

## **Middle East Crisis – Israel Foreign Minister, Abba Eban**

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The Middle East has passed through a crisis whose shadows darken the world. This crisis has many consequences but only one cause. Israel's right to peace, security, sovereignty, economic development and maritime freedom – indeed its very right to exist – has been forcibly denied and aggressively attacked. This is the true origin of the tension which torments the Middle East. All the order elements of the conflict are the consequences of this single cause. There has been danger, there is still peril in the Middle East because Israel's existence, sovereignty and vital interests have been and are violently assailed.

The threat to Israel's existence, its peace, security, sovereignty and development has been directed against her in the first instance by the neighboring Arab States. But all the conditions of tension, all the temptations to aggression in the Middle East have, to our deep regret, been aggravated by the one-sided policy of one of the Great Powers which bear primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. I shall show how the Soviet Union has, for 15 years, been unfaithful to that trust. The burden of responsibility lies heavy upon her.

It is beyond all honest doubt that between May 14 and June 5, Arab governments, led and directed by President Nasser, methodically prepared and mounted an aggressive assault designed to bring about Israel's immediate and total destruction. My authority for that conviction rests on the statements and actions of Arab governments themselves.

### **THE PATTERN OF AGGRESSION – 1957-1967**

During Israel's first decade the intention to work for her destruction by physical violence had always been part of the official doctrine and policy of Arab States. But many members of the United Nations hoped and some believed that relative stability would ensue from the arrangements in March 1957. An attempt was then made to inaugurate a period of non-belligerency and coexistence in the relations between Egypt and Israel. A United Nations Emergency Force was to separate the armies in Sinai and Gaza. The maritime powers were to exercise free and innocent passage in the Gulf of Aqaba and the Straits of Tiran. Terrorist attacks against Israel were to cease. The Suez Canal was to be opened to Israel shipping, as the Security Council had decided six years before.

In March 1957, these hopes and expectation were endorsed by the United States, France, the United Kingdom, Canada, and other states in Europe, the Americas, Africa, Asia and Australasia. These assurances, expressed with special solemnity by the four governments, induced Israel to give up positions which she then held at Gaza and at the entrance to the Straits of Tiran and in Sinai. Non-belligerency, maritime freedom and immunity from terrorist attack were henceforth to be secured, not by Israel's own pressure but by the concerted will of the international community. Egypt expressed no opposition to these arrangements.

There were times during the past decade when it really seemed that a certain stability had been achieved. As we look back it becomes plain that the Arab governments regarded the 1957 arrangements merely as a breathing space enabling them to gather strength for a later assault. At the end of 1962, President Nasser began to prepare Arab opinion for an armed attack that was to take place within a few brief years. As his armaments grew his aggressive designs came more blatantly to light. On 23 December, 1962, Nasser said:

“We feel that the soil of Palestine is the soil of Egypt, and of the whole Arab world. Why do we all mobilize? Because we feel that the land of Palestine is part of our land, and are ready to sacrifice ourselves for it.”

The Foreign Minister of Egypt, Mahmoud Riad, echoes his master’s voice:

“The sacred Arab struggle will not come to an end until Palestine is restored to its owners.”

In March, 1963, the official Cairo radio continued the campaign of menace:

“Arab unity is taking shape towards the great goal – i.e. the triumphant return to Palestine with the banner of unity flying high in front of the holy Arab march.”

The newspaper *Al-Gumhuriya* published an official announcement of the same day:

“The noose around Israel’s neck is tightening gradually ... Israel is no mightier than the empires which were vanquished by the Arab east and west... The Arab people will take possession of their full rights in their united homeland.”

Egypt is not a country in which the press utters views and opinions independently of the official will. There is thus much significance in the statement of *Al-Akhbar* on 4 April 1963:

“The liquidation of Israel will not be realized through a declaration of war against Israel by Arab States, *but Arab unity and inter-Arab understanding will serve as a hangman’s rope for Israel.*”

In February 1964, Nasser enunciated in simple terms what was to become his country’s policy during the period of preparation:

“The possibilities of the future will be war with Israel. It is we who will dedicate the time; it is we who will dictate the place.”

