

INTERVIEW

given by

PRESIDENT ANWAR EL SADAT

to the German « Frankfurter Allgemeine »
and « Suddeutsche Zeitung »

March 29, 1976

Question : Mr. President, this is not your first visit to Germany, although it is your first official visit. If I may ask a direct question : What do you expect from this visit ?

President : There are many things I need to do on this visit. First of all, I wish to meet the German people for whom I have a great affection ; mine is a long story with Germans, I wish to meet and be acquainted with the German people and Chancellor Schmidt, whom I have not met before. I met Ex-Chancellor Brandt when he came to visit me with President Scheel, in Cairo, Genscher also came. But I wish to get acquainted with Chancellor Schmidt and discuss a number of things with him : bilateral relations, Arab-Israeli struggle in the region, present political matters, I mean the entire political position and the security problem, since there can be no security in Europe, without security in the Middle East.

Question : When discussing economic questions, what will you offer in return ?

President : As you know, we have exhausted our economy during the past 15 years. After the first disengagement agreement in '74, I began re-construction at once, despite the fact that it was a big risk. When I restored the evacuees to the three Canal cities, they were within the range of Israeli artillery. This was before the second disengagement of forces. But I took the risk, and ever since 1974, we started the re-construction programme.

You cannot imagine all the things we need. The basic framework of our economy was badly affected. There are also numerous problems : Housing, health and communications and also investment projects and agricultural industrialisation schemes to which I shall devote greater interest, in the near future.

Question : So far, foreign capital has manifested hesitation to invest ?

President : No. I cannot say that. I advise you to meet the Prime Minister who will show you a list running to hundreds of millions for which contracts have been already concluded, upon a special basis.

Question : Mr. President, you mentioned that Middle East security and European security are linked together. You also proposed that Western Europe should offer guarantees to settle the Middle East problem. Can you explain that ?

President : I honestly believe that if you want to establish permanent peace in this area, guarantees should be offered to the two sides. As for the guarantees, the two super-powers sponsoring the Geneva Conference, the United States and the Soviet Union have persistently refused to involve any other party in them. Last year I proposed first to France and then to England and France a leading part in this, to participate in offering guarantees. I am glad that one of the Chairmen of the Geneva Conference, Mr.

Brezhnev, said in the speech to his party, that he was in favour of Britain and France taking part in providing guarantees. It is time that Germany too should join.

— This is the responsibility of Western Europe, and Germany principally, since your guilt complex was the cause of our misfortunes in the region. It is, therefore, incumbent upon you to take part in guaranteeing permanent peace, and forgetting the past in its entirety, so that we can enjoy peace in this region.

Question : Will these guarantees be political or military ?

President : We agree to both. They will be political and military. You may have some difficulties regarding the military aspect, therefore, you can participate in the political aspect.

Question : Could the military guarantees include the participation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation or the stationing of NATO forces ?

President : No. We prefer the United Nations. We prefer a force under U.N. supervision.

Question : Will this force be European ?

President : Why not ? We will accept this force whatever its composition, provided guarantees are offered to both sides.

Question : Could the question of armament and arms deals be part of the guarantees ?

President : Yes, when Israel is prepared to withdraw to the '67 boundaries, we shall be prepared to discuss that, but not before then. And certainly not before Palestinians are given back their human rights.

Question : But before that, and until this takes place you will have to look for sources of armament ?

President : Yes, that is very true. Because part of my land is under occupation, and part of other Arab lands is also under occupation; we could not be required to limit our armament. But when Israel is ready to withdraw to the '67 boundaries, we shall be prepared to discuss that.

Question : When you hold talks with Chancellor Schmidt and other statesmen in Germany, will you take up the question of arms ?

President : I invariably reply to that question by «No comment».

Question : You will be visiting Italy and France, both of which have contracts with Germany for the production of arms and are not like Germany, prevented from sending arms to regions of tension.

President : I shall exert my utmost power. We do not have arm deals with France and have also bought diverse equipment from Italy and Britain, a joint project with Britain and France and a joint project with France and Italy and some French equipment. We have started these deals already, but not with Germany yet.

Question : Will you seek to obtain cooperation for the production of arms as well ?

