

National Day of Egypt

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Egyptian Art Then And Now Enriching Man's Life And Making Him Happy

by Rateb Siddik

The Ambassador's Message

Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim
Brother and Sisters,

Today the Egyptian people celebrates the 39th anniversary of the Egyptian revolution which took place on the 23rd of July, 1952. This revolution marked the end for an era of tyranny and occupation and revived the sovereignty of the Egyptian people which they were deprived from for centuries.

This anniversary synchronises with the end of the Gulf war, a crisis which threatened the Arab and Islamic solidarity. Egypt adopted a firm stand towards the latest Gulf crisis extracted from the principles of its foreign policy which does not rely on slogans, which called for a peaceful settlement of the dispute and its resolution within an inter-Arab framework.

Since the establishment of diplomatic relations between Egypt and Bangladesh, the bilateral ties are characterized by abundant good will, understanding and cooperation. As usual, Egypt was one of the leading nations which proved her solidarity to Bangladeshi people and government, during the latest natural calamities of cyclones and floods. This was demonstrated by the condolences messages sent by H.E. Mohammad Hosny Mubarak, President of the Arab Republic of Egypt to H.E. Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed, Acting President of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. It was followed by immediate arrival of three Egyptian cargo aircrafts carrying relief goods to the affected peoples of Bangladesh.

On the other hand, the mutual collaboration between both countries in different arenas and on the framework of international and specialized agencies became one of the most important features of the relation between Egypt and Bangladesh. This has been witnessed this year, when Egypt, used her status as chairman of the 19th Ministerial Conference of the Organisation of Islamic

Conference, to forward a request to the Secretary General of the OIC on May 9. The request asked to distribute a message to the Foreign Ministers of the Islamic countries to provide urgent assistance to this people of Bangladesh in order to face the natural catastrophes and cyclones. Egypt has also asked to allocate an immediate help for the Islamic solidarity fund for emergency assistance to alleviate the sufferings of the people of Bangladesh.

This is a practical demonstration to the Egyptian awareness of her role on the Islamic world which is based upon her deep belief in the message of Islam.

In a practical demonstration to the vitality of the Egyptian role on the Arab scene, this year has witnessed the return of the Arab League back to its base in Cairo. In addition to the election of the Egyptian Ex-foreign Minister as Secretary General of the Arab League by unanimous decision of the member countries.

The Egyptian awareness of the Third world problems became the main motive behind the Egyptian efforts in the field of economic and social development as well as the issues of human rights and democracy.

Egypt's adherence to the philosophy of the non-aligned movement and as one of the founders of this movement has always been one of the main basis and essential corner stones of her foreign policy towards the Third world nations.

Egypt and Bangladesh played a vital role unitedly within the framework of the non-aligned movement which demonstrated the understanding persisting between both countries.

Bangladesh Zindabad
Egypt Zindabad
Long live Egypt-Bangla relations.

Mohamad Mostafa Badr
Ambassador of the Arab
Republic of Egypt to
Bangladesh.

The Egyptian artist embodied his people's spirituality in the temples, with their statues and murals. He invested with value all he invented what — his shelter, his clothing, his adornments and his tools. Magnanimity, pride serenity reverence, fastidiousness, delicacy, restrained power these were some of the values projected by the civilization of ancient Egypt in its plastic art.

Egypt moved from Hellenistic paganism to monotheistic Christianity with ease; and in the Coptic era, the variations of the human psyche as discovered in spiritual seclusion were crystallised in marvellous paintings and weavings. In Muslim Egypt, the plastic artist transformed the spirit of the Glorious Koran into magnificent combinations in wood, glass, pottery, metal, brick and stone.

The function of art was then and still is to make man happy and to enrich his life. Whether to create or simply to appreciate it, art is a way of achieving human identity.

Selim I invaded Egypt in 1517 AD and Egypt was ruled for centuries by the Ottoman Turks, who drew most of its artists, and craftsmen to Turkey. The living pulse of Egyptian creativity abated. Values degenerated but did not quite die. Through his simple perception of values, the popular artisan saved them in his consciousness, where they waited to be reborn.

