

INTERVIEW

given by

PRESIDENT ANWAR EL SADAT

to Abdel Moneim El Sawi,

Chairman of the Board of Directors of

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Since the very first moments of assuming power in Egypt, President Anwar El Sadat believed in the future.. The past has become a history, and more important than to deal with the past is to aspire towards the future.

For the future came the Rectification Revolution in May 1971, and an insurance for the Future was the great October War..

Therefore, my first question to President Anwar El Sadat was on the Future. About his vision of the future the President said:

President : I believe in public freedoms for all citizens, chief among which is freedom of expression, as well as insuring all citizens against fear, need and anxiety. During my life time I was exposed to all kinds of persecution.. So, my main concern was to protect every citizen against the sufferings I was exposed to.

I was hopeful that people would be satisfied with the measures I took in implementation of the May Revolution, such as establish-

ing the principles of democracy and sovereignty of the law, then I can retire and lead my personal life as any free citizen in any free country, but I found myself required to continue assuming my responsibilities, contrary to what I wished.

Question : Your continuation at the head of the State is one of the guarantees of freedom, democracy and sovereignty of the law.

President : The guarantee of freedom is freedom itself, its practice. . . People are free by nature, and their adherence to freedom comes from within them first and foremost. . . Had freedom not been genuine in this people, the Rectification Revolution of May 1971 would not have succeeded. If I am ever proud of anything, it is that by this Revolution I uncovered the genuine and true mettle in the nature of the Egyptian people.

Question : But the people need you to further confirm the meanings of freedom, so that no alien and unbelieving current would pounce on these democratic gains . .

President : (Sighing deeply) What can I say. . . I am relying on God alone in what I am embarking on. . .

Question : Would you, Mr. President, give us your opinion on the nature of freedom and its proper course ? Some people are tired of freedom because of the many differences in opinion it arouses . . Some officials see that freedom has widely opened the door for criticism, some of which is really bitter. . . Some readers see that depriving people of freedom for a long time has made its practice go beyond all limits. .

President : Do all those people conceive of any other substitute for freedom ? The opposite of freedom is despotism. . . So, would they imagine that despotism could be a substitute for freedom ? If

people check themselves, they will accept freedom whatever its hazards, and will prefer it to any other substitute.

Freedom should either be full, or not be at all . . . Those who think that freedom should be conditioned, are mistaken . . . Freedom within a framework of conditions is of no value, and does not build up society as required. It is better for all of us to accept extravagance in the practice of freedom, rather than sacrifice it in fear of extravagant or exaggerated practice.

Question : What about freedom of the press, Mr. President ? Perhaps all the observations about freedom are mainly caused by a wide-scale practice of freedom on the pages of newspapers?

President : When I decided to cancel censorship, I meant to restore freedom of expression, and to make people live in an atmosphere of freedom so that they would not presume that only their opinions are correct and those of others are wrong. Any opinion may be right or wrong, and there is no way to discriminate between right and wrong except through free discussion and publishing these opinions to the people . . . Then, people will find themselves faced with more than one opinion and more than one trend, and they start to be convinced of the most correct opinion amongst the many they have to choose from.

This was my opinion since the May 1971 Revolution, and had it not been for the battle I was preparing for, and which required us all to have self-control, patience, and alertness, I would not have hesitated ever since that day to cancel censorship on the press. When we waged the battle and achieved victory, the first measure to take was cancelling censorship on the press.

Question : I would like to say something Mr. President, not in prejudice to my profession, but to complete our talk about freedom . . . You had stated that the press is a fourth authority . .

President : It is the authority of popular control, guidance and criticism in expression of the people's interests.

Question : And when it is owned by the Arab Socialist Union Mr. President, how can the elements of completion of this authority be realised ?

President : Ownership is something, and the limits of authority is something else. The A.S.U. ownership of the press institutions does not prevent authority from completing or performing its task in deepening the democratic concept safeguarding the social structure and fusing established values in the general being.

Question : This means that it will be free in directing criticism, even to the Arab Socialist Union itself.

President : There is no one above criticism as long as it is an objective criticism. When criticism deviates from its main task it becomes a kind of slander, no one could be above questioning.

In brief, since nobody is above criticism, no criticism is above questioning. This rule is enough to ensure the people's control over their institutions, and provides objectivity of criticism for the institutions. Going beyond the limits in both cases is subject to professional measures, or could be referred to court if necessary.

Question : Speaking of courts, Mr. President, what do you think of justice to judges ?

President : I believe that a just judiciary system is the only guarantee for sovereignty of the law. It is unfair to ask judges to be just, honest and straightforward without providing them with suitable life within the available resources.

Question : The Government is scared that if it amends the cadre of the judiciary, it will be pressured to do the same for private cadres..

President : I wish we could have satisfied all people, whether those who grade in private cadres or in the general cadre. However, the question is that of available resources, there will be priorities within the limits of available resources.

Question : I would like to be frank with you, Mr. President, and tell you my own notions in this subject . . . Competition to obtain privileges should not divert our attention from certain facts . . . Judges, for instance, are required not to have another job but the judiciary . . . They cannot afford to do any other extra work . . . For example, they cannot afford to be experts in some sectors, because if they do so, it will be against judiciary itself, whereas many other activities are open before other specialisations. This implies that means of additional gain are granted to others and not to judges. This difference makes of the judge a full-timer in his job and it cannot be otherwise out of respect for the sanctity of the judiciary, and out of solicitude for justice . . . Therefore, competition becomes meaningless, and the demands to apply the privileges obtained by judges elsewhere, are very inadequate . . . Those who are asking for the privileges of judges may put themselves in a situation where they would need the judge's justice, and they will find that this justice grants the judge rights and security in order to insure his fairness. Therefore, such guarantees are not personal as much as they are objective and related to the nature of his work . . .