President : I do not wish to comment on anything connected with arms, for the simple reason that I do not wish to create trouble for Chancellor Schmidt, before I meet him. I do not wish to place him in an embarrassing position.

Question : Every one is keen to avoid the no war-no peace situation. You mentioned that the next step should be the Geneva Conference and the overall solution.

President : When I met President Ford in Salzburg last year, we discussed the whole problem and agreed on definite steps. According to these steps, we believe we shall meet in Geneva in the course of 1976. When the U.S. elections are over in November or by 1977, at the latest, we can start considering the overall settlement which we can prepare during 1976. It appears that some difficulties stand in the way to holding the Geneva Conference, since the Syrians have a different viewpoint. But America and the Soviet Union share our viewpoint. We have no differences, whatsoever, with the Soviets on this question. Therefore, when such difficulties arise, I shall keep pursuing peace efforts, until I am convinced that it is impossible to hold the Geneva Conference. I will then re-consider the entire situation, but always in the light of promoting peace.

Question : Can this take place prior to U.S. elections ?

President : You mean convening the Geneva Conference. Yes. We are supposed to convene during the present year, before the U.S. elections.

Question : Do you expect President Ford to come (to Cairo) before the elections, as was previously stated ?

President : I don't know. This was what I had asked of the United States. As I said, time and again, whoever the President, America has the biggest part in the Arab-Israeli struggle due to its relations with Israel. They provide Israel with everything, even to balancing its budget. Therefore, whoever comes, we shall deal with him. But as far as I can see, President Ford stands a good chance for being elected.

Question : It appears that among the main obstacles before the Geneva Conference is the participation of the Palestinian Libe-

ration Organisation. Israel has a very understandable viewpoint regarding this question. Mr. President, do you have a formula for the participation of the Palestine Liberation Organisation in the Geneva Conference ?

President : I have also considered that with President Ford in Salzburg, then later during my visit to the United States. I proposed to President Ford and Dr. Kissinger to contact the Palestinian Liberation Organisation, as a first step. As a second step, we would insist on convening the Geneva Conference, since if we are determined to establish true peace. Palestine has to participate, otherwise, there will be no lasting peace.

Question : Do you believe the Israeli Government understands this point ?

President : I believe they began to understand it. There is an important event now. The Israeli delegation to the U.N. will be participating in the Security Council meeting which will be attended by Palestinians. I consider this as the beginning of some understanding on the behalf of Israel.

Question : Will the creation of a Palestinian entity on the Western Bank (of Jordan) and Gaza provide a first step ?

President : Undoubtedly. It will constitute a very important step towards peace. Palestinians should at least, be given human rights of which they had been deprived.

Question : Thereupon, this entity will need guarantees to be offered to the two sides by the super powers.

President : Exactly. I agree with you.

Question : Egypt abrogated its Friendship Treaty with the Soviet Union. You said that Egypt was subjected to political

economic pressure. Can you give us some instance? Have there been final attempts for holding meetings between President Sadat and Mr. Brezhnev?

President : I tried. I proposed a meeting to Mr. Brezhnev, in fact, we even fixed the date which was announced both in Cairo and Moscow, the date being January 1975. But they cancelled the meeting at the last moment. I visited Moscow four times and Brezhnev had to visit Egypt. I was, therefore, prepared, I am still prepared up to this very moment, should he choose to come, I shall be delighted to receive him and study everything with him ... But the way they deal with us, I am sorry to say, cannot be tolerated, because it is not merely pressure, but a violent strain in the military and economic spheres, with all the hardships we are facing in the country.

Question : You are paying the price of independence.

President : It is the price of independence we are paying. I was telling my people, two or three days ago, that I had to fight the battle of breaking the arms monopoly, over a period of 20 years. We fought over that in '56 with the West and I am fighting it now against the Soviet Union. It is the price of independence, exactly as you put it.

Question : Now, we shall have to introduce China in our talk. When we speak of the Middle East question, we always mention the two superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union. But there is a third state becoming powerful.

President : Their attitude does not reveal that they follow the line of the superpowers; they have been aiding us. Four months ago when I contacted India, I contacted China, too. Four months later, the Indians told me that the Soviet Union refused. Now they officially announced that they insisted on overhauling our MIGS.

but that the Soviet Union refused. This was the reason for the abrogation of the treaty.

