MEETING
BY
PRESIDENT ANWAR EL-SADAT
WITH THE
NATIONAL PRESS CLUB

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Mr. President

Ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to talk with you and through you to the American public. I feel that we have no time to waste in trying to work together in building a just and durable peace in the Middle East and in the world at large. So allow me to outline to you in a summary what we are trying to fulfill this goal.

Our primary task is to face up to the realities of the Middle East with courage and determination. While those realities include great risks to our people and to the peace of the world they also include a great opportunity for building a new structure of peace in our area that can fulfill the legitimate needs of all the peoples and states in the Middle East.

We in Egypt have adopted a policy courageous enough to be able to break the vicious circle that has spiraled for so long
in our lands and lead to continuous escalation of wars, human suffering and futile waste.

We have learned throughout long history never to surrender to despair. Instead, as human beings with creative abilities, we have had to examine ourselves as well as others, to find the way to break the chain of despair and open avenues of conciliation and moderation, so as to create a healthy climate for peaceful solution of the conflict. We have taken already concrete steps to pave the way, but we needed a more concentrated and sustained effort by you, by us, and by all the peace loving peoples and states in this world which will create a (garbled) of peace, alive and effective, until it achieves in our area the reign of legality, justice and peace.

We must put the key problem in the conflict in correct perspective and hope that it is understood. That problem is the reality that the Palestinians as a people have not been fully recognized by all sides, the reality that the Palestinian people have suffered unjustly for more than a quarter of a century for no sin of their own. They were denied their self determination, their country was partitioned and none of the repeated U.N. resolutions on their behalf has been implemented or fulfilled. What adds to their suffering is that it was at the hands of those who equally knew the meaning of suffering and homelessness. It is tragic to try to solve one injustice by committing another. I firmly believe that if the Palestinian people are accorded their basic rights as a free people they will become a force for peace, stability and human progress in our area.

I have dedicated my efforts to the achievement of a comprehensive settlement of the problem, on the basis of the U.N. resolutions, which will put an end to the occupation of Arab territories, will put an end to the denial of Palestinian rights, and
will usher in a new era in which the legitimate aspirations of every state and every people will be fulfilled peacefully. This I think, is the duty of my generation: that we pass to the coming generation a Middle East which is regulated by peace and permeated by a spirit of hope and good will. This is our duty and the task that must be.

For this, I need your support and cooperation. I know of no greater challenge than this task. That is why I called for a conference of peace on October 16, 1973, within the framework of the United Nations, to include the United States, the Soviet Union, and all the parties to the conflict, to settle this conflict on the basis of the U.N. resolutions. That is why I call today on all the parties to the conflict to invite the representatives of the Palestine Liberation Organization to such a peace conference where all can work together to achieve a durable peace. I believe that reasonable justice to all sides can be achieved in a spirit of tolerance and magnanimity.

Anyone who thinks that conflicts can be solved in this way and age by war or continuing escalation of arms is committing a grievous and dangerous threat to peace. The minimum requirement for solution of the conflict is to work against the dangers of escalation. That is why I call on the world to ensure that the Middle East is freed from the threat of use of nuclear and atomic arms. Egypt has no desire or intention of introducing such arms. We have signed the treaty on nuclear non-proliferation and we are willing to ratify this treaty as soon as Israel does. The fact that Israel has refrained so far from signing, much less ratifying, this treaty raises the serious prospect of nuclear blackmail. Such a policy is both dangerously shortsighted and futile because it will prove to be counter productive. It tends only to increase instability and to work against peace.
Egypt, one of the oldest nation-states in the world, has learned through all the ups and downs of history to conserve certain values which have helped us through the lean years. These include a deep belief in the dignity and majesty of the human spirit. Since time immemorial we have learned that civilization means creative living by human beings for their happiness and prosperity. It is our task in Egypt today to overcome in a few years the neglect, misuse and misrule of countries. With a population of about 40 million and with limited natural-resources and, unfortunately, little oil, we must mobilize all our efforts to tackle the challenge of rapid economic growth and development. I think that we can best achieve this in a "trilateral relationship", in which our people can invest their human resources and knowledge in cooperation with the know-how and management of the advanced countries, and the capital requirements can be provided for by Arab oil-producing countries. This trilateral relationship can offer a model for the rest of the world. It can lead the way to the solution of the problems of the developed and developing world for it stresses cooperation and dialogue rather than polarization and confrontation. Here we need the inventiveness, the resourceful talents of your people and the ingenuity reflected by your technology. If successful, this approach can help to remedy the imbalance between have and have nots in our world.

