A Living Revolution and a Revolutionary Life

I wish our revolution to be alive, and our life to be revolutionary — that the Egyptians may find themselves renewed with every sunrise, and changed again with every nightfall.

I wish our revolution to be alive and our life to be revolutionary — that the Egyptian people may be driven to vigorous and tireless activity, resting only when compelled to sleep for a few hours each day. I want this activity to be varied in form and colour, touching every branch of life, involving every member of the people in all their stations — the civil servant in his office, the clerk at his desk, the farmer in his field, and the worker in his factory.

I wish all Egyptians to feel, deeply and passionately, that they have been thrust into an effort that allows no rest, into a struggle that permits no delay, into a race whose goal must be reached in the shortest possible time — only to begin again another race, no less demanding of exertion, diligence, and zeal.

I want Egyptians to have no leisure for themselves, and for their own selves to have no leisure for them — to be kept from idleness by work, and from the idle musings of the complacent by the earnest toil of those too busy even to think of themselves.

That is how I wish to see Egyptians in these days, for they had long been idle until they grew weary of idleness — and idleness grew weary of them. But now they live in the days of a revolution: a revolution that cannot endure emptiness, that does not tolerate repose.

They live in an age of revolution that detests nothing as it detests idleness — its mortal enemy, which ruins its purpose by diverting people's minds toward forms of lazy, suspicious, self-indulgent thought.

I know nothing more dangerous to a revolution, nothing more harmful or treacherous to it, than for people to become idle — to spend their hours asking each other, or themselves, what so-and-so did or did not do, what may happen tomorrow, and how things might turn.

When people meet one another empty of work, seeking only amusement and comfort, flitting from one newly invented diversion to another — jest, frivolity, and idle chatter become their trade. They are no people of labour or production; they are people of talk. Their delight, their joy, their very sense of life lies in a joke tossed by one among them, at which mouths and throats burst into laughter. They sleep awake, and sleep again when the wings of drowsiness brush their faces. They spend most of their days asleep while the world around them is awake, working, producing — and they remain sunk in heedless torpor, useless to themselves and to all others.

Those among them who are able gorge their bellies with food and drink, fill their mouths and ears and minds with trivialities that profit nothing. Those unable to do even that complain, weep, and curse their time and their fellows, blaming others for their own weakness, misery, and distress.

There are some who waste their lives in vanity, arrogance, and boastful speech; and others who waste them in bitterness, complaint, envy, and resentful longing for what they do not have. None of this belongs to a life of work and production; none of this belongs to a living revolution or a revolutionary life.

I want our revolution to live, and our life to be in revolt — that we may never accomplish a goal without being driven to achieve more, never reach an end without being spurred toward a further one, never rest or let ourselves rest until we have made up for what was lost in the long years gone by.

I desire all this, and I know the way to it — a way neither obscure, nor twisted, nor beyond reach. It is a clear, straight, and near path: it is enough that we set our hearts on it, love it, and believe in it, to be carried forward to the fulfilment of our hopes.

That way is to achieve **true harmony between the revolution and the people** — a harmony in action, not in words alone; a harmony that requires the revolution to be firmly rooted in every conscience, its flame alight in every heart, its aims pursued by every hand, its cause pondered by every mind, its goals proclaimed by every tongue.

This means that the revolution must not remain confined to those who kindled its fire among the officers of the army, nor to those who work with them in government, nor even to the intellectuals and thinkers who responded to their call. It must extend in reality, not in rhetoric, to all the sons of the people — to their hearts and minds alike.

This cannot be achieved by appeals to revolutionary sentiment alone, but by a swift and practical beginning to the works of reform — by enabling the entire nation to engage in the manifold activities that reform demands.

I know that this, before anything else, requires **money** — the means to begin the many projects that will bring about industrial and agricultural renewal and other forms of production. Yet I also know that the revolution cannot depend on the ordinary state budget, for that budget by its nature is too narrow for such vast undertakings; it fluctuates year by year between ease and hardship, abundance and constraint. Genuine reform demands **new sources of funding**.

These sources, I believe, are neither distant nor difficult. They are close at hand, easy to find — if only the revolution will show a measure of boldness. And surely a revolution should not need to be urged to boldness: it ought to be bold by its very nature.

Why, then, does the revolution not call upon the people to lend the state a portion of their wealth, to launch the projects of reform? What is needed is a measure of trust — and trust does not come unbidden; it is gained by appeal, by persuasion, by inspiring hope.

I read that we must encourage foreigners to invest their capital in Egypt, and that is good, beyond question. But why should **Egyptian capital** not be invested in Egypt? And where else should it be invested? Is it not strange that six months have passed since the revolution began calling for reform, yet it has not invited the people to subscribe to a single loan for a single project of reform?

There are only two possibilities: either there is money in Egypt — and if so, what better use for it than the reform of Egypt? — or there is no money in Egypt, in which case where does the money come from that is spent on such foolish luxuries that profit nothing?

Let the leaders of the revolution believe me when I say that they must win the people’s trust — the trust that the revolution truly intends reform. The way to gain that trust is to **ask for contribution** from those able to give. They will not be asked for alms or charity, but for loans — loans that will

bring them profit, bring their fellow citizens work, and bring their country wealth, abundance, and production.

Let the revolution, then, move to win the people's confidence — and their **financial confidence** — by enabling the prosperous to invest their resources in Egypt's reform. Let it call for public loans and test the devotion of the wealthy to its cause.

I have no doubt that this test will end in success.

And when foreigners see Egypt's wealth invested in Egypt's renewal, when they see Egypt's sons placing their trust in their country's revolution, they too will place their trust and invest their funds in Egypt. Then the people will throw themselves into work; then idleness will vanish; then the harmony between revolution and people will be fulfilled — and our revolution will be living, and our life truly revolutionary.

— **Ṭāhā Ḥusayn**
al-Ahrām, 7 February 1953