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OCTOBER 27, 1975

OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY

THE WHITE HOUSE

EXCHANGE OF TOASTS
BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT
AND
ANWAR EL-SADAT
PRESIDENT OF THE
ARAB REPUBLIC OF EGYPT

THE STATE FLOOR

10:14 P.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Mr. President, Mrs. Sadat, ladies and gentlemen:

It is obviously a very, very great honor to have Mrs. Sadat and you with us this evening, and particularly for me to have the opportunity today, tonight and tomorrow, and next Sunday, to strengthen our personal relationship.

Although you have been in our country before, Mr. President, this is the first State visit by an Egyptian President to visit the United States. I believe your visit, Mr. President, symbolizes the very close working relationship of our two countries and what has been achieved in the last two years.

We honor you tonight as a friend of the United States and for your commitment to provide your people many of the same goals that the American people have striven for and cherished over the long two hundred years of our young history.

You are committed, I know from our personal discussions, to improving the conditions of life for all Egyptians, and for the people of the entire Arab world.

You have recognized that we must work together to overcome the tragedy of unfulfilled lives, lives marked by disease, malnutrition, undereducation, underemployment and the devastation of war.

Americans -- and I say this from personal contact -- respect your vigorous pursuit of peace and your efforts to devote your nation's energy and your nation's resources not to continue conflict, but to meet the needs of your people.

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We in the United States are committed to work with you toward such worthy goals. Failure to achieve peace in the Middle East will affect the lives of Americans and the lives of our friends in the Middle East, and actually throughout the world.

We share your deep belief and conviction that nations can gain much by working together. Your courage, Mr. President, in taking the first steps toward peace after almost three decades of warfare assures your place in history in the Middle East, and we congratulate you for it.

You are the man, Mr. President, who assumed the lead in ending a conflict that for more than a generation absorbed the lives, the energies and the substance of many, many nations. We have been proud to work with you in this very noble cause, and we will continue to do so.

Mr. President, I know from my conversations with you that we had in Salzburg, and from our many other exchanges, that your dedication to peace is for all the people of the Middle East. I say again tonight, emphatically and categorically, that we share the view that the process of making peace for all must continue.

No step we have taken can be an end to itself. There can be no peace until the legitimate interests of all the peoples of the Middle East are taken fairly into account in a final peace settlement.

I wish to address a special word, Mr. President, to your charming wife. My own wife, Betty, is doing much to inform me about the rights and the problems and the desires of women in the new freedoms of modern society. (Laughter) Sometimes she thinks I am an apt -- and sometimes a less than apt -- pupil. (Laughter)

But anyhow, I am pleased to observe that Mrs. Sadat has distinguished herself in your nation by her contributions to both the well being of all Egyptians and to a new consciousness of the status of women and the efforts in your country to achieve equality of opportunity.

Ladies and gentlemen, I ask that you join me in a toast to the President of Egypt and to our mutual objectives.

To the President.

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PRESIDENT EL-SADAT: Mr. President, Mrs. Ford, ladies and gentlemen:

First of all, I would like to thank President Ford for his kind words and express my sincere appreciation for the warm reception the American people have accorded to me and my family.

It was a great pleasure to respond to President Ford's invitation to visit your beautiful country and meet with its hospitable people. I come here with a message of friendship and amity from the Egyptian people to every American. I welcome the opportunity to pursue with President Ford the talks we held and the contacts we have maintained over the past few months on several issues of mutual interest and common concern.

It is my feeling and sincere hope that this visit will contribute significantly to furthering American relations in all domains, and will consolidate the ties of friendship and understanding between the American people and the Arab nation.

On the eve of your Bicentennial, I would like you to know that we share with you the determination to utilize the legacy of the past to pave the way for a better future, not only for our two peoples, but for the entire family of man.

We share with you, too, the hope of fulfilling the great ideals of democracy, human dignity and equality.

Mr. President, the past two years have witnessed a tangible improvement in our relations. For the most part, the credit for such an improvement is due to a greater degree of American understanding of our just cause and our legitimate struggle to establish peace in the area.

We feel, rightly I hope, that the events following October 1973 have dissipated many misconceptions and myths that marred the healthy development of our relations for so long. As you know, we have always maintained that if the United States adopted an even-handed policy in the Middle East, there would be no problem between us.

We expressed our readiness to respond positively to any favorable change in American policy. Thus, when there appeared some indications that the United States has started to see the realities in their true perspective, matters began to move in the right direction.

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Bridges of friendships and channels of communication were established for our mutual benefit. You have my assurance that we intend to spare no effort to strengthen our relations even further and broaden the scope of our cooperation.

The Egyptian people -- and in fact, the entire Arab nation -- expect the United States to continue to demonstrate by words and deeds alike its genuine interest in reaching a final peace settlement.

We recognize and acknowledge with satisfaction the role you have played in the past few months to stimulate and accelerate the process of a final settlement. We realize also that it is your firm and solemn commitment to pursue this policy until the ideal of peace becomes a living reality.

We do not question your dedication to work seriously and tirelessly towards that end. However, you would agree with me, Mr. President, that we cannot allow the situation to slip back to a state of no war and no peace. We feel that the momentum for peace should not be squandered under any circumstances.

Rather, it should be utilized fully, and with a sense of urgency commensurate with the still persisting danger of explosion. Any stalemate or stagnation will not only delay the settlement, but in all probability it would introduce certain qualitative and substantive changes that would obstruct the road to peace.

I trust that it has become quite evident that if we are really concerned with an overall settlement, we have to address ourselves to the core of the problem; namely, the Palestinian question. The Palestinian people have been deprived for over 27 years of having their own State where they can lead a productive and fulfilling life.

Are they not entitled to their national rights like all other peoples? Would it not be a travesty of justice to deny them the inalienable right to live in peace and dignity. Does it serve any useful purpose to perpetuate the state of strife and frustration?

Fortunately, there are increasing signs that their cause is gaining more international support every day. Nations are coming to grips with the reality of the Palestine people as an indispensable factor in the equation of peace in the Middle East.

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Many Arabs are confident that the United States will not dissent from this irreversible trend. They feel, not without reason, that faithfulness to the essence of the American Revolution and the heritage bequeathed upon this Nation by its Founding Fathers entail lending the Palestinians your understanding and support, thus reinforcing the road to peace.

We can all be assured that once the Palestinians have been accorded their basic right as a free people, they will become a force for peace, stability and human progress. Reason and reconciliation would prevail over animosity and hostility.

Americans can understand, perhaps better than any other people, man's attachment to his land, for this has been one of the main characteristics of the American culture. Such relationship instills in us a strong love for our country and a devotion to defend it, no matter what the sacrifice is.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am pleased to say that you have a President you can be proud of. Throughout my contacts with him, I have found him a statesman of great ability, vision and understanding. He is a genuine man who radiates sincerity and honesty. It shall give me and the Egyptian people immense pleasure to welcome him and Mrs. Ford in Egypt in the near future.

May I ask you, ladies and gentlemen, to join me in a toast in honor of President and Mrs. Ford, wishing them health, happiness and fulfillment.

Thank you.

END (AT 10:31 P.M. EDT)