

INTERVIEW

given by

PRESIDENT ANWAR EL SADAT

to the « Times » newspaper

June 4, 1976

Question : Mr. President, do you think there is any chance of further movements towards peace in the Middle East in the rest of this year or are we deadlocked now ?

President : Well, it is a pity really because we could have achieved something this year but unfortunately it is the Arab position which is hindering this, and not one of the two super powers. Because, you know, if I asked tomorrow for Geneva to convene the two super powers would agree. We convened in December, 1973. I mean Geneva convened, and started working, but because Syria did not come we did not continue. After that, came the first disengagement on the Egyptian front and the first disengagement on the Syrian front.

In spite of any difference between us and the Soviet Union they agree with us that the proper place for the peace is Geneva, and the same thing with the United States, but because of the party manoeuvres in Syria it appears that they are not ready, because one day they say they are ready and the next day they say we shant's go. It is always two-faced policy. There are also the Palestinians — they are as you know, very, very strong — and as I have always

said it will not be possible to achieve any peace without the Palestinians.

As 1976 is the year of elections in America and all of us know the American system, we know that the American administration will always be paralysed until the elections. Without understanding and without real efforts from the United States we cannot come to a peaceful solution because of the arrogance of the Israelis. They provide them, as you know, with everything starting from bread and butter to guns. They even send them the deficit in their budget.

I thought at one time that we could spend 1976 in Geneva working with the Palestinians — I know this would have needed a battle with the Israelis in Geneva to bring the Palestinians to participate — but we were ready to take all this and with some help from the public opinion we should have achieved this. The Palestinians would have joined us in Geneva and during 1976 would have made a frame for the global solution.

When the American elections are ended, and early in 1977, I think America could be in a position to start to exert this effort and help us all in putting this framework in such a shape. In this also I have said, and the Soviet Union agreed lately at the Party Congress last February, that Britain and France should join in the guarantees. Before, they used to refuse this. Both the Soviet Union and the United States were adamant against anyone joining them, but suddenly last February in the Congress Party of the Soviet Union I found Brezhnev saying that he had no objection at all that England and France should join in the guarantees.

Question : Your relations with the Soviet Union have become quite distant and quite fairly strained, haven't they ?

President : Strained, very strained.

Questions : And you have entered into a new relationship with

China. Do you think that this trend of close relations with Europe and the United States and China and strained relations with the Soviet Union is likely to continue or to be reversed ?

President : Well, really, I am doing my best. Even in my speech on May 1, I said I did not want to escalate any situation between me and the Soviet Union. All I ask the Soviet Union is this. To accept us as we are and not as they would like to have us. Lately, my Minister of Commerce has been there. When Marshal Grechko, for whom we have great respect, died the Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of War went to his funeral. I am doing my best not to escalate anything with the Soviet Union and I think it will work. They should take us as we are. We refuse guardianship and we refuse any other interference and we want to work on an equal level. We want to have the best relations. But the treaty and other facilities have ended. This is a chapter that has been completely ended. I am not giving you, or the French, or the United States facilities, or a treaty like they had. That is what I try to tell them. I don't want to have any difficulties with a big power or a small power, it is not in my interest at all.

Question : In your domestic economy you are running into quite considerable difficulties aren't you at the present moment ? People also tell me that it is very difficult to get the investment which has been going into buildings, new hotels and things like that to go into the productive sector of the economy ?

President : No. Not at all. In my plan I am now concentrating on investment. Take for example today. I have seen you before I leave for the Western Desert because I am aiming to start a big industrial complex. There will be three big complexes. One in the Western Desert, one in the Suez Canal area and the third in Guiza here.

I am concentrating on food problems. I shall be importing wheat, but with new technology I hope I shall be self-supporting in two

years. I am concentrating on this. I am not asking at all for other projects now. For instance, we were planning for petrochemicals. Saudi Arabia is starting petrochemicals with Union Carbide.

But why should we start petrochemicals ? Let us concentrate on the agro-industrial complex and improving our production in food. This would be my concern in the next two years.

We have another two fertilizer factories. By the end of 1976 we shall be self-supporting in fertilizers. There is another project, a joint venture near Alexandria on the gases from the sea that we found in Aboukir — but all this will be exported. Starting from 1977 and 1978 we shall be exporting fertilizer. I shall be concentrating on agro-industrial and food problems in the first place, some fertilizers because we are an agricultural country, sugar, all that is related to food, and I shall be postponing all other projects, but it does not mean that we shall be having very big projects.