At the beginning of the present century a revival took place in literature, music and plastic art. There were Taha Hussein, Tawfiq El Hakim, El Akkad and Ahmad Shawky in letters, Sayed Darwish in music, Mukhtar in sculpture, Mahmoud Said, Sabri, Nagi, Youssef Kamel and Ragheb Ayyad in painting.

Mahmoud Mukhtar, Egypt's foremost sculptor in modern times, was the first Egyptian to call attention to the greatness of sculpture in the ancient Egyptian tradition. Though he studied in France and was impressed by the European tradition of sculpture, his mind and soul remained Egyptian and art stemmed from the ancient



Ayyad: Revival.

Egyptian heritage.

Painters were familiar with European culture in general and with the special artistic trends that had recently been fashionable in Europe and America. Many of them, Sabri Youssef Kamel, Mohammed Nagi were powerfully influenced, for example by the Impressionists. Such pioneers contributed to reviving the arts especially when the school of Fine Arts was established in Cairo. Most of them taught in it.

Egypt sent many scholars to study the art of painting in England and most of them came back with some notions of the tradition of the water-color English school. Three of them Shafik Zaher, Habib Gorgi and Mahmoud Abdel Hadi taught painting and drawing in the Teachers High School to students in diverse disciplines to enable them to become Teachers of painting and drawing in the general education schools and watercolor painting dominated, especially the

thirties. Prominent among this school's artists were Hidayit and Shafik Rizk, for example, under whom a select of teachers were trained in the art of painting, as an adjunct to other specialisations.

With these men and other young artists Youssef Affif established the New Oriental Artists Group rebelling against the static academism which was the basis of education in the School of Fine Arts in Cairo and in other schools, its members were diverse branches of a style tree, nourished by the contemporary European theory combined with poetical Oriental-Egyptian mysticism.

A younger generation, established the Contemporary Art Group led by Hussein Amin. Prominent among its members were Hamid Nada, Samir Rafl, El Gazzar, Abraham Massoud, and Youssef Sida. The Art and Liberty Group, established contemporaneously with this one included an elite of plastic artists and writers. Egyptians and foreigners, from Cairo and Alexandria, most members of the two groups joined them in the name of free art as opposed to the academism of Arts schools.

The exhibitions it held in 1941, 42, 43, 44 and 1949, real festivals attended by thousands of visitors were a far cry from the shows of today.

Surrealism was at its peak of popularity then and each exhibition was full of surprises. Authors and poets contributed to the exhibitions, writing poems on the canvases or the sculptures, on the doors, even on the floor. The leaders of the movement were the artists and writers themselves, while the sponsors walked behind.

Hamid Said lived in seclusion. Free of any mundane encumbrance, in a house designed for him by architect Hassan Fathi.

In 1945 a group of young artists teaching painting gathered round him. They were able to attain half of the week from the Ministry of Education to study and work in Marg village under supervision of Hamid Said. Eminent among the members of this group were Ilwani, Htmaide, Hanafi,



President Hosni Mubarak: Firm leadership.

Rashwan and Khamis Shihata, all painters, the sculptors Anwar Abdel Moulla and Hafez Fahmi. Together they constituted a school called Art and Nature. Its credo was that a profound, but objective vision of nature could lead to understanding of the laws governing its structure and thus to personal development as well as to awareness of aesthetic values in every minute part of nature. Each part being understood as a whole in itself and all parts being seen as in unison with the whole. This school clearly had a beneficial effect not only on its members themselves but also on their schools and students and on art in general.

