

Top Copy: Egypt, May 79,
Visits of Vice President Mubarak

ראש הממשלה
THE PRIME MINISTER

Jerusalem, August 18, 1980

Dear President Sadat,

I thank you for your letter which reached me on August 15. I have read it with no less attention than I did your previous communication and I will gladly respond to the seven points you raise. But let me start with a reflection on the passage at the end of your introduction.

You write to me: "The story of the Israelites began in the land of Egypt. It is apparent that it is the will of God Almighty that the story would find its completion in Egypt also."

His Excellency
Mohammed Anwar El Sadat
President of the Arab Republic of Egypt
Cairo

The history of the people of Israel did not begin in Egypt. It started in the country from which I write this response. In those ancient days the country was called Canaan. Abram (he was not yet Abraham) arrived in Canaan directly from Haran, which he reached after having left Ur-Kasdim (Mesopotamia). Thus, is it recorded in the Book which is the inspiration of monotheism:

"And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Schem unto Eilon Moreh and the Canaanite was then in the land. And the Lord appeared unto Abram and said, unto thy seed will I give this land..." (Genesis, Chapter 12, Verses 6;7).

Since the days of the Prophet Samuel, Canaan was called Eretz Israel, the Land of Israel ("Now there was no smith found throughout all the land of Israel" - 1 Samuel, Chapter 13, Verse 19). Only in the second century of the Christian era did the Roman Emperor Hadrianus, having crushed the revolt of Bar Kochba with the help of legions, from Britain and Germany, rename the land, Syria et Paleastina. The origin of this name stems from our ancient enemies, the Philistines, and thus did it enter into the common usage of many nations. The mighty Emperor also renamed, or misnamed Jerusalem, Aelia Capitolina. Except for students of ancient history, this name is now almost completely forgotten.

To go back to Canaan, or the Land of Israel, and to its association with Egypt - old Abram spent a short time in Egypt and then returned to Canaan. Only his grandson, Jacob, named also Israel, descended (to use the Biblical expression) with all his family to Egypt and there the events unfolded as described in the Book. In their wake the children of Israel returned to Canaan, just as we, the descendents of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob - Israel, returned through the course of history, time and again, having never severed our ties with this land of our ancestors. Throughout the generations Jews have never left the Land and have always dwelt in it.

None of us mortals can know the will of God Almighty, but surely as the history of the Egyptian people will find its completion in Egypt, so the history of the Jewish people will find both its expression and consummation in their own land, the Land of Israel.

1. "Both parties should refrain from arguing for the sake of escalating the disagreement and creating unnecessary rifts." These are your words. I agree with them without qualification. However, it is my duty to bring to your attention a quotation from an article which appeared in the Egyptian newspaper, Al-Gomhouriya, several days ago:

"Begin requested clarification. We will not give a clarification, we will offer an apology. We apologize to the late Hitler. Hitler did not kill the will for peace of the nations of the world but made of it a hope and a goal. Hitler did not kill the will of the Jews to live but intensified their dedication to life. He, above all, was responsible for the establishment of the State of Israel for it was he who brought every Jew to dream about the Land of the Return as he sees it. But

Menachem Begin is the one who kills the hope for peace in the hearts of men in Egypt, Israel and the Arab countries."

I shall withhold direct comment for a while.

You will recall that on May 27, 1980, I wrote to you a private, confidential letter in which I quoted from another article in a Cairo newspaper, Al-Akhbar, which wrote:

"Hitler was an extreme racist who called for the rule of the Aryan race over the whole world. Begin (is) an extreme racist who calls for the rule of the Jews over all races in the world, claiming that he belongs to the chosen people," etc. etc.

Our Ambassador, Dr. Eliyahu Ben Elissar, brought to you my letter. General Ali, your Foreign Minister, was present at the meeting. Since it was

a confidential diplomatic exchange, I will not now divulge its contents. But I can cite you as saying that in your opinion - which you clearly expressed - my complaint was completely justified. In the wake of that article came the cartoon in which Hitler bestows medals upon me; notably the swastika, and now comes the above-mentioned "apology" - to the late Adolph Hitler.

Mr. President, I do not complain any more. I desist from doing so. I wish, only, to analyse together with you what was said in the capital of Egypt of somebody whom you called your friend.

