

THE EGYPTIAN MAN

The sublime aim we wish to achieve as a result of this overall urbanisation strategy in this stage in which we go forward in the spirit of Great October and undertake the task of building and achieving progress is to set up a modern state and a modern society in our country, so that our people may realise self-fulfilment and develop their creative capacities.

We should not, for a moment, stand in awe of this stage. It is inevitable and it is our way to a broader future.

As the Egyptian citizen is — in the last analysis — the aim of this progress and to begin with the means of realising it, he is, also its guarantee.

He is the guarantee for us to move forward and adopt the latest techniques of the age in all fields, without fear of losing our identity, breaking away from our genuine character or abandoning the virtues in which our people have always taken pride and honour.

As I have always said, this people bear deep down in themselves the values of civilisations 7,000 years old. These civilisations flourished and faltered, went forward and stopped short, changed and

rejuvenated themselves but, in the end, the people always knew how to emerge from all these tests upholding their genuine characteristics and their sound and pure innate qualities.

A cursory look reveals different names of successive civilisations, different systems and rulers who sometimes came from the farthest ends of the earth.

But a deeper look reveals a strange characteristic : a unity behind all the successive civilisations.

For centuries this people hardly owned any part of their land or freedom to express their views but, all the same, they maintained their cohesive character and their harmonious national fibre in which their conquerors and exploiters met their end.

The distinct characteristic at all times which gave our people this strange ability to absorb conquerors and exploiters is that they have always been the makers of civilisation and builders of progress.

The skills they gave the world were never skills of invasion and destruction but skills of building and construction.

The most eloquent evidence of these deep-rooted characteristics is that they witnessed events and deep changes and yet maintained a rare degree of national unity and national harmony, which has become proverbial all over the world.

Major political and social changes which become inevitable at certain stages in the lives of every nation had the character of a peaceful and not a sanguinary transformation. As soon as these transformations were completed, all elements of the people closed their ranks again.

Even imperialist and colonialist systems which, in other parts of the world, succeeded in creating division and dissension never succeeded in Egypt. Egyptian political, national and geographical cohesiveness remained above all disputes.

These same characteristics enabled our people to play their historic role in supporting the Arab nation to which they belong, warding off invasions of the Arab nation and embracing its values and heritage under all hardships, invasions and dissensions. Also, one of the most distinguishing characteristics of our people has always been their faith and their adherence to their intrinsic character.

Faith, as we understand it today, is the pure faith, free from fanaticism and impurities which

were attached to its substance in periods of decadence — faith which is remote from irresponsibility and belief in superstitions, and which does not deny man's will and the will of society to face the ever-changing circumstances of life, supported in this by the brain which God has given him and which distinguishes him from the rest of God's creatures.

For Mohammed the Prophet taught us saying :

"He who struggles for the sake of God is likened unto a man who fasts and prays, he does not cease to fast and pray, until he returns."

Struggling for the sake of God is not restricted to fighting, for the Prophet said :

✓ « He who ventures forth in pursuit of knowledge is likened unto him who ventures forth for the sake of God, until his return. »

He also taught us the deep social meaning of struggle in these words ,

« He who offers succour to the widow and the poor is likened unto him who is struggling for the sake of God. »

The most dangerous menace to the true essence of this faith are those who use it to oppose toil, and the pursuit of knowledge and science.

For God in all His glory and wisdom has placed the pursuit of knowledge on the same footing as the struggle for His sake and has made it concomitant with faith when He said in the Holy Koran :

« God holds in great esteem those of you who believe and those who have acquired knowledge. »

As for our genuine character, upholding it does not close before us the door of renovation. Those who introduced the new in the long history of our civilisation have always occupied a distinguished place in our history. Our right to deal with the issues of our life according to prevailing circumstances is not less than that of our great forefathers who did the same for their life, in their day.

Radical change does not necessarily mean a complete severing at the roots from the national, spiritual and civilisational heritage of our people.

We do not say this out of conceit or the desire to distinguish ourselves. For we believe firmly, from our knowledge of history, that the areas with deep-rooted heritage cannot, by nature, lose their identity under any pressure. We also believe that by springing from these roots we are protecting this variation in civilisations and personalities which because they are numerous, enrich the world and

its experience, as far as we and others are concerned.

I am not introducing new concepts; I am just referring to meanings which have taken root in the conscience of our people and in their innermost soul from which they cannot be moved. From among those meanings is my claim that the Egyptian man, with his true and genuine origin, is our safeguard for making this journey towards the future without losing any of our identity.

One of the most prominent effects of the revolution of technology today is that overwhelming progress in the means of transporting various ideas, information, currents and patterns of behaviour across the national boundaries of all the human societies, which have pulled down all the old boundaries isolating one environment from the other, and one society from the other. In the face of this increasing revolutionary transformation our immunity against these outward-looking circumstances and communication can only come from within us. Preserving our identity cannot come by retreating within ourselves, by rigidity and weakness, but by the sound method which derives its vitality from our capacity for renewal, and its steadfastness from our strong adherence to our origins.

With this interpretation, our work for setting up a modern society and nation does not mean emulation and imitation.

We are capable of creating for ourselves by ourselves an up-to-date civilisation with a true Egyptian and Arab character. We refuse to allow our adherence to our origin to be a backward look, revering the past because it is the past and refusing all novelty. For not all the past is bright, as it contained many elements of backwardness. On the other hand we refuse to mar our national personality by emulating the material or behavioural phenomena of other communities.

