

SPEECH

by

PRESIDENT MOHAMED ANWAR EL SADAT

to the Air-Forces

March 25, 1976

My sons, members of the Air Forces
Air Defence and the Special Forces,

In the name of God. Every time we meet in this place, it is as though we had a rendez-vous with fate. I met you in this very same hall on May 12, 1971. On the next day May 13, 1971, the Rectification Revolution started which is now known as the May 15th Revolution. It started from here.

You may remember that I announced from this very place that I shall not admit centres of power and shall not allow strife, of any kind, as we are faced with the battle of honour.

In 1971, all our efforts were devoted to the battle, and it was our sole purpose and aim. I said that I would not allow the growth of centres of power, and would not admit strife since it would surely detain us from the battle and get us entangled in its labyrinth, fighting among ourselves and inside the country, leaving the enemy.

I came once more and spoke of the heroic feats of our Air-Forces, and all the branches of our Armed Forces. But the Air

Force has a special position. As the Commander of the Air Force (now Vice-President Hosny Mubarak) stated to the History Committee investigating the causes of the 1967 set-back, in 1956 and later in 1967 that there had been negligence in the command for which the Air Force and the rest of the Army had been unjustly blamed. It will be soon revealed that the Armed Forces were the victims of the set-back and not one of its causes.

After the magnificent performance you gave in the October battle, I must admit before you and before your people, and in the hearing of all the Arab Nation; just as I admitted to the Second and Third Armies that their nation was indebted to them, I must admit here before you, before your nation, that your people, your nation and the various branches of the Army are all indebted to you for the first blow by the Air-Forces, one that paved the way for all the victories we scored. All the Armed Forces accomplished their duty in a splendid manner: the Special Forces, the Air Defence Forces, blew to pieces the Israeli air supremacy in the first three days, to the point that the Israeli command gave instructions to its pilots not to fly close to the Suez Canal. In the first three days, one-third of the Israeli Air-Force, was lost and the pilots who were considered the pride of Israel were pushed to the battle. Only recently Israel announced that the gap was nothing but the Valley of Death, on account of the heroic feats accomplished by the Special Services. Every branch of the Armed Services having performed countless heroic deeds, I do not know whom to mention and whom to leave out. Our Air-Forces unsettled Israel by the first blow, and thereupon our war began to be called the Six-Hour-War instead of their 67 «Six-Day-War». We must all admit that the first blow by the Air-Forces has paved the way for our glorious success, so that the Arab nation would become the Sixth Power in the world, as recognized by all, for both the military performance and use of all our potentials, including oil.

Then we meet moments I consider of the happiest in my life, I recall the times when we met before the battle; in your squadrons, and your barracks, you and the Special Services, the Air-Defence Forces in their stations, the forces of the Second and Third Armies in their positions on the bank of the Canal. I shall never forget June 5, 1973 when I met you in Katamia Airport and spoke with the pilots on the forthcoming battle. Then I went to the two armies in their positions. Accompanied by the commanders and from the Egyptian positions on the bank of the Canal, I gave the final instructions to each commander, after each of them had explained his plan for Sinai that lay before us. Our Armed Forces gave a magnificent performance, but it was thanks to the first blow by the Air-Force which paved the way for the perfect and miraculous feat.

Just as the Air-Force Commander said, this first blow not only made up, to the Air Forces for the '56 and '67 battles, but gave a magnificent example for air battles and the performance of the air corps. This is why I admit that this performance was the most perfect one since the world got to know the air corps and air battles. I shall never forget, nor will your nation and the Armed Forces, your heroism, your sacrifice and magnificent performance.

For the first time in history, in the age of jet aircraft, the greatest air battle known to the world continued for over than 45 minutes. We all know that our aircraft cannot remain in the air for more than 13 minutes, still throughout the 45 minutes, all our Air Force was in the air and intercepted and defeated the Israeli aircraft, which were not able to hit any of their targets, of course. This was a wonderful planning and a wonderful performance. The aircraft that landed for fuelling after 13 minutes of flight were replaced by others, and so on and so forth. This splendid performance, not only made up for the '56 and '67 battles but have become les-

sons taught in military academies, the world over. We all know jet aircraft battles, as they are twice the speed of sound, the battles do not last over a few minutes. The biggest jet battle in history was here, for 45 minutes. Despite the drawback of our aircraft that could only remain for 13 minutes in the air, when others could remain for over an hour, our Air-Force was not behind. We are extremely proud of you.

