

Anwar el Sadat's visit to Jerusalem in 1977

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From the beginning of the 1970's, the instruments of the settlement in the Middle East has changed. It was based on the uncertain outcome of the fourth Arab-Israeli war and on the subsidence of the international circumstances. These specialities provided a chance to the politicians to use diplomatic solutions instead of war. From his inauguration the president of Egypt, Anwar El Sadat worked in the spirit of his *infitah* policy, which politically meant an opening toward the United States and Europe, and looser relations to the Soviet Union. Being a belligerent power during the wars, Egypt had serious economic and industrial problems. Sadat thought that solving his country's trouble would be better by the capital investments and financial support from the West. This mentality involved an opening toward Israel.

Sadat's visit was an unique first step in the stream of the peace talks. In this essay I will try to give an insight into the details of this initiative. This research is based on diplomatic documents from the National Archives related to Egypt, Israel and Romania. Beyond these documents I used Hungarian periodicals to explore the background of the Arab countries refusal. The first, *Népszabadság* was the official medium of the Hungarian Communist Party and the second, the *Magyar Hírlap* which is said to have been the semi-official newspaper of the government.

After the fourth Arab-Israeli war, which ended in October, 1973, the general way of military disengagement talks started with the leading of the United States. Thanks to Henry Kissinger's step by step diplomacy, in 1974-75 the discussing partners managed to reach three succesful separating agreements.¹ Although, by 1976, due to Syria and other Arab countries' rejection on continuing these kind of face to face negotiations, Kissinger's policy could not be carry out.

The commenced talks, by reducing the strained relations and creating confidence among the participant states became the base of the subsequent peace process between Israel and Egypt.²

The international base of Sadat's visit was the change in the US Middle East policy. Jimmy Carter, stressed from his inauguration in 1977, that he wanted to play an effective

¹ In the Sinai II agreement, which was signed in 1975 Israel assumed the obligation to withdraw its troops from the strategically very important Mitla and Gidi passes, situated on the west side of the Sinai peninsula. According to the agreement, the environs of the passes was declaired to a neutral zone. The US forces were qualified to be the supervisor. Egypt accepted to stop the state of belligerency with Israel for three years.

² Shlomo Avineri, "Peacemaking. The Arab-Israeli conflict", *Foreign Affairs*, October 1978, p. 51-70.

part in solving the Middle East question. The new system changed the separate agreements' method into a comprehensive way. The wide ranging plans contained the follows: all questions must be solved on peaceful way, commitment by all parties concerned to respect sovereignty and territorial integrity of others, Israel must withdraw by agreed stages to the 1967 lines with only such modifications as are mutually accepted, these resultant boundaries must be safeguarded by demilitarized zones supervised by UN forces. The Palestinian question must be solved by the acceptance of Palestinian sovereignty and integrity or by the voluntarily federation of this entity with Jordan, giving extensive political autonomy to them.³ The report, which became the official viewpoint of the United States, urged a comprehensive approach to a solution of the Arab - Israeli conflict, instead of the step by step method. For this aim, Carter wanted Geneva to be the scene of the overall negotiations.⁴

To reach the comprehensive settlement, the Carter administration had to become acquainted with the opinions of the Arab leaders. In the interest of this, the new Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance, made a state visit to the Middle East in February, 1977. Besides sizing up the countries opinion he wanted to get the US plan accepted. In spring the Arab and Israeli politicians required the visit, from which talks I will interpret the one with Sadat and Begin with reference to their interest and conception.

Sadat's interests were dictated by reconciliation between Israel and the Arab states. On this behalf he was willing to make efforts toward Israel but he still had a lot of preconditions. Arriving in Washington on 4 April, he supported the formation of the demilitarized zones on the Sinai, as well the liquidation of the Arab commercial boycott against Israel "if things go well toward the development". Insisting on the question of the relationship between Egypt and Israel, Carter was interested in the conditions of the diplomatic connection and the problem of the boundary between the two countries. Sadat showed reserve in this topic. He said he could imagine a normal relationship, convened by the international circumstances, but it would only be reached in the distant future.⁵ Sadat supported the US plan of the Geneva conference, he imagined the Palestinian participation in a joint Arab delegation. The president of Egypt's insistence on the solution of the Palestinian problem on a Geneva way promoted him to regain possession of the Sinai, propped up by multilateral protectorate. According to this chance, Sadat always wanted to keep close relationship between the Palestinian and the Sinai questions. It was clear for Sadat that the unresolved problem of the Palestinians would make difficulties over getting back the sovereignty of the Sinai peninsula. Thus, the territory and the autonomy problem made an unbreakable connection in Sadat's point of view, the two elements became the conditions of each other and made strong influence on the following peace process. At the end of the talks, a friendly relationship was formed between Sadat and Carter.

³ According to the report of the Brookings Institute in 1975. Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, London, Weidenfeld-Nicolson, 1983, p. 85.

⁴ Carter wanted to recall the Geneva peace conference which was initiated by Kissinger after the Jom-Kipur war. The Secretary of State convened a conference, chaired by the two superpowers, on behalf of the organization of the Middle-East situation. The initiative became unsuccessful. Syria did not take part because the PLO was not invited. The conference thus has been postponed.

⁵ Jimmy Carter, *Keeping Faith*, London, William Collins Sons & Co. Ltd., 1982 p. 283.