The real challenge confronting peoples with deep-rooted origins who are facing the problem of civilisational progress is precisely how to renovate their civilisation. They should not reject the past in the name of the present and should not renounce the modern in the name of the past, but they should take of the new without losing sight of their origins.

The modern society and nation are not such insofar as their material manifestations alone are concerned, and their setting up is not completed once they have acquired modern commodities and products.

Modernism is knowing the right order of priorities as to our requirements of these tools. Then we should set up the institutions, systems and relations capable of transforming these tools in Arab hands from hackneyed, inanimate tools into creative, productive ones. Next, we should compose the suitable environment and necessary stage of development which will make us capable of invention and creativeness, and consequently of a true contribution to human civilisation.

We cannot plant science in an unscientific environment or expect results in an atmosphere which does not believe in the freedom of research.

We should uphold our spiritual and ethical values in face of the wave of material indulgence known in the rich consumer communities. For these spiritual and ethical values are genuine characteristics of our civilisation.

The communities which ignored them have experienced spiritual hardships in the midst of material abundance.

We uphold social security, unity of the family, supremacy of the sentiments of amity and the rejection of grudges and hatred. It was these values which protected this society in the darkest hours. They are the barrier against tendencies of absolute

individualism and lack of civil responsibility which causes the disintegration of society and deprives man of the sentiments which he needs most.

Also, we refuse that progress be for the sake of a few who isolate themselves from the people and attach themselves to methods of life alien to them.

We want the widest sections of the people to share in making progress and to receive a fair share of its fruits.

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To conclude, you may have noticed that the meanings I have referred to were not far removed from what we have been practising in the last few years.

My aim has been to have the slogan of the State of science and faith established as a fact and not as mere talk. My efforts have been directed towards the establishment of the State of Institutions and allowing citizens to practise their activities within the context of the sovereignty of the law.

I did not hesitate to have all exceptional measures eliminated gradually and all detention camps closed after forty years of existence under various

circumstances, and I am sure the people will never allow their re-opening.

My aim remains that the State should not be satisfied with only liberating the capacities of its sons by removing barriers and restrictions, but should proceed to offer them welfare and protection by providing a comprehensive social securities umbrella with an ever widening base until the day comes when every individual is protected by its shelter.

We should understand socialism with both our minds and our hearts. Therefore we must not stop thinking of our deprived masses and of the best means of providing them with a dignified means of life, security and progress. The progress of nations is measured not by the standard of those few at the top, but rather by that of the broad masses at the base.

I was well aware that all this entailed a wider movement for ideas, opinions and efforts. However I firmly believed that this is a necessary and healthy matter, and that it is the only means for training our masses in the use of logic, dialogue and participation by means of the institutions which we have set up. I was also confident, that the sound instincts of our people which are the source of their

sensitive political awareness, will enable us to undergo this experience of democratic maturity in peace.

Democracy, as we know, is not mere words but a practical daily experience. Democracy cannot be practised in a vacuum but has to have a framework that helps define the attitudes which involve the political, economic and social affairs of the homeland.

The people have accepted the system of the alliance of the working powers of the people as the outline of their political life. In the battle of construction and progress we are in dire need of this growing. Therefore I reject the call for breaking up national unity in an artificial way through creating parties. But I also do not accept the theory of the one party which imposes its tutelage on the people and takes away freedom of opinion, depriving the people of actually exercising their political freedom.

Therefore I am keen on maintaining the alliance as the proper framework of national unity in which all the powers of the alliance express their legitimate interests and opinions, so that the attitudes sponsored by the majority and which the State adopts may be evident.

The political organisation should be a crucible

for dialogue in which conflicting ideas fuse, and attitudes which truly express the desires of the wider popular base crystallise.

The October War with all that it revealed of heroisms, asserting meanings and giving birth to youthful leaderships should infuse its spirit into the structure and movement of the political organisation.

Hatred is never constructive, and it has no place in the ranks of our good and kindly people. We do not want to fight battles which are long past for we still have the most serious of all battles ahead of us, that of the future, of construction and progress.

With the October War we have embarked on a new stage in the life of this ancient people the main tasks of which I sum up again as follows :

- 1) Economic development at rates that exceed all we have achieved up till now.
- 2) Preparation of Egypt for the year 2000 so that means of continued progress may be secured for the coming generations.
- 3) Outward-looking economic policy at home and abroad to provide all guarantees for funds invested in development.

- 4) Effective and comprehensive planning which guarantees the realisation of the great goals of society through science and knowledge.
- 5) Consolidation and reorientation of the public sector thus enabling it to take the lead in development.
- 6) Social development and the building up of man.
- 7) Entering the age of science and technology.
- 8) Civilisational progress based upon science and faith.
- 9) An open society which enjoys freedom.
- 10) A secure society in which the citizen enjoys peace of mind as to his present day and his future.

It is in fact a glorious stage, the stage of construction and progress, the stage of work and prosperity. Every Egyptian has a duty to perform for the sake of achieving these glorious goals. With this alone can we be really true to the spirit of the glorious Ramadan, October, and to the blood of our war dead. May God guide us all and lead us to the welfare of our great people.