

INTERVIEW

given by

PRESIDENT ANWAR EL SADAT

to **Selim El Lozy**, Editor-in-chief of the Lebanese magazine
«El Hawadeth»

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President Sadat's voice was full of sadness as he welcomed me saying : «Haven't I told you that the Arabs will confront a tragedy in Lebanon that might be more grave than that of the establishment of Israel ... This was four months ago, and I, now, say that the tragedy is still at the beginning.»

Then, President Sadat invited me to ascend to the 2nd floor of his house in Giza where we sat in a glass-enclosed terrace overlooking the Nile, and he said :

President : I always like to have a vast horizon before me when I think and discuss matters ... Perhaps it is the complex of long years in prison.

Question : But you are still a prisoner, though at the top of power ...

President : This is true, but this time I am a prisoner with my own consent ...

Question : The prevailing opinion in observers' circles is that the calculation concerning the Sinai Agreement did not comply with

its effects ... Perhaps because this agreement was not accompanied by a dynamic Arab policy, and that even the best of agreements is not worth undermining Arab solidarity for it, especially after the Syrians and Palestinians had succeeded in portraying you to Arab public opinion as pulling out Egypt's potentialities from the confrontation battle, thus crippling one of the jaws of Arab pincers around Israel ... Moreover, the Lebanese believe that the sabotage inflicted upon their country was the outcome of some Arabs' objection to this agreement, and that had it not been for it, one of the most prosperous Arab countries would not have been lost ... Is the vehicle of peace still advancing in return for all that ?

President : It seems that you are the journalist who is most capable of taking advantage of my strong belief in the freedom of the press, and you know that I even accept discussing wrong ... As a matter of fact, I don't believe that any man who uses his mind, and has even the slightest idea about mathematics, can tell me not to take 5,000 kms. of my occupied land from Israel ... 5,000 kms. including the passes and the oilfields, and which are a confirmation of the victory we scored in the October war ... This is the basis ... I paid visits to each of Kuwait, Iraq, Jordan and Syria before reaching the second agreement on Sinai ... I explained Egypt's attitude, and particularly our intention to move in the light of resolutions 242 and 338... In Syria, in particular, I told President Hafez El Assad that I was going to Salzburg, and that despite the failure of Kissinger's efforts in March, there will be another attempt on the part of the United States for a step in Sinai, certainly to be followed by a similar step in the Golan ... I was very frank with President Assad, and every word I said was very clear, and he did not express any rejection of what I was saying, that is why the Syrian reaction to the Sinai Agreement reflected a reactionary mentality of the past, interested in stirring up Arab disputes ; in the sense that whenever the Syrian Baath

Party feels like objecting to a decision or agreement, it deliberately fabricates an outburst in the Arab world. Therefore, it organised an attack on the Egyptian Embassy in Damascus, endeavoured to stage a similar attempt in Beirut, hatched the operation of blocking our Ambassador in Madrid, and attempted to organise a demonstration in Kuwait ... Here I would like to unveil a fact only very few know, namely, that the Palestinians have no hand in the campaign launched against Egypt ... By so saying, I mean to correct what you said that the Syrians and Palestinians had succeeded in portraying Egypt as having withdrawn from the confrontation battle ... The Palestinians are having no free will of their own. The last comment I heard from them is that they are geographically committed to Syria and politically to Egypt... If I failed to solve this equation, it is very evident that there is a complete trusteeship from Syria on the Palestine Liberation Organisation. If such a trusteeship is not obvious enough to the Arab nation, it is about time that it should be exposed. The Palestinians had frankly admitted to me that the statement which was issued in the name of the Palestine Liberation Organisation before Kissinger's arrival in February, and in which I was accused of accepting a piece of land in exchange for a piece of principles, this statement was written in Damascus and given to the P.L.O. to be issued in its name. The Palestinians also told me that they even omitted many of the charges included therein ... Do you, and do the observers you speak for consider such methods successful ? Isn't it a kind of blackmail to the Arab nation to threaten Arab solidarity ? Obviously, very few in the Arab world are aware of the new stage in which a new Arab mentality is born, a mentality thinking in the way and methods of the age, thus placing national interest in lieu of narrow-minded party interest such as the one within which the Syrian Baath Party moves. Those who think that Arab solidarity can be made to collapse as a result of the casual methods of blackmail which we

are witnessing, are mistaken ... Arab solidarity had become a reality, born of an actual experience in the October War. The Arab silence concerning what is going on could not be considered an approval due to blackmail, or an attitude according to which estimates of profit and loss are built ... The Arab silence we are witnessing is no more than an aspect of courtesy and decorum on behalf of the Arabs, besides being an aspect of their keenness to maintain an integrated image in front of the whole world. Frankly, I cannot consider the battle in Lebanon as a substitute for the battle with Israel, as I also cannot conceive the philosophy of Syrian disability, and domination over the Palestinians to be a substitute for responsible Arab action.

Question : But where is Arab solidarity in a bloody crisis like that of Lebanon ? All the Arabs are watching the tragedy as if it is happening in the jungles of Africa, and not in the most loved country of the Arab world ?

President : Don't put all the blame on the Arabs. . The responsibility, in the first place, lies with the Lebanese parties which failed to reach an agreement. Every politician in Lebanon wanted to promote his own interests during Presidential election year, thus changing the nature of the crisis. .

