

INTERVIEW

granted by

PRESIDENT ANWAR EL SADAT

to the « Expansion » French magazine

June 8, 1976

Question : You have announced that there will be no going back on the open-door policy, though some claim that the policy of economic liberation has only led to very limited results, all in the interest of the new rich class. What are your aspirations as regards the Egyptian economy ?

President : What I attempt to do is to set an example from what happened in Germany after the Second World War ; it was not only the government which had built the country anew, it was also the people of Western Germany who undertook this process of reconstruction. Small investors have come to us, wanting to establish projects that Egyptians can carry out, that is why we refused their investments. It is true we are facing tremendous difficulties in our economic system, but so far it is not yet too hopeless to set right. For instance, Egypt of 1980, will become for the first time an oil-producing country. Moreover, we expect to obtain new revenues from other sources in 1980, when we produce one million barrels of petroleum per day. Thus just one year after the reopening of the Suez Canal, our expectations have increased, since the Suez Canal revenues are expected to double during the coming four years.

The basic difficulty facing us results from the short term loans

the rate of interest of some of which reaches 20%. I have visited six of the sister Arab countries in the Gulf region, and they have approved of setting up a fund to help Egypt overcome the economic difficulties confronting it. I also discussed this question in Europe with the German Chancellor Schmidt and the French President D'Estaing. Whereas, in view of the extremely difficult economic situation, in Italy, the Italians would only offer us their know-how.

Question : Is economic reconstruction possible during the no war — no peace stage, and can Egypt obtain guns and butter ?

President : This is not only possible but it is also essential, for I cannot leave my country without defence. What would then be the use of building in the depth of country should Israel come one day and take our lands !

Question : Does Egypt own resources enough to face the economic problems and the social difficulties that may threaten the stability of the country without attempting to rely on the U.S. ?

President : We shall never resort to rely on anyone. Our major problem at present is the provision of food. All we need is adequate nutrition. Accordingly, I have actually commenced an immediate programme so that Egypt would achieve self-sufficiency in foodstuffs, with the exception of wheat which we have to import from abroad. As to whether the U.S. might or might not help us in this connection, this is of no concern to us because we are not subservient to anyone. Meanwhile, I am grateful to the government and the people of the U.S. for their increasing aid as well as the consortium set up in collaboration with Europe and Japan.

Question : Following the Sinai agreement, there were great expectations and hope for quick improvement of matters, while now there seem indications of lack of confidence since economic conditions have only slightly improved. How do you intend to remedy this lack of confidence ?

President
face difficult
I would have

Question
mean time,
austerity ?

President
really produc
principal pro
achieved. It is

Question
how do you p
gards to the f

President
strategically
it lies in the m
represents mo
tute part of t
sible, it is one

We are o
to this. This
our efforts wil
two years late
even in Leban

Question :
of political situ

President
become a poss
thought in the
of the Octobe

President : This is an absolutely false information. Yes, we do face difficulties, but we live in perfect serenity. Had it not been so, I would have taken measures in this respect.

Question : Is it possible to have the people produce while, in the mean time, a minority amasses wealth. What about the need for austerity ?

President : You have to see the masses for yourself, they are really producing. We have a long heritage and a lot of patience. Our principal problem is that no one sees what has in actual fact been achieved. It is only a matter of time.

Question : With the re-concentration on Egyptian nationalism, how do you perceive different reactions in the Arab world with regards to the fate of Egypt ?

President : Egypt is the heart of the Arab world, politically, strategically and historically ; from the civilisational point of view, it lies in the midst of the three continents of the world. Thus, Egypt represents more than the third of the Arab world. Since we constitute part of the Arab world, our fate and the Arab fate are indivisible, it is one and the same fate.

We are often attacked, every now and then, but we got used to this. This had and will always happen throughout history. But our efforts will never stop. Look at what happened : the Palestinians, two years later, came to understand facts in their true sense, and even in Lebanon, they now realise that I was right.

Question : How did the Sinai agreement lead to the reshaping of political situations in the area ?

President : Now, and after the lapse of 27 years, peace has become a possible fact. This led to what we call the resurrection of thought in the Arab world. Slogans and speeches are over. By virtue of the October war, we have restored faith in ourselves. We no

longer have any complexes. Those who raise their voices are still full of complexes. We are ready and prepared for peace, as we aspire to adopt a new way of thinking in dealing with problems and their treatment. But this needs time.

