

# Pact carries special meaning for Sadat's widow

By Mike Latona  
Staff writer

ELMIRA — As far as Jehan el-Sadat is concerned, she was not the only Sadat present Sept. 13 during the signing of the historic peace accord between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Spiritually, she said, her late husband was very much a part of the White House ceremony.

"I said, 'Anwar Sadat's soul is watching over us and is very happy with what's going on,'" she recalled as she raised her eyes upward.

Indeed, the accord fulfilled many dreams and hopes shared by both Anwar and Jehan Sadat.

"I was sure that this was going to come one day. I said this many, many times in my speeches," said Mrs. Sadat in an interview with the *Catholic Courier*.

Speeches fill up a large part of Mrs. Sadat's itinerary now. Egypt's former first lady visited the Elmira area this past Sunday and Monday, Oct. 17-18.

Mrs. Sadat made a series of appearances sponsored by the St. Joseph's Hospital Foundation, 555 E. Market St., and Notre Dame High School, 1400 Maple Ave. The final item on her agenda was a lecture Monday night at Notre Dame High School. Titled "International Peace and Understanding," her speech drew about 950 people.

Prior to her talk, Mrs. Sadat said she believes that the Sept. 13 peace agreement will have a positive effect on the entire Middle East.

"We are, everyone, praying that it will continue and last. On both sides, people are dying to have peace," she said.

"The whole area in the Middle East



Mike Latona

**Jehan el-Sadat speaks to about 950 people Monday, Oct. 18, at Elmira Notre Dame High School. Her appearance was co-sponsored by the school and the St. Joseph's Hospital Foundation.**

— we've suffered enough wars," she added.

Her husband worked feverishly to quell these longstanding tensions in the 1970s. Anwar Sadat's efforts, which began with his historic visit to Israel in 1977, culminated in an Egyptian-Israeli peace agreement in 1979.

The 1979 agreement was negotiated by President Sadat and then-Israeli leader Menachem Begin at Camp David, Md., with then-U.S. President Jimmy Carter serving as mediator.

Largely because of the United States' support of Egypt during those years, Mrs. Sadat decided to move to the United States in 1985. She now lives in Great Falls, Va., located just outside of Washington, D.C.

Mrs. Sadat has greatly enjoyed her years in this country, she said. "I love

the American people so much. I'll never forget that they supported my husband," she observed.

A former instructor at the University of South Carolina and American University in Washington, Mrs. Sadat now teaches a course on Middle Eastern women at the University of Maryland.

She has received a number of international awards and honorary doctorates, many of which honored her efforts in advancing worldwide peace and women's rights. Most of her talk at Notre Dame High focused on those two subjects.

She said her plans are to continue teaching and lecturing as long as possible. "I will always be talking and working and calling," she stated emphatically.

Mrs. Sadat added that all her works are being done in her husband's memory. "In every speech I talk about my husband," she said. "He is always in my mind; I'm walking with his support."

Although devout in her Muslim faith, Mrs. Sadat said she respects various religious beliefs. "God is the only one for all of us," she remarked.

During her speech Monday night, Mrs. Sadat shared with the audience her feelings on the day in 1981, when her 62-year-old husband was assassinated by Egyptian fundamentalists only a few feet in front of her.

"There are no words, really, to explain that day," she said. "Just in seconds, all my hopes, all my dreams ... went immediately."

Yet it wasn't long before she decided she must carry on her husband's cause.

"I want to tell every widow, or woman with such difficulties, that life doesn't end," she emphasized to those in the audience.

Mrs. Sadat concluded her speech by citing a plea for peace by her late husband, and reciting a love poem she wrote for him. She then received a standing ovation.

Although she plans to remain an active peace and women's rights advocate, Mrs. Sadat stated during a brief question-and-answer session afterward that she has no political aspirations in her native Egypt.

"I've had enough in my life, to tell you the truth," she said.

## Accord

Continued from page 1

Esposito fears that extremists on both sides will continue to oppose the peace settlement and perpetuate hostilities. Religious leaders will have their most important role in settling those tensions.