From America they are negotiating now with us for some projects and Port Said is a completely free city — free resort. We will be starting a huge project in the Free Zone in Suez which will serve the Red Sea and the Suez Gulf. We are not short of investments.

It has nothing to do with confidence. If you meet the Prime Minister he can tell you about hundreds of millions of dollars here that have already been signed and are on their way to work. For instance, this year we shall be having more than eight prefabricated factories for an ambitious programme in Cairo, and it will be fulfilled by the end of this year. We shall be having 15,000 flats as a first priority, I don't know if you have visited the Canal Zone.

Question : No, I have not had a chance.

President : Well, one needs to have a look there. Really the Suez Canal is functioning itself. No, there have been rumours that we lack so and so ; that there is no confidence. Do not believe it because we have more than we can absorb, but as I told you I am concentrating

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Question : Is there a difficulty in fitting together your open-door policy and bringing in foreign investment and the principle which I saw you reaffirmed in a recent speech, of keeping Egypt as a socialist economy. Can those two things fit together ?

President : Yes. Actually it is a completely new experiment but I have seen some glimpses of it in Austria. We have a very big public sector here with assets of more than Lst. 7,000m. What I am aiming at is to give 30 per cent to the private sector, and keep 70 per cent for the public sector. If we can reach this, our country will be prosperous. I have seen this experiment in Austria. Their public sector is 65 per cent, the private sector 35 per cent, but very active.

You can't imagine the prosperity in spite of the fact that they are small, and to a certain extent they are not rich. They have no seas. They are in the heart of Europe but still you cannot imagine what is happening. I have seen a glimpse of it and I really was amazed at such prosperity. So that is what I am aiming to do.

We shall be keeping our public sector because we have built it with sweat and blood. But I shall be encouraging the private sector to reach 30 per cent.

This will make balance, and it will give some incentive to the public sector to straighten its ways and to improve its production so that we can't go the way we have gone before. It was not a Marxist system and it was not an open door system. It was something you may call chaos in planning. That is what I am suffering now — chaos from planning.

I am trying to straighten our economy and put it on an international level whatever it costs me. My Arab colleagues are helping. Since I have recently visited the six Arab states, they will be raising a fund for us. America with Germany, Japan and Iran will also be

raising a consortium. This year from America's 750 million dollars, 250 is for this consortium. Iran has helped. Chancellor Schmidt, of West Germany, has agreed to help but we shall be waiting until the elections next October.

I have no complaint but it is patience that we need and I am telling my people this. We have at least four very hard years to come until 1980.

The oil we have already found under the Suez Gulf will produce a billion barrels a day in 1980. But I have another 22 concessions in the whole western desert and the Delta here because we found gas in the desert. As I told you, we started our fertilizer production on it. That is in the centre of the Delta and in Aboukir. We have a very rich gas plant here in the Western Desert. The pipeline has already reached Cairo from the south and we shall be using it for all the factories here to economize on our diesel consumption.

There are great prospects here. Great prospects. But I shall concentrate on the agro-industrial food problem to solve it in two years. Other essential materias like fertilizers, cement, sugar, we already have. As you know, aluminium production has started in Upper Egypt.

Question : I am very interested to read about the political developments and your plan for political forums. How rapidly do you think that is likely to happen ?

President : I told them that we shall be having a multi-party system because this is the only way to democracy. We have started three platforms at the centre, the right and the left. They are now preparing their programmes and this year we shall be having two elections : the Presidential election and the Parliament elections because the five years end next November. The three platforms are now called organizations. They are preparing their programmes to put before the people and in the next election that will take place

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next October they will be nominating their deputies for the elections. I think after that everything will function.

Question : Would you expect that, at some stage in the future, your Presidential system would become rather like the American ; that each of the three organizations would, perhaps, nominate a candidate for the Presidency ?

President : Well, our Constitution states that the President is nominated by at least one third of the members of the parliament and agreed upon by two-thirds. If he is agreed upon in the parliament by two-thirds, he will be put before the plebiscite. In the parliament more than one can be nominated or can find one-third of the deputies to nominate him. The man who takes the majority of two-thirds will go to the plebiscite. We should not jump or leap in the dark. We still have this problem — illiteracy and so on, and as I told them, in my theory we shouldn't make the choice of the President a matter of struggle. On the contrary it should be a safety valve for all the organizations and he should not belong to any organization after he is appointed or elected by the people to guard the whole experience.

Question : And you have brought political imprisonment to an end altogether, haven't you ?

President : Since five years ago. No concentration camps at all. No political internees. Even those who were condemned in courts I released except five or six from the centres of power of May, 1971.

Question : But they were trying to organize a coup, weren't they ?