Let me conclude by saying that I see in our era the change for realization of the greening of our deserts, the blossoming of a new era of Arab civilization and the development of an international system based on legality and peace. To all this, we in Egypt well dedicate our efforts and join with you and the people of the world in making these ideas a living reality in our time.

Afterwards the proceedings of the conference began.
Question: What are the next steps you expect after signing the second disengagement agreement? What do you expect to happen on both the part of Egypt and Israel?

President: On our part, we are making arrangements, at present, with the two super-powers to call for the convocation of the Geneva Conference. As for Israel, we expect a second disengagement of forces in the Golan as was the case after the first agreement in Sinai. We want this to take place very quickly and then we shall be ready to go to Geneva to discuss the final solution. We are exerting enormous efforts in our contacts with the two super powers. The Palestinians must participate on an equal footing with the other parties because the Palestine cause is the essence of the Middle East problem.

Question: What is your opinion of the statement made by Yasser Arafat when he said “I don’t care what Sadat said because the Egyptian army is with me”?

President: (Laughing) We are accustomed to this tone in our area. We fought our battle in 1973 and it was a clean one. As I said on October 16 and at the zenith of our victories, we did not hit the Israeli cities though the Israelis hit three Egyptian cities, despite the fact that we had missiles stationed in the direction of three Israeli cities.

I am neither a war lover nor a war monger. We initiated the October War in order to convince the Israelis and make them understand that the Arab-Israeli conflict cannot be solved through arrogance and deceit.

Question: What are the priorities you envisage with regard to solving the problem, and regard to Jerusalem?

President: As I said before the Palestinians must participate as members at the Geneva Conference in order to talk about
themselves and about Jerusalem. In my belief, there is not one single Moslem or Christian in our area or any where else, who would approve Israel's full sovereignty over the whole of Jerusalem. If there is a proposal for the internationalisation of Jerusalem, such internationalisation should not mean old Jerusalem only but all of it. These are my own views and not those of the Palestinians, who have alone the right to decide what they consider the best for the future of Jerusalem.

Question: What can the United States do to achieve a disengagement agreement on the Golan Heights?

President: As I said the United States has more than 99% of the cards of this game in its hands, therefore, it is required to do its utmost in order to achieve a disengagement of forces on the Golan in the same way the first agreement was concluded.

Question: What is the nature of the economic aid you asked for during your talks with the U.S.?

President: I had exchanged many excellent ideas and views with President Ford in Salzburg, and we are continuing now the discussion of the questions we dealt with there. I am facing economic difficulties in my country as is the case with any developing country.

As regards the main question I discussed with Gerald Ford in Salzburg, my troubles, as I said, were due to the fact that our economy was drained of its life blood during the seven years prior to the 1973 War. Following the war, the Arab States offered us aid which helped improve our economic states. However, we do not have enough petroleum. All I ask from the U.S. is to help as far as it can to replace the short-term agreements with long-term ones, as aid offered to us.

Question: Is it not right that the capital in Egypt, i.e. Cairo, should be turned into a capital of peace and coexistence where peoples from the entire world would come for a period of five years according to the agreement on their movement?

President: I believe it must be easily achieved. We have called an Egyptian tape and bureaucracy, and after a few days, the Arab states of the Middle East and the Rockefeller Foundation have decided to aid us. We are now starting to work on the establishment of the City Bank, which will be a financial institution.

Question: My theory of racial persecution and the conditions in the U.N. be similar to the Far East?

President: I believe that a simple reason for the racial persecution and general atmosphere of our country, as well as of any other developing country, exists. We have many branches of the City Bank, and as most of our children are receiving aid in the camps, they are expected to return to the schools as soon as possible. We also expect the establishment of a new radio set in Cairo.
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long-term ones, and to grant us a longer period of grace. Any aid offered to us by the U.S. is most welcome.

Question: Many American companies wish to invest their capital in Egypt, but they find difficulty in taking definite attitudes from the economists in your country. Moreover, the system of monetary dealings in your country places many restrictions on their movement.

President: I admit before you that we are facing the red tape and bureaucratic mentality, especially after we built what we have called an iron curtain around us. Therefore, it is not easy to get rid of such measures overnight. Lately, the Egyptian People's Assembly promulgated many laws in a bid to facilitate the investment of foreign capital in our country. Furthermore, and after a few days, that is at the beginning of next month, branches of the “Chase Manhattan Bank”, and “First National City Bank”, will be opened in Cairo.

Question: Mr. President, do you consider Zionism part of racial persecution and would your attitude against Zionism in the U.N. be similar to the one you took against racial discrimination?