Therefore, if those who are concerned are not ready to accept any Arab help from outside, be it in the form of a summit conference or in any other form, how can the Arabs help Lebanon ? On the other hand, there is Syria which holds the reins of supplying the warring parties with weapons, which opposed any Arab interference in the crisis, and instigated the Palestinians to reject any attempt for a satisfactory solution. When Kuwait called for a conference of Arab Foreign Ministers, they refused to attend it. . Why? They said Egypt had asked Kuwait to call for the con-

ference, though all Arab officials knew that Kuwait had taken this generous initiative on its own. So, the concerned parties in Lebanon were not ready to accept any help, and Syria, which had a direct influence on the Lebanese scene as the primary supplier of weapons, did not want the Arabs to discover its game. . . Moreover, the Palestinians are completely under the influence of Syria... This is the whole situation. . . You have to call these parties to account, and not all the Arab nation.

Question : Wouldn't it have been wiser to assess in advance the possible reactions to the Sinai Agreement ? Whether the Syrians are indeed supplying fighters with weapons or not, and of their own, how can reasons change the results ?

President : Do you really believe that what happened in Lebanon was a result of the Sinai Agreement? Have you too become a prisoner of the logic of the Syrian Ba'ath Party? Where was the Sinai Agreement when a clash occurred between the Lebanese army and the Palestinians in 1973? And what is the truth about the Lebanese problem ? Why do you try to hide things instead of saying the truth?

Question : Mr. President, this analysis is not Ba'athist, but was published in «Le Monde Diplomatique» newspaper. .

President : This is wrong, an absolutely wrong presumption. However, let us presume that the Sinai Agreement had caused the explosion of events in Lebanon, what did Lebanon do to be subjected to all this? Why should all these massacres be committed? Is it to spite Egypt or the United States or Israel? Haven't I told you that the philosophy of Syrian disability cannot be a substitute for responsible Arab action?

Question : Mr. President, the political action or line you pursued may be convincing if we take a partial look at the Middle

East crisis, from the Egyptian standpoint only. . . But if we look at it in a comprehensive way, we shall find that the map of this area has completely changed. . .

What Dr. Kissinger said to the Democratic and Republican leaders was true when he stated that «if I had exerted efforts to reach a partial agreement between Egypt and Israel, it was because I wanted to gain time, and to draw from the Arab-Israeli conflict the stronger and more influential element. Syria, Jordan and, even, Iraq are militarily incapable of launching a successful war against Israel without the effective participation of Egypt».

These words indicate that the Sinai Agreement was, at least from the American point of view, a political rather than a military agreement. . .

President : Don't ask me about words said by Kissinger before the Foreign Affairs Commission in the American Congress, not about words uttered by Rabin in the Knesset or to the press. . . Each speaks from a certain logic of his own. . . You have only to ask me about my strategy on the basis of which I lay down my calculations. . . I am fully aware of their strategies and calculations, and they are different from ours. . . Egypt has not gone out of the battle, and no power on earth can force it to pull back. . . On the contrary, Egypt re-opened the Suez Canal by force. . . The Jews were standing on the other bank of the Canal claiming they have half of its water, and when we reopen the Canal, they will take half of its revenue. . . However, Egypt expelled them by force, and re-opened the Canal as an inevitable outcome of the October War. . . So, how could it be said that we went out of the battle? This is the twisted logic of the Syrian Ba'ath Party... The eternal Baath complex had always been to ascertain itself as the only hero of the Arab nation. . .

This was its complex with Abdel Nasser, and then with me, and will be with my successor as well. . It is its complex with Egypt, and not with a certain leader or president.

The Ba'ath Party had failed in the past and was isolated, and will fail in the present, but it should be isolated, and time will tell. . I am not ready at all to declare my strategy before the microphone in order to satisfy the Syrian Ba'ath Party and the Palestinian elements it is leading and using as a screen. . I have my own strategy, and am fully aware of the American and Soviet strategies. I, my people and the majority of the Arab nation are fully convinced of the line Egypt is pursuing at present.

Question : Mr. President, you have accustomed me to open-heartedness, and these views I am presenting before you are the views circulating. They do not bear the quality of truth, but are questions presented for discussion. . The image which emerged after signing the Sinai Agreement, was that you had regained part of your occupied land, whereas President Assad had not. By normal standards, the hero is the one who can restore his land or part of it. . Nevertheless, Assad's position in the Arab world is better than yours. . Don't you think that the reason is that the Arabs consider that you have taken back part of your land at the expense of the cause itself; whereas President Assad refused to sign a partial agreement in the Golan, and also refused to meet with President Gerald Ford in November, as Yitzhak Rabin himself had stated, because President Assad insisted on linking the Palestine cause with a settlement with Syria?

President : Let us discuss facts away from any personal consideration. . I visited Hafez El Assad before going to Salzburg, and told him that there was a second disengagement agreement in Sinai to be followed by a similar one in the Golan.

If Assad has not accepted to conclude a second agreement it was up to him, and this is his responsibility... He is free to do whatever he likes with his calculations.. I know the truth about his refusal to meet President Ford, and I don't want to embarrass him, nor to embarrass President Ford.. However the truth will be known one day.. Frankly speaking, I still have a hope that Hafez El Assad will come to his senses, especially after the interview he granted to Borchgrave, one of the Chief Editors of the American «Newsweek», and in which he said that he hated me after he discovered that the War we waged in October was but a play between me, the Americans and the Israelis and that the results we reached were pre-arranged.. I was asked in Kuwait about my opinion of this statement and I said that if it was true that Hafez El Assad had made such a statement, I am not going to answer him at all. On the contrary, I only wish to remind him of what I told him in Damascus Airport after signing the first disengagement agreement, and the attack I was exposed to on the part of the Syrian Baath Party was of the same kind I am exposed to now.. I told him: «You put your hand in mine, and we went along together.. If you ask me to come from Cairo to Damascus on foot I shall do so».. But for him to state to the «Newsweek » that this war was only a play between me, the Americans and the Israelis, is a matter we should not keep silent about.