As you know, I did not ask for any "clarification," as the author of the above-quoted paragraph asserts. I only drew your attention to what was written in Al-Akhbar. But now we have before us for all to read the "apology". It is the most shameful profanity ever written since a long,

rambling speech was published in the form of a book called "Mein Kampf." I would wish the editor of Al-Gomhuriya success in getting the forgiveness of Herr Hitler.

He stated, moreover, that Hitler made peace a "hope and a goal;" that "he did not kill the will of peace," etc. He only killed tens of millions of people in order to make the Aryan race the ruler of the whole world. "Hitler did not kill the will of the Jews to live ...;" he only ordered to shoot them, to bury them alive, to gas them, to burn them, to drown them, to annihilate six million men, women, children and babies. He only killed a million-and-a-half Jewish children, torn from the arms of their mothers. How many Einsteins, Bergsons, Freuds, sages, philosophers, writers, poets, might, would, have emanated out of them? And yet the good Egyptian people is being informed and educated on the newest theory that Hitler "intensified the Jews' dedication to life!"

Above all, "Hitler was responsible for the establishment of the State of Israel ...". Quoting this heresy, I cannot but say, God Almighty! in whom we both believe - not the builders, the pioneers, the fighters for freedom, the prisoners, the executed heroes, the generation of the holocaust, the revolt, the heroism, the victory, the redemption - none of these are responsible for the renewal of our independence; but who is responsible? The enemy of mankind who "scientifically" massacred millions of potential citizens of that Jewish State.

After all this, you advise me that both parties "should refrain from arguing for the sake of escalating the disagreement ...". But what is even more serious and dangerous, you write in paragraph seven: "It is a law of nature, not only of physics, that every action has a reaction which is basically similar in kind and degree." In deep sorrow I must say that the venomous

campaign continues daily and even escalates, whilst your own words could, perhaps, unintentionally be construed by editors and journalists as justification for all the hostility - including that "apology" to the late Hitler - which has become the dominant tone of the Egyptian press.

2. Hostile propaganda is clearly forbidden by our mutual peace treaty, and in my previous letter, I brought clear proofs of such conduct by your Minister of State for Foreign Affairs - in Africa, in the United Nations and elsewhere. Most recently there was the communique signed by him in Bucharest which is a complete departure from the Camp David agreement. It is, therefore, my sad duty to register for the sake of truth and for the record, that Egypt is not fulfilling its commitment under the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty to abstain from hostile propaganda.

3. On settlements, you write that I gave an undertaking at Camp David "to observe a moratorium on building new settlements for the duration of the negotiations. It was understood by all sides that the negotiations referred to in this commitment were the autonomy talks."

This statement does not conform to the facts as confirmed in the minutes of the Camp David talks. The document I hold before me is a letter addressed by me to President Carter on September 17, 1978.

I quote:

"Dear Mr. President,

I have the honor to inform you that during the agreed period of negotiations (three months) for the conclusion of the peace treaty no new settlements will be established in the area of the Government of Israel.

Sincerely yours,

Menachem Begin"

Not only did I stress the negotiations for the peace treaty (meaning, of course, between Egypt and Israel) but I intentionally noted in parenthesis "three months," which was the time we allotted in the Camp David Framework for Peace to conclude our negotiations; (in fact, they took six months). This, and no other, was our commitment we gave on settlements and that undertaking came to an end on December 17, 1978. It never entered my mind to give a commitment lasting for the then indefinite duration of negotiations concerning the autonomy for the Arab inhabitants in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza District.

I do not claim that because of my letter to President Carter, as quoted above, we have the agreement of the United States Government to construct new settlements. I merely made clear both Israel's undertaking and when it would come to an end. Did not your advisors inform you of the contents of my letter on the day we signed the Camp David accords in Washington D.C.? I, for my part, made the matter crystal clear.

The statement I made in my last letter of August 4 in response to your demand that all settlements in Judea, Samaria, etc. be removed is termed by you, "negativism". I wonder. I said in the Aswan press conference: "We are no foreigners to this land ... we have a perfect right to live there." And when one says that Jews and Arabs can live together (and I remember your enthusiasm on seeing Jews and Arabs living together in Haifa) - what is that? Negativism? I believe that from the moral point of view the concepts should be reversed. We stand by our positive position.

4. On Jerusalem, I have told you everything I can, both orally and in writing. I do not wish now to repeat either the contents of the documents I attached to my previous letter nor my statements during our friendly talks. You have our position.

