

I N T E R V I E W

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by

PRESIDENT ANWAR EL SADAT

to Italian T.V., Channel I.

April 8, 1976

Question : Mr. President, at the inception of your trip to Italy, can you tell us something about the Italian-Egyptian relations, their development, as well as about your aspirations concerning the consolidation of cultural cooperation ?

President : Before I say anything, I would like to seize this opportunity to convey, through T.V. to the people and government of Italy my personal gratitude and that of the Egyptian people. Perhaps, you remember that after the 1967 war, all the European countries joined in boycotting us, with the exception of Italy. Italy continued its cooperation with us; since then, it offered us loans and helped us overcome the difficulties which confronted us following the 1967 defeat. This is what calls me to express our appreciation for the Italian people, and we shall never forget the feelings shown by Italy towards us. I am also happy to meet again with my friend President Leone, who visited Egypt and extended his invitation to me to visit Italy. Moreover, I wish to get better acquainted with the Italians, particularly your leaders, because there are mutual interests, to both of us, since we both belong to the Mediterranean Sea, and since as I mentioned, Italy showed

its readiness to help us in times of hardship and distress, in addition to your numerous potentialities in the field of technology which we need in the re-building of our State.

Finally, there is a broad field for cooperation between the two countries in various spheres.

Question : Egypt assumes a significant role in the Middle East crisis. During the last few months, we noticed that the efforts exerted in an attempt to reach a settlement are often obstructed by the keenness of all parties not to move too far from their basic attitudes. What is your opinion in this connection ?

President : Egypt plays a leading role in the Arab world and in the Middle East. This is a historic fact that will always be maintained in the future for several reasons, among which the population of the Egyptian people represents the third of the Arab human power, in addition to our geo-political position, our richness, technical cadres and the system of education applied in our country. Suffice it to say that we have seven universities.

You can add to this, the fact that, since the 19th century we have had links binding us with Europe, and we preceded the other Arab countries in this connection, as we had particular relations with both France and Italy.

Today, the field of manoeuvre has become noticeably broader before us, since at present we have better relations with all, and particularly with the Arab world. These relations should not be affected by disagreements currently existing within the Arab world, since we have become used to them by now. But I hope that due consideration is given, and frankly that there are no disagreements among us as regards the strategy we agreed on at the Arab summit conferences, the latest of which was the one held in Rabat. This two-point strategy can be summed up in the following :
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Second : no compromise on the rights of the Palestinians. We all agree on these two points, but every now and then, disagreements arise with respect to the appropriate tactics. Syria, for example, under the pressure of the Soviet Union, complains of the US effecting the first and second disengagement agreements on the Sinai front, and the first disengagement agreement on the Golan Heights. The Soviets believe these agreements would cause them to be isolated, that is why they incite the Syrians, and the Palestinians to rigidity, while they attempt the same thing with Jordan, nowadays.

But I am sure that their game will soon be revealed, whereas the most dangerous thing is that the Soviets have started to provoke disturbances in the Arab world, and this is what we do not approve it, we objected to it even prior to the October War. Before the battle, we were one Arab family. It is for this very reason that we came out victorious, and became the sixth power in the world. We discovered our ability to merge as a political and a military force with the same family spirit, we would use the energy weapon. Let me repeat that strategically we are in accord, but we only differ in the tactics applied. Whatever difficulties we might face in the future, we have a clear vision and a clear strategy to pursue step by step and which has proved its effectiveness up till now.

Question : What is your evaluation of the world situation ? What are the regions likely to explode and which cause more worry than others ? What is the duty of the two super-powers, the Soviet Union and the United States, in this respect ?

President : No doubt, the Arab-Israeli conflict in the M.E. is the gravest problem facing the world or in other words, the two super-powers at present. This makes it a two-fold problem the pacification policy on the one hand and the cold war on the other. This is the most dangerous and the most difficult of problems.

Question : What about Lebanon ?

President : Certainly, Lebanon constitutes part of the Arab world and the Middle East. Consequently, it falls within the scope of the problem we previously talked of. Thus, the Lebanese problem is just an outcome of all that is happening in the Middle East.

Question : Are you optimistic with regards to the future of humanity, or do you find the time suitable to resort to pragmatism, that is, to deal with every problem respectively ?