A similar chorus of threats arose during this period from other Arab capitals. President Aref of Iraq and President Ben-Bella of Algeria were especially empathetic and repetitive in their threat to liquidate Israel. They were then far away. The Syrian attitude was more ominous because it affected a neighboring frontier. In 1964, the Syrian Defense Minister, General Abdulla Ziada announced:

“The Syrian army stands as a mountain to crush Israel and demolish her. This army knows how to crush its enemies.”

Early last year Syria began to proclaim and carry out what it called a “popular war” against Israel. This was a terrorist campaign which expressed itself in the dispatch of trained terrorist groups into Israel territory to blow up installations and communications center and to kill, maim, cripple and terrorize civilians in peaceful homes and farms. Often the terrorists, trained in Syria, were dispatched through Jordan or Lebanon. The terrorist war was formally declared by President Al-Atassi on 22 May 1966, when he addressed soldiers on the Israel-Syrian front:

“We raise the slogan of the people’s liberation war. We want total war with no limits, a war that will destroy the Zionist base.”

## ISRAEL’S POLICY 1957-1967

The decade beginning in March 1957 was not monopolized by security considerations alone. Behind the wall of a strong defense, with eyes vigilantly fixed on dangerous borders, we embarked on an constructive era in the national enterprise. These were years of swift expansion in our agriculture and industry; of intensive progress in the sciences and arts; of a widening international vocation, symbolized in the growth of strong links with the developing world. At the end of her first decade Israel had established relations of diplomacy, commerce and culture with all the Americans, and with most of the countries of Western, Central and Eastern Europe. In her second decade she was to build constructive links with the emerging countries of the developing world with whom we are tied by a common aspiration to translate national freedom into creative economic growth and progress.

Fortified by friendships in all five continents; inspired by its role in the great drama of development; intensely preoccupied by tasks of spiritual cooperation with kindred communities in various parts of the world, and in the effort to assure the Jewish survival after the disastrous blows of Nazi oppression; tenaciously involved in the development of original social ideas, Israel went on with its work. We could not concern ourselves exclusively with the torrent of hatred pouring in upon us from Arab governments. In the era of modern communications a nation is not entirely dependent on its regional context. The wide world is open to the voice of friendship. Arab hostility towards Israel became increasingly isolated, while our position in the international family became more deeply entrenched. Many in the world drew confidence from the fact that a very small nation could, by its exertion and example, rise to respected levels in social progress, scientific research and the humane arts. And so our policy was to deter the aggression of our neighbors so long as it was endurable; to resist it only when failure to resist would have invited its intensified renewal; to withstand Arab violence without being obsessed by it; and even to search patiently here and there for any glimmer of moderation and realism in the Arab mind. We also pursued the hope to bringing all the Great Powers to a harmonious policy in support of the security and sovereignty of Middle Eastern States.

It was not easy to take this course. The sacrifice imposed upon our population by Arab violence was cumulative in its effects. But as it piled up month by month the toll of death and bereavement was heavy. And in the last few years it was evident that this organized murder was directed by a central hand.

President Nasser seemed for some years to be accumulating inflammable material without an immediate desire to set it alight. He was heavily engaged in domination and conquest elsewhere. His speeches were strong against Israel. But his bullets, guns and poison gases were for the time being used to intimidate other Arab States and to maintain a colonial war against the villagers of the Yemen and the peoples of the Arabian Peninsula.

