



EPHRAIM KISHON'S

COCKEYED WORLD

THE PROFESSIONAL TOUCH
 "Please sit here, director."
 "Thank you. Two teas, waiter."
 "And now we can talk undisturbed."
 "Quite."
 "Nice weather today, isn't it."
 "Very pleasant."
 "It only if weren't raining so hard."
 "Yes indeed. They say the sea is very rough."
 "Otherwise, what's new?"
 "Nothing, my boy. We're about to start on the construction of the National Ding-Dong Centre, of which I have the honor of being the head."
 "What a coincidence. You know, the construction company which I have the privilege of representing happens to be bidding for the contract."
 "Really?"
 "May I say in all humility, direc-

tor, that we consider this project a national mission of the highest importance."
 "You're quite right."
 "Has the contract already been awarded?"
 "Not yet. Why the question, if I may ask?"
 "Because I have just remembered that only this morning, a member of our board remarked

that many firms, less conscious of the moral aspect of this project, might well be toying with the idea of offering a donation to the election fund of the party of which you, sir, if I am not mistaken, are a prominent member."

"Needless to say, my boy, I myself, as well as my party, would reject out of hand the very idea of such an approach."

"We didn't doubt that for a second. Though, just as a matter of interest, what would have been the exact amount your party, sir, would have absolutely refused to accept?"

"Unfortunately, I am not in a position to answer that question, since it so happens that only at the last meeting the party executive failed to make a concrete proposal about linking the building

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permit to a \$125,000 donation in cash on signature of the contract. So I don't see much sense in exploring this hypothetical situation."
 "I agree. Especially since our company, even had it gone out of its mind to the extent of getting involved in criminal activities, would probably not have been ready to go beyond \$1200,000 in three equal instalments."
 "It's rather stupid to engage in such abstract discussions, but I seem to remember that I and my party happened to reject, indignantly, transparent hints on sums larger than that."
 "No doubt, director, there are in our country unprincipled companies which practically beg for even larger rejections. But a solid firm like ours cannot allow itself a deeper indignation than that."
 "Each one of us, my boy, has to know the limits of his non-principles."
 "Naturally. Could you therefore

check, sir, whether your party could work up enough wrath to reject \$1250,000 as well?"
 "Is that the highest sum which is out of the question?"
 "I'm afraid it is."
 "Then I hardly think my party will be ready to reject this categorically enough."
 "May I remark that the above imaginary sum does not include our contribution to a private fund."
 "Meaning me?"
 "God forbid!"
 "Look, my boy. As long as our abstract discussion turned on party matters, I reluctantly agreed to go along, but the moment you become personal, I have to say an unqualified 'Enough!' I'm not one of those highly-placed, weak characters who are willing to do favors for a consideration such as a two-storey villa on a private plot."
 "Where?"
 "Somewhere in Herzliya-on-Sea, not far from the highway if possible. As for myself, I would consider the very making of such an offer a personal insult of the vilest kind."
 "I never thought otherwise."
 "So I think the smart thing to do would be to stop this little game. Lets forget the whole thing."
 "Right. When do we meet?"
 "Day after tomorrow. Here. After the final rejections."
 Translated by Yohanan Goldman
 By prior arrangement with Ephraim Kishon

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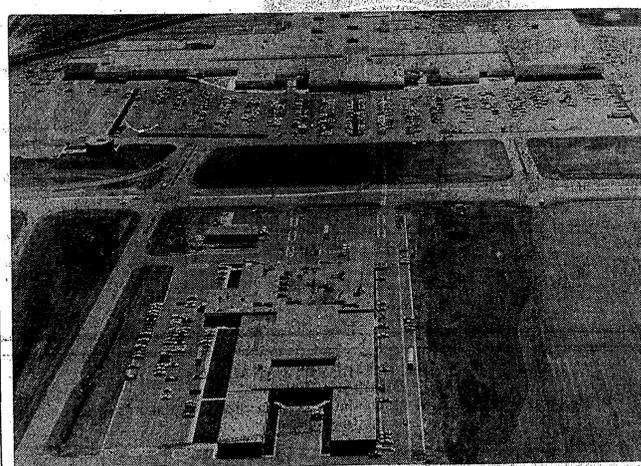
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