President : I have always been convincingly optimistic whilst as you know, some of my chancellors are extremely pessimistic, but I told them that I am optimistic, and will forever be so. Events have proved me right because despite the problems raised by the Watergate scandal, and despite the obstacles which caused the delay of the implementation of the second disengagement agreement for almost a whole year. Having reached it, peace efforts went forward. Therefore, I am undoubtedly optimistic.

Question : Last March 13, you abrogated the agreement concluded three years ago with the Soviet Union, what is the truth about this abrogation ?

President : You mean the 'Treaty' ?

Question : Yes.

President : Well, things took place as follows. Since the October War, nearly two years ago, the Soviet Union stopped supplying us with arms and even refused to sell us what would compensate our losses in the battle.

In the mean time, it continued to supply Syria with equipment, replacing not only the weapons they used up in war, but they also sent it more modern arms than what they previously had. The same attitude was adopted by the US in connection with Israel which

received aids and replacements for all it had lost during the war. As for us, the Soviet Union categorically refused to supply us with anything since ceasefire, and up to the present day.

We thought that sooner or later the Soviet Union would understand our position, accordingly, we endeavoured to increase contacts to exchange viewpoints. For example, in 1974, it was agreed that our Foreign Minister would visit the USSR, but two days before the fixed date of the visit, the Soviets cancelled it, postponing it to October of the same year. When our Foreign Minister went on time, it was then agreed that Brezhnev would visit Egypt in January 1975. To my great surprise, later in December 1974, I received a message from Brezhnev in which he requested me to send both the Minister of War and the Foreign Minister, and I did.

It is then that Brezhnev apologized to them that he would not be able to carry out his expected trip in January.

Subsequently, he sent us some of the weapons due for delivery in 1973/1974 and then he stopped. Thus, instead of Brezhnev's visit, they sent us some of the arms, after which we were left with nothing for a whole year since February 1975. During this period, I made several attempts with India, for, as you know, India belongs to the non-aligned group. That is why I resorted to it for the spare parts I needed after the Soviet Union had ceased supplying us with planes' motors. For instance, they used to say then that the name of Egypt is not included in the supply list for 1975/1976. Well, this meant that every machine or plane in need of a spare part should if the latter is not obtained be set aside and remain unused. This was what made me contact India. So I sent a message to its Head of Government who informed me that she had to contact the Soviet Union before taking a decision and this exactly what happened. Four months later, shortly before addressing the Parliament I received the Indian reply, which can be ex-

pressed in the following : « We are sorry. The Soviet Union refused to supply you with any spare parts for your equipment », this is how the situation was seriously and dangerously developing since it was evidently clear that the Soviet Union was pressuring me and is doing the same thing regarding the economic aspect, for they refused to grant me an adequate period of grace to settle our debts, knowing full well the extremely difficult economic situation we were in. From the military point of view, they reached the point of preventing non-aligned countries from providing us with the spare parts necessary for our equipment. This is in addition to the fact that at the Communist Party (Congress) held in Moscow last February, Brezhnev announced that he regards the agreement concluded with Egypt as the tool governing the Soviet-Egyptian relations. He then made some statements which we consider to be an interference in our internal affairs.

These were the reasons, with the Indian reply in particular which made me explain to my people, to the Arab world and to the world at large, the point we have reached. Therefore, I could not wait for another year and a half, because during this period all the Soviet weapons we have will eventually become unfit for use. Hence my full record of facts before the Parliament, the body which abrogated the Treaty. I state that our normal relations with the Soviet Union shall be maintained, relations, which if the Soviet Union wants to keep up we will be most happy to, since we do not want to create problems with anyone.

Question : Can you tell us something about Peking's decision concerning the offering of unconditional assistance to Egypt ?

President : Have you read about it today ?

Question : Yes, just today.

President : I mentioned in the course of my previous talk that,

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last year, when the Soviets refused to answer our requests, I ad-
dressed the same requests to both India and China, because I know
that China manufactures the same kind of Mig planes, and they
sent me 30 Mig planes, several thousands of spare parts and light
weapons.

When I asked them to send me more spare parts and that I
was ready to pay for them, their answer was that their offer is
a gift because they are not arms merchants.