But Israel's danger was great. The military build-up in Egypt proceeded at an intensive rate. It was designed to enable Egypt to press its war plans against Israel while maintaining its violent adventures elsewhere. In the face of these developments Israel was forced to devote an increasing part of its resources to self-defense. With the declaration by Syria early in 1965 of the doctrine of a "day by day military confrontation" the situation in the Middle East grew darker. The Palestine Liberation Organization, the Palestine Liberation Army, the Unified Arab Command, the intensified expansion of military forces and equipment in Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and more remote parts of the Arab continent – these were the signals of a growing danger to which we sought to alert the mind and conscience of the world.

## ARABS SOUGHT PRETEXT FOR WAR

In three tense weeks between 14 May and 5 June 1967, Egypt, Syria and Jordan, assisted and incited by more distant Arab States, embarked on a policy of immediate and total aggression.

June 1967 was to be the month of decision. The “final solution” was at hand.

There was no convincing motive for the aggressive design which was now unfolded.

Egyptian and Soviet sources have claimed that a concentrated Israeli invasion of Syria was expected during the second or third week in May. No claim could be more frivolous or far-fetched. It is true that Syria was sending terrorists into Israel to lay mines on public roads and, on one occasion, to bombard the Israeli settlement at Manara from the Lebanese border. The accumulation of such actions had sometimes evoked Israeli responses limited in scope and time. All that Syria had to do to ensure perfect tranquility on her frontier with Israel was to discourage the terrorist war. Not only did she not discourage these actions she encouraged them. She gave them every moral and practical support. But the picture of Israeli troop concentrations in strength for an invasion of Syria was a monstrous fiction. Twice Syria refused to cooperate with suggestions made by the UN authorities and accepted by Israel for a simultaneous and reciprocal inspection of the Israeli-Syrian frontier. On one occasion the Soviet Ambassador complained to Israeli Prime Minister of heavy troop concentrations in the north of Israel. When invited to join the Prime Minister that very moment in a visit to any part of Israel which he would like to see the distinguished envoy brusquely refused. The prospect of finding out the truth at first hand seemed to fill him with a profound disquiet. But by 9 May the Secretary General of the United Nations from his own sources on the ground had ascertained that no Israeli troop concentrations existed. This fact had been directly communicated to the Syrian and Egyptian governments. The excuse had been shattered, but the allegations still remained.

On 14 May Egyptian forces began to move into Sinai.

On 16 May the Egyptian Command ordered the United Nations Emergency Force to leave the border. The following morning the reason became clear. For on 17 May 1967, at 6 in the morning, Radio Cairo broadcast that Field Marshal Amer had issued alert orders to the Egyptian armed forces. Nor did he mention Syria as the excuse.

This announcement reads:

- “1. The state of preparedness of the Egyptian Armed Forces will increase to the full level of preparedness for war, beginning 14.30 hours last Sunday.
- “2. Formations and units allocated in accordance with the operational plans will advance from their present locations to the designated positions.
- “3. The armed forces are to be in full preparedness to carry out any combat tasks on the Israel front in accordance with developments.”

On 18 May, Egypt called for the total removal of the United Nations Emergency Force. The Secretary-General of the United Nations acceded to this request and moved to carry it out, without reference to the Security Council or the General Assembly; without carrying out the procedures indicated by Secretary Hammarskjöld in the event of a request for a withdrawal being made; without heeding the protesting voices of some of the permanent members of the Security Council and of the Government at whose initiative the Force had been established; without consulting Israel on the consequent prejudice to her military security and her vital maritime freedom; and without seeking such delay as would enable alternative measures to be concerted for preventing belligerency by sea and a dangerous confrontation of forces by land.

It is often said that United Nation procedures are painfully slow. This decision was disastrously swift. Its effect was to make Sinai safe for belligerency from north and to south; to create a sudden disruption of the local security balance; and to leave an international maritime interest exposed to almost certain threat. What is the use of a fire brigade which vanishes from the scene as soon as the first smoke and flames appear? Is it surprising that we are firmly resolved never again to allow a vital Israeli interest and our very security to rest on such a fragile foundation?