Question : I, personally, do not think that President Assad made such a statement.. I met Borchgrave in Switzerland, and he said, within the hearing of some friends, that he was not responsible for the title given to the article, and that some parts of the interview itself were misconstrued.

President : Damascus should have published a denial if such a statement was untrue — Something very similar also happened

with Podgorny. . . Once, during an official visit to Turkey, he insulted the Arabs and Egypt, and talked about the Arab military in a very humiliating manner. . . This statement was published and no denial was released on Podgorny's part. Then, on June 11, 1974 and while I was preparing for the battle and in need of the Soviet Union, I was asked to receive Podgorny, but I apologized saying that he insulted the Arabs and Egypt, and no one bothered to refute what was published on his behalf.

Question : Mr. President, shall we put aside the Syrian question and begin to talk about the Palestinian question. . . You have repeatedly said that Mr. Kissinger had pledged U.S. recognition of the Palestine Liberation Organisation. . . You also said that you obtained guarantees from Gerald Ford, while Rabin and Yigal Allon stated that U.S. pledged not to recognise the Palestine Liberation Organisation without their approval, and they certainly do not approve such a step. .

President : I repeatedly said : «Don't call me to account for what Rabin or anyone else of the Israeli leaders has said». I said this to the Arab Kings and Heads of State in the Rabat Conference. . . It also happened that immediately after the October War, the Syrian Foreign Minister summoned our Ambassador in Damascus and told him that Radio Israel had announced that Egypt was about to sign an agreement with Israel, and he asked for an explanation from President Sadat. So, I sent a cable to President Hafez El Assad in which I said: «Are we so unsure of ourselves as to be required to give an explanation of what Radio Israel announces ?

Anyway, I have given the Egyptian Ambassador explicit instructions not to meet or deal with your Foreign Minister».

Now, you too, Mr. Lozy, come and ask me for an answer to what Rabin and Allon said about the U.S. and the Liberation

Organisation ? Well, last February, and prior to the talks of the second disengagement of troops on the Egyptian front which failed in March, there was a sort of agreement between me and Henry Kissinger which I am not obliged to declare especially after our talk has become of no value to those who twist facts and accuse this operation of treachery. There was an agreement between me and Kissinger, and I informed the Palestinians of it later.. Moreover, my visit to the United States was primarily for the Palestine cause.. My addresses to the Congress and the UN, and all my press conferences were about the Palestine cause.. Then, the resolution which was adopted with a majority of 101 votes, stipulating that the Liberation Organisation should be present in every conference pertaining to the Middle East.. All this is recorded and if you go back to it, you would not be in need to ask me what did I do for the Palestinians.

Question : Mr. President, you seem to regard the campaigns of Baathists and Palestinians against you, and the Palestine cause as two different issues, do you not, Sir ?

President : That is right. When you put it this way, I would reply that despite the February Declaration in which they mentioned that I bartered a piece of land against a piece of principles, I said to Yasser Arafat before President Boumedienne in Riyadh : «You met the Ambassador of a major state who showed an agreement he alleged, would be signed by Sadat, America and Israel and that there were secret provisions in that agreement.

But that Egypt had said 'NO'.

Syria takes Palestine as a pretext to attack Egypt, and so does the Soviet Union. All I ask of you, Yasser, is not to allow any one to take Palestine as a pretext to attack Egypt. If Syria or the Soviet Union want to attack Egypt they should speak for

themselves. Only you may attack us on behalf of Palestine, if you wish to do so. I also told Yasser Arafat in front of Boumedienne, «whatever you do, you can rest assured that your cause in Egypt is in trustworthy hands».

It has been proved by deeds and not words that the purpose of my visit to the United States and Britain was the Palestine cause, despite the fact that demonstrations in London were both funny and sad.

As the British police categorizes organised demonstrations, Syrians, Israelis and Palestinians formed one demonstration while Egyptians formed another by themselves. I want the Arab nation to know that. What I told Yasser Arafat in front of Boumedienne, I had communicated to Khaled El Fahhoum four days previously I said : «Your cause in Egypt will remain in trustworthy hands, whatever you do». He must have communicated this to the rest of the Palestinian leaders, Khaled El Hassan was also present in this meeting.

The Palestine cause shall remain in trustworthy hands in Egypt for the simple reason that we know that Israel is capable of liquidating the entire region. If Egypt were to pull out from the battle, then it will turn back to liquidate us in Egypt, once it has liquidated the region. Arabs have a common fate — this is the simple calculation that renders our departure from the battle a catastrophe to us all.

I am equally responsible for the Egyptian people as I am for the national cause. It is this responsibility that prevents me from misleading and fooling people. Had I chosen to pursue the irresponsible and easy ways, as they did, we would have accepted ending the state of war with Israel and taken everything.

Question : You always say that the Sinai agreement is merely a step towards peace. But we see that the agreement has turned to something else. Israel becomes more rejectful of peace and more objecting to recognition of the rights of the Palestinian people. If the agreement does not open the way to peace, what is the good of it? Is not the restoration of Arab solidarity more valuable than any agreement ?

President : Your words revolve round a non-existent assumption which is Arab solidarity. It has collapsed. If Israel tries to gain time, it is because of the Syrian and Palestinian attempts to break Arab ranks. Syria was supposed to complete the second step in Golan, and then we could present Israel, to the world in Geneva, with its back to the wall.

