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 justifications 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, waiting for nothing but a vanguard to lead the charge against the battlements, whereupon it would fall in behind in serried ranks, ready for the sacred advance towards 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 disunited, 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. . . .


**Questions to Think About**

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?

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