening in southern Europe generally — and in Greece in particular — genuinely offers a real lesson to anyone willing to learn one, though those who genuinely love to learn from history, and are genuinely keen to benefit from its own events, remain few indeed. The Axis attacked Greece, at a time when Greece herself lived under a certain

variety of dictatorship, overseen by General Metaxas — yet no sooner had she found herself exposed to this same aggression than she forgot her own grudges, and resentments, standing a genuinely magnificent stand, one the modern world itself admired, exactly as the ancient world once admired other magnificent stands taken by the great Greek people. This same small-yet-great people very nearly overpowered Italy herself, had Hitler not rushed to assist his own ally Mussolini. The Greek nation was then tested in every conceivable way, losing everything, except her own honour, and her own dignity.

Greece then triumphed, alongside the victors — yet has not, even now, secured her own complete independence: her own homeland remains occupied still, her own future still the very subject of a struggle between the East and West of Europe. One faction of Greeks wants a moderate democracy, backed by the democracy of the West; another wants an extreme democracy, backed by the communism of the East. Matters grow genuinely confused for the Greek people, who find themselves unable even to establish a genuinely stable government for themselves, one that might properly consult the people through a genuine referendum — and so the Greek nation finds herself returning to something resembling dictatorship instead. This same Regent of the throne today combines, in his own single person, both the headship of the state and the headship of the government — accountable, and unaccountable, both at once, his own position exactly like General de Gaulle's own position in France — except that governmental affairs in France proceed along their own natural path, calmly, and steadily, since France already enjoys her own complete independence, subject to no such struggle between Eastern and Western democracy, subject, rather, only to her own natural development.

No one knows whether this same new experiment in Greece will succeed, or fail. But what admits of no doubt whatsoever is that the Greek people, were they genuinely given a choice, would genuinely choose — yet they are not free to make this same choice, and will never be free to make it, until the foreign occupiers evacuate them, and East and West alike leave them to manage their own affairs exactly as they themselves wish.

Nor is the state of affairs in Bulgaria and Romania any better than in Greece — though we know nothing whatsoever, in truth, of these same two countries' own affairs, since Russian authority imposes upon them a genuinely intolerable censorship. Hungary, meanwhile, has already

declared a state of emergency, after genuine chaos had already engulfed her, very nearly bringing her to ruin. Nor are matters settled in Poland; nor is security widespread in Germany, Austria, or Italy — there is nothing there but comprehensive turmoil, and a struggle varying in its own intensity, between what peoples themselves want, and what the victors' own governments want.

And those who imagine matters in Africa stand any better than matters in Europe genuinely, deeply deceive themselves — it is enough merely to glance at the African Mediterranean coast, to know the Arabs of North Africa remain genuinely resentful, genuinely unsettled; that the people of Libya remain genuinely fearful, genuinely watchful; that the people of Egypt remain genuinely apprehensive, genuinely anxious. As for Palestine, you already know what is happening in Palestine; as for Syria and Lebanon, you already know what is happening in Syria and Lebanon. Should you reach Turkey, there you find nothing but the deepest fear, the deepest anxiety, armies kept mobilized in a country not even at war, yet genuinely dreading misfortune. As for Iran, her own Emperor has already ordered that his own birthday not be celebrated at all, so long as the Iranian homeland remains subject to foreign occupation. And India's own trials are far too evident to require any real explanation.

And so the entire world remains genuinely convulsed by exactly this same struggle, between peoples' own aspiration toward freedom, and independence, and three or four governments' own determination to dominate, and oppress. And all of these same aspiring peoples, across every one of these same countries on earth, genuinely suffer for exactly this same aspiration, genuinely grieve for these same hopes, finding no real way toward their own fulfilment. Many of these same peoples sacrifice their own blood, and their own interests, even in peacetime, exactly as they once sacrificed them in wartime, for the sake of exactly these same hopes. World opinion, meanwhile, has scarcely occupied itself with one revolt, in one country, before another revolt, in another country, presents itself, occupying it instead, consuming whatever effort, and whatever thought, it possesses — such that:

*The gazelles grew far too many for Kharash to track —
poor Kharash no longer knows which one to hunt.*

World opinion has already occupied itself with the problem of Eastern Europe; then with the problem of Southern Europe; then with the problems of the Arab world, the most prominent among them the

Palestinian problem; then with the Turkish-Russian problem; then with the Iranian problem. And while still occupied with all of these same problems, the problems of the Far East arrived upon it too — genuinely strange problems indeed, or, say, rather, genuinely natural problems, with nothing strange about them at all, since they arise from exactly the same wellspring every other problem has arisen from: the wellspring of promises given, with the utmost generosity, and open-handedness, and then never actually honoured by those who gave them.