Question : Syrians linked the question of agreement in Golan with the question of Israel's recognition of the Palestinian people.

President : Is Syria more solicitous of Palestinians than Egypt ? We tried to open the way before them, brought King Hussein to Alexandria and obtained his recognition that the Western Bank is only a trust in his hand, just as Gaza is a trust in mine, a recognition coming for the first time from Jordan. The King also officially recognised, in the Alexandria Declaration, that the Palestine Liberation Organisation was the sole legitimate representative of Palestinians, with the exception of Palestinians resident on the Eastern Bank, in Jordan.

When I reached this agreement with King Hussein and wanted to summon Palestinians to take a step together so that they would come to terms with the King on the future relations between them, the Palestinians rioted as the Syrian trusteeship desired it, and also because the Syrian Baath Party was not involved in the agreement.

But when the Baath Party formed a political and military union with King Hussein, no Palestinian opened his mouth. How can you explain that ? To what do you attribute it? How did the Palestine cause benefit from this agreement ?

Why didn't King Hussein accept the return of Palestinians to Jordan?

Question : Are you against the Baath Party or King Hussein? The King wins and Syria holds the initiative.

President : I have nothing against King Hussein; he is free. But I differ with your view that Syrians hold the initiative. It is Egypt which moves in all directions. It was we who went to America and visited Britain and France. Giscard D'Estaing came to Egypt to affirm France's place in the ranks of truth concerning the Middle East cause. Egypt has freedom of movement in all directions, and also concerning Geneva. Syria may not want to go to Geneva. But that will not change anything. On the other hand, if Egypt refuses to go to Geneva, the conference will not be held. In December 1973, Syria refused to attend the Geneva conference, yet the conference was convened since Egypt attended.

How can you say that they hold the initiative? What were they able to obtain? Where are they moving : in America ? in Western Europe ?

Question : They move in the opposite direction : the Soviet Union, and Eastern Europe. El Assad has improved his relations with Iran, the Gulf States and Saudi Arabia which supported the Syrian initiative in Lebanon.

President : What has happened, Selim ? Did incidents in Lebanon affect you? Did the Syrians fool you whom we describe

as the Grey Wolf of the Arab press? This was the name given to Kemal Ataturk which we found befitting for you.

Question : Mr. President, I am placing the picture before you.

President: But the picture is incomplete. It was I who opened the road to Iran. Between the Shah and myself there are strong brotherly relations. El Assad went to Teheran, despite the opposition of the Baath Party, because I had been there. Previously, when I visited Yugoslavia, El Assad flew to Yugoslavia. When I visited Bulgaria and Rumania, El Assad flew to Bulgaria and Rumania. I invited Hussein to Alexandria, so he ran to Hussein in Jordan. Taking the initiative from our hand is one thing and running behind us is another.

Question: King Hussein served his interests.

President: Well and good. I am happy for him. What would be wrong is for the King to imagine that he was clever enough to dupe Syria and Egypt. I sent him a message saying : « I do not have two policies. What I say in a closed room, I say before a microphone.

If you find that your interest lies with the Baath, you are free, but be frank. This is on a personal level. But on nation-wide level, formation of unity relations or any positive relations between Syria and Jordan is in the interest of the national cause. The Syrian front, without the Jordanian front, will be an open one. The same applies to the Jordanian front. I told this to King Hussein and I also said that I was in favour of the establishment of any form of unity between him and Syria, even though I didn't like tight rope walking.

Question : It appears that you are resentful of the campaign the Sinai Agreement had been subjected to in Jordan. I learned

that you said to Prince Fahd : «What have I done to King Hussein» ? I also learned that the press campaign had stopped.

President : That was Press Campaign No. one. After that, King Hussein gave an interview to the US «World Report». His words sounded just like the words of the Jordanian press. But that is on personal level. When you inquire of Egypt's national line, I will reply that Egypt is for the Syrian-Jordanian front under any form: be it unity, coordination or solidarity, since this front is in the interest of the cause.

Question : Mr. President, do you not believe that it would have been preferable had you hold a summit conference, and submitted the Sinai Agreement to it, considering that it concerned the entire Arab nation, and then agreement would have been reached on the next stage?

President : The Arab solidarity we had built-up with the Arab brothers was accomplished by my initiative. I wouldn't have liked to say that, but time has come for me to speak of it.

The idea was that all the Arabs should convene and agree on a strategy, as was the case in the Basle Conference, held by Hertzl and Co., towards the end of the last century to establish the Zionist strategy which has not been fully revealed as yet.

They preferred to surprise us, step by step, until Israel was formed. Weizmann collaborated with the British, until they obtained the Balfour Declaration and established some colonies. Then immigrants began to flow into Israel, first, 50 thousand a year and then 100 thousand, until Israel was founded in 1948. All this had been planned 50 or 60 years ago, and took us unawares. Had Jews announced to the world what their forthcoming step would be, Israel would have never been founded.

I am indebted to our Arab brothers, Heads of State and Ministers for the all-out support, understanding and consciousness manifested by the Arab nation during the October battle. Agreement had been reached between us on a two-point strategy; First, not to squander a span of Arab soil. Second, no compromise on the rights of the Palestinian people. In the recent conference in Rabat we added a third article which was the non-intervention in Palestinian affairs. We all know that certain Arab countries impose a form of trusteeship and containment on the Palestine Liberation Organisation.

I move within this strategy. But that does not mean that I need to convene the Arab nation, everytime I take a step within the framework of the strategy.

For instance, I did not violate article three of the strategy we had agreed upon. I did not attempt to form an organisation within the Palestinian sphere. That would have been the easiest thing for me to do, had I believed in the principle of sabotaging a cause covertly while appearing to defend it overtly.