Question : In the course of the coming years, can one say that China might supplement the Soviet Union, in its relation with Egypt ?

President : I say that we shall be much obliged to whomsoever chooses to become our friends. But we shall confront whomsoever chooses to become our enemy.

Question : This is more or less a historic question. You concluded the Soviet-Egyptian Friendship Treaty in an embarrassing moment in the history of Egypt, following the elimination of the centres of power.

President : And the agents.

Question : Did you sign the treaty with your own free will ?

President : I will give you some of the historic incidents. A month and a half before May 1971, before I could get rid of the agents, I felt that I had to warn Moscow since I know that Russians are, as a rule, suspicious by nature. Before I did that, I summoned the Soviet Ambassador. After considering various matters and bilateral relations, I said that there was something I need not inform him about because it was a purely internal matter. But that I intended to tell him, so that I would not be misunderstood. I said that I intended to eliminate so and so as I admitted difference of opinion, but not struggle, especially as our land was under occupation and the country was in a difficult position. This was in 1971.

I gave him the names and told him to contact Moscow. Then I said : «It is possible that after I eliminate them you should thi

that I am getting rid of your friends, here, and you might provoke more doubt. This is why I want you to advise them of the matter».

A few days after eliminating those agents, on receiving the Soviet Ambassador, I was surprised when he told me that Podgorny intended to visit us if I were willing. I said that he was welcome. But I learned that they had certain doubts, when Rogers came to visit me the same month. I eliminated the agents, but had informed Moscow a month and a half before, about all this.

Podgorny came and told me that they had reached a decision in the Political Bureau and the Central Committee — that they were ready to sign the Friendship Treaty. « You have chosen the wrong time. » I said « We asked for it three years ago and insisted on it during President Nasser's life, in fact, Nasser during his last visit and two months before his death asked for it. When you did not accept to sign the treaty, he proposed to conclude an alliance with you, just to overcome your doubts, but you refused. »

I explained that the timing was wrong. «But» I added « if it would remove all of your suspicions, I agree in principle. But wait another two months, until July when I will hold the National Congress here. Come then and I will conclude the treaty».

«Please», he said, «western quarters are conducting a propaganda about us and claiming that our friends in Egypt have been confined to prison and that they were so, and so and so».

« But I warned you a month and a half ago », I replied,

«Yes», he said.

I asked him if their Ambassador had conveyed the message and he said that he had. I told him that all I asked was two months, after which we could conclude the treaty, before the ASU National

Congress convened. But he replied : « Please, we have adopted a decision ».

« Very well », I said « I will sign the treaty tomorrow ». I ordered my Foreign Minister to sit with Gromyko and the treaty was drafted. I went to the People's Assembly and defended it and the Government ratified it. This was the climate in which the treaty was signed.

I must tell you one thing : Every individual in Egypt was against it, that is a fact and the Russians surely knew it.

I only ask you to view the TV covering the P.A. session, in which I submitted the draft-law to the People's Assembly, last week; every single person was against it. It was accepted because I told my people that it was in the interest of Egypt and that we wanted to eliminate all the doubts of the Russians, as at the time we had not fought our battle yet and they were the only party to supply us with aid and were in contact with us.

These were the circumstances of the treaty, and I was responsible for it. When I ascertained that this was the attitude of the Russians, especially after the Indian reply, and that my term of office would be ending soon, on October 1st, and that, practically, elections would start in August, I felt it (the treaty) weighing heavily on my conscience — to leave it to the country or a person (next President) coming in the near future to be exploited during the next ten years, as five years have passed out of the fifteen stipulated by the treaty. This is why my conscience pressed me to do something. I never reply to deeds. I always take the initiative and let others reply. This is the true story.

Question : Mr. President, with regard to the termination of your term of office, next October, you said that you will acquiesce to the will of the people.

President : I shall accept the will of the people despite the fact that I am still objecting and asking to be allowed to rest, after 34 years of involvement in politics, out of which ten years were spent in prisons and detention camps. This was for your sake, the sake of Germany as I was against the Western Allies. Are not 34 years of political work sufficient for any politician to retire and rest for a while ?