In May, 1977 a new player stepped on the Middle East's political stage. Soon after the Sadat-Carter meeting, the Prime Minister of Israel, Yitzak Rabin's campaign, which was not free from scandals, ended in failure. Due to this, the right-wing Likud party – led by Menachem Begin- managed to win against the Labour Party, who had run the country for thirty years. The new Israeli leader, who was famous for his terrorist past and for being a long-lasting opposit, rightly could be the obstcale in the way of the US planned peace process. There were different opinions related to the electoral victory of Begin in the Arab states. On one hand, politicians thought that no matter wich party led Israel because neither of the former prime ministers wanted to give back the occupied land. Furthermore, for Begin, it would be easier to do, because he had no right-wing opposite.⁶ Egypt was not shocked at first time. Sadat thought that the outcomes of the elections are not the most important facts in the settlement of the Middle East problem. Beside this, Egypt belived in Begin's statement that the new Israeli government, wich was based on a national union, would be able to take care about the peace process on competent and detailed way. Naturally, some politicians were afraid of the new Israeli leadership. They thought there would be problems in the relationship of Egypt, Syria and the PLO (Palestin Liberalization Organization), and the Geneva conference would become inopportune.⁷

In their electoral campaign Begin and his party offerd relentless resistance to a sovereign Palestinian state. Their argumentations were based on historical and religious consideration, and they said that Israel's security would be damaged if the Palestinian state become exist. The PLO was said to be a terrorist group and the device of the Soviet Union to put pressure on Israel. Begin, avowing himself a supporter of the revisionist cionism,⁸ refused to withdraw his forces and to abolish the jewish settlements on the West Bank and Gaza. Israel didn't have interest in the coprehensive method, because Jerusalem should have talked to al the Arab world simultaneously. In spite of these, during his meeting with Carter on 19 July, he was not averse to take part in the Geneva conference but he offerd so kind of alternatives wich would help him to tear the talks' comprehensiveness into its parts. He strictly refused the participation of the PLO as an autonomous delegation. During the presentation of his view, Begin was better concentrating on the details of the conference than admire its substantial parts. Although Israel's point of view hadn't changed so much about the PLO and the arab countries as we could become acquainted with this, but Begin was engaged in politics for peace from the beginning. Israel also had economy and financial problems, moreover it was easier for him to make concessions during the peace talks due to the lack of right-wing oppositions.

By the end of summer 1977, the discussions with the Middle East politicians have been brought to their end, but only little and uncertain steps were made toward the comprehensive talks by the Carter administration. Washington- inspite of IsraeI's rejection - devoted all their energies to the problem of the Palestinian representatives. Carter

⁶ MOL KÜM Izrael 1977 TŰK XIX-J-1-j packet 66, 66-2-003300/4 Izraeli választások (Election in Israel).

⁷ MOL KÜM Izrael 1977 TŰK XIX-J-1-j packet 66, 66-2-003300/7 Izraeli választások (Election in Israel).

⁸ A radical zionist political movement, wich was founded and led by Jabotinsky. It fought for the wide-ranging spreading of the zionist idea and for the establishment of the Israel state. Supported the armed struggle.

declared if the PLO acknowledged the UN Resolution 242, which literally don't talk about the necessity of the palestinian self-determination, Washington would get in touch with Arafat, even if he won't recognize Israel.⁹ The leader of the PLO refused the unamended resolution. Due to the permanent pressure Israel had changed his mind about the Palestinian participation by September 1977. Begin agreed to invite Palestinian spokesmen, but only as a member of a joint Arab delegation.¹⁰

The struggle for the Geneva conference became more complicated with the appearance of the Soviet Union. The last opportunity for Washington to soften Syria and the PLO's point of view was to increase the importance of the Soviet Union – as a co-chairman – in the peace process. The joint communique published on 1st October, didn't contain significantly new details but provoked a storm of controversy. Israel and lots of politicians from Washington felt aversion against the declaration. The joint communique couldn't realize the hopes pinned on it, Carter's opportunities started to decrease, the comprehensive method met with a lot of difficulties. 1. the Palestinian participation problem. 2. Begin's refusal in connection with the autonomy of the West Bank and Gaza. 3. the growing number of the Jewish settlements on the occupied territories.¹¹ 4. Syria insisted on not to recognize Israel as a state. 5. Sadat's insistence on guarantees from Israel with regard to the Sinai and the withdrawal from the occupied land.

Carter started to feel that the comprehensive approach was hard to carry out, in the end it became impossible to do. The Middle East had been the focus of the conflicts for the United States for years. The oil crisis after the fourth Arab-Israeli war caused a serious economy problem to Washington. They can't afford to let the partners talking on their own. On this behalf, to solve these problems the US grew her own influence, which was held behind the comprehensive system.

The unsuccessfulness of this attempt rooted in the complexity of the Middle East situation. The new agreement should have found answers to questions of the moral difference of the Arab states and Israel, the legitimacy of Israel, the Palestinian's entity, moreover it should have harmonized the religious, economic, strategic and geopolitical conditions.¹² The overall solution couldn't be carried out, furthermore the rapprochement between Carter and Arafat decreased Israel's trust toward the United States. By the early parts of 1978, Carter realized the difficulties of the situation, and a lot of dispute was started among the politicians of Washington about the function of the Geneva conference, whether it should be a real summit conference or should only be an official ceremony to ratify the agreements. Carter's administration didn't have to make a decision about it. By organizing the Camp David summit US not directly but gave up searching for overall solutions.

In October 1977, Carter couldn't see that. The accumulated obstacles were too much to settle the problem on his own, thus – based on his friendship with Sadat – on 27 October,

⁹ The United States made a promise to Israel in 1975 that Washington won't keep contact with the PLO till it recognizes Israel and the Resolution 242.

¹⁰ C. Paul Bradley, *A study of Carter Administration Policies 1977-1980*, Thompson-Rutter, 1981, p. 13

¹¹ Arriving from the meeting in Washington in July 1977, Begin got three more settlements built in spite of Carter's refusal.

¹² Shlomo Avineri, *op. cit.*

Carter wrote a letter to the president of Egypt to ask for help. "Your promise, namely that I can count on you in critical situation, impressed me deeply. We reached this point and I need your help."¹³

The preliminaries of the visit

The peace process obviously reached its critical point, which was increased by the Soviet-US joint communique. Sadat was afraid of the renewed appearance of the Soviet Union in the peace process.¹⁴ He was led by his political and economic interests toward peace, and was pressed by them to look after solutions apart from Geneva.