Jerusalem is our capital, one city, indivisible, with guaranteed free access to the holy places for all religions. Prince Fahd, of oil-rich Saudi Arabia, therefore, calls on his Arab brothers to march on Israel in a holy war - jihad. We are not impressed. You know me by now. I hate war with every fibre of my soul. I love peace. My colleagues and I made great sacrifices for the sake of peace. If there are, anywhere, ungrateful men who prefer to forget what we did and the sacrifices we made for the sacred cause of peace - then let them buy oil, let them sell arms, let them be friends of tyrants like the ruler of Iraq (to mention just one), let them sell principles and dignity - they will not change the irrefutable facts.

The threats of Prince Fahd are of no concern to us. He does not know - how can he? - what this generation of Jews, who suffered the indescribable fall and the unprecedented triumph, is capable of sacrificing

and doing in order to defend the people, the country, Jerusalem. He may have the billions of petro-dollars; we have the motivation in the service of a just cause.

But let it be known to all: We do not want military victories. We want peace - for our people and for the other nations. And we were glad to note that Egypt did not concur with Saudi Arabia's war slogan.

Jerusalem, of course, is indivisible and is a part of this peace. You write to me again that Jerusalem should be undivided under two sovereignties. This, I must admit, I do not understand. I do not blame anybody for my inability to comprehend. But I say to you, in full candor, I simply do not grasp the idea. I do not understand the project to have one city under two sovereignties, or two sovereignties over one city.

5. On Resolution 242 you mention semantics: "all the territories;" "the territories;" "territories". To us, the Israelis, these are no mere semantics. The two initial formulae (containing the definite article) were proposed in those almost forgotten days of November 1967, but they were rejected. Their rejection was deliberate and meaningful. Written into Resolution 242 are the words, "from territories," and by those words we are in no sense committed to carry out what is called "complete withdrawal."

This is also one of the reasons why we did not withdraw to the pre-1967 armistice lines on the southern sector. You mention Sinai. Of course, there we made the greatest sacrifices for the sake of peace. But, under the Camp David accords and the peace treaty, Israel did not withdraw behind the 1967 Gaza District armistice line. This fact, this example, should not be ignored when we deal with other sectors. There is

a general concensus in Israel, by all parliamentary parties except for the Communists, not to retreat in any sector, East, North or South, to the pre-4th June, 1967, armistice lines.

6. When I asked you: Can Egypt bring representatives of the Palestinian Arabs, inhabitants of Judea, Samaria and the Gaza District, to the negotiation table, you replied with another question: "And what did you do to encourage them?" Allow me to answer.

You speak about "repression." I would be interested to know what would any country, Egypt included, have done if its citizens were assassinated, its children massacred and all this under the slogan to liquidate the "Zionist entity" which is Israel? I remember certain events in your country and the inescapable reaction of the authorities in charge. Let not the blameless be blamed for the guilt of the murderers.

Permit me to remind you again what I stressed in my last letter, that the boycott by the Palestinian Arabs of the autonomy talks began ab initio, even before we started our talks and immediately after the signing of the Camp David agreement.

7. And now, I come to the final point. As I understand it, at the end of your letter you make a double suggestion:

a) Not to renew our autonomy talks until after November 4, 1980, on an undefined date following the elections in the United States.

b) After that date, to hold a tripartite summit conference in which you, President Carter and I will participate.

Dear President Sadat,

If I understood you well, I feel it my duty to ask you: Why again for the fourth time does Egypt interrupt, or suspend, or disrupt our talks? Why should we not continue with our negotiations? You always contend that a solution is urgent. Were we to accept your suggestion, we would have agreed to a suspension of nearly six months or more. That is a long time indeed. Where is the sense of urgency? You, yourself, tell me that our world is one of plurality, of different opinions. Such difference of opinion exists between us as well. Of course, it takes at least two to negotiate. However, if you persist in your negative attitude, the negotiations will remain disrupted for the simple and only reason that Egypt repeatedly suspends the talks. On our side, I repeat our suggestion to renew without any further delay the tripartite autonomy negotiations.

And, what of the "summit" idea? I understand that President Carter was not consulted. Permit me to say that both he and I should have been consulted through a diplomatic, confidential exchange. Let us at least now, however, quietly consider the matter, the venue and the date should all three parties accept the principle itself. This should not, under any circumstances, preclude the renewal and the uninterrupted continuation of the autonomy talks. This is my concrete, positive suggestion to you.

With best wishes,

M. Begin
Menachem Begin