President: Nobody can accuse us of being anti-semitic for one simple reason that we ourselves are Semites. I shall tell you a very amusing thing. The Jews used to live with us on an equal footing in our country. They even dominated our economy until 1952, and we never complained of this. But this question of Zionism changed everything and turned it upside down. In 1950, on my return to the army after seven years in prison and detention camps I started furnishing my flat. I wanted to buy a radio set, and as most of our economy was in the hands of the Jews, and as they were receiving their instructions from Zionism after the establishment of the state of Israel, they refused to sell me a radio set in Cairo because I was an officer in the Egyptian army
and had fought against Israel. Such an incident may clarify to you their attitude towards us. We have never known racial persecution in our country, and we have always behaved with humanity especially as the Koran exhorts as to believe in Moses, Issac and the prophets.

Question: Will you ask for military aid from the U.S. If so, what are the kinds of weapons you will ask for?

President: I feel that there was some kind of propaganda which preceded my visit to this state. This propaganda was concentrated on one major point, namely, that I am going to demand weapons from America, and that it will refuse my request. The object behind this was to intimidate me or to cause me to hesitate.

As a matter of fact, I have discussed this issue, in particular, with President Ford today, and I did not have a shopping list on me. I told the American Congressmen who visited Egypt in the period from 1973/1975, especially the Armed Forces Commission, that I shall ask the U.S. to sell me weapons. So far, I have discussed this question in a very general manner and I repeat that I did not bring with me any kind of list for military purchases.

Question: Pravda newspaper attacked your visit to the West, and particularly to the U.S. What is the truth of the Egyptian-Soviet relations?

President: To be frank with you, we differ with the Soviet Union on two points.

First: Replacement of the weapons we lost in the 1973 War. Israel was compensated for all the weapons it lost during the war, and even before the ceasefire was implemented. The same also applied to Syria. As for Egypt, such replacement has not taken place. So that I brought with me a shopping list, and I do sell to my Minister, Brezhnev, that I am going to ask for weapons to replace those which I bought in the past.

Second: The period of the late 1974, both the Soviet Union and the Soviet regime in Egypt were moving in the right direction, but now they are again unification to the right direction, but now they are again unification to the right direction. The right direction is that I brought with me a shopping list (Applause).

Question: How is Egypt going to pledge to the U.S.?

President: I have not brought with me a shopping list of weapons, I intend to pledge to the U.S. (Applause).
... The replacement of Soviet weapons necessitates that I buy weapons from the Soviets, but they have refused to sell me weapons for many reasons they cited to my Foreign Minister. For 14 months and since October 1973 until January 1975 they did not send me anything. As of January 1975 they began to send me part of the deals concluded in the past and which were scheduled to be delivered in 1973 and 1974.

Second: The economic disagreement. I asked them for a period of grace they had already granted to others. And although the Soviets have not repaid the price of the weapons they bought from America during World War II, they refused my request.

It is not new to hear of the Soviet Union's objection to my visit to the United States. Nixon visited me in Egypt and invited me to visit the United States. So, I have come to meet the American people. As I told you, I came at the head of a mission of amity and friendship. In 1971 and after my election as President of Egypt, I visited the Soviet Union four times and until now Brezhnev has not visited me once. I shall not go to Moscow again unless Brezhnev visits me. It is true that we are a small nation, but we have our dignity and shall always do our best to preserve it. They can say what they want, but all I have to say is that shall always remain independent and with a free will. (Applause).

Question: If you obtain American weapons, are you ready to pledge not to use them against Israel in any new war?

President: According to article 51 of the U.N. Charter I have the right to self-defence. So, when I ask America for weapons, I intend to use them in accordance with and implementation of this article in the Charter — such an article which grant me the right to the legitimate defence of my country.
Question: Would you welcome a visit paid by the Journalists’ delegation, which is present here, to Cairo from which they would fly directly to Tel-Aviv?

President: (Laughing) Are you trying to pull my leg? If the members of this club wish to visit us, we welcome you all. We are a very hospitable country. I would like to thank the Chairman of the Club who gave me the opportunity to talk about peace in this age, in the time in which we are living. I am ready to make peace with Israel. I respect my word, and I have said this since 1971 — and at the peak of war — that I am ready to make peace with Israel. As for economic and normal relations, let us be logical. For 27 long years, and until this moment four wars have taken place between us, during which there were those who were killed, wounded and maimed. Establishing such relations would mean opening borders between Egypt and Israel. No. No... Let the existing official state of aggression be terminated first and then we can reach an official peace agreement to be guaranteed by any big power, or all the big powers together, or the Security Council, or the U.N. Let us put an end to this state of aggression in this generation of ours, and live, and leave the coming generation to define the shape of peace in the Arab-Israeli conflict.