Sadat's visit to Jerusalem couldn't be a sudden decision. He needed guarantees about the territory (Sinai peninsula) and autonomy (Palestinian) question before going to Israel. The two countries had to find out – in lack of diplomatic connections – how to get contact between each other. Being afraid of the uncertainty of the results both partners preferred the secret talks, which started again after the Jom-Kipur war.

Seeking for connecting links started toward different directions at the same time, from which one led to Romania.¹⁵

For Ceaușescu it was important to strengthen his relations to the states in the Middle East in the system of both bilateral and comprehensive talks. Bucharest paid attention to take part and help in the solutions of the Arab-Israeli problem. On different level Ceaușescu had a permanent economic and cultural connection with most of the Arab states. These connections can be explained by Romania's special foreign policy and by the supporting of the non-aligned countries' movement. Furthermore with having good relations with the Arab states Bucharest wanted to grow its international reputation, and wanted to solve its internal economic problems. Ceaușescu had an objective foreign policy which gave him a chance to be a some kind of mediator among the countries. There was two more facts in 1977 which helped Romania to make stronger its position, namely the increasing interest of the US toward comprehensive solution and the weakening attitude of the Soviet Union. The forced expansion of the industrial era and the inner tensions caused by the problems of the living standards were important reasons too. Romania wanted to change its structure of international trade by increasing the export of industrial machines and the import of raw material and energy sources.¹⁶

In December 1976, due to the confused circumstances of the by-election, the ordinary Romanian-Israeli talks were cancelled. Thanks to these political conditions, at that time the Ceaușescu initiative was said to be a pressure from the Soviet Union toward Israel to accept the PLO as a negotiating partner. Rabin neither wanted to hear about the PLO nor he wanted to leave his electoral campaign. The relationship between Romania and Israel started after the victory of Begin. Thanks to the mediation of the Romanian ambassador in

¹³ Jimmy Carter, *op. cit.* p. 295.

¹⁴ Jacques Derogy, *Szupertitkos Izrael* [Secret Israel], Akadémiai kiadó, 1991, p. 38.

¹⁵ The relationship started under Golda Meir's ruling, although at that time it was not too important in Israel's foreign policy.

¹⁶ MOL KÜM Románia 1977 TÜK XIX-J-1-j packet 111, 128-1 005876 Románia és a Közél-Kelet [Romania and the Middle East].

Israel Begin received an invitation to Bucarest. During the talks between 26-29 August, Ceaușescu declared that withdrawal of the Israeli troops and the Palestinian participation were considered essential and he asked Begin to revise his point of view. Begin's aim was to ask for contribution from Romania between Sadat and him. Knowing the relationship among Israel, Washington and the west part of Europe, with this help Ceaușescu desired to improve his country's investments and connection to capitalist group in the west countries.¹⁷ Moreover he wanted to make good impressions in Begin related to the Romanian Jews by equitable maintenance of the case of their emigration.¹⁸

Sadat's relationship to Romania is dated back to the past too, it was inherited from Nasser, and did not break up after the expulsion of the Soviet consultants, which was due to Romania's special foreign policy. There were a lot of parliamentary, mass-organization and other kind of visits among the two countries, which aim was to strengthen and deepen the economic and cultural relationships.

On 11 May 1977, Ceaușescu made an official visit to Cairo. This meeting was part of the high level series of consultations, which had started years ago. During the talks they paid note of the important achievements of the economic and industrial question mostly. Two agreements were made by them. First, they decided to increase trade exchanges and the development of economic and technical cooperation between Egypt and Romania. The second one was a new trade agreement. During the exchange of news on the international situation they emphasized the need for all states to strictly observe in their international relations, moreover the national independence and sovereignty. Talking about the present situation in the Middle East the two presidents underscored that the continuous Israeli occupation creates grave tensions and danger in the area and constitutes an obstacle to the peaceful and lasting settlement of the Middle East situation. They also estimated that at present, there exist favourable conditions for the political and diplomatic process that is indispensable for the establishment of a just and lasting peace. In the end they stood for the increase of the UN role in solving the Arab-Israeli conflict.¹⁹ The joint communique, which was published after the talks had different interpretations among the countries. Romania wanted to strengthen the UN's position, only in order to help to organize the Geneva conference. Egypt, however, wanted the UN to be the place of the negotiation talks.²⁰

The president of Egypt was pleased by hearing the invitation of Begin to Bucarest and asked Ceaușescu to try his will toward the peace process. Sadat had planned his trip to Jerusalem before, but before making his decision he needed to clear up Begin's intention. At the end of the talks in Bucarest Ceaușescu made evidence of Begin's desire for peace. Officially Romania did not want to be a mediator between Egypt and Israel, however the visit to Bucarest made an opportunity for Begin to have a secret talk with the president of the

¹⁷ MOL KÜM Israel 1977 TÜK XIX-J-1-j packet 66, 66-1 004753/1-2 Az Izraeli miniszterelnök romániai látogatása [Begin visited Bucarest].

¹⁸ MOL KÜM Romania 1977 TÜK XIX-J-1-j packet 111, 128-1 005876 Románia és a Közel-Kelet [Romania and the Middle East].

¹⁹ MOL KÜM Romania 1977 TÜK XIX-J-1-j packet 111, 128-1 003300 Ceaușescu látogatása Egyiptomban / Függelék I. Román–Egyiptomi közös nyilatkozat [Ceaușescu visited Egypt/Appendix I. Romanian–Egyptian Joint Communique].