President : Yes, they were. Some of my aides do not agree with my view and they discuss everything with me. I permit the difference of opinion but as I told them in 1971, I do not permit at all a struggle for power because this will be against our national aspira-

tions, especially then, when the Israelis were on the canal shore just near here.

Question : Could I ask you a military question ? You have been responsible for the successful conduct of what is, perhaps, the most modern war. What are the chief lessons you draw from that experience ?

President : Militarily or politically ?

Question : I was thinking militarily because of the lessons that must apply throughout strategy given the new conditions and the new weapons that now exist.

President : There are lots of lessons. The first is that we have entered what you call the missile era. We had a theory in our military training. It was that you shouldn't let soft forces face armour. Soft forces mean soldiers, whatever they are. We have ended this theory because my commanders, in the first instant after the air strike launched by the Vice-President — who was at that time Commander in Chief of our air force and now one of the five big heroes of the war — all the communications centres, everything was damaged very severely. My commanders immediately crossed the canal with the antitank missiles and they faced the armour against all the theories that we have been trained upon, and the whole world is training upon up to this moment, and in four days Israel, as they have already admitted, lost 400 tanks before the big tank battles.

We are in the missile era, either small missiles, that is handheld, against the tanks, or the missile that is on the tank or on the armoured vehicles. Also, ground to air missiles deprived Israel of its supremacy.

Before the war it was not superiority, it was supremacy because they have Phantom and Mirage jets. I have got the MiG 21. If you compare these two types you will be astonished. In the MiG 21 the

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pilot has nothing except the compass. No facilities at all. In the Mirage, in the Phantom, in your planes, the Jaguar also, everything is computerized for the pilot. If he enters a missile zone there will be a lamp to tell him. If anyone is going to attack him from behind another lamp will tell him. He just puts a card in the computer. It will take him to the place where he is going. It will tell him to drop the bomb. It will bring him back to his airport. But all this is done, believe me, up till this moment in the MiG 21 and all the Soviet military gear, by the pilot. Very primitive.

So, when I tell you that Israel has air supremacy not superiority it is true. On the third day the Israelis issued an official order for their pilots not to approach the Canal area because, in the first three days, they suffered very heavy damages. One third of their Phantoms and everything they boasted of came down because of the ground to air missiles. And they were not up-to-date. They were Sam I and Sam II. Sam III is up-to-date. Sam IV's also very up-to-date and very efficient but Sam I and Sam II are very old. There is another lesson in this war. You remember in the Second World War they said that the biggest tank battle was at Kirsck in the Soviet Union ?

Question : Yes.

President : Five hundred tanks engaged each other and they said this was the biggest tank battle. Well, in the 17 days war in October, 1973, the casualties were 3,000 tanks from three sides, mine, Israel and Syria. I lost 500 ; 2,500 were lost by the Israelis and the Syrians. Most of them by the Syrians because in one day. in their retreat they lost 1,200. They said so officially.

Israel lost more than 1,000. I lost 500 only and if I had not had to start the second stage earlier because of the serious situation, I would have lost less than that. With the most severe and vicious

tank battles the Israelis will tell you about they never dreamt of this. So the modern war needs thousands of tanks.

We learnt lots of lessons from this war. Again, the theory of the Atlantic wall and defensive lines has been proved to be wrong. The Bar-Lev line was built according to the Atlantic wall strategy since the Israelis are fascinated by the German tactics and strategy. Up to now they have adopted the Blitzkreig way. This is their system. The Bar-Lev line was built exactly like the Atlantic wall that was built by Hitler. Three lines. Even the reserves — exactly a copy of the Atlantic wall, but it has been proved that it is just like Siegfried line or like the French line in the Second World War — Maginot. It has also been proved that whatever changes there will be in the tactics of war or in the weapons, still the man, the soldier, is the conqueror of the battle.

Question : But technically, then, the best defence is likely to be a mobile screen of missiles rather than a big concrete fixed position ?

President : Quite right. But you should have both. For example, we have this small anti-tank that was taken by hand by my commanders, when they rushed to the eastern bank and occupied the platforms that the Israelis were preparing for their tanks to defeat us if we crossed the Canal. They immediately occupied it and they shot the tanks at a range of four kilometres. At the same time, as I told you, we have this same missile on armoured vehicles — Russian ones.

So you have to have both — the static and the self-propelled missiles. It will be a very, very, very costly war, the next war because of this, and also because of the new electronic warfare that we have already seen used. Lots of changes should take place in all the academies of war. But it has proved at the end the soldier, the man, the human being, is the important factor in everything.

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