The clouds now gathered thick and fast. Between 14 May and 23 May, Egyptian concentrations in Sinai increased day by day. Israel took corresponding precautionary measures. In the absence of an agreement to the contrary, it is legal for any state to place its armies wherever it chooses in its territory. It is equally true that nothing could be more uncongenial to the prospect of peace than to have large armies facing each other across a narrow space, with one of them clearly bent on an early assault. For the purpose of the concentration was not in doubt. On 18 May, at 24 hours, the Cairo Radio *Saut El Arab* published the following Order of the Day by Abdul Muhsin Murtagi, the General then Commanding Sinai:

“The Egyptian forces have taken up positions in accordance with a definite plan.

“Our forces are definitely ready to carry the battle beyond the borders of Egypt.

“Morale is very high among the members of our armed forces because this is the day for which they have been waiting -- to make a holy war in order to return the plundered land to its owners.

“In many meetings with army personnel they asked when the holy war will begin – the time has come to give them their wish.”

On 25 May, Cairo Radio announced:

“The Arab people is firmly resolved to wipe Israel off the map and to restore the honor of the Arabs in Palestine.”

On the following day, 26 May, Nasser spoke again:

“The Arab people wants to fight. We have been waiting for the right time when we will be completely ready. Recently we have felt that our strength has been sufficient and that if we make battle with Israel we shall be able, with the help of God, to conquer. Sharm-el-Sheikh implies a confrontation with Israel. Taking this step makes it imperative that we be ready to undertake a total war with Israel.”

Writing in *Al Ahrām*, on 26 May, Nasser’s mouthpiece Hasanein Heykal, wrote, with engaging realism:

“I consider that there is no alternative to armed conflict between the United Arab Republic and the Israeli army. This is the first time that the Arab challenge to Israel attempts to change an existing fact in order to impose a different fact in its place.”

On 28 May, Nasser had a press conference. He was having them every day. He said:

“We will not accept any possibility of coexistence with Israel.”

And the following day:

“If we have succeeded to restore the situation to what it was before 1956, there is no doubt that God will help us and will inspire us to restore the situation to what it was prior to 1948.”

There are various ways to threatening Israel’s liquidation. Few ways could be clearer than to ask to move the clock of history back to 1948.



## THE RING CLOSES AROUND ISRAEL

The troop concentrations and blockade were now to be accompanied by encirclement. The noose was to be fitted around the victim's neck. Other Arab States were closing the ring. On 30 May Nasser signed the defense agreement with Jordan; and described its purpose in these terms:

“The armies of Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon are stationed on the borders of Israel in order to face the challenge. Behind them stand the armies of Iraq, Algeria, Kuwait, Sudan and the whole of the Arab nation. “This deed will astound the world. Today they will know that the Arabs are ready for the fray. The hour of decision has arrived.”

On 4 June Nasser made a statement on Cairo Radio after signing the Protocol associating Iraq with the Egyptian-Jordanian Defense Pact, here are his words:

“We are facing you in the battle and are burning with desire for it to start, in order to obtain revenge. This will make the world realize what the Arabs are and what Israel is...”

Here we have the vast mass of the Egyptian armies in Sinai with seven infantry and two armored divisions, the greatest force ever assembled in that peninsula in all its history. Here we have 40,000 regular Syrian troops poised to strike at the Jordan Valley from advantageous position in the hills. Here we have mobilized forces of Jordan with their artillery and mortars trained on Israel's population centers in Jerusalem and along the vulnerable narrow coastal plain. Troops in Iraq, Kuwait and Algeria converge towards the battlefield at Egypt's behest. 900 tanks face Israel on the Sinai border, while 200 more are poised to strike the isolated town of Elath at Israel's southern tip. The military dispositions tell their own story. The Southern Negev was to be sundered in a swift decisive blow. The Northern Negev was to be invaded by armor and bombarded from the Gaza Strip. From May 27 onward Egyptian air squadrons in Sinai were equipped with operation orders, now in our hands, instructing them in detail on the manner in which Israeli airfields, pathetically few in number, were to be bombarded, thus exposing Israel's crowded cities to easy and merciless assault. Egyptian air sorties came in and out of Israel's southern desert to reconnoiter, inspect and prepare for the attack. An illicit blockade had cut Israel off from all her commerce with the eastern half of the world.