Question: I did not suggest that you should hold a summit conference to obtain its approval, before you take a strategic step. I asked you why you did not obtain support for an agreement you had concluded, just like a general-manager in a joint stock company. He takes actions within his responsibilities and then obtains approval after execution.

President: Am I really the General-Manager of the Company of Arab Nations? Do I even have the authority to call a meeting of the summit conference, same as a general manager who calls a meeting of his Board of Directors or General Assembly?

On my part, I am committed to the basic articles of the Arab strategy we had agreed upon. If I recover all of my oil, half the

returns of which was claimed by the Jews, but I obtained all; if I opened my Canal forcefully, when they claimed half the water and half the returns, I believe no Arab would blame me for this, even the hot heads who burn the cause while pretending to defend it.

Question: But that does not change the fact that the new position in the region has all been reversed which was clearly manifested in the Lebanese crisis.

Do you not think, Mr. President, that the incidents in Lebanon, have undermined your position as the head of the major Arab state? You were the first to forecast the incidents taking place there. You saw the picture more clearly than any one else, in fact, more than those who rushed head-long into its quick-sands, without sufficient calculations. Still Egypt was not able to do anything, on account of the isolation imposed on it by the Arab world, as the «Le Monde Diplomatique» paper put it. .

President: Your line of reasoning is wrong. Egypt is not isolated. With regard to the Lebanese crisis, there were two ways before Egypt: either to adopt the ordinary means of sabotage, that is, supplying arms and funds, or exerting responsible efforts with the combating parties through diplomatic means, and contacting them all. You know that I have a very special affection for President Frangieh and have written fifteen or sixteen letters to him and to Rashid Karamy, when he assumed power. You know that at the beginning of the crisis, last April, I warned against fire smouldering under ashes, and the explosion would occur as soon as any one would start interfering with the crisis.

But the political mentality refuses to live up to its responsibilities, especially during crisis, it sought only its own personal interests. This is true of Lebanese leaders, each seeking his private interests, in the House of Deputies election, and during the presiden-

tial election year. I invited Kamal Jumblat to Cairo and when he came, he asked me to support Syrian mediation. I told him that I had no objection. Not only would I support Syrian mediation I was willing to support the devil himself to stop the flow of Lebanese blood.

On the other hand, a Lebanese businessman came to see me, in Alexandria, at the start of the Lebanese crisis. He told me that he woke up one morning to find that ten cars had been stolen from his agency show-room. Upon investigation he learned that it was the Syrian Shock Troops that had stolen his cars. He went to Kamal Jumblat who said to him :

«Apparently you were fighting with the Phalanges». The man replied : «What business have I got with the Phalanges ? I am a businessman and a dealer. I have car agency and am not involved in politics». So Kamal Jumblat sent one of his assistants, Abbas Khalaf, to accompany him to Zoheir Mohssen, the Commander of Syrian Shock Troops. They agreed that the man should pay 10,000 liras. Then they returned nine cars only and said that the tenth had been burned.

This is the nature and the behaviour of Zuhair Mohssen who is nominated to replace Yasser Arafat in the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organisation, yet, Kamal Jumblat comes and asks me to support the Syrian mediation. It is most exasperating that we should observe courtesy and ignore the essence of the problem that is wrong.

Egypt is not in favour of extending courtesy at the expense of the truth. Still I said to Jumblat that I was willing to support the devil, if this would stop the flow of Lebanese blood. I know fully well that turning the crisis to a Moslem-Christian issue was merely a camouflage. No, no, it was not that at all. I know them

and know the details of how the crisis was diverted, to a struggle between Moslems and Christians. I hold the Lebanese responsible for allowing this operation to take place, as well as for concealing the guilty parties and not responding to Arab efforts, the last of which was the effort exerted by Kuwait. All of them know how the factional uprising was fabricated and who made it up. They all kept silence, colluded and refused to talk. After all this, I am required to support Syrian mediation, so I will.

Yesterday, I gave open instructions to the Foreign Minister to further support Syrian mediation or any other mediation capable of extinguishing the fire in Lebanon, whether the extinguishers come from Damascus or any other capital. Did we not support French mediation when the French President, Giscard D'Estaing visited Cairo ? But that you should tell me the crisis in Lebanon is between Moslems and Christians, that is fabrication, falsehood and clowning which I repudiate.

Question: Mr. President, your accusation of Lebanese, Syrian and Palestinian leaders does not exonerate other Arab parties. Let us take Egypt's responsibility, for instance. You are responsible for the Palestinian fury which is one of the basic elements of the Lebanese crisis. You are also responsible for having let go the effective elements, trained by Abdel Nasser in the Lebanese field, ones whom he relied upon in all the battles, and you did not provide replacement to fill the vacancy and maintain Egypt's capacity to move.

President : The Palestinian fury should have been directed against those who impose their trusteeship on Palestinians and write statements emitted in the name of the Palestine Liberation Organisation.

The Palestinian fury should have been directed against the

Soviet Union who sent its Ambassador in Beirut to give Palestinians wrong information. I neither was a cause or party to the Palestinian fury. This distortion of facts is a losing game. You know what they told the boys who attacked our allows Israeli ships to transit the Suez Canal. The treaty signed by Egypt is available for examination and has been published. But the Syrian Baath Party persists in distorting the articles of the treaty to delude people. I am no party to the Palestinian fury.

With regard to the other matter, concerning the elements trained by Abdel Nasser, in the Lebanese sphere, it was the Intelligence that had trained them. I shall not provide either funds or arms to reassert Egypt's position. We are not in need of a position obtained in return for arms and implements. Let others do that.