In fact, he speculated that the rising power of Islamic activists helped prod Rabin and Arafat to reach the agreement. The two politicians saw the window of opportunity for a purely political settlement narrowing as fundamentalists pushed the religious dimensions of Arab-Israeli differences, he said.

Like Borelli, Esposito hopes religious leaders will adopt an "Abrahamic" approach that emphasizes the common roots of Islam, Christianity and Judaism. All three are based on faith in the same God, and they acknowledge many of the same prophets.

"The majority of the work to be done by religious leaders is in broadening the perspectives of their community," he said. "The days of Judeo-Christian on one side and Islam on another have gone."

Some are calling for a comprehensive study of the peace accord's effect on religious relations.

One Lebanese Muslim leader said the accord could lead to problems for Christians in Arab countries. Arabs "who reject the PLO-Israeli accord might find in Christians a scapegoat," said Mohammad Sammak, political adviser of the grand mufti of Lebanon.

Melkite Catholic Archbishop Georges Kwaizer of Saida and Deir-El-Kamar, Lebanon, disagreed.

"I don't think that it will bring problems for Christians, but it will for the Arab world," said Archbishop Kwaizer.

Both spoke Sept. 20 at a Catholic-sponsored meeting of world religious leaders. Lebanon is the only Mideast country with a large Christian population that is a major political and social force.

Sammak said "Christians might be accused as the spearhead of the West" trying to spread its influence in the Arab lands.

Because of some Arab countries' and groups' opposition to the accord, it could have an unbalanced effect on the Middle East, bringing peace to Israel and "turmoil in the Arab world," he said.

Muslim fundamentalists "might take advantage of this turmoil" to spread their influence and harm Christian-Muslim relations, he said, because "although many Christians are Arabs—they consider Christians a Western bridgehead into Muslim territory."

Another problem, Sammak said, is that Israel has cited the protection of Christians as a reason for past intervention in Lebanon.

Although the the PLO-Israeli accord is an "important breakthrough" politically, it leaves "many question marks" in Lebanon, he said.

"What will be the destiny of 300,000 Palestinian refugees in Lebanon?" he asked. "Lebanon cannot assimilate them."

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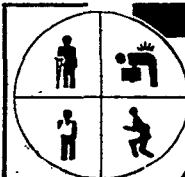
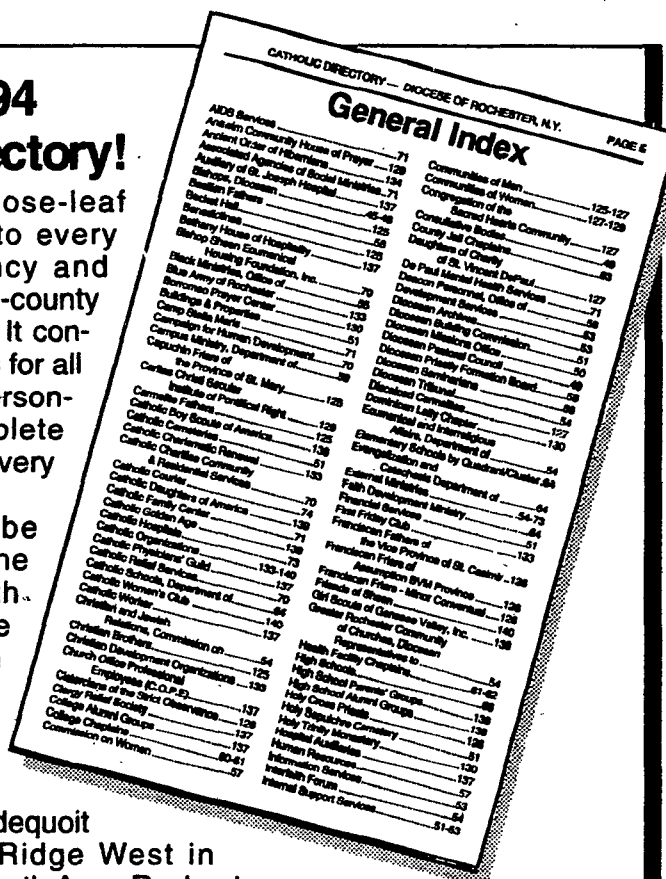
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