I congratulate your Ex-commander, Hosni Mubarak, for the battle. He was a vivid example of sacrifice and self effacement for the sake of Egypt and the tenacity and steadfastness of Egypt.

I charged him to engage in the battle and in the meantime defend the skies of Egypt from north to south. In other words, he has given an unforeseen performance.

I told you here, remember that I would not ask you for an assignment beyond the capacity of your arms. But you accomplished assignments far beyond the capacity of the arms in your possession.

The battle was maintained for 45 minutes despite the fact that your aircraft could only stay 13 minutes in the air, yet the Egyptian air force did not disappear from the sky, nor was the Israeli Air-Force able to penetrate the sky of Egypt, from north to south, over 180 kilometres front-line extending from Port Said to Suez.

You performed magnificently and honourably, far beyond the imagination of any one, and ten-fold the capacity of the arms in your possession. This is why we shall never lag behind again. We know what facilities western aircraft gave the Israelis in their flight. Without the facilities offered by western aircraft in your planes you were better than eagles. Since you made up for the difference with your faith, your revolutionary spirit and your solidity.

You supplemented a great deal with yourselves. This is why your weapon which was inferior to your enemy's, triumphed in your hands, triumphed by you and won a victory for your Armed Forces, your country and your nation.

It was a touch of loyalty when after this magnificent performance, Hosni Mubarak, the Commander of the Air Corps, came and told me : « We have given our performance ». I replied « Far more perfect than was required of you and thousand times more than you were asked to do ».

What about the past ? should we forget about it and the former Air-Force Commander who was responsible for the '56 and '67 setback and put the blame on the Air-Force and those who were with him. On behalf of the Air-Force, I asked that they should be released. On the second day they were all released, upon request from Hosni Mubarek, expressing your will.

Once again a touch of loyalty and generosity characteristic of Egypt. Egypt is loyal, Egypt is generous and Egypt is loving.

I congratulate you for having completed the second disengagement of forces, last month. As I told your brothers in the Second Army yesterday, our plan was to reach the passes and expel Israelis behind them. The arms in our possession were barely sufficient and I know beforehand that I needed to come out of the battle with as much as possible of my arms intact on account of the pressure and arms blockade imposed on us by the Soviet Union.

When we worked out the plan for the battle, we set a strategic target for it; demolishing the wall of fear constructed by Israel, and the fallacy of the Israeli soldier, Israeli aircraft and Israeli performance before the world, tactically, as well as reaching the passes. With the second disengagement agreement, we reached the passes by half a battle, since America got me out of the battle

after confronting me for ten years. At that point, I discovered that pursuing the war would cost you, the Armed Forces and the country beyond their capacity. I cannot fight America. This is why I accepted cease-fire. You have learned that the Soviet Command contacted me from the very first day, six hours after the outbreak of the fighting. They contacted me to communicate Syria's request for cease-fire. The request was repeated the second day and upon Soviet Prime Minister Kosygin's visit to Egypt. Three times I refused, but when I found that I would involve the country in an unequal battle, I accepted cease-fire.

I sent a written message to the Syrian President on my acceptance of cease-fire, they had come out of the battle ten days before — I told him that I accept cease-fire with a bleeding heart because I would not allow the demolishment of our Armed Forces for the second time. I do not want to bear this responsibility before my country and my nation, I said, and was prepared to render account for this. That was the text of the cable.

Despite the breach and the play that was staged therein, one that some persons from inside the country and outside it, even our comrades in the battle, capitalised on, and continue to capitalise on, some of the people around us, all the sick ones tried to take advantage of it. But what was the final result ?

On February 12, all the targets of the battle were reached by half a battle, with my arms more than 85% intact, but not including the Air-Force losses. For during the days of the breach you, together with the Special Forces, worked a miracle and turned it (the breach) into a 'Valley of Death'. Still I came out of the battle with 85% of my arms, intact. Then when the Soviet Union imposed an arms embargo on us, directly after the cease-fire, except for the tanks Boumedienne bought from them and sent us, when the embargo was maintained for 14 months, extending to this day,

we were not shaken, and our Armed Forces were not shaken, since 85% of our arms were intact. Now, in conformity with the decision for the diversification of the sources of arms which I adopted jointly with the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, you got the western arms with the facilities that did not exist in the arms you used in the '73 war. And, God willing, you will be getting more. I am keen on that.