Question: And allow the Lebanese field to remain devoid of an Egyptian presence?

President : Don't blame me. Direct your blame to the Lebanese leaders. When Mahmoud Riad proposed holding a summit conference we said that we, in Egypt, were ready. . . But that it was preferable that the Arab League Secretary-General should fly to Beirut to ensure that the Lebanese parties concerned would accept the resolutions to be adopted by the conference, that we should not convene a conference and then, have it turned into a force as was the case with the Foreign Ministers' Conference. Kuwait was insulted, and it was said that it was prompted by Egypt, despite the fact that the Kuwaitis did it by their own initiative. Why?

So that Syria would have a free hand in the Lebanese field. Recently, when I told Palestinians that they were under Syrian

trusteeship they replied, « We are obliged, geographically, to be committed to Syria and politically to Egypt ».

Question : That is a nationalization.

President: I agree with you. This is Arab equivocation and beating round the bush.

Question: Mr. President, all this does not justify the result namely that Egypt was absent from the Lebanese arena?

President : Look, Selim, you can go and ask Mahmoud Riad. I have made myself ready and told Mahmoud to travel to Beirut, meet with Franjeh and Arafat and lay down the bases of the agreement. On my part, I intended to fly there myself in order to attend the signing of the agreement between the two sides. But when the situation deteriorated further, and, things were let loose, it was no longer possible for us to put that we decided into action.

Can you tell me how many cease-fire agreements were reached in Lebanon ?

Answer : 24.

President : We would only have added one more since Egypt cannot accept to contribute to the solving of the Lebanese crisis by simply adding another cease-fire agreement to the previous 24 ones. Nevertheless, we are aware of the parties feeding the sedition to keep it alive, and which practically have the power to bring about total cease-fire.

Believe me, when I say that since cease-fire in Lebanon has been put into force, I always appeal to God that it might continue and be effectively implemented. When things are quieter I will have many questions and more information to submit to Arab public opinion, because it is not permitted to go on fooling Arab

public opinion tolerated to allow the continuity of this opinion, nor can we continue to have turmoil, outbiddings and taking advantage of Arab courtesy.

Question : Generally speaking, the stories about arms and the sources of finance are still in the realm of uncertain information. If there is to be a Syrian responsibility in this concern, it has to be divulged and known. But I think Syria will shoulder its historic responsibility. As regards the Egyptian responsibility, if you will allow me to speak frankly I would have said that Egypt has for long been known for its Arab national ideology, the Arabs know that it is an integral part of the Arab nation and an essential member among the countries of the Third World.

In their battle against Zionism and its ally, America, the Arabs are strengthened by the solidarity of the Arab nation, by the support of the Third World to their causes as well as by the friendship of the Soviet Union and the Socialist Group. At present, the Arabs see no ideology of Egypt for which their masses can be enthusiastic, despite the fact that Egypt, during your rule, has given more for the cause, more than it did under any other rule. Egypt fought and was victorious for the first time in the history of the Arabs.

People, nowadays, are only enthusiastic for ideologies, to Arabs moral matters are much more important than material things.

President: When accomplishment is greater than the capacity to assimilate, there occurs some sort of confusion.

On the ideological level, we corrected past errors and raised our ideology above the divisions which broke us up into parties in the past: this one is conservative, that one is progressive, another is a Communist, an imperialist or a capitalist. The funda-

mental trait marking the Egyptian ideology has become « We are Arabs » first and foremost.

We have to address ourselves to our causes, giving no superpower a more privileged position than another. Egypt has given of its very life blood twice in assertion of this principle, once when it eliminated the Western arms monopoly in 1955, which led to the 1956 battle in the accumulation of military debts the settlement of which is still a subject of controversy with the Soviet Union.

The second time, was in 1972 when I broke the Soviet arms monopoly. In 1972, I wrote to the Soviet leaders telling them: «We have together broken the Western arms monopoly, why do you then aim at repeating the same operation? Why are you striving to impose it on me ?

We have waged our battle in October living through centuries of defeat, and have pulled down the wall of fear which often challenged the Arab nation. If you do not realize what Egypt has done, is Egypt to be held responsible?

Question : This is a double responsibility, the responsibility of the one who does not realize, and that of the one who doesn't know how to make realize.

President: I can explain this point to you, for there is a reason for it. In the past, our voice was much louder than our achievements.

Today, our voice has become more modest. We can take as an example what we fulfilled in the field of socialism. We have corrected our concept of the socialist ideology, and have kept far from the Communist way of thinking.

Modern socialism is the reduction of state capitalism for the establishment of some kind of balance between the public and

private sectors which would lead to their mutual cooperation, their integration; and to establish political freedom so that it may supervise and control the remaining part of state capitalism. In addition to extending to every citizen of the broad masses insurance against illness, disability, old age and death. The difficulty of the whole situation lies in the fact that all this is taking place at one and the same time; the battle against Israel, the fight with America and with the Soviet Union, the rectification battle, the adoption of the open-door policy and combating bureaucracy and red tape as well while also releasing the freedom of press in a way unprecedented in Egypt for the past forty years, prior to the Revolution.

We are now paving the way for a life of complete democracy through the multiplicity of rostrums.

Here, I would like to say that the committee undertaking the process of re-writing the modern history of Egypt in a factual and unemotional way, is not attempting to accuse anyone, but simply wants to draw up the basic landmarks on our path from 1919, to the present day. We want to give the 1919 Revolution its due, just as much as the 1952 Revolution, and we want to make clear the characteristics of the 15 May Revolution.