²⁰ MOL KÜM Romania 1977 TÜK XIX-J-1-j packet 111, 128-1 003300 Ceaușescu látogatása Egyiptomban (Ceaușescu visited Egypt)

national assembly of Egypt on 25 August. The Romanian initiative was said to be successful by the Egyptian delegation. Sayed Ali Sayed, the vice-president of the National Assembly, stated that the Romanian diplomacy was realistic, moreover it played a significant role in solving the Middle East problem. The fact for itself, that Romania had good relations with both countries made a good chance to be a serious help in the negotiation.²¹

The another scene of the secret talks was Morocco. The monarch, Hassan II always wanted to keep good relations with the Israeli politicians.²² Thanks to the mediator's work Sadat decided to give a permission to have a secret meeting, which was designated in Rabat. The talks' aim between Moshe Dayan, Israel's Foreign Minister and Hassan Tuhami, the deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs in Egypt was to prepare the personal meeting of the two premiers. During this talks Egypt declared that the total Israeli withdrawal must be the precondition of the peace talks, which was refused by Dayan, he only can imagine this solution as a result of the peace process. In spite of the different opinions they reach a compromise and Hassan II took the responsibility of the meeting between Sadat and Begin.²³

The preparations

The arrangements in Egypt had started on the first days of November, only a few person was initiate into the details of the visit. Sadat was first among equals in foreign policy. Thanks to its size and receptiveness to command, the army and the economic sector could be easily separated from the political matters.²⁴ The majority of the Egyptians supported their president, the criticism from the Arab neighbourhood only increased his popularity. Lots of sentiments, which came from the resistance of the Arab word changed the visit's character to a mission.²⁵

The support among the politicians was not so unanimous. Beside the refusal of the left-wing opposit the Foreign Ministry did not want to take part in such a bold initiative unless the Israeli government gave guarantees. Sadat's Foreign Minister, Ismail Fahmi and his deputy Muhammad Riad had resigned before the visit.²⁶ Being a practical politician, he managed to develop united stand among his followers. On 9 November, he announced to

²¹ MOL KÜM Romania 1977 TÜK XIX-J-1-j packet 111, 128-1 005876 Romania and the Middle East.

²² Before the talks in Bucarest there was a message from the Israeli secret service to the Egyptian one about an imminent attempt on Sadat's life.

²³ Jacques Derogy, *op. cit.* p. 25.

²⁴ Melvin A. Friedlander, *Sadat and Begin: The Domestic Politics of Peacemakin*, Westview Press, 1983, p. 83.

²⁵ Raymond Hinnebusch, *Egyptian politics under Sadat*, Cambridge University Press, 1985, p. 65

²⁶ Fahmi gave back to his mandate with reference to the changed circumstances. The Foreign Minister was devoted to Geneva conference more strictly than Sadat. Being the only person who know the plan of the visit, he had a difficult task to defend Sadat's point of view on a foreign meeting in Tunis. *The Times*, 17 November 1977.

the Egyptian People's Assembly that "in the interest of the peace I am ready to go anywhere. I am ready to go to the Israeli parliament to explore the facts."²⁷

All the concerned parties were surprised by the announcement. Israel's politicians had different opinions. They view was divided along the question of honest of Sadat.²⁸ The Foreign Office worried about the pressure of the Egyptian media, which emphasized the withdrawal and a Palestinian question as the most important precondition. Beside a lot of scepticism, Begin recognized the historic importance of the declaration of the president of Egypt. He knew that Sadat wanted to put pressure on Israel toward the Geneva conference, beside he knew it would be a fault to let this opportunity slipped.²⁹

In Washington the opinions were divided too, Carter had difficult position. On one hand Washington did its best to help to organise the details of the meeting by its ambassadors, on the other hand Carter knew that this meeting would make obstacles in the Geneva conference's way. Thus he supported the gesture but he wanted to turn back Sadat's attention to the comprehensive way.

Two days after Sadat's announcement the Israeli media broadcast Begin's greetings to the Arab world. The speech was delivered in English and Arabic too. The Prime Minister supported Cairo's intention and declared the president would be received "with the traditional hospitality you and we have inherited from our common father Abraham".³⁰ Lots of criticism were published in the Arab press about Begin's speech. They condemned the Prime Minister because he talked nothing about the Palestinian question, which should be the base of the agreement. On the other hand he was condemned because he spoke only to the Egyptian people, although the peace process must refer to all the Arab world.³¹

On 15 November, Begin, through the ambassador of Washington send his invitation letter to Sadat. "Your Excellency's readiness to undertake such a visit as expressed to the People's Council of Egypt has been noted here with deep and positive interest, as has been the statement you would wish to address the members of our Parliament, the Knesset, and to meet with me...May I assure you, Mr. President, that the Parliament, the Government and the people of Israel will receive you with respect and cordiality."³²

The two countries point of view started to take shape, and they began to understand each other's position.

As I think the most embarrassing problem can be summarized in the conflict between precondition and result. What Egypt wanted before talking about peace – withdrawal, Palestinian sovereignty – could only be the outcomes of the talks by Israel. One of Sadat's statements to the press show us how insuperable the opinions were at the beginning. "The

²⁷ Kereszty András, *Piramis és Dávid csillag* [Pyramid and Mágén Dávid], Magvető kiadó, 1981, p.31

²⁸ One of the condemnatory view come from the Army Chief of Staff Mordechai Gur. In his statement to the press on 15 November, he accused the Egyptian Army of preparing for war, and declared that Sadat's initiative was a boast. Melvin A. Friedlander, *op. cit.* p. 87.

²⁹ *Ibid.* p. 95

³⁰ Frank Gervasi, *The Life and Times of Menachem Begin*, G. P. Putnam's sons, New York, 1979, p. 49.

³¹ *Népszabadság*, 13 November 1977.

³² Frank Gervasi, *op. cit.* p. 49.

Israeli withdrawal from the occupied land and the Arabic calm for the autonomy of the Palestinian state can't constitute the basis of the debate."³³

The visit

After two day long security preparations on 19 November, Sadat arrived to Jerusalem. After the protocolar ceremonies and privat talks on 20 November, he spoke to the Israeli Knesset.