Our own British allies' own position with respect to these same promises, in particular, genuinely invites both laughter, and pity: they promised, exactly as the other Allies promised — yet gave promises genuinely, thoroughly contradictory. They told the weaker peoples they were promising them freedom, and independence, and everything the Atlantic Charter itself contained, of generosity, and prosperity — while telling, at the very same time, certain defeated European peoples, that they promised to assist them in recovering their own independence, complete and comprehensive, and their own dominion, vast and ample. Once the war laid down its own burdens, though, the weaker peoples said to our own English allies: come, then, grant us the independence you promised us, the freedom you adorned in our own hearts, and led us to imagine lay so close within our own reach. And the liberated peoples said to our own English allies: come, then, grant us the assistance you promised us, that we might recover our own dominion, vast and ample. And the English people said to the English people: we must fulfil what we promised of justice, lest suspicion of us grow, doubt in us intensify, and we lose the world's own trust — while, at the very same time, we must retain our own empire, complete, undiminished — for it would hardly be reasonable that we should assist the French in recovering Indochina, and the Dutch in recovering Indonesia, only to lose India ourselves, or any other part of our own empire.

Mr. Attlee looked into the matter, and the House of Commons looked into it alongside him — and there it stood: Great Britain had promised Holland assistance in recovering the Dutch empire, guaranteeing that same empire's own safety, while promising, at the very same time, never to assist colonialism, never to support injustice, or oppression, never to allow the strong to tyrannize the weak! The people of Indonesia now demand Great Britain honour her own word; the Dutch government, too, demands Great Britain honour her own word. And the very problem now facing Great Britain is exactly this: how can she honour, toward the

people of Indonesia and Indochina, everything she promised the entire world, of freedom and independence, while honouring, toward Holland and France, everything she promised them, of restoring their own possessions to them, intact? How can she grant independence to the people of these same countries, in the Far East, and restore these same countries to Holland and France, both at once?!

A genuinely serious problem, as you can see — and Mr. Anthony Eden resolved to find some genuinely graceful way out of it, asking, only yesterday, in the House of Commons: was it not the Dutch, after all, who declared war on Japan themselves? The meaning here is entirely clear: the Dutch alone ought to reap the fruit of exactly the war they themselves declared. But Mr. Attlee, a man genuinely given to modesty, and genuine fidelity too, answered the former Foreign Secretary that the Dutch had simply declared war in genuine solidarity with the Allies.

What makes this same problem still more complicated is that the British have found themselves compelled to enlist the defeated Japanese themselves, in restoring order in Indonesia — have you ever seen a victor enlist the defeated, a conqueror relying upon the very conquered?! But necessity permits what would otherwise be forbidden, and the ancient poet was not mistaken, when he said:

*When spearheads themselves become the only mount available,
I see no choice, for one in genuine need, but to ride them.*

The British, then, will enlist their own Japanese enemies, in preserving order in Indonesia, until Holland can send troops sufficient to preserve order in those same countries. On that day, the Japanese will return to their own country, the British will return to their own bases, and the Dutch, with all their own strength and might, on land, sea, and air, will be left to face the Indonesians, with all the weakness, misery, and suffering decreed upon them, in a struggle carrying exactly the blood, toil, and tears Mr. Churchill himself once promised!

This same tragedy, now playing out in Indonesia, plays out too in many other countries of the earth: promises given, in times of hardship, broken, in times of ease; cooperation among the victorious powers, in subduing the wronged, who find no genuine way toward victory themselves. Along exactly this same pattern, matters have always proceeded, between powerful Europe and weak East — and God, exalted be He, will never change what befalls a people, until they change what lies within themselves. Should the East wish to be genuinely noble, and

honoured, genuinely enjoying its own right to independence, let it seek all of this within itself, not from Europe — for Europe will never offer it this same gift, preferring, rather, to keep it for herself. How very often, indeed, do Easterners ask other Easterners for assistance, and support; how very often, indeed, do Easterners offer other Easterners assistance, and support — yet it remains assistance of the heart alone, support of the tongue alone, the very weakest form of assistance, the very weakest form of support imaginable!

There remain, then, for weaker nations, only two genuine paths, admitting no third: the first, work that knows neither idleness, nor mere reliance on others; the second, hope that never despairs of God's own mercy — for none ever despair of God's own mercy, save a people who disbelieve.