

REVOLT ON THE NILE

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with a foreword by

PRESIDENT NASSER

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Colonel Anwar EL Sadat's book is neither an autobiography nor a history of the Egyptian Revolution, but a series of episodes and vivid portraits which have a direct bearing on the Egypt of today.

These pages show how the old political passions and the evil influences to which Egyptian leaders were exposed hampered the rational progress of our country.

The patriots were fully aware of the danger of their clandestine activity, which forms the lively central theme of this book. Historians will find valuable information here.

Colonel Anwar EL Sadat is liked and respected. His military virtues, courage and coolness, loyalty and devotion, force of character and disinterestedness, and finally his love of justice, destined him to play a leading role in the Egyptian Revolution of July 23rd, 1952.

He has displayed these qualities throughout his lively career, and he put them at the service of our national cause. He was imprisoned for his patriotic activities in November, 1947", by order of the British. He was imprisoned again in 1947. One may imagine how a man of his combative nature suffered under these restraints. Nevertheless, these years of captivity gave him leisure to meditate at length upon the condition to which the Egyptian people had been brought by two thousand years of slavery. He escaped to liberty, a living symbol of the immense desire for liberation which inspired the peoples of the Valley of the Nile.

He fought ceaselessly for his ideal. The masses were now seeking social justice, and the "Free Offers," among them Colonel Sadat made every effort to inspire and maintain that faith which was to enable the people to assail their triple enemy: imperialism, the monarchy and feudalism.

The country was stagnating under autocracy. That yoke had to be thrown off to open the way to our renaissance. A long history of negligence, error and frustrated projects showed that a reform of the State was utterly necessary and that the monarchy was powerless to accomplish it. Jobbery and corruption sullied the regime. That center of infection had to be eradicated.

More than once, the Revolution almost foundered in stormy seas. The struggle lasted for ten bitter years.

Egyptian affairs over the last twenty years are made difficult to understand by the complexity of events. But closer scrutiny reveals certain leading themes: the Army's discontent at the decay of the State, the falling into discredit of traditional authority, and the Egyptian people's resentment of the occupation of their country by the British.

It is not always easy to overcome the forces of dissolution, treachery, inertia and indifference, but the patriots laid the foundations upon which a new edifice was to arise: the Republic of Egypt. Order was imposed on chaos.

Today, in their new-found freedom, the Egyptian people have found self-respect. The old social hierarchies have given way to civil and political equality, which encourages public-spirited and creative enterprise. The slogan of the new Egypt is: Work, produce. The Revolution is dedicated to the tasks of peaceful reconstruction.

This story ends in 1952, the year of the Liberation; and the beginning of a new era in Egypt. Already, our hope and faith in a regenerated Egypt are wiping out from our memory the humiliation and sufferings of an earlier time.

A new chapter of history opens for Egypt, and the future is full of promise.

GAMAL ABDUL NASSER.

Revolt on the Nile

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Chapter One

IN THE YEAR 1938, chance, or perhaps it was the providential scheme of things, brought together in the garrison of Mankabad, in the province of Said, a group of young officers who had recently graduated from the Military Academy at Abbasieh. we spent all day on maneuvers, returning dog-tired in the evening to our tents. We sat around a campfire at the foot of Mount EL Cherif and talked into the night.

We were young men full of hope. We were brothers-in-arms, united in friendship and in a common detestation of the existing order of things. Egypt was a sick country. The social and political unrest in Egypt was the theme of our debates.

Our days were sad, but the nights made up for it. One of our company was a manly and straight-backed young officer, nearly six feet tall, who was reserved and serious in manner. If we started a lighthearted conversation, it was invariably Gamal Abdul Nasser who interrupted to bring us back to graver topics. He had

lost his mother early in life, and he bore the marks of that grief.

Gamal's convictions were deep-rooted. He was a true son of Said. He was passionately attached to the land of his origin, and his conversation was sown with proverbs and sayings from his native province.

Said, the old Thebaid of the Ancient Egyptians, is a beautiful and noble province. The great forces of nature hold sway there—the Nile and the earth which it waters. The men of Said are strong. It is a country of old legends and high deeds. It is a cradle of good workers, soldiers and stalwart men faithful to the ways of their ancestors. On a rocky eminence in the heart of this province, Mankabad perches like an eagle's nest in a narrow plain enclosed by granite hills.

What did Gamal Abdul Nasser say to us as we sat around the campfire on Mount EL Cherif? His message to us was this: "We must fight imperialism, monarchy and feudalism, because we are opposed to injustice, oppression and slavery. Every patriot wants to establish a strong and free democracy. This aim will be achieved, by force of arms if need be. The task is urgent because

the country has fallen into chaos. Freedom is our natural right. The way lies before us—revolution."

So, at the beginning of 1939, the officers of Manka had founded a secret revolutionary society dedicated to the task of liberation. In 1942, the society was organized in sections. each composed of separate cells.