First, he talked about the circumstances of the visit's preparation and summarized the previous attempts toward peace. After closing the past he formulated the essential principles of peace, namely how the peace based on justice could be achieved, and what conditiones did it need. "The first fact is that no one can build his happiness at the expense of the misery of others [...] direct confrontation is the nearest and most succesful method to reach a clear objective." The two, strictly related components in Sadat's interest, namely the Sinai peninsula and the Palestinian autonomy, precluded some kind of outcomes of the talks. „First I have not come here for a separate agreement between Egypt and Israel. This is not the part of the policy of Egypt. The problem is not that of Egypt and Israel. [...] Second, I have not come to you to seek a partial peace, namely to terminate the state of belligerency at this stage and put off the entire proble to a subsequent stage. This is not the radical solution that would steer us to permanent peace. Third, I have no come to you for a third disengagement agreement in Sinai or in Golan or the West Bank."

Beside the general principles Sadat talked about Egypt's interests separately.

In connection with territories Sadat was willing to recognise Israel as a legitimate state if Israel withdraw its forces from the occupied land. He offered any kind of garantees toward Israel suported either by the superpowers or by the Arab world or by both. "You want to live with us, in this part of the world. In all sincerity I tell you we welcome you among us with full security and safety." Before recognise Israel, Sadat insited on the withdrawal. His purpose was so serious that he did not even want to get involved in a converstaion about this. "Peace can't worth its name unless it is based on justice and not on the occupation of the land of others. [...] To speak frankly, our land does not yield itself to bargaining, it is not even open to argument". At that stage of the peace talks the withdrawal was still a precondition as it was during the talks in Rabat.

The second obstcale in the way of achieving peace was the Palestinian problem. Sadat had informed the Israeli politicians earlier that there would not be peace without solving the question of the Palestinian state. "As for the Palestine cause, nobody could deny that it is the crux of the entire problem. Nobody in the world could accept today slogans propagated here in Israel, ignoring the existence of a Palestinian people and questioning even their wherabouts." He wanted to stress the legitimate rights of the Palestinians with the connection of the United Sates' recognition toward this question. According to Balfour declaration he expressed that he can't understand Israel's point of view. In this declaration Israel got a legal and moral base to establish a state on a land, which was not theirs and in that case how can they refuse the rights of the Palestinans in the same question. As a second example he talked about the situation of the Arab countries. "...it is no use to refrain from

³³ *Magyar Hirlap*, 26 October 1977.

the recognizing the Palestinian people and their right to statehood as they right of return. We, the Arabs, have faced this experience before with you [...] but we have today reached the edge of a horrible abyss and a terrifying disaster unless, together, we seize this opportunity today of a durable peace based on justice.”

As we can see officially Sadat did not turn away from the general Arab point of view, namely from the necessity of a Palestinian state but we should emphasize one important momentum. During the speech sadat talked about everything in connection with the Palestinians apart from the PLO. Sadat knew that Israel could not accept this radical organization, thus he tried to formulate substances without mentioning it. This cautious step was the base of disapproval of the Arab countries.

Talking about the Palestinian problem was an instrument in Sadat’s hand to express the Pan- Arab idea. This thought expresses such a union among the Arab partners which become stronger in the case of an attack against the Arab world and which has not reached its aim yet in nowadays. Since 1960’ the Palestinian question has stepped out from the individual nationalistic circles of the Arab countries and we can say it still goes about its own business, which was hallmarked by the international acceptance. Although the spiritual union of the Arabs can still be expressed by upholding the banner of the Palestinian state. The ideological thoughts of Pan and Nationalism practically means the Sinai and the state of Palestinian’s strict relationship in Sadat’s mind. Insisting on the connection between the private and the communal caused a lot of obstacles in the way of the agreement. The critics about Sadat was generally based on the refusal of his right in talking about the homeland of the Palestinians. During the following talks Sadat was forced to separate these questions.

At the end of the speech the president summarized the principles of the Geneva conference in five points. 1. ending the occupation of the Arab territories occupied in 1967. 2. achievement of the fundamental rights of the Palestinian people. 3. the right of all states in the area to live in peace within their boundaries. 4. commitment of all states in the region to administer the relations among them in accordance with the objectives and principles of the United Nations Charter. 5. ending the state of belligerence in the region.³⁴

After Sadat’s speech the members of the Knesset could listen to Begin’s responses. He was said to be a good public speaker too. After the greetings he talked about the previous attempts. Breaking through the moral criticism toward the Israeli withdrawal Begin recalled the Jewish injuries. “...one day after our independence was *renewed* (not newly established) we were attacked on three fronts, few against many, weak against strong.”

The following chapters of the speech made the listeners feel that there was more than psychological barriers between the two countries as Sadat mentioned. The comparison of the two addresses can show us the basic oppositions, which was covered by a moral blanket. Sadat’s opinion about the peace for Israel means the follows: “What is peace for Israel? It means that Israel lives in a region with her Arab neighbours in security and safety. [...] It means that Israel obtains all kinds of guarantees that will ensure these two factors. To this demand, I say yes. Beside this we should see what Begin said about peace. This simple sentence at first sight could be similar to Sadat’s opinion.” In this region we shall all live

³⁴ “President Anwar Sadat’s Address to the Israeli Knesset.”

http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsourc/Peace/sadat_speech.html, access: 30. October 2005.

together- the great arab nations in its states and its countries, and the Jewish People in its land, Eretz Israel. Using the hebrew name of the country was not casual.

