

Our Revolution Here ... and Everywhere

Al-Jumhuriya, 23 July 1960.

This is the feast on which we celebrate the revolution that blazed up on the twenty-third of July, and which still stands, still advancing in the fulfillment of the political and social aims for whose sake it blazed up.

Is it the feast of the United Arab Republic alone, or is it a feast for many other nations besides? Is it a feast that we celebrate while other nations merely pay us the courtesy of sending their delegations to witness our celebration of it, so that when it is over the delegations return to their own countries, having discharged the duty of courtesy toward a friendly country? Or is it a feast in which these delegations, or most of them, truly share, because the effects of the revolution we are celebrating are not confined to these two lands of which this United Arab Republic is composed, but extend beyond them to many other lands, in the African continent and in the Asian continent as well?

As for myself, I believe it is a feast embracing many nations in both continents, because our revolution was a prelude to the independence of various peoples who had been subject to the authority of foreign colonialism, and sometimes to the authority of domestic despotism as well. I do not like to prophesy what the future will hold, yet I did, nonetheless, prophesy, when our revolution blazed up, that it would bring about in the East what the great French Revolution had brought about in the West. And perhaps, when I wrote these words in Al-Ahram, I was dictating them driven by the broad hope the revolution had stirred in my soul, and by a deep love for this freedom — a freedom I did not love for my own homeland alone, but loved and wished also for many other homelands that had long, long ago been deprived of it.

And I confess that, in these days, I scarcely read a single piece of news, among that news broadcast across the lands of the earth announcing the liberation of peoples from colonialism, despotism, and injustice, without being reminded of our revolution and saying to myself that the liberation of these peoples, their independence, and their enjoyment of freedom, dignity, and honor are all, every one of them, an effect of this revolution of ours; for I was certain, when I wrote what I wrote in Al-Ahram, that we have neighbors in Asia and in the African

continent, and that news of our revolution would reach these neighbors, and that they would come to know a great deal of its results, and would rejoice for us, and would envy us, and would wish for themselves something like what had been granted to us by way of revolution, or something close to what had been granted to us ...

I was thinking of Tunisia and the Far Maghreb, and I was thinking of Iraq, and I was thinking of the French colonies in the African continent. And I reckoned that the removal of the despotic king from Egypt, and the social reform that had been begun in Egypt, and the withdrawal of the British troops from Egyptian soil — toward which the revolution would press on until we attained it — I reckoned that all of this would fall upon the hearts of our neighbors, near and far, as water falls upon the thirsty man's parched throat ... as the ancients used to say. And it was not long before I saw the revolution blaze up in one place after another among these lands, these lands both near and far. And it was not long before I saw some of them attain what they sought, at times only after a struggle of violence, and at times without reaching violence at all.

These lands in North Africa struggle the fiercest and harshest of struggles, and are scorched by the fire of aggression, tyranny, and wrongdoing, and in the end attain the goal they sought to attain: Tunisia gains her independence, and the Far Maghreb gains its independence after great trials, and Algeria is on the verge of attaining the independence it seeks, despite all the evasion and maneuvering in which France persists, and despite all the varieties of injustice, oppression, repression, and the torment of the innocent in which France persists as well.

And here we are, in these very days, witnessing the steady succession of news telling us of the independence of the French colonies, after France had entangled herself in that partnership she claimed she would establish between herself and her colonies — thereby warding off revolution in those colonies, giving them a little while keeping the greater share for herself, and making them imagine that they were free in their internal affairs while their economic, military, and political life remained a partnership between themselves and France. And the President of the French Republic went so far, on one occasion, as to declare to these colonies that they were free to accept this partnership, and thereby enjoy the honor of cooperating within Greater France, or to reject this partnership, and thereby suffer the hardships of independence, since they lacked the means that would allow them to protect that

independence. The President of the French Republic declared this, confident that the colonies would take the greatest care to accept the partnership and live with internal independence alone, enjoying the honor of sharing in everything else. But some of these colonies chose immediate independence, so that France was compelled to recognize that independence for them, while most of the colonies accepted this partnership at first, only to find, after no more than a year or a little more, that they were demanding their independence in full and unabridged.