Henry Kissinger had visited me in November 1973 at the time when we embarked upon our efforts towards a just and peaceful solution. Kissinger is a man of deep insight, for I have assumed authority since 1952 as a member of the Revolution Council, as a Minister and Speaker of the People's Assembly and as a Vice President, and dealt with three American foreign ministers. The truth is that Kissinger is quite different from any of them, for he studies the problem in all its dimensions, then he chooses the proper way to its solution. The Arab-Israeli conflict is extremely complicated and has psychological aspects and a history of violence, bitterness, hatred, war and bloodshed. Since I started working with Kissinger under the rule of Nixon then Ford, we have achieved a great deal.

Question : Mr. President, you have mentioned that the Arabs are now the sixth international power. How does this power express itself ?

President : We have become the sixth power in the world for two reasons. First we proved ourselves in the fight, in the use of advanced weapons and in the electronic war. Second, we used the available weapons, namely the petroleum weapon. No one could have ever believed that the Arabs will impose a ban on petroleum ; there is also the increase in revenue as a result of raising its prices.

Question : What is the example that Egypt can give to the Third World ?

President : Politically, we are independent and opened towards all, from China in the Far East to the United States in the Far West. Economically, we are trying to attain an international standard. Mi-

litarily, v
the sour

The
system o
proved t
the whol
tions wit
to submi
parliamen
cratic sy
of the op
establish
are need
any dete
Constitut

Ques
in Egypt
Union th

Presi
fuse priv
papers w
views and
fere at a
made som
we were
to the old
whole wo
ownership
ying how
All aroun
newspaper

es are still
ace, as we
blems and

at the time
nd peaceful
ve assumed
ouncil, as a
as a Vice
nisters. The
hem, for he
s the proper
y complicat-
ence, bitter-
ng with Kis-
ved a great

he Arabs are
wer express

he world for
n the use of
we used the
e could have
oleum ; there
prices.

give to the

ened towards
the Far West.
standard. Mi-

litarly, we proved ourselves as brave fighters, and we diversified the sources of armament. But above all there is the democracy.

The Arab countries and the Third World have the one party system or the military coup d'état. In India, the many parties system proved to be premature and Mrs. Indira Gandhi is trying to change the whole system. In Egypt we established three political organisations within the Socialist Union, and these organisations are going to submit their programmes and candidates to the people in the parliamentary elections next October. We have started a true democratic system based on the rule of the majority and the existence of the opposition. But in the Third World the foundation is not yet established for the structure of democracy. A plan and regulations are needed. During the past five years in Egypt, we no longer had any detentions or detenees, not even during the war. We have the Constitution and the sovereignty of law and discipline.

Question : Does journalism truly represent the fourth authority in Egypt as long as it is under the influence of the Arab Socialist Union that appoints and changes the editors-in-chief as it wishes ?

President : We have a 100% journalism and we completely refuse private ownership in this field. At the time when our newspapers were privately owned, journalism used to reflect the owner's views and not the society's. Now, the Socialist Union does not interfere at all. No one is giving instructions to the editors-in-chief. I made some changes in key posts in the press because I found that we were living in the past and that some journalists were holding to the old system and pushing us back with them. I think that the whole world will reach a stage in which there will be no private ownership of the press. In England and Sweden they are now studying how to support the newspapers without touching their freedom. All around the world the advertisers control the privately owned newspapers.

Question : Egypt's experience with the Soviet Union was not a good one, what are the effects of the detente on the Middle East ?

President : I do not think that detente applies to this area. There is no detente in the Middle East between the two super states. Each of them wants to have the upper hand in the area. There is a misunderstanding between Egypt and the Soviet Union. But, I shall try not to aggravate the problems which began in 1972 when I made the Soviet experts leave Egypt. We disagree on two points ; re-scheduling the debts and the armaments. Since the October War I received nothing from the Soviet Union except for small quantities of weapons while the Soviet weapons are piling up in Syria and the American ones in Israel.

Question : Does the improvement in relations with the United States serve the relation between Egypt and the Soviet Union ?

President : We have a main principle in our foreign policy. We shall never throw ourselves in the super-states policy. The United States has been friendly and considerate to us, that is why it received the same treatment from us. Should the Soviet Union give us the same treatment, it will gain our friendship.

Question : How would you describe your relations with the United States ?

President : Our relation now is one of deep friendship and that was our aim. I have never asked the United States to neglect its relations with Israel. I only asked for an objective understanding. They have given us compassion but I now want their sympathy.

Question : You have often said that the United States holds 99% of the cards. What do you mean by that ?

President : Israel depends on the United States 100% in food, guns, Phantom planes and even in covering the deficit in the budget. The U.S. alone can impose pressure on Israel to convince those

arrogants to accept a peaceful solution to establish a permanent peace in this area.

Question : After the (S 130) planes, do you hope to obtain defensive weapons from the United States following the American elections ?

President : Certainly, I hope so. But if I do not obtain them I shall not confront the U.S. I have other sources in Western Europe.