The biblical Eretz Israel contain bigger part of land, expands some part of today's Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. With this sentence Begin proved the jewish historical inheritance on the occupied land, refusing the claim of the withdrawal, which was supported by the statement about the Balfour declaration. Thanks to this document Israel does not appear an invading country. Their land in 1967 was recaptured not occupied. "In this land we established our civilization; here our prophets spoke those holy words you cited every day. [...] here we become a nation; here we established our Kingdom, and when we were exiled from our country by the force that was exercised against us, we did not forget this land. This, our right has been recognised. The Balfour declaration was included in the Mandate which was recognised by the nations of the world including the United States." As a complement of the recognition from Washington, he mentioned the association between Feisal and Weizman made on 3 January 1919.³⁵

Talking about land Begin refused that territories can not be open to an argument. He said: "I call upon the President of Egypt and call upon all our neighbours: do not rule out negotiations on any subject whatsoever.[...] no side shall present priori conditions. We will conduct the negotiations with respect."

Closing the polemic around the territorial case he talked about Jerusalem. He stressed that the city had been open for every body for 11 years and Israel will keep it secured under every circumstances.

The the technical details of the relationship between the two countries was more important to Begin. He urged to develop the economic, cultural and political connection as soon as possible. The open borders before the peace was the dream of the Israeli government. This was the real opposition of Sadat's intentions, namely Begin wanted to turn the preconditions into results.

He did not avoid to talk about the Geneva conference. He declared that not only wanted he talk with Jordan but with Lebanon and Syria too, but these meetings only had to take the resolution 242 and 338 into consideration.

In connection with the Palestinian question during his speech Begin did not talk too much in details. Sadat can be blamed for ignoring the PLO as an organisation, but Begin did not talk about this question at all.

"I invite King Hussein to come here and we shall discuss with him all the problems that exist between us." These problems could not be the Palestinian ones because since 1974 in this question only the PLO is qualified to talk. To see clear, the follows have to be mentioned: "I also invite genuine spokesmen of the *Palestinian Arabs* to come and hold talks with us on our common future, on guaranteeing human freedom, social justice, peace and mutual respect".³⁶ Palestinian Arabs? Begin refused to recognize the Palestinians as a sovereign entity. For him Palestina has two types of inhabitant, Palestinian Arabs and

³⁵ According to the agreement the Arab partner recognised the Balfour Declaration and he did not throw an obstacle in the jewish immigrant's way in return for the inviolableness of the holy places. It did not come into force.

³⁶ "Menachem Begin Following Sadat Historic Speech."

<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/begintoknessetsadat.html>, acces: 31. October 2005.

Palestinian Jews. Moreover the reference to the Palestinian state is completely missing from his speech.

By 21 November, only two important duty left for the Egyptian delegation. First they were planned to meet with the parties of the Knesset. In the name of the Mapai the former prime minister Golda Meir greeted Sadat and congratulated him on his bold initiative. "Of course, we must realize that the path leading to peace may be difficult one, but not as difficult as that path which leads to war." In connection with territories Ms. Meir was more permissive according to her "dove" policy, but did not made change in the Israeli point of view. "We were, and are, prepared for territorial compromises on all our borders with one condition: these borders will give us security, and will protect us from danger, so that we never will never be in need, God forbid, at any time of help from abroad in order to defend ourselves." As a last motive I would like to stress her thoughts about the Palestinian question. He preferred not to recognize the Palestinian state from the stand-point of security. "We have never said that we want the Palestinian Arabs (the same as at Begin) to remain as they are. We do not wish to be dependent upon others, nor do we wish them to be dependent upon others. [...] Of course we realize that there are Palestinian Arabs, and we believe there is a solution, one that is both good for them and safe for us. [...] Our opposition to another state is based on Israel's most vital security requirements."³⁷ The unofficial talks with Meir ended in positive mood.

As a summing-up of the visit the two leading politicians held a joint press conference, which started with the declaration of the agreed communique. In this document Israel and Egypt agreed to pursue the Sadat visit through a dialogue, leading to the signing of peace treaties in Geneva.

The text of this communique only talks about the general principles and was set on an uncertain base about the future. Nobody could hear facts or detailed information about the achievements.

Using a negative critic, as lots of Arab countries did, if there is nothing to go along with nobody can make an effective agreement. However, emphasizing only the differences between the two countries will led us wrong way during the analysis of the visit. As I think Sadat's initiative could not be the base of any kind of real agreement, on one side because of the short time, secondly it is a historical experience that the moral importance of these kind of first initiatives always were stressed better. Therefore I would like to neglect the negative judgement.

The journalist could ask after this. They were interested in the following topics: the chance of Begin's trip to Cairo, the following diplomatic relations, Sadat's contentment about the result of the visit, and a lot of questions about the Palestinians. For detailed summary I would like to cite few questions.

Q: Mr. Prime Minister, have you received an invitation to go to Cairo and, if so, when will you go?

Mr. Begin: We discussed this issue, with complete candour. I think that President Sadat would like to reciprocate. I would like to see Cairo, but I do understand the reasons why, at this stage, such an invitation was not issued.

³⁷ "Remarks by Golda Meir to President Sadat in the Knesset."

<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsourc/Peace/meirtosadat.html>, acces: 31. October 2005.

To officially invite the Prime Minister of Israel, which country still have occupied Arabic land was a too big risk to Sadat. At that time he can not afford it.

Q: Mr. Prime Minister, in view of a political and physical risk that the President of Egypt took by coming to Israel, do you feel that you have gone far enough in giving him something that he can take back home?

Mr. Begin: What we wanted to achieve during this visit was to make sure that we started a serious direct dialogue about the ways to establish peace in the Middle East... I think we can say that we made progress on this issue, and the key word is "continuation".

Mr Sadat: One of the main motives behind this visit to Israel was to give a peace process a new momentum and to get rid of psychological barrier... For the substance we have made a very big survey.

Begin's visit to Cairo was in a strong relation with the Israeli return for Sadat's initiative. The President of Egypt knew that his reputation needed a same kind of step as he did toward Israel. The refusal of the invitation of Begin to Cairo and the need of a venture from Israel were inconsistent with each other. As the conversations among the two countries were getting difficult Sadat increasingly missed the so-called big gesture from Israel which was only realised in the middle of 1978.