I am also keen that the Soviet arms in your possession should continue to operate at top efficiency. We began efforts to preserve the efficiency of the arms in our hands, for quite some time, so that we will not reach a stage when the arms in our possession turn to scrap iron.

But deliveries of western arms with facilities have begun to arrive. If you rendered a praiseworthy performance with arms devoid of facilities, what will you do with the arms offering facilities? I am proud of you, proud of our martyrs, and proud of the spirit by which you rendered your combat performance.

Besides the arms and the skill in their assimilation, each of you had faith, solidity and ferocity, emanating from the sufferings and bitterness we experienced following the '67 war. This is why arms in your hands turned into something horrible.

I remember whilst in Austria last year, accompanied by Vice President Mubarek, one of our military attachés in a European country, a pilot and a bearer of the Star of Sinai, asked him to see me and I saw him. I discovered that he was the leader of the Sokhoi formation which included my brother Atef. I had never inquired about Atef's battle, until last year, as Atef's battle is the battle of each and all of us. To me you are all my brother Atef. He came and introduced himself as the Commander of Sokhoi Formation to which my brother belonged. He related their take-

off and flight to Sinai in their Sokhoi planes to strike the first blow which paved the way to victory.

He recalled the last words he heard from Atef, over the microphone, as they crossed the Canal. He told him that he was estastic and repeated a verse from the Koran that brought him luck : « you do not aim; it is God who aims ». The Commander told him to stop talking and go perform his duty which they did, and Atef died.

Each one of you, in addition to his arm, performance, knowledge, technology and expertise, also had faith and a touch of this land, the faith that fills all hearts.

Each of you played an honourable part which we shall not forget, nor will the Armed Forces, nor your country nor your nation.

Once again we are in a rendez-vous with fate, as we are going through a new transition towards full democracy.

Five years ago, the Rectification Revolution started from this hall the day I announced that I shall not admit centres of powers. From this hall I shall once more announce that I shall bring to the light the remnants of the centres of powers and those who operate in the dark. I shall not admit underground activities. We shall turn towards full democracy, after five years. The detention camps have been permanently closed. Every person feels secure for his house, his life and his dignity, the dignity of man, every man responsive to his work, sovereignty of law, state of institutions, and full liberties. Sequestrations are over and done with, the centres of power are ended. Today we start a 100% sound democratic life.

Yesterday, my attention was drawn by a pressman in a foreign news agency who was interviewing me. He handed his list of

questions and I asked him what was the source (of the information in them). He replied that the sources were local.

What were the questions? He said that they heard there was a movement of dissatisfaction in the Air-Force. Was that true? I answered all the questions but said: son, do not waste my time, when you hear such words and rumours from abroad. We are busy and are engaged in big things. « What is happening? »

At present, just as what had happened in '72 and '73 — try to remember with me — when I adopted the decision concerning the experts in June, universities opened in October and November '72, in December '72 and January '73, they tried to instigate trouble, among the students, but could not. I state before you that I was very happy, indeed, that the broad base of the students did not respond.

What they did at the time was to instigate doubt that we were going to engage in a war, suspecting the system of government and the stability in the country, for no other reason (but to stir up trouble) a cheap attempt by elements from a certain trend and other elements from the centres of power that had lost all of the things they enjoyed in the past.

I warned against this. You know that I warn every one to his face and never adopt a measure against anyone except until he is given a chance to defend himself.

What is going on, at present, while we are engrossed with the big reconstruction operations? Our fight was completed with half a battle. Israel's withdrawal from the remaining distance between the passes and the frontier, will be taken up when the United States will have finished with its presidential elections and we will settle the final step. There are no more steps.

Now we are concerned with our economy. We opened the Suez Canal and adopted an open-door policy. We were on the brink of an economic disaster and would have collapsed were it not for our Arab brothers who decided to establish a fund in our favour, during my recent visit. I also agreed with our friends in the West: Germany, and France, and also Japan and Iran, to form a consortium for reviving our economy. Ever since 1962, our economy passed through many stages which led us to the present economic predicament.

So what can they say at present? They cannot say that we won't engage in a war, we fought our battle. They cannot say that the step-by-step policy was a failure; the Israelis withdrew to behind the passes, with half a war.

