

PRESS CONFERENCE

held by

PRESIDENT ANWAR EL SADAT

in Paris

April 4, 1976

The first question to President Sadat concerned Egypt's role in the present struggles that are taking place in the Eastern and Western regions of the Arab world.

The President began by thanking the French press for giving him such an opportunity, and he thanked President Giscard D'Estaing for this wonderful trip.

He said that Egypt is truly the heart of the Arab world because of its geographical position, its policy, culture and strategic position, that is why it does have a role to play. What is happening in the East, in Lebanon, is most distressing. I did raise the slogan 'lay your hands off Lebanon' I say the Lebanese themselves are the cause of the events in their country.

They had two problems which they were capable of solving. One of them was to amend their system, the second is the relation between Lebanon and the Palestinian Liberation Organisation. I am sorry to say that the interference of Syria has led to a deterioration of the situation since it provided all the fighting parties with weapons.

I discussed this matter with President D'Estaing, and our

point of view concurred; we agree to whatever steps France would take to reach a solution to this problem.

Then the President referred to the Egyptian initiative which consisted of sending forces from 5 or 6 Arab countries with the agreement of Lebanon, so that they stand between the fighting parties to allow them to catch their breath, and at the same time President Franjeh would resign.

As for the Western region of the Arab world, I did send the Vice President of the A.R.E. to Algeria and Morocco to find a solution for the Sahara problem, and we have succeeded in preventing military clashes between them. Now the diplomatic relations are suspended on account of Algeria's recognition of the Polisario State. We are doing all we can to help our brothers who fought with us before; I shall never side with one against the other, but I will stand by them as a brother, and we hope to reach a solution.

In reply to the question on the situation of Egypt following the abrogation of the treaty and whether the President's trip was to find out the position of the countries of Western Europe, and whether or not the friendship agreement between France and Egypt can replace the USSR-Egyptian treaty; he said that the trip had already been planned before the abrogation. As my visit to Germany was supposed to follow the one to America and Britain last year. The immediate reason for the abrogation of the Soviet-Egyptian agreement was when I asked India, an unaligned country, for spare parts for overhauling our Mig planes, they informed us after a period of 4 months, that in spite of continuing efforts by the Indians, the Soviets refused the idea. It was quite clear that they try to break us both economically and militarily.

As for concluding an agreement of friendship with France,

is an idea which we welcome greatly. Last year, President D'Estaing and myself signed the Cairo Declaration which we consider to be a friendship agreement, at any rate we are willing to sign any sort of agreement with France.

The following question was : How does the President account for the joint point of view of France and Egypt with regard to the Lebanese problem, when at the same time the French cabinet considered the Syrian efforts exerted in the Lebanese problem as fruitful ?

The President's reply was that in fact there is no disagreement between the French and Egyptian points of view.

I did notify President Giscard D'Estaing yesterday of the situation in Lebanon, in detail, and it is quite clear that Syria has not only failed to find a solution, but it has sunk deep in the Lebanese swamp from which it will find no escape. Furthermore, an American envoy was there in Lebanon two days ago where he met all the parties concerned. I still believe that any endeavours on the part of France will be greatly welcomed and acceptable.

President Sadat was then asked whether he discussed with President D'Estaing the possibility of purchasing weapons from France, particularly after Lieutenant General Mohamed El Gamasy's visit to France ?

First of all I would like to seize this opportunity to thank the French government for the facilities put at the disposal of Lieutenant General Mohamed El Gamasy during his visit to France.

As for purchasing weapons from France, there was no need to tackle this subject again with President D'Estaing, since we already reached some agreements during a previous visit, and we are on the point of concluding future agreements with France.

Another question was about the establishment of an armament industry in Egypt, and whether or not this matter has been open for discussion in France and Germany. To which His Excellency replied that there is the Arab Company for Armaments which is not exclusively Egyptian concern, but an Arab one which includes Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar. The President added : I did mention before in the press conferences I held in Germany, that France is the European country which was the first to understand the problems of the Arab world. This is a good opportunity to assert the full understanding of France for our problems, and the coming days will witness a wide-scale co-operation with France. As for purchasing armaments from Germany, I did not discuss this matter with Chancellor Schmidt, since Germany has its stand in this respect.

The President was asked about the actual steps which the French initiative will take in Lebanon. To which he replied that he suggested to President d'Estaing that Mr. Couve de Murville should make another tour in Lebanon, which I am sure will be greatly welcomed by all parties there.

A further question was : you did mention the convening of the Geneva Conference in which the Palestinian Liberation Organisation would participate. Now you know the attitude of the Soviet Union in this respect ?

President Sadat answered : this is a very important question. When I met President Ford in Salzburg last summer, we agreed to put an end to the step by step policy, after concluding the second disengagement in Sinai and Golan, and that we should concentrate wholly on convening in Geneva sometime during 1976, to find an overall solution to the problem; We can postpone this matter until 1973, after the American elections are over. The President added « I can see no reason now for disagreement about the Geneva co

ference with either America or the USSR; inspite of the present misunderstanding between us, Geneva is still the most appropriate spot for meeting to be convened.

Only this new relationship between Syria and Jordan which cropped up lately for no apparent reason I didn't know exactly what they want. Sometimes they declare their refusal to go to Geneva, while at other times they seem to agree to the meetings this point has to be clarified. The Palestinians are beginning to realise the expected consequence of the new Syrian-Jordan alliance. But I have no idea what the Palestinian Resistance plan to do. As for Egypt, we are ready for the Geneva conference this year to reach a general agreement after the American elections are over.