And some of the others sought this independence while reserving for themselves complete freedom, once their independence was secured, to ally themselves with France or with some other power. And France looked up one day to find all her colonies in the African continent demanding independence, and demanding membership in the United Nations. And France looked up one day to find that she was unable to refuse these colonies' request, because the President of the Republic had not been content merely to declare the colonies' right to separate from France or to associate with her, but had set this down in the French constitution itself, so that France had no means left of refusing what these colonies demanded, whether full independence with alliance or full independence without it; and the coming autumn will not arrive before the independence of all the French colonies in the African continent is complete — excepting only Algeria, because the French hold the view — and how foolish a view it is! — that Algeria is not a colony at all, but a part of the French homeland itself. And yet France was nonetheless compelled to declare — through the mouth of the President of the Republic himself — that Algeria has the full right to determine her own fate, and it was the revolution in Algeria that compelled France to this, forcing it upon her by sheer compulsion. It should suffice you to note that the French army, for all its strength and might, and for all the aid it has drawn from France's allies, has spent six years without crushing this revolution or blunting its edge.

Nor was France content with what her President declared of Algeria's right to determine her own fate; rather, she invited the leaders of the revolution to negotiate, and these negotiations have indeed begun, and are now faltering. But the matter will undoubtedly end in the independence of Algeria, whether by peace or by war, and thus France will lose all her colonies in this African continent as well, and a French writer finds himself compelled to record, in one of the great French

newspapers, that the sitting President of the Republic has risen to the presidency only to put an end to the empire, and to reduce France to a second-class power. Nor does the matter stop with France alone, for Britain herself is relinquishing some of her own colonies in this African continent, willingly or unwillingly, and Belgium declares the independence of the Belgian Congo after harsh trials. And the Belgian Congo has a story not yet concluded, whose news readers see in the newspapers every day, but it has, in any case, become an independent state, and will become a member of the United Nations next September, after the Security Council has recommended its admission.

And so, too, the geographical map of this continent is changing, and secondary-school students are learning something new in the geography of the African continent ... these students are learning something their predecessors did not learn this same year before them, namely that most of the African continent has been liberated, and that states have arisen in it that did not exist during this school year, and that will exist, active in human life, during the coming school year.

And when we celebrate the feast of the revolution this year, we shall find ourselves compelled to remember that our revolution was a prelude to this freedom that has come near to casting its shade over the whole of the African continent.

Nor is the matter confined to what has happened in the African continent, for there are other lands in Asia as well that have been influenced by this revolution, whether or not they acknowledge that influence; for the revolution in Iraq is an effect of the effects of the Egyptian revolution, whether the sole leader and singular judge likes it or not. And it seems to me that there is some resemblance between the revolution of the Egyptian army some years ago and the revolution of the Turkish army in these very days, and I have no doubt that the Turks would most bitterly resent acknowledging that our revolution had any effect on theirs, but the thing that is certain is that this resemblance exists, whether the Turks like it or dislike it.

And who knows — will the effects of our revolution upon the outside world stop at this point, or will they go on exerting their influence until no trace is left on earth of colonialism as people have known it for years? I do not claim that colonialism has come to an end in all its forms and shapes, for everyone knows that alliance with the great powers is itself one color, one shape, of colonialism. But the first drop of rain is followed

by a downpour, and it is the right of every citizen of the United Arab Republic to feel something of that deep contentment that takes hold of the heart and conscience, when he remembers that his homeland's revolution was not confined to his homeland alone, but was a prelude to the disappearance of an odious form of colonialism from lands both near and far; and Egypt was never, on any day, selfish or closed in upon herself, but these two lands were always, the two of them, agents of good, loving it for their own people and spreading it among other lands wherever they found a way to spread it, and the two of them are now discharging their historic duty as they bring about good and spread it to other lands.

And if the best of people are those most useful to other people, then the best of homelands are those most useful to other homelands.