Q: Will there be any place for the Palestinians to participate in this dialogue, now or later or in the Geneva conference?

Begin: In the Geneva Conference the *proper* representation of the Palestinian Arabs will take place.³⁸

The responses to Sadat's visit in the Arab countries

Sadat's hope toward the Arab countries about joining to his initiative seemed to be an illusion, they express different reactions in connection with the visit. Morocco and Sudan's support and Jordan's ambivalent attitude was completed by Saudi Arabia's diplomatic silence.³⁹ The stronger refusal was showed by Iraq, Syria and the PLO, the last two started to organize a coalition against Egypt.

The reasons of the rejection based on two parts, rooted in the Islamic ideology. First, Sadat, with his visit, stepped out from the circle of Pan Arabism. According to the togetherness among the Islamic countries they prefer union to independence. This community thinks about the Palestinian question as his own interest. Because Sadat was talking about this without harmonizing it with his Arab partners, he broke the communal interests, and he seemed to be deviant from the Pan Arab point of view.

The second cardinal point in the scheme of the refusal was the recognition of Israel. Solving the polemics about the Palestinian statehood it should be the first and most

³⁸ "Joint Begin Sadat Press Conference and Text of Agreed Communiqué."

http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Peace/joint_begin_sadat.html, access: 30. October 2005.

³⁹ Crown Prince Fahmi stated that "Sadat's initiative means the maximum, which could be done in the interest of the Middle East situation. It is impossible to predict what would happen if his efforts fail. The peace must be based on the Palestinian problem and the withdrawal of the Israeli forces." MOL KÜM EAK 1978 TÜK XIX-J-1-j packet 48, 36-1-001431/14 Szadat külföldi körútja és értékelése [President Sadat's tour on abroad and its assessment].

important precondition before any kind of peace treaty with Israel. With his visit, Sadat officially recognised Israel before ending the state of belligerency and solving the Palestinian problem. The rest parts of the rejection, namely the recognition of Jerusalem as a capital of Israel, accepting the plan of bilateral partnership, having private talks beyond his speech to the Knesset can be interpreted as the outcomes of the two basic elements.⁴⁰

The PLO's discussion in Beirut on 18 November, called upon the Palestinians living on the occupied land to express their indignation with demonstrations and strikes, and to upset the chance of the visit to be an introduction of further chatasrophets toward Palestinians. On 22 November, the PLO call upon Syria, Iraq, Algeria, Jemen and Libya.⁴¹ "On the summit conference we have to make strict decision against Sadat, and we have to punish him with sanctions and total isolation"- as it was said in the statement of the PLO.⁴² Syria ordered a national mourning. By 24 November, the president of Syria, Hafez Asad invited the leaders of the PLO for a conversation, with whom he wanted to send a delegation to Soviet Union. As a base of the discussion they worked out a united stand, which contained the following more important items. 1. They refused the visit. 2. They called upon the other Arab states too, to reject it. 3. They would use common efforts to stop Sadat's policy. 4. Reaching peace in the Middle East based on justice, which meant the withdrawal of the Israeli forces and the existing of the Palestinian state. 5. Developing an international lobby to find supporters. 6. They showed solidarity toward the battle of the Palestinians, moreover they recognised the PLO as an only representative of the Palestinians. 7. Permanent discussion among them must be hold.⁴³

By 30 November, they managed to organize the talks among the PLO, Syria and the Soviet Union. After the meeting in their joint communique they stressed the necessity of achievements related to the withdrawal, statehood, the Geneva conference and security and independence of the states in the region.⁴⁴

Libya declared that "If Sadat will travel to Jerusalem the country will ask for the exclusion of Egypt from the Arab League. President Sadat's enterprise is a crime, committed against the entire arab nation, and if the visit will take place Libya will cut off his confidence toward Egypt, moreover he won't recognise Sadat's country as a legal one."⁴⁵ After this statement Libya called upon the Arab countries to a conference to Tripoli. The talk's aim, which was opened on 2 December, by the president Kadhafi, was to strengthen the unity of the Arab powers, and to work out a new strategy against Egypt.⁴⁶ The participant states established the Front of Steadfastness and Confrontation. Beyond the

⁴⁰ Whalid Kalidi, "Thinking the unthinkable, a sovereign palestinian state", *Foreign Affairs*, July 1978, pp. 695-712.

⁴¹ *Népszabadság*, 19 November 1977.

⁴² *Népszabadság*, 22 November 1977.

⁴³ *Népszabadság*, 24 November 1977.

⁴⁴ MOL KÜM EAK 1977 TÜK XIX-J-1-j packet 48, 36-1-005781/37 Szadat látogatása [President Sadat's visit].

⁴⁵ *Népszabadság*, 19 November 1977.

⁴⁶ Kadhafi knew that the most important was to win Syria over the unity. He failed in approaching Syria's and Iraq's view, thus he decided to accept the moderate position of Syria. MOL KÜM EAK 1978 TÜK XIX-J-1-j packet 48, 36-1-001431/9 Szadat külföldi körútja és értékelése [President Sadat's tour on abroad and its assessment].

refusal of Sadat's approach to Israel their joint communique stated that in connection with Egypt's membership in the Arab League they would make further conversations. Beside this they refused to take part in the League's meetings hold in Egypt, and would like to remove the headquarters of the League from Cairo. They decided about the closing up of the diplomatic relationship. Moreover the PLO was declared again to be the only representative of the Palestinians. They called upon the Arab nation to support Syria, as a biggest state in the front line. They decided to create a joint platform to prevent zionism and any kind of capitulation. An attack against this platform would mean an attack against each member-state.⁴⁷

The effectiveness of the meeting can be judged in different ways. Seemingly it could create common point of view among the Arab states but it was divided from the beginning. The unity of the Front was weakened by the difference between Syria and Iraq. The delegation of Iraq withdrew from the conference and refused to sign the joint communique unless the other countries wanted to fight for the modification of the Resolution 242.⁴⁸ As a shore up to the weakness of the conference in Tripoli, Algeria's ambassador in London said that the meeting made a fault because it forgot to make a difference between the policy of Egypt and Sadat as an individual. Moreover it made no steps toward peace.⁴⁹