The supreme command was invested in a Central Committee with a dozen members. All the revolutionary forces were controlled by this committee. The Committee made the plans. It was a secret assembly in the fullest sense of the word. It was the embryo of the Council of the Revolution which assumed power after the *coup d'etat* of July 23rd, 1952

The aim of the Committee was to establish by force a democratic and republican government. which implied the expulsion of the British from Egyptian soil and the destruction of the feudalism oligarchy which ruled our country. From the beginning, our movement attracted many adherents in the Army and in civil life, and it grew rapidly in influence and numbers

Sections were formed in every branch of the Army. Each member had the right to recruit new members and was responsible for their conduct. Thus, each of us formed a new revolutionary cell around him. Soon there was a militant organization covering the entire country. Members used secret signs and passwords. Military rank was observed inside the Society as it was in the Army.

It need scarcely be stated that our organization was illegal. We worked in darkness, awaiting the dawn. It was a long-term plan, and Gamal Abdul Nasser was to be the architect and the strategist. His energy, his clear thinking, his balanced judgment equipped him, more than anyone else, for this task. Gamal's wisdom preserved us from premature action and from many dangerous adventures. Revolutionary tactics demand patience and lucid thought. We proceeded cautiously. It was useless and dangerous to make ambitious claims if we had not the means to translate them into reality.

We swore on oath to remain faithful to our country and to work with all our strength for its regeneration. The Army had a right to intervene, since both the

government and the opposition parties were incapable of ending oppression.

The political parties squabbled for power, but whatever the results of the elections, the mass of the Egyptian people felt that they were being ruled by a hidden hand. The British continually interfered in Egyptian affairs.

Colonialism and feudalism—these were the twin instruments of our servitude. The social structure of Egypt on the eve of the Second World War can be compared to that of France before the Revolution of 1789. At the top, king Farouk and his family (the dynasty of Mohammed Aly) disposed of roughly one quarter of the national income. This Albanian royal house, shallowly rooted in national sentiment, had usurped its powers in the nineteenth century. The dynasty wore itself out by its excesses. Privilege, prodigal expenditure, the promised reforms that were never carried out—these things sapped the foundations of the regime and undermined the prestige of the monarchy.

Separated from the people and shaken by public scandals, the monarchy through itself into disrepute by collaborating with the British, who preferred a tame tyrant to a strong democracy. In a word, the royal house of Mohammed Aly achieved a total failure. It aimed to detach *Egypt from* the Ottoman Empire, and it threw the country into the arms of the British Empire. It set out to rescue Egypt from the anarchy of the mamelukes, and it ended in anarchy itself. It claimed to serve the country: it was only of disservice. Eventually it became completely immobilized and did nothing at all. That is why, the day after the Revolution, the monarchy was abandoned by everybody and was swept away in the flood tide of popular resentment.

The Egyptian Parliament was theoretically elected by universal suffrage. In fact it represented neither the country nor the people, and the constitutional regime had given way to government by oligarchy. The ruling class of Egypt were the great landowners, who owned most of the wealth of the country. These feudal lords, comparable to the Prussian junkers were in undisputed control of their villages. At election time, they put pressure on their serfs to maintain themselves in power.

They behaved in a manner which was already out of date in Europe in the nineteenth century. Land-owning was a speculative business. The land was let and sublet at exorbitant rates, and the absentee landlords spent the winter in their sumptuous mansions in Cairo and Alexandria. During the summer they gambled in the casinos of Europe.

These vast feudal fortunes were achieved by exploitation of the *fellahin*, who lived in a perpetual bondage of debts, poverty, ignorance and disease. In 1939, two million Egyptian tenant farmers were so poor they did not even own the simple tools which they needed to till their fields. The peasant proletariat of Egypt was an amorphous, passive, dumb mass of people whose chief preoccupation was survival.

The Egyptian people had to storm two bastilles to achieve their revolution. Feudalism was one. British imperialism was the other. But once one fortress was breached, the other was sure to crumble.

In 1939, the sky clouded over, the storm burst. The Second world War scattered our revolutionary group to the four winds. Gamal Abdul Nasser was sent to the

Sudan, a country artificially separated from Egypt by a line drawn across the map by the British.

Sudan, at this time, was a land of exile for Army officers in disfavor. In fact, in an area bigger than Europe, almost anywhere outside Cairo and Alexandria was a place of exile for people who had ceased to discharge their function as "satisfactory" servants of the State. Lieutenant Nasser, already suspected by the authorities, did not wait to be transferred. He volunteered and was posted to the 3rd Infantry Battalion at Khartoum.

there he met a man named Abdul Hakim Amer, and the two young officers found they shared a common detestation of the existing order, and a common vision of the future. Their temperaments were very different. Lieutenant Nasser was calm and deep, always master of his emotions. Small setbacks did not disturb him, but they upset Abdul Hakim, who was impulsive and unpredictable. The two men frequently quarreled because of their temperamental differences, but during three years' service in the Sudan they got to understand and respect one another. Today they are the firmest friends. Abdul Hakim Amer, the impulsive young

**lieutenant of Khartoum days, is now Minister of War and
Commander-in-Chief of the Egyptian Army.**

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