

On July 23, 1952, Gamal Abdel Nasser and other members of the Egyptian military staged a coup and overthrew the king of Egypt. Within a year, Nasser assumed the role as Egypt's sole leader. Later, in his autobiography, which is the source of this excerpt, Nasser reflected on the fateful night of the revolt. ♦ As you read the excerpt, think about the confusion and doubts that Nasser experienced. Then, on a separate sheet of paper, answer the questions that follow.

From Egypt's Liberation: The Philosophy of the Revolution by Gamal Abdel Nasser

For a long time I have been asking myself: Was it necessary for us, the Army, to do what we did on July 23, 1952? I have already observed that the revolution marked the realization of a great hope felt by

the people of Egypt. . . . But if that

is so, and if what happened on

July 23rd was neither a military

mutiny nor a popular uprising,

why then was it entrusted to the

Army, and not to other forces, to

bring it about? . . .

There were various justifica-

tions before July 23rd which

made it clear to us why it was

necessary for us to do what we

did. . . . [W]e felt to the depth of our beings

this was our soldiers' duty. . . .

I can testify that there were certain critical

occasions since July 23rd when I accused

myself, my comrades and the rest of the

Army, of stupidity and madness for doing

what we had done on that day.

Before July 23rd, I had imagined that the

whole nation was ready and prepared, wait-

ing for nothing but a vanguard to lead the

charge against the battlements, whereupon it

would fall in behind in serried [crowded]

ranks, ready for the sacred advance towards

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Date _____

the great objective. And I had imagined that our role was to be this commando vanguard. I thought that this role would never take more than a few hours. Then immediately would come the sacred advance behind us of the serried ranks and the thunder of marching feet as the ordered advance proceeded towards the great objective. I heard all this in my imagination, but by sheer faith it seemed real. . . .

Then suddenly came reality

after July 23rd. The vanguard

performed its task and charged

the battlements of tyranny. It

threw out [King] Farouk and then

paused, waiting for the serried ranks to come

up in their sacred advance. . . .

For a long time it waited. Crowds did

eventually come, and they came in endless

droves—but how different is the reality from

the dream! The masses that came were dis-

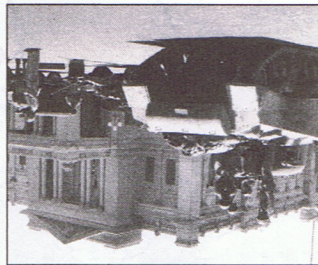
united, divided groups of stragglers. . . . At

this moment I felt, with sorrow and bitterness,

that the task of the vanguard, far from being

completed, had only begun. . . .

Source: *Egypt's Liberation: The Philosophy of the Revolution*, by Gamal Abdel Nasser (Washington, D.C.: Public Affairs Press, 1955).



Tanks in Cairo, July 26, 1952

3. Activity Adapt this autobiographical excerpt into several journal entries. Create entries for July 23, just before July 23, for July 23, and just after July 23.

1. How did Nasser imagine the country would respond to the overthrow of the king? What happened instead?

2. **Analyze Credibility** How credible is Nasser's claim that he was prepared to hand over power to others after the coup?

Questions to Think About