

**PRESS CONFERENCE**

held by

**PRESIDENT ANWAR EL SADAT**

at the Egyptian Embassy in Rome

April 8, 1976

Question : I have two questions to ask :

1 — We recently heard of a secret agreement signed between the U.S.S.R. and America in 1973, whereby the U.S. shall introduce Egypt within its own axis. This news came from Cairo, and we would like your Excellency to comment on it.

2 — Can you brief us on the talk you held with Italian economists, particularly the part concerning the development of the Suez Canal ?

President : I do not believe that Cairo is the source of this news for the simple reason that it is not true. In 1973, I started the October War against the will of both America and Russia. They both wanted a cease-fire from the very beginning yet the battle remained for 17 days. This news is deliberately false. I assure you Egypt enjoys its own freedom of decision, amongst the two super-powers and with regard to the whole world.

As for the development of the Suez Canal, we have reached full understanding and we are ready to receive Italian experts as from next week to solve our problems by sharing in the reconstruc-

tion of our country. Moreover, Italy has agreed to give us a loan of 40,000,000 dollars for the development of the Suez Canal.

**Question :** Mr. President, you have expressed more than once your solidarity with the Palestinian people and the Palestine Liberation Organisation. There is an important step which is the state of Palestine instead of the present Israel. Does your support of the PLO also cover such a step ?

**President :** It is odd and regrettable that facts can be colored so strangely. The Palestine Liberation Organisation seeks a secular State where Jews, Moslems and Christians can live together. In this we have no comment; if this is what the Palestinians want we support them. Furthermore, I did say that if that solution is difficult to apply, let the Palestine state be established on the West Bank and in Gaza.

**Question :** The question now deals with the news about obtaining arms from Eastern Europe, Britain, France and the U.S.S.R.

**President :** The details in this context are not quite complete. The U.S.S.R. did not compensate us for the arms we lost; it sent us instead part of the arms' deals for 1973 and 1974 and then they stopped. It also prevented our getting hold of other types of arms or spare parts. In addition the U.S.S.R. prevented us from sending us spare parts or overhauling our planes.

**Question :** Do you plan to obtain more arms from America?

**President :** Most certainly. It is my duty to keep my military forces fully equipped to defend our country whenever needed.

**Question :** Have you any idea whether or not Israel has produced atomic bombs ?

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President : We heard rumours from time to time to this effect, but it does not frighten us one bit whether or not Israel has atomic bombs. We shall not be the ones to introduce atomic bombs in the region, and if Israel does, it will have to bear the consequences.

Question : Will President Sadat discuss the topic of Jerusalem with the Pope ?

President : I will meet shortly with His Holiness the Pope, and I shall discuss with him the problem of Jerusalem the sacred land and the Arab-Israeli conflict on the whole, but it is still too early to talk about what I shall discuss with the Pope.

Question : Did you ask Germany, France and America for arms ?

President : I did say in Germany, that the position of the German government and its policy in this respect are well known, that is why we did not discuss this matter. We have made deals with France; as for the USA, we shall welcome any offer of arms, beside the transport planes; if not, we are content with what we have. We shall seek arms from other countries and I am willing to obtain arms from the devil to defend my country.

Question : What about the Soviet arms sent to Libya, Sir ?

President : I said, before meeting President Ford in Salzburg, that Libya will get arms from the USSR worth 11 billion dollars. I have no idea what Kazzafy will do with all these weapons — may be he likes to store weapons in Libya !

Question : Mr. President, is the acquisition of arms by Libya part of an overall Arab plan ?

President : I don't think Kazzafy has an Arab policy or an Arab solidarity policy.

**Question :** Mr. President, has the abrogation of the Soviet Egyptian Agreement taken into consideration the election year in the USA ?

**President :** It is absolutely ridiculous to believe rumours that the abrogation of the Treaty with the USSR has anything to do with helping the American President in the elections. It was the natural outcome of the USSR preventing India from giving spare parts. I did not choose the timing of the abrogation. If anyone did it is the Soviet Union. As soon as we received India's reply we had to take action. We never intervene in this game of the super-powers.

My trip to Europe was also to seek aid in facing all sorts of future difficulties as a consequence of the abrogation of the treaty for the reconstruction of Egypt. However, this trip was planned long before that.

**Question :** Mr. President, I would like to ask two questions.

In an interview to the French television, you stated that Libya imports weapons from the USSR but that the Libyans are not in a position to operate these arms — this means they will have to seek experts to train them.

**President :** I did say that if Libyan army intends to use these weapons we would have no objections.

But, to my knowledge, the Libyan army is not yet ready to use these weapons so there is one probability left — the Soviets undoubtedly will use them, and then we shall have to make estimates accordingly.

**Question :** What in Mr. President's view is the role that the USA can play within the scope of the Mediterranean ?

**President :** Italy is one of the Mediterranean countries; and we want the Mediterranean to be a sea of peace. Italy can be of great importance both politically and economically.

As I previously said, Western Europe, particularly the nine countries of the Common Market, are asked to share in the guarantees to solve the Middle East problem.