Now those who write this story in years to come will give a special place in their narrative to the blatant decision to close the Straits of Tiran in Israel's face. It is not difficult to understand why this outrage had such a drastic impact. In 1957 the maritime nations, within the framework of the United Nations General Assembly, correctly enunciated the doctrine of free and innocent passage through the Strait. Now, when that doctrine was proclaimed – and incidentally, not challenged at the time by the Egyptian representative – it was little more than an abstract principle for the maritime world. But during the ten years in which we and the other States of the maritime community have relied upon that doctrine and upon established usage, the principle has become a reality consecrated by hundreds of sailings under dozens of flags and the establishment of a whole complex of commerce and industry and communication. A new dimension has been added to the map of the world's communications, and on that dimension we have constricted Israel's bridge towards the friendly States of Asia and Africa, a network of relationships which is the chief pride of Israel in the second decade of its independence and on which its economic future depends.

The closing of the Straits of Tiran gave no benefit whatever to Egypt except the perverse joy of inflicting injury on others. It was an anarchic act, because it showed a total disregard of the laws of nations, the application of

which in this specific case had not been challenged for ten years. And it was, in the literal sense, an act of arrogance, because there are other nations in Asia and East Africa that trade with the Port of Elath, as they have every right to do, through the Straits of Tiran and across the Gulf of Aqaba. Other sovereign States from Japan to Ethiopia, from Thailand to Uganda, from Cambodia to Madagascar have a sovereign right to decide for themselves whether they wish or do not wish to trade with Israel.

The blockade is by definition an act of war, imposed and enforced through armed violence. Never in history have blockade and peace existed side by side. From May 24 onward, the questions who started the war or who fired the first shot became momentarily irrelevant. There is no difference in civil law between murdering a man by slow strangulation or killing him by a shot in the head. From the moment at which the blockade was imposed, active hostilities had commenced and Israel owed Egypt nothing of her Charter rights. If a foreign power sought to close Odessa or Copenhagen or Marseilles or New York harbor by the use of force, what would happen? Would there be a discussion about who had fired the first shot? Would anyone ask whether aggression had begun? Less than a decade ago the Soviet Union proposed a draft resolution on the question of defining aggression. The resolution reads:

“In an international conflict that state shall be declared an attacker which first commits one of the following acts:

Naval blockade of the coasts of ports of another State.”

This act constituted in the Soviet view direct aggression as distinguished from other specified acts designated in the Soviet draft as indirect aggression. In this particular case the consequences of Nasser’s action had been fully announced in advance. On March 1, 1957, Israel’s Foreign Minister announced that:

“Interference, by armed force, with ships of Israel flag exercising free and innocent passage in the Gulf of Aqaba and through the Straits of Tiran, will be regarded by Israel as an attack entitling it to exercise its inherent right of self-defense under Article 51 of the United Nations Charter and to take all such measures as are necessary to ensure the free and innocent passage of its ships in the Gulf and in the Straits.”

The representative of France declared that any obstruction of free passage in the Strait or Gulf was contrary to international law “entailing a possible resort to the measures authorized by Article 51 of the Charter.”

The United States, inside and outside of the United Nations, gave specific endorsement to Israel’s right to invoke her inherent right of self-defense against any attempt to blockade the Gulf. Nasser was speaking with acute precision, therefore, when he stated that Israel now faced the choice of either to be choked to death in her southern maritime approaches or to await the death blow from northern Sinai.