President : All this is true, and at the end the judge is required to rise above and overcome any whim or trend . . . He is required to be ascetic, not to have greed and to abstain from additional gain . . . The just judiciary which is convinced of the guarantees of justice is, at the end, the balance of society.

Question : Then, it is obvious, Mr. President, that the judge's complaint will find its way to solution ?

President : Any justified complaint will find its way to solution.

Question : What about platforms, Mr. President ? Public opinion is still waiting for a clear opinion with regard to platforms..

President : Platforms mean giving opportunity to every opinion to express itself in confidence and assurance, and through legitimate and constitutional channels. As long as we agree that we should be committed to a minimum of basic principles in building up our society, there is no harm if we differ otherwise. I, personally, have no doubt that we are all keen to achieve the country's higher interest.. Competition among opinions in search for realising this interest is a legitimate one .. We cannot close the door in the face of any personal interpretation, as we also cannot presume a certain trend to be the only right one. The problems from which the society suffers, are exposed to the study of all. No one amongst us would not welcome the study of these problems in the hope of reaching the best solutions. This is democracy as I understand it..

As long as majority's opinion will prevail at the end, and democratic application necessitates that the minority should yield to the majority's opinion, there is no fear of anything.

Question : But studies on public opinion do not presume the majority to remain so forever..?

President : This is also true.. One of the pillars democracy is proud of is that it leaves the door open before all those working in public affairs and political practice to try and convince the masses. If any of them can reach the masses, and win the majority through logic and conviction, and affording them equal opportunities, then, the minority must listen to him, and yield to the masses' changed attitude.

Question : With this concept, Mr. President, those who study the question of platforms should not presume that there is a permanent majority, and other minorities should express themselves through platforms..

President : If platforms are embracing all currents, adequacy between them mainly shows the extent of effectiveness and power of persuasion of each on public opinion.

Question : And what about those who apprehend that platforms might be a kind of retreat from the principles of the July Revolution ?

President : If the rules of commitment among all platforms stipulate adherence to the Revolution principles, why the apprehension? Retreat from the principles of the Revolution makes the platform which does so lose its legality.

Question : What about political practice? would it remain limited within the framework of the Arab Socialist Union, the membership of which has become voluntarily ?

President : No one can ban interest in public causes or political practice.. We are all partners in laying down the plans of our actions and reaping their fruit.. There only remains the question of organising this process so that such a stage would not cause deviations that are very much against its nature.. This task is entrusted to the committee of hundred when it starts assuming its responsibilities.

Question : One more thing the people are wary of, Mr. President, they are scared those platforms will be turned into parties..

President : When we initiate a step on the path of democratic action, I think it is safer to, first, give it all the elements of success, the development will be in the light of the outcome of this

experience. So why should we be wary as of now? We begin a democratic step, and if it succeeds, and the masses are convinced of it, it will have our blessings. . . If the masses wish it to develop in the form of parties, no one has the right to object to the people's desire to develop their political organs in the way they find better, and are convinced of. All I hope for is that our development will always be through democratic channels, free dialogue, and the masses' conviction of what is best for their interests.

Question : Would you allow me, Mr. President, to ask for more information about the explosive situation in Lebanon?

President : It is a very unsatisfactory and disagreeable situation. It is a matter of grave concern specially if we realise that its effects are not limited to Lebanon alone, but its danger extends to every spot of the Arab world. . . I am still fully convinced that the solution of the crisis is in the hands of the Lebanese themselves, and it is up to them to put an end to the conflict if they rid themselves of personal purposes and whims, and rise to the level of overall national thinking, away from any alien factors that are benefitting from the conflict. The good of the Lebanese people is of great interest to us, and national unity on the land of Lebanon is very dear to us. . . The settlement of any dispute with the Palestinian resistance is a must imposed by Arab reality. . . Therefore, the Arab nation is in a constant state of alertness to confront a war it might be dragged in at any moment.

In the light of all this, I still hope that the conflicting parties in Lebanon may come to their senses and realise the danger surrounding and threatening the entire Arab nation.

Question : What about the situation in Angola, Mr. President?

President : I am against foreign intervention in any Arab or African land, as much as I support the struggle of the peoples of

Africa for liberation and independence. Rupture in the liberation movements is a matter of grave concern to us, because the foundation of independence emerges from unity of struggle and the militants' solid stand in face of external conspiracies.

These are the main outlines of our general policy which we adopt with regard to any struggle. . . We wish the African fighters in Angola would unite so that grudges would not spread among their ranks, and weaken their struggle especially as the foreign powers which support them are fully aware of this fact. . . Foreign intervention does not serve the national liberation causes as much as it causes split in the militant's ranks.

Question : Would you, please, tell me about youth, and their role in shouldering the responsibilities for the future ?

President : The youth are always the hope, and makers of the future. . . It is their right to ask our generation to inform them of the details of national action so that whenever the trust is handed over to them, they will be worth of it. In this context, I believe in two facts: First, to prepare our youth, to bear the responsibilities of the future. Second, the responsibilities of building up our society should be distributed among the successive generations. In this way, the sons of our generation would assume the responsibility of preparing the youth, for the future, and the youth will bear the responsibility of the trust given to them, with confidence and appreciation. . . The link between generations is a must so that the chain of work for building up the society would not be disconnected. . . If the monopoly of one generation over national action is **unacceptable**, the rejection of the accomplishments of our predecessors may cause a breach in the march of history.