As the opportunity for convening Geneva conference started to decrease, Soviet Union's influence to coordinate the peace movements in the Middle East began to decrease too. At that time Moscow could not manage to exercise its influence over Syria and the PLO, in spite of the fact that they belonged to the Soviet Union's circle of interest. The country's relationship with Egypt was broken off with the expulsion of the Soviet consultants from the country in 1972. Lots of critics, which were published in the press from November 1977, turned the conflict between Egypt and the Soviet Union into a difference between Sadat and the Soviet Union.⁵⁰ To Moscow the only chance to strengthen its position was the comprehensive solution, they only could have been able to put pressure on the US and Israel with the help of the unified Arab delegation. The last promising step toward the overall conference was the joint US-Soviet communique, no matter how unsuccessful it was. It was insupportable for them that behind the scenes of the Geneva conference Egypt and Israel talked on bilateral meetings. In spite the fact that the Egyptian media presented the visit as a preparation to Geneva, the talks showed separated character. The Soviet Union declared that these kind of negotiations would only delay the settlement, moreover Israel forced Egypt on unprincipled bargaining, and the Geneva conference must be convened as soon as possible.⁵¹ Moscow supported the Front.

⁴⁷ C. Paul Bradley, *op. cit.* p. 95.

⁴⁸ There is another type of refusal opinion, which says that Syria had already agreed with Egypt and the United States in the the question of Lebanon, thus the condemnation against Sadat is only a deception. 1977 TŰK XIX-J-1-j packet 48, 36-1-005781/55 Szadat látogatása [President Sadat's visit].

⁴⁹ MOL KŰM EAK 1978 TŰK XIX-J-1-j packet 48, 36-1/00209 Egyiptomi-izraeli tárgyalások [Discussions between Israel and Egypt].

⁵⁰ MOL KŰM EAK 1978 TŰK XIX-J-1-j packet 48, 36-1/00468/3 Az egyiptomi nagykövet látogatása [The visit of the Egyptian ambassador].

⁵¹ MOL KŰM EAK 1978 TŰK XIX-J-1-j packet 48, 36-1-001431/12 Szadat külföldi körútja és értékelése [President Sadat's tour on abroad and its assessment].

As a reaction to the isolation, Sadat got the office of the El-Fatah closed in Egypt and banned the radio of the Palestines.

Realtions among Israel, Egypt and the USA after the visit.

Egypt's separation in the Arab world was getting dangerous. The political vacuum caused by the visit could have only been filled in by a same genaruous gesture from Israel. Sadat made a bold initiative but Begin returned to the detailes. The stalling conversations needed a mediator again, which could only be the United States.⁵² The option of the bilateral meetings started strenght its position in Israel's, Egypt's and in the United States' policy too.

"Our aim is not to convene the Genvea Conference at all costs, but to make progress toward the settlements" – declaired Zbigneu Brzezinski, the national security adviser of President Carter.⁵³

Sadat could not wait idly for the Israeli respons. According to the changed preferences there was a need for a new meeting between the two leaders. The invitation of the Israeli delegation to the Mena House talks in December, which was said to be a preparation for Geneva by the Egyptian press, based the official attendance of a Jewish delagation in an Arab country.⁵⁴ After these antecedents and due to the US's force toward Israel the second meeting between Begin and Sadat was held in Ismailia on 25 December. Diplomatically it was important too but could not make any significant step toward peace.

As a conclusion of the visit duplicate judgement must be used. The noncommittal and refusal attitudes of the Arab states show us how many confirmed aversions are there in the Middle East. Furthermore it demonstrates us how important the visit was by softening the Arab–Israeli conflict. To understand the iportance of Sadat's initiative two question have to be answered. Was it a grand step toward peace, or was it a withdrawal from it? The answer depends on the meaning of peace. The visit brought détente in the Arab–Israeli conflict but it was a first obstcale in the comprehensive solution's way.

⁵² Arab diplomats in Washington thought that Sadat managed to carry out his minimal plan. With his visit he based his reputation in some important US political groups, which could be useful during the following talks. On the other hand Sadat failed to reach his maximal plans, namley to increase the US's immediate position in the peace process and to get particular promises related to armament support to Egypt.

MOL KÜM EAK 1978 TŰK XIX-J-1-j packet 48, 36-1-001431/5 Szadat külföldi körútja és értékelése [Sadat's tour on abroad and its assessment].

⁵³ *Népszabadság*, 13 December 1977.

⁵⁴ Beside the delegation of Israel and the United States, all the Arab countries and the Soviet Union refused the invitation. The United States wanted to postpone the begining of the talks in order to persuade the Arab countries, especially Saudi Arabia and Jordan to take part in the conference held in Cairo. He could not managed to reach that. MOL KÜM EAK 1977 TŰK XIX-J-1-j packet 48, 36-1-006322/2 Az egyiptomi politika a kairói konferencia előestéjén [The Egyptian policy before the conference in Cairo].

Without taking the moral influence into account, did the visit have as serious effect on the peace process as big refusal was expressed against it by the Arab states? The critics of Libya and Syria focused on breaking the unity of the Arab nation and weakening the Arab position before signing peace. That could have been real. If there had not been any respons from Israel Sadat could have lost his position as a President, furthermore all the Egyptian peace process could have been failed.

There is an other aspect of the explanation. Seeing Sadat's visit stepping out from the special circumstances of the Middle East, it can be seen that he only travelled to the other partner of the conflict. In the end, it was a fruitful venture to disprove Israels rejection in the question of the withdrawal. Israel stated that the country would not give back any land unless the Arab countries recognize Israel as a state. Sadat did it with his visit.