Visit of President Sadat of Egypt

President of the United States and President Sadat of Egypt
Dinner Honoring the Egyptian President. April 4, 1977

President Carter. First of all, I'd like to

Thank you. I am very grateful I am to all the Members of the Congress and distinguished guests who have come here tonight to be with us
to honor one of my very close, personal friends.

I've been looking forward to the visit by President Sadat for a long time. I think everyone that I've talked to who's been to Egypt, no matter what their political persuasion might be or under what circumstances they went to that great country, have come back impressed with him.

He's a man from a small village. And when I met with him early this morning, he said that the consciousness of the villagers was the guiding concept in his own political life—a commitment to the closeness of families, a pledge to the individual human being and the individuality that exists there; an unswerving religious commitment, a pride in one's heritage. And no nation on Earth has a heritage as admirable as does the country of Egypt.

He talked to me about the need for his visiting his home people frequently to reemphasize his ties with the people of Egypt who look to him for great leadership.

He's a man who, when he first took office, played a strong role in the establishment of a firm commitment to basic human rights. Although they were turbulent times, the release of political prisoners was an instantaneous action on his part.

He's a man who has been courageous in proposing, boldly, new ideas and new concepts which might be the basis for peace in his troubled region of the world.

I've found, and all the visitors to Egypt have found, that he's a man of superb frankness; if he believes something, he tells you.

You never know from one moment to another exactly how political consequences might evolve. But he analyzes complicated issues and is able to express himself quickly and clearly. He's a man of his word, and within the Arab nations,
he's an early spokesman when difficult and controversial changes are made. I hope that this year, 1977, might be a time when we can tap his superb judgment and leadership and make major strides toward permanent peace in the Middle East.

I think the characteristics that I've described—and there are many more that I could outline to you—can be a basis for substantial progress. I've learned a lot from him during this morning's conversation and this evening. And after supper, we're going to go upstairs and just have a private meeting, just me and him.

But his knowledge of the background of developments in the Middle East and south of him, in Africa, are a very valuable reservoir of knowledge and experience and insight that will help to guide me in making the right decisions that apply to our own country's influence.

We are proud of his friendship already. And I believe that the ties that bind Egypt and our country together can be strengthened even further in the weeks ahead. As I pointed out this morning in the brief ceremony during the rain, I think that the archeological exhibition of King Tutankhamen's Tomb—as we call it, King Tut—has been received as gratefully as any cultural event that's ever occurred in our Nation.

When I visited the National Gallery to look at this remarkable exhibition—for some reason or another they let me in ahead of the waiting throng—[laughter]—I got there early to do it, I might say—but there were people there with pallets on the sidewalk. And when I left the exhibition and shook hands with the people along the way who had spent the night waiting in line, they asked me if it was worth waiting overnight, and I said, yes, it was.

This was an exhibition, I think, of only 55 artifacts out of more than 5,000 that were discovered in this one site. And the beauty and the sensitivity of them, I think, were typical of the long and distinguished and proud heritage of Egypt.

I'm very grateful that we've had come to our own country for a visit—he's been here before as you know—my own good friend, and Foreign Minister Pahlmy, and others. And I would like to propose a toast to the people of Egypt and to their great leader, President Sadat, my good friend.

We're glad to have you here, sir.

PRESIDENT SADAT. Thank you.

Mr. President and dear friends, I came here looking forward to meeting you and working closely with you on subjects of mutual interest. I'm happy to state that our first get-together this morning met my expectations.

I found you a man of courage and vision. You listen only to the dictates of your conscience. Your first and foremost allegiance is to the truth. Your determination to pursue what is right is paralleled by your willingness to accept the diversity of views and differences of opinion. Your grasp of the complex issues of our time is formidable. Above all, your paramount commitment is to the cause of peace and the universal brotherhood of man.

I can quite understand the way you think and act. Like you, I come from a rural area that is the heart of Egypt's farmland, where life has different dimensions and a different meaning. Social solidarity is dominant. A conscious submission to the divine will provides us with tremendous strength to deal with the continuous challenge of life. People are not judged by their wealth or power but rather by their adherence to the supreme norms and higher values cherished by the entire community.

Judging by words and deeds alike, I sense a streak of all that in your background. I fully agree with you that in our dealings with others, we should apply it.
some standards we would like to see applied by us.
I endorse your statement in the Inaugural Address that we should strive together to build a quiet strength, based not merely on the size of an arsenal but on the nobility of ideals.

In your book, “Why Not the Best?,” you said that your country should, among the community of nations, set an example of courage, compassion, and dedication to basic human rights and freedoms. We welcome this, and we are sure that it will prevail throughout your Presidency.

Mr. President and dear friends, as you well know, we are embarking on an ambitious program to rebuild our society along lines which ensure more justice and equal opportunity. We are revitalizing our system with a view to enable it to cope with the immense problems we encounter, old and new. We are determined to build this new society on ideals of faith in human dignity, which we inherited from the ancient Egyptian civilization. This heritage has kept us united together and optimistic in the face of the most difficult challenges.

The Arab nation has succeeded in its efforts to establish a model for enlightened cooperation among nations. The outcome of the first Afro-Arab summit conference held in Cairo a month ago bears witness to this fact. The heads of state and government of 62 developing nations assembled together in an atmosphere of unity of purpose and laid the foundation for an equitable system, capable of confronting the challenge of development and modernization. A model for man, an explorative cooperation was set up for the benefit of all the people of participant countries. Basically, it is a structure of self-help. The Arab community, which is part and parcel of the nonaligned movement, pledged to spare no effort to promote peace and prosperity throughout the globe.

Mr. President and dear friends, your recent statement on the right of the Palestinians to a national homeland was welcomed by every Arab. It was regarded as a positive signal because it was the first time since 1947 that an American President has ever spelled out his convictions that the Palestinians should have their homeland where they could establish their state.

You would agree with me that the Palestinians, who demonstrated moderation and a great sense of responsibility, are entitled to be heard by you and the American people. Their leadership has established its credentials to be part of the peace process. A dialog with them will reassure them and stimulate further moderation. With the solution of the Palestinian problem, the road to peace would be open and clear.

What remains to be done is the withdrawal of Israeli forces from all occupied Arab countries after '67. That makes ending the state of war a foregone conclusion.

As I have often said, we are willing to consider any formula proposed to guarantee the maintenance of peace in the area. We will decide whose security was constantly threatened for a quarter of a century; thus, we have no objection to the adoption of adequate measures to secure the international borders and make the recurrence of war a remote possibility. We welcome your participation in providing these guarantees.

Mr. President and dear friends, you are projecting a new image for the United States. Its impact goes beyond the frontiers of your country. The revival of idealism and morality is not merely an intellectual exercise, it is a living mechanism that influences the course of events in many parts of the world.
We are most willing to cooperate with you in reasserting the rule of law as an arbiter among nations. Legitimacy should replace force as a determinant of right and wrong. The strength of nations should be measured not by the power they muster but by the values they uphold.

Mr. President and dear friends, we are developing our bilateral relations along lines which are apt to stimulate an ever-growing cooperation for our mutual benefit. In the short period that passed since you assumed office, you demonstrated your enthusiasm for intensifying such cooperation. The measures you took in this respect are symbolic of your genuine belief in international solidarity. I have no doubt that your Presidency will usher in a new chapter in international relations.

May your vigorous efforts at home and abroad be fruitful.

Ladies and gentlemen, I ask you to stand in respect to my dear friend President Carter.

President Carter. Thank you, sir. Thank you, Mr. President, I appreciate that very much.

God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:50 p.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House.