The President was asked about the incidents which occurred on the Western bank, and whether the military confrontation between the Israeli and Arab forces will change his idea about overall agreement ?

His Excellency said : « On the contrary, it is quite natural that the Arabs in the occupied lands should express their rage to the Israelis who treat them as third rate citizens. If the military confrontation has any influence at all, it should be on Israel alone, for it is Israel which has to withdraw from the Western bank and Gaza, to make way for the immediate establishment of the state of Palestine.

Another question was : will the election of a new President for Lebanon, solve the problem ? The President replied : « Yes I regret to say it, because President Franjeh is a personal friend of mine. I believe the leaders of nations have a big responsibility towards their people, to the extent that sometimes they have to keep over their dignity for the interest of their people. Accordingly I ask President Franjeh to lay aside his dignity and resign,

for this might be the right way to a solution of the Lebanese problem.

In answer to the query about the future of the Geneva conference, President Sadat said : In my opinion, the Geneva Conference is the ideal way for us to reach an overall and peaceful solution to the problem. And Egypt is ready any time for this meeting, only we have to take into account the rest of the parties concerned from among the Arabs, particularly the Palestinians, without whom nothing can be accomplished.

We do hold the initiative ever since the October War, whether for Geneva or any things else, but now it is for the new Syrian alliance to say its word on the matter. Nevertheless we in Egypt will keep on raising the banners of peace and safeguarding the initiative in our hands.

To a question about the situation with Libya and whether what Gazzafy does is a threat to Egypt and Tunisia, the President said : « Frankly speaking he is mentally sick, and we in Egypt, do not give much importance to what he does against Egypt, but I must say I am rather concerned about Tunisia. He then added : « Gazzafy can never be a threat to Egypt, no matter what he does, most of his men whom he sent to sabotage Egypt have been arrested and put in jail, I also know the names of those whom Gazzafy sent to Europe at the time of my visit, but what is really dangerous is the big deal of weapons he concluded with the Soviets the total of which amounted to \$ 11 billion, of which he paid \$ 800 million in advance.

The President then added : These are all heaped-up weapons in Libya, I would welcome the idea if the Libyan army would use these weapons, but I well know that these weapons are beyond the capacity of that army. The President commented, asking : W

then would use these weapons along an extended front 200 kms. on the Mediterranean Sea ? It must be the Soviet army then; besides it is the latest production of the developed Soviet industry of arms, just like the French Mirage. I do not fear Gazzafy — only if the Soviets will establish a base in Libya, then I shall have to reconsider my calculations.

Another question was about the position of Egypt, if the new president of the U.S.A. would be elected from the democratic party which opposes the idea of providing Egypt with weapons. To which the President replied : Not all democrats are against supplying Egypt with arms, and if a democratic president is elected, we shall have to face this truth and learn to deal with him. The election of a new president is in itself a denotation of the will of the American people, who have the solution to most of the matters in concern; that is why I have to deal with the new American president whether he would be a republican or a democrat, and I am always optimistic.

The other question was about the attitude of the Arab world towards the policy of President Sadat, as some countries give their consent to this policy while others have their revolutionary ideologies, what is your comment ?

President Sadat replied : « I feel that all this is mere exaggeration. We do have times of discord, but only concerning the course of tactics, and not our strategy — we all agree on the same strategy which we repeat over and over in conferences, the last of which was in Rabat ! it comprises two points :

1. We shall not give up one inch of the Arab land.
2. We do not bargain over the rights of the Palestinian people.

He then added : I started in Egypt the rehabilitation of the cities of the Suez Canal, and the restoration of the evacuees. It was

rather risky to reopen the Suez canal despite the failure of Mr. Kissinger's task in March 1975, and despite the presence of the far-ranging Israeli artillery. Yet the days have proved the truth of *my vision and optimism*, and we reached the agreement about the *second disengagement*. Moreover, we have started to develop the Canal with the aid of Japanese experts six months ago, and the whole job will be over in two years time.

This will allow for the passing of tankers weighing 1/4 of a million tons.

Unfortunately party intrigues and outbiddings of some parties give you the picture of utter disagreement among the Arabs which is quite wrong. We are rebuilding our country and working towards achieving peace, and the whole world will follow suit.

The President was then asked whether he discussed with President d'Estaing the guarantees of peace, to which he referred in his press conferences in Germany.

President Sadat replied : « I did discuss this matter with Chancellor Schmidt and he agreed to having Germany participate in the political aspect of these guarantees, but not in the military. On the other hand I did not discuss it with President d'Estaing, since I previously had discussed it last year.

You know the two super-powers were against the idea of a third participant, but Brezhnev has announced in the last meeting of the Soviet Communist party, that he agrees to my suggesting the participation of France, which has a leading role. Brezhnev declared in his speech, that he agrees to the participation of both France and England in those guarantees for peace. I am really happy that France is in now because I insisted that it should participate in those guarantees on account of its leading role.

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Western Europe, and I am sure the U.S.A. will give their consent to the idea.

President Sadat ended his press conference by saying : « It won't be difficult for me to convince France of participating in the military and political aspects of the guarantees for peace.