To stir up doubt, at present, they attack the integrity of the system, under cover of the freedoms granted to the press or the People's Assembly. Then they circulated the rumour that a coup is about to be carried out and that there was dissatisfaction in the Air Corps. I am relating this, everybody is listening and I am saying it before you.

The object is to portray Egypt as having no stability, so that the open-door policy would fail, the policy we adopted to save our economy and to build up an edifice with solid foundation in the ground to rise up high in the sky, a solid structure such as your October performance. They want to cast doubt on this. The Italian News Agency correspondent who was interviewing me yesterday was asking me about that, after being approached by the remnants of the centres of powers.

What I said to you on May 12, 1971, I shall repeat again. I will not admit centres of power, or their movements and conspiracies. By sovereignty of the law I shall bring them to the light, before

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the people, as I know them and their movements. But they cannot affect us. The caravan has moved and the wheel has turned. Anything that stands in the way of a turning wheel is bound to be reduced to powder. Nothing shall detain the march. Never again will the dignity of man be trampled, nor absolute rule be restored. Freedoms will not be restricted nor an iron wall built up to dry our blood and keep us in technological backwardness. We shall befriend whoever befriends us and antagonise those who are hostile to us.

Some persons did not understand and some that are used to suspecting everything said — when I spoke of the part of the Armed Forces in the forthcoming stage, after delivering the July 23 and the Rectification Revolution to their owners who are the people — some spread such rumours.

When I said that the part of the Armed Forces was defending constitutional legitimacy, I say before you what I said before your brothers in the Second and Third Armies. As long as the Constitution is standing, they can practise politics as much as they wish.

But if anyone encroaches on the Constitution here the Armed Forces should be alerted, for the attempt to change it not to amend it: the constitutional means for amending the Constitution are stipulated in it, and they (politicians) are free to practise as they please. But whoever attempts to change the Constitution that provides for the gains of the workers and farmers, and our freedoms, rights and obligations, to him that we (Armed Forces) shall say: «stop».

Apart from that, the duty of the Armed Forces is to settle the blood tax and to maintain the performance level reached in the October War, in fact to improve it. The Armed Forces have no part in political practice as this is not their business. When the

Armed Forces busied themselves with it, we saw what happened. They became a true picture of what was taking place outside the forces, in the way of lack of security and confidence in the future, and there were defeats and set-backs. But when they returned to their duties in 1973, they gave the best performance ever, one that fascinated the world.

The Armed Forces are not to interfere in politics. But whoever endeavours to practise politics should know that there is to be no encroachment on the Constitution which organises our rights, obligations and freedoms, and places every man in his right place. It renders the sovereignty of the law, the State of Institutions and freedoms, a basic target clearly stipulated in its articles.

No longer is any man charged upon basis of suspicion, reports or emotionalism.

Now that my six-year term will be ending in a few months, I advise you to belong wholly to Egypt, just like the July 23 and March 15 revolutions; not to an individual, a class, a faction, a party or an organisation. As you started and completed the revolutionary legitimacy, and delivered the trust to the people, owners of constitutional legitimacy, always protect that with your combat performance, defending the frontiers of Egypt, your recovery of our lands and your performance of your duty at any cost.

As I was telling the Third Army, yesterday, Vice-President Hosny Mubarek, the Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister and the Commander-in-Chief, El Gamassy, who used to be present when Kissinger came for the disengagement agreement. They heard how Israel respected you, respected your planning, performance and combat, a respect that reached the extent of agitation and fear. I felt so very proud. Keep this up, my children.

Protect Egypt and the soil of Egypt so that the sun should continue to shine on the country and prosperity prevail. Hold on

to love, since the worst thing I face at present is hatred. All I told you about the centres of power when I came here on May 12, 1971 and now in March 1976, I claim that all was founded on hate. You, my children, deal in love, in loyalty, honour, justice and charity with all the values that render life on the land of Egypt : in the desert, in towns, in the Nile Delta, in the valley and on mountain tops an honourable life, a life for the righteous, a land where every man will enjoy his civil and human rights. This should be a land where everyman will possess all that God meant him to have in this world; honour, in righteousness and in justice, with charity and love, devoid of any interest.

May God guide your steps and God's peace and mercy be upon you.