Question : Mr. President, you mentioned platforms. Is it not possible that within the foreseeable future, these platforms would become political parties ?

President : That is possible, since political parties are not formed by decree. It is by practice that parties are formed. The platforms will be starting their work in the near future, at once. Elections will be held in September. After practice, we may discover the need for another platform, or that we do not need a third forum etc. etc.

Question : You will be holding talks with your friends Mr. Willy Brandt and Mr. Bruno Kreisky who are party leaders.

President : Certainly, I shall hold talks. I shall go to my friend Bruno Kreisky and shall meet Mr. Brandt in Germany. But I will be going to see my friend Kreisky, especially, as his socialist system is most suitable for us, here. They have economic prosperity in Austria, this is what I want for my people, that type of socialism.

Question : Let us talk of parties. Do you think hazards may emanate from the extreme right and extreme left ? Do you think that the centre stands a good chance ?

President : I think the centre stands a very good chance. But that does not mean that we are not to be exposed to trouble from

the left and right wings. But I must tell you that we have a safety-valve constituted by the President of the Republic. Another safety-valve is the fact that the Arab Socialist Union will not be a party, but merely the frame-work within which the three platforms operate.

Question : How do you foresee coexistence with Israel, following Geneva or any other settlement of the main problem ?

President : To call it coexistence would be jumping to conclusions. What I may say is this --- We are now in a state of war with Israel. It has gone on for 27 years. When Israel withdraws from Arab territories and the State of Palestine rises, my idea is that we should end the state of war, officially, before the world, and let the next generation decide as regards relations. The state of war will have ended, and a new chapter could be turned. But with this legacy of bitterness, hatred, wars and bloodshed, we cannot reach coexistence.

Question : Can you find hope in the young generation of Israel ?

President : They should decide for themselves. I cannot decide for them. I can decide for myself and say that I am ready to conclude a peace treaty, officially, before the entire world. But I cannot tell what the next generation might do.

Question : Do you find any change in the attitude of the young generation in Israel ?

President : No, No. It is the same arrogance. There is no change at all; even after they were defeated in the October War.

Question : With regard to Egypt's position in the Arab world does it still play a leading part ? One is under the impression that Egypt no longer seeks a leading part among Arab countries.

President : This is exaggerated. I must tell you that following the October War, Egypt began to follow a new trend towards all problems, based upon reality and that there should be a new renaissance for the Arab world, which is actually taking place. The differences between us are not strategic. Not at all, Syria, ourselves and the various Arab nations have agreed on a two-point strategy in the summit conferences and should not compromise on tactics, but we are used to that. As for Egypt's part, I shall tell you that it has a leading part now and will have one in the future. Now we have freedom of movement and the ability to manoeuvre, because we are not isolated. We have good relations with America, Western Europe, our Arab brothers and the entire world. Even with the Soviet Union, we do not differ over the Middle East issue.

The difference between now and the past is that now we do not have a loud voice. In the past, we had a very loud voice, but we did very little. Now, we do a great deal. We push forward everything and enjoy freedom of movement everywhere.

Question : Mr. President, can you comment on the situation in Lebanon ?

President : It is truly regrettable. I must tell you frankly that I lay the responsibility on Lebanon leaders. Ten months ago I said : «Lift your hands off Lebanon», before anything had happened. My viewpoint is that they should agree on that. Whether the Soviets through Syria, offer arms to both fighting parties, or whether Syria interferes in the internal affairs of Lebanon, they will not succeed, since they cannot solve their own problems in their country, and with their people, as the Baath Party constitutes only 2%, because 98% of Syrians are not Baathists. How then can they settle the problems of Lebanon ? I lay the responsibility on Lebanese leaders starting with President Franjeh. He should adopt

a decisive measure. I wrote him more than ten letters urging him to do that.

Is his position more precious than the lives of the Lebanese, Lebanon itself and the independence and integrity of its territories? I am asking this question.

I had to swallow my pride with the Soviets several times, for the benefit of my people especially in 1971 when I said that this was 'the year of decision'. Brezhnev insisted to expose me before the whole world and would not sell arms to me. The entire Arab world attacked me for having said that and not having kept my promise. So I had to swallow my pride for the sake of my people and announced that we were exhausted.