All this is taking place simultaneously. Two days ago, I had Karamanlis in Cairo as my guest. He is one of the rare politicians in whose conversation one takes pleasure. He is a man who, within nine months, succeeded in having a referendum on the monarchy and in carrying out new elections, thus restoring democracy to Greece. All was accomplished within an interval of nine months. When I inquired about this experience, the Greek Prime Minister replied:

«To have it done in a short time cost us a high price». I

told him «God willing, we shall fully establish democracy during the current year, after which the Arab world will see in Egypt a model of democracy which benefitted from all the world experiences.»

For example, Indira Gandhi today, endeavours to bring about a change in the Indian regime, laying down a presidential constitution to replace the Western democracy known to India.

I assure you we will eventually benefit from the other experiences and ours shall be a leading one. Those who beguile their people by claiming revolutions will be asked why they do not follow the example of Egypt? Why do they waste their effort in illusionary battles at the expense of the Arab cause, instead of directing these efforts towards real battles in the interest of our cause?

Question : Then, Mr. President didn't you notice that no one in the Arab world has moved to bridge the gap that is widening between you and your friend President Hafez El Assad? Anyone who listens to both of you, notice that, between you, there is love that is very much like hate, and hate that is very much like love.

President: By my very nature, I hold friendship and loyalty sacred. President Hafez El Assad sided with me in the most critical hours in my life, when defeatism dominated the entire Arab nation, and when rupture, bitterness, indignation and anger were the Arabs' daily bread.

It was during this very period that President Hafez El Assad put his hand in mine so that we may break down the fear in which we were walled up. I believe that, at the time, few would have had the courage to put their hands in mine and join me in a battle which seemed almost impossible.

This was what I told him in the meeting we held at Riyadh. I also said to him that «I am not ready to give in to the Baath Party's analyses nor to its destructive theories.»

Question : Has no Arab moved? I heard that Saudi Arabia made an attempt..

President : Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries did, as I said before, this is not a personal matter. It is a difference in views. On our part, we reject the Baath Party analysis because we regard it as destructive and anarchistic ; belonging to a stage which came to an end with the October War.

There is no disagreement as to the strategy of not relinquishing one inch of our land, and not accepting any compromise over the rights of the Palestinian people.

Question: Would you, Mr. President, clarify the difference in view between you and the Syrian Baath Party?

President: Our view in Egypt is that the October war has put the initiative in our hands, consequently it is incumbent upon us to keep up the strides of the momentum towards peace going, so as not to freeze the situation, and so as not to allow the initiative to slip from our hands. Whereas, the Syrian holds that we didn't achieve victory in the October War, that the initiative is not in our hands, that the US has no role to play in solving the problem because it is an imperialist, colonialist State, and finally that the peaceful step by step policy is but a waste of time, and that it is imperative to re-start preparations for a new military battle. Egypt is of the opinion that the above analysis is wrong. Furthermore, confusing between the stage of peaceful solution and that of military solution is a waste of available opportunities and of the possibilities at our disposal.

Prior to the October war, my disagreement with the Soviets was of a totally different kind. In 1972 when Vietnam launched its tremendous attack, I went to Moscow at the beginning of January, I had already visited the Soviet leaders twice in 1971, said to Brezhnev «At this stage, no political move can ever succeed without resorting to war».

He was convinced of my opinion, but 20 days later, I was surprised to see a statement issued, following the Brezhnev-Nixon meeting, calling for military détente. I lost my temper at the news, for how can we accept such a military détente when Israel stood twenty paces ahead of me. I mention this incident, and the disagreement between me and the Soviets is for the purpose of stating that «before the October battle, war was inevitable in order to guarantee the success of the political move». While at present, we are in the non-military stage, we must continue along the path of political solution and in the meantime, we are in the process of building up our military force to face all probabilities.

Once it becomes evident that such a stage of diplomatic solution in our political battle is exhausted, our move, or rather our return to the stage of military solution would be normal, logical and acceptable to world public opinion.

This naturally can never be taken to mean the suspension of our military preparations otherwise why would I have visited British and signed several armament deals ?

Why would I have visited France and also agreed with them on armament deals ? I am trying to move in all directions after the ban imposed on me by the Soviet Union.

Question: Despite the difference in views between you and Syria, I would like to concentrate on your relationship with Presi-

dent El Assad, and I see no reason why the relationship between you two cannot be resumed despite the existing differences. There is an old saying:

«Difference in opinion does not destroy the cause of friendship».

Nor do I consider it wrong for President El Assad to link his acceptance of a second disengagement in Golan with the recognition by America of the Palestine Liberation Organisation.

President : I also do not see anything wrong in that. But it is wrong to use the placard of Palestine to attack other regimes.

When I obtain a disengagement and improve my position from the strategic, material, military and political aspects, is that not in the interest of the Palestinian cause ?

Question: Instead of saying that he is taking advantage of the Palestine cause can't we say that he is serving the cause? You said that America promised you the recognition of the Palestine Liberation Organisation.

President : There is even more, but I am not at liberty to disclose it.

Question: Why does not America give him such a promise, if they are sincere?

President: Then it is indeed a matter of effort. Do my efforts then make one a traitor to the Arab nation?

When we engage in a discussion, just as we are doing now, this does not necessarily mean that we agree on all points. I said as much to Khaled El Fahoum and to Khaled El Hassan. I said

that I can conceive the need for discussion, and if you are not convinced you have every right to issue a statement bearing your point of view. But to issue a prior statement accusing me of exchanging part of my principles for a piece of land, then to inform me that you have sent a delegation, to meet me.. such ways cannot be acceptable !