Question : Egypt has lately signed a military and commercial agreement with China. What does this step mean ?

President : Our new relation with China is extremely encouraging. We shall mainly obtain the spare parts that will alleviate the problem of armament, for 90% of the weapons of Egypt are Soviet-made.

Question : Concerning organising the human wealth, do you think that there is something for Egypt to learn from the Chinese example ?

President : Yes, there is much to learn.

Question : Since Yugoslavia is a non-aligned country, can President Tito act as an intermediary between Egypt and the Soviets ?

President : I did discuss that matter with President Tito in Brioni and I asked him to tell the Soviets that we are willing to be their friends provided they take our policy just as it is, and President Tito is the only person alive of the four — Tito, Nehru, So-karno, Nasser — who formed the alliance of the non-aligned countries.

Question : How would you describe yourself, politically ? Are you a socialist ?

President : Yes I am a socialist, and I believe in equality of opportunities, of social insurance and of the necessity of putting an

end to exploitation of man. Moreover, I extended the system of insurance, the first of May, so as to secure pensions for 90% of our people ; we also have the system of scholarships in universities, which allows free education for students who obtain the highest grades. On the other hand, one of my daughters was incapable of entering the University because she did not obtain the grade average required. Land ownership should be strictly private and not public, for collective farming proved to be unsuccessful in the Eastern block.

Question : Concerning the liquidation of Nasserism in Egypt, do you reject the principle of socialism of Arab nationalism which Abdel Nasser called for ?

President : That is what the Soviets accuse us of, but it is a false accusation ; they use the name of Nasser against me, just the same as some others in the region, who oppose the policy of Egypt, exploit Nasser's name to defy me — but I do not care.

Question : Where does the Nasserite youth fit in the three political systems — are they rightists, leftists or centre ?

President : Those who believe themselves to be Nasserites belong to the centre, since this position adopts the principles of both the 23 July and the 15 May revolutions.

Question : Your Excellency will pay another official visit to Iran in June — In what way will Iran be able to assist Egypt ?

President : I am proud of what the Shah and myself have accomplished through the relations of our two countries. I am grateful for all the assistance I received from the Shah — for he gave me petroleum when I needed it, and gave us loans. Again Iran will participate in the international consortium to support us. It is high time for us in the Middle East to sit together and affirm to the super powers that the upper hand is ours.

Question : In your speech at the beginning of May, you reassured us of the support of Egypt to the Palestine Liberation Organisation since it is the sole representative of the Palestinians. What do you mean when you refer to the Palestinian entity ?

President : They are to have a homeland in the Gaza Sector and the Western bank.

Question : An independent nation ?

President : Yes. An independent nation.

Question : What are your conditions for peace, and what is your coming step ?

President : I will tell you my complete theory of peace. I request the summoning of the Geneva Conference with the participation of the Palestinians. I am positive the Israelis will put all the obstacles they can in our way; nevertheless we have to strive to allow the Palestinians to have their seat in Geneva, that means that we intend to achieve permanent peace. The Palestinians are the core of the problem, therefore we shall not be able to achieve permanent peace without their presence. It is not a matter of the occupied territories of Sinai or the Golan, it is much more than that it is the aspirations of the Palestinian people. So let all parties participate in Geneva for setting up the framework that can form the basis of an overall solution for the problem, and then set up a timetable according to the proposed framework, after the American elections.

If we are capable of putting an end to the war, consolidated by official guarantees for both sides, the Israelis and the Arabs, through the Security Council and the super powers, or anybody that Israel would require, we can pave the way for a true and permanent peace, and receive the acknowledgement of the whole world to end the war. Then my budget would not suffer any more from military burdens, as it is now.

Question : What do you mean by saying that resuming relations with Israel must wait for the coming generation, and to what extent are you ready to further this matter ?

President : We cannot immediately establish diplomatic and commercial relations after this heritage of blood-shed and violence such as Rabin lately asked for, it is an unjust method this imposition of their terms, but they have to be rational. Let our aim be putting an end to this war by means of guarantees, provided that the borders be those of 1967, and that the Palestinians obtain their right to have a homeland in Gaza and the Western bank. If we reach this goal, I believe our generation will then have succeeded in realising the solution for this cause, and true peace would then be achieved.

Question : Do you aim at obtaining atomic reactors from the U.S. ?

President : Yes, for the purpose of the desalination of sea waters and for generating electric power.

Question : How do you see Egypt in the 10 or 20 years to come, and what sort of heritage do you wish to leave behind for the generation of your sons ?

President : A nation of prosperity, in which everyone is socially insured. I suffered greatly all my life from lack of social insurance ; my kinsmen in the village are still suffering, and I wish to see Egypt reformed and living up to the modern standards of technology so that it may assume its role in the Middle East.