In 1960, the Ministry of Culture set up a program to subsidize artists and men of

letters. Its purpose was to separate the artist from any other responsibility but his artistic creativity. Each was paid a suitable monthly salary which relieved him of the necessity of turning to any other way of making a living. The project began, with the selection of five artists: the painters Ramsis Yonaan, Rateb Siddik and Tabia Halim, the sculptors, Adam Hunein and Mohyiddin Taher. The project went on in utter seriousness of purpose and with superb results in production, for six years and grew to include dozens of artists and men of letters. The production of plastic artists was crowned with a magnificent exhibition held in the big hall of the Arab Socialist Union in February 1968, generally considered the best ever held

in Egypt up to that time. The whole project had been created by Dr Tharwat Okkasha, Minister of Culture then, and by Hamid Said, its designer and supervisor.

Production deteriorated when the people responsible for it changed. The artists were now restricted and support for them became devoid of real meaning. Hamid Said, however, was thinking of another project, the creation of art life in which artists would be truly free without any outside intervention. As a base was selected the Manastiri palace which stands in the most beautiful spot in Cairo, on the southern tip of El Rouda Island the Nile. This center housed young artists intent on understanding the ancient (See facing page)

Heartiest felicitation on
the National Day of the
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AMERICAN
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Egypt's Diplomacy Reviving Afro-Asian Solidarity

By Seifullah Noseir

IF Egypt is an African country, she is also an Asian one, because she enjoys this geographical uniqueness among all countries of the world since the Egyptian land of Sinai falls within the Asian continent. Therefore, the importance given by Egyptian diplomacy to Asian affairs represents a vital and major dimension in Egypt's foreign policy.

Egyptian diplomacy calls for the revival of the spirit of Afro-Asian solidarity and the spirit of Bandung due to the 32nd anniversary of the Bandung Conference. That Conference was the embodiment of the victory of the will for solidarity and common work among the newly independent countries in Africa and Asia, their struggle against colonial powers, and the realization of full independence to oppressed peoples.

Egypt believes that Afro-Asian cooperation is the proper formula capable of confronting problems and challenges facing the countries of Africa and Asia. It will also enable them to achieve economic development, serve the cause of peace and security in the world and foil the attempts of interference and hegemony by foreign powers.

Egypt supports the cause of peace in Asia, because her adherence to peace is a universal one. She believes that for peace to prevail, it should not be achieved in one area

alone without the others. Otherwise, it will be a fragile peace and liable to fall at any moment. Peace in the Middle East or Africa could not be complete without peace in South East Asia or Western Asia.

Egyptian diplomacy is concerned about the state in the South East & Indo China regions. Egypt supports the international efforts adopted for a peaceful and permanent settlement of the Cambodian problem. Egypt emphasized the importance of working honestly for the implementation of UN resolutions on Cambodia and the creation of a suitable atmosphere to enable the Cambodian people to realise their aspirations and desire for unity.

Egypt also supports Afghan resistance movement and looks to the day during which peace will prevail in West Asia and the people of Afghanistan will be enabled to exercise their right of self-determination without any pressures by big powers. Egypt hopes that constant efforts rendered in this regard will succeed in bringing a settlement to the Afghan question guaranteeing the rights of this muslim brotherly people in peace, freedom and stability.

Egyptian diplomacy believes that continuous efforts to find urgently, a just and peaceful solution to these problems could contribute in lessening

world tensions and consolidating the quest for peace. This is because to avoid resorting to force in international relations, which is becoming a dangerous trend at present and threatens the future of many nations, peace could not be achieved except by adopting the real meaning of peace based on justice, respect of the sovereignty of states and adherence to the principles of international law.

Demonstrating that, Egypt always backed Bangladesh since the establishment of relations between both countries, which reflected on the fraternal ties and understanding between both nations. Such distinctive ties became one of the most important features of both Egypt & Bangladesh foreign policy. That also reflected to lead to a continuous coordination and cooperation between both countries in the different international organizations and specialized agencies.

Finally, it should be emphasized that Egyptian foreign policy commits itself to extending the circle of political, economic and cultural dialogue with Asian state, to gain a deeper understanding of their civilizations through the organization of bilateral symposium with several Asian countries.

The author is First Secretary, Embassy of Egypt, Dhaka.



Youssef Kamel: On the canal.