Question: Mr. President, mistakes born of emotions are one thing, to place tactical conflicts within the framework of an already jointly established strategy is another thing.

President : I went even further. When I was asked about the attitude of the USSR towards me as opposed to their attitude towards Syria, I always replied that this did not bother me, for what Syria obtained was also mine. Moving in different directions may serve the common cause as much as moving in the same direction, provided the intentions are good and the efforts sincere. But we should have sat and talked. If they are able to obtain help from the U.S.S.R., and if I can obtain the same from the U.S.A., then the two supplies would be complementary to one another. That is how reasonable people behave, using their minds.

Question: Indeed.. Let us, for example take what the Israelis are saying nowadays.

They say that President El Assad dreams of establishing and ruling a federal Arab state in the region of the «fertile crescent».

The Arab unionists affirm that such a dream is not a crime in itself, provided it can satisfy two conditions; the approval of the area, as it happened in the agreement between Syria and Jordan, between Syria and the P.L.O., and as it is being negotiated between Syria and Lebanon at the moment.

The second condition is that such a federation should not constitute an axis rejected by Saudi Arabia and Egypt; on the contrary, it should be considered as giving the lie to the Israeli plan which stipulates that : «There should only be two powers in the Middle East; Egypt and Israel, whereas, other entities are doomed to be partitioned.» Such a state of affairs would give Israel its so-called secure borders.

You are accused of falling into the trap of this Israeli plan, unless Egypt regains its capacity for wide movement in full cooperation with Syria.

President: Do not be too concerned for Egypt, Selim. We are conscious enough to avoid falling into traps set for the region. You should be more concerned for those who are trying to get more than their share. I don't care about what Israel says, my sole concern is what the Arab Unionists say, because I am one of them.

I blessed the agreement concluded between Syria and Jordan, and I will keep on blessing it, despite the minor differences. The unity of the two Syrian and Jordanian fronts is undoubtedly to the advantage of all the Arab nation. I would equally bless a similar agreement concluded between Syria and Iraq.

As for Lebanon, I do not accept this way in which Lebanon is being forced into this unionist project. If there is a genuine endeavour to reach such a union, I do not think that a single unionist would accept to see Lebanon forced into a union in circumstances which do not allow for an expression of free will.

Question: Lebanon is a member of the Arab League, which is a sort of confederation. I don't see why we cannot have other

smaller confederations to complement the Arab League, provided they are not conceived as independent axis.

President : I quite agree with you. All I asked of King Hussein and of the Palestinians is to define the form of future relations between Jordan and Palestine.

Question: President El Assad accomplished, or is about to accomplish, what you have failed to achieve; a confederate state composed of the Syrians, the Jordanians and the Palestinians. Now, if the Lebanese were also to join them.. ?

President : That is where the axis would come in. Particularly if this nation is to be ruled by the «Baath Party». It is far better for President El Assad to remain within the tripartite framework of Syria, Jordan and Palestine. He would then be able to solve the problem of Palestine. It is wrong and dangerous to seek more than that, unless they wish to form a unity similar to the one between us, Libya and Syria.

Question : It seems to be working between Syria and Jordan

President : I am a unionist by nature, nevertheless, I do say that no one should bite more than he can chew, lest he should fail, and the Arab nation would then suffer for greater problems than it is suffering at present.

Question : It is generally thought that the elections in the U.S.A. will favour the Jews. Yet an objective study of international conditions in general, and the situation in America in particular, such as the price of oil, and the policy adopted by all the oil-producing countries indicate that the Arabs can have a direct influence on the elections in America, or at least that they can neutralize Jewish pressure. If the Arabs start to unmask Israeli obduracy in the efforts for peace, they will neutralize Jewish pressure.

President : Indeed ... They can do even more.

Question : You are the person indicated to play this role.

President : I quite agree with your second analysis. But who is responsible for the obdurate attitude by Israel ? Israel can indeed be grateful to the Syrians and the Palestinians. Following the October War, with the first and second disengagement agreements we had cut Israel to size. Though the entire world had applauded Israel after the 1967 war, they applauded the Arabs after the 1973 war. Was it right of us to create the Lebanese crisis which changed the world's applause into hooting ? I am well aware of how much America depends on Arab oil. I came back from my visit there with full information about the extent of their need. This need is always apparent in their calculations. But over there they think calmly and rationally. Their calculations are computed and not haphazard. I am awaiting the end of the discussions in the Security Council, to be able to know what to do. I said that the year 1976 is the year of Palestine, I said so in the UN, and God willing, we shall live up to our word.

Question : We trust that your relations with the U.S.S.R. are improving. The information we received from Beirut maintains that the relations between Moscow and Cairo are getting better. There are many indications to that, among which advice given by the Soviet Leaders to the Palestinians not to widen the conflict, but to keep the proverbial 'linking hair' intact ?

President : If this as true, it would be a good thing. Though I believe such assumptions in Beirut derive from the fact that we and the Soviets have a similar policy as regards the Palestine cause. But on the level of bilateral relations between Cairo and Moscow, the situation remains much the same.

The commercial agreement between us was concluded for one year only. The problem of the debts is still unsolved. Military supplies have ceased altogether 14 months ago. To mitigate the effects of Brezhnev's cancelled visit to Cairo, they sent us small part of two previous deals, which were due in 1973 and 1974, just a small part, though the bulk was not sent.

Worst of all is the delay of the necessary overhauling of planes, which would lead to a loss in the motor power of the aircraft. They are increasing the pressure. We have decided not to resort to insults and libel. My instructions to all are to seek understanding and to foster good relations.