Question : The liberal democratic system is unstable all around the world, so do you believe in the spreading of totalitarian regimes ?

President : The totalitarian regime failed in our country ; I do not give advices — each person has to choose what is suitable for himself, and I do not wish anyone to impose anything upon me. We

shall
true d

Q
ones w
bank ?

Pr
derate
so tha
for the
Liberat

Qu
fore se

Pr
and the
upon o
Syria
problem

Qu
risk for
emphasi
stand ?

Pre
a provis
been rec
this need

Que
their Ar
rights. T
tion of e
participat

shall enjoy a system of governing and opposition in order to realise true diversity of views and opinions.

Question: Will the extremist Palestinians overcome the moderate ones within the framework of events in Lebanon and on the Western bank ?

President : Yes the extremists have already overcome the moderates. I asked President Ford and Dr. Kissinger to start a dialogue so that the moderates can take the lead, for it will be much easier for the Israelis when the U.S. sets out a dialogue with the Palestine Liberation Organisation.

Question : Is it possible to convene the Geneva Conference before securing peace in Lebanon ?

President : There are no obstacles on our part, and the U.S.S.R. and the U.S.A. are both ready to convene the Conference any time, upon our request. But I do not know what goes on in the mind of Syria and the Palestinians are preoccupied with the Lebanese problem, so we have to give them time.

Question : You have revealed to the world your will to run any risk for the sake of peace. Don't you think Yasser Arafat needs to emphasize his leadership through harmonising his private and public stand ?

President : I have advised the Palestinians, 4 years ago, to form a provisional government, and if they had, they would have now been recognized by the majority of the world — frankly speaking this needs time.

Question : Women in Egypt have much more freedom than their Arab sisters, even though they do not enjoy their full civil rights. The First Lady in Egypt persistently urges for the realisation of equality for women so as to allow them to have a bigger participation in public life. Some experts think that illiteracy, which

is now 70%, and population explosion, which increases yearly by 2.3%, cannot be solved unless we exploit all the capacities of women and let them enjoy their full civil rights, what is your opinion ?

President : I quite agree that the Egyptian woman enjoys much more rights, in some aspects, than in your country ; on the other hand, she still lacks other rights.

Question : What is your plan for allowing women their full rights ?

President : I will do all I can within the overall framework ; as for the details, I shall look into them later on.

Question : President Giscard d'Estaing has appointed a lady minister of State for women's affairs, so are you thinking of forming a similar post in your country ?

President : This is mere discrimination. Would I appoint a male minister to look after the affairs of man ? We have a lady minister for social affairs who obtained her law certificate from Paris ; besides we have many distinguished feminist leaderships.

Question : The first period of your presidency is about to end, so do you feel that your post as a president kept you in isolation ?

President : I am completely deprived of my freedom ; I long to go to restaurant or to go on an outing with my children ; I like to walk 4 or 5 kilometers daily, or go to the movie but I can't that. You cannot imagine how my people react when they see me out.

Question : The most severe critics of President Sadat cannot conceal their admiration for his courage to endure risks for the sake of peace. Others see that Sadat has not yet achieved his aspirations for Egypt ; moreover the presidency has deprived him from obtain-

ing dive
you orga

Pres
nisations
General
Foreign
Vice-Pres

I beg
team wor
I would li
leader.

Quest
were expos

Presid
because I h
and since th
keep my sto

Questio
a long time
life ?

Presiden
in jail forms
in a cell 1 1
to do any re
mission. I dic
the period of
an ordinary h

ing diverse opinions and views of non-political counsellors ; how do you organise your work and do you have a team of intellectuals ?

President : Yes I have quite a number of chairmen at our organisations, the Prime-Minister, Speaker of the People's Assembly, the General Secretary of the Arab Socialist Union, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Commander of the Armed Forces and the Vice-President.

I began to collect my breath since 1975 ; I now have a fine team working with me ; I also have oppositions, of which I am glad. I would like to set up many leaderships to avoid my being the sole leader.

Question : You look your best despite the circumstances you were exposed to last year, so how is your health today ?

President : I am in good health — I cannot eat whatever I like because I have to preserve my countenance and always look healthy, and since the state of stomach is reflected upon the mind, I have to keep my stomach in good shape.

Question : You have been humbly brought up, and also spent a long time in prison, how did these early experiences affect your life ?

President : What I learned in the collective detention camp and in jail forms the basis of my entire view of life. I spent 31 months in a cell 1 1/2 meters by 2 ; in the first year I was not permitted to do any reading or writing, but later we were granted this permission. I did a lot of reading and learned many languages. During the period of suffering in my cell, I learned to live what I read. I was an ordinary human being before going to prison.