Nobody who lived in Israel between May 23 and June 5 will ever forget the air of heavy foreboding that hovered over our country. Hemmed in by hostile armies ready to strike, affronted and beset by a flagrant act of war, bombarded day and night by predictions of our approaching extinction, forced into a total mobilization of all her manpower, her economy and commerce beating with feeble pulse, her main supplies of vital fuel choked by a belligerent act, Israel faced the greatest peril to her existence that she had known since her resistance against aggression nineteen years before, at the hour of her birth. There was peril wherever she looked and she faced it in deepening solitude.

A crushing siege bore down upon us. Multitudes throughout the world began to tremble for Israel’s fate. The single consolation lay in the surge of public opinion which rose up in Israel’s defense. From Paris to Montevideo, from New York to Amsterdam, tens of thousands of people of all ages, parties and affiliations marched in horrified protest at the approaching stage of politicide – the murder of a State. Writers and scientists,

religious leaders, trade union movements and even the Communist parties in France, Holland, Switzerland, Norway, Austria and Finland asserted their view that Israel was a peace-loving State, whose peace was being wantonly denied. In the history of our generation it is difficult to think of any other hour in which progressive world opinion has rallied in such tension and agony of spirit to any cause.

#### ISRAEL'S CHOICE – TO LIVE OR PERISH

To understand the full depth of pain and shock, it is necessary to grasp the full significance of what Israel's danger meant. A small sovereign state had its existence threatened by lawless violence. The threat to Israel was a menace to the very foundations of the international order. The state thus threatened bore a name which stirred the deepest memories of civilized mankind, and the people of the threatened state were the surviving remnant of millions, who in living memory had been wiped out by a dictatorship more powerful, though scarcely more malicious, than Nasser's Egypt. What Nasser had predicted, what he had worked for with undeflecting purpose had come to pass – the noose was tightly drawn.

On the fateful morning of June 5, when Egyptian forces moved by air and land against Israel's western coast and southern territory, our country's choice was plain. The choice was to live or perish, to defend the national existence or to forfeit it for all time.

From these dire moments Israel emerged in five heroic days from awful peril to successful and glorious resistance. Alone, unaided, neither seeking nor receiving help, our nation rose in self-defense. So long as men cherish freedom, so long as small states strive for the dignity of survival, the exploits of Israel's armies will be told one generation to another with the deepest pride. The Soviet Union has described our resistance as aggression and sought to have it condemned. We reject this accusation with all our might. Here was armed force employed in a just and righteous cause; as righteous as the defense of freedom at Valley Forge; as just as the expulsion of Hitler's bombers from the British skies; as noble as the protection of Stalingrad against the Nazi hordes, so was the defense of Israel's security and existence against those who sought our nation's destruction. Never have freedom, honor, justice, national interest and international morality been so righteously protected.

#### MESSAGE TO JORDANIAN KING

While fighting raged on the Egyptian-Israel frontier and on the Syrian front, we still hoped to contain the conflict. Jordan was given every chance to remain outside the struggle. Even after Jordan had bombarded and bombed Israel territory at several points we still proposed to the Jordanian monarch that he abstain from general hostilities. A message to this effect reached him several hours after the outbreak of hostilities on the southern front on June 5.

Jordan answered tragically not with words but with shells. Artillery opened fire fiercely along the whole front with specific emphasis on the Jerusalem area. Thus, Jordan's responsibility for the second phase of the concerted aggression is established beyond doubt. This responsibility cannot fail to have its consequences in the peace settlement. As death and injury rained on the city, Jordan had become the source and origin of Jerusalem's fierce ordeal. The inhabitants of the city can never forget this fact, or fail to draw its conclusions.

## THE SOVIET ROLE IN THE MIDDLE EAST CRISIS

Whatever happens in the Middle East for good or ill, for peace or conflict, is powerfully affected by what the Great Powers do or omit to do.

There was in the Soviet policy a brief but important episode of balance friendship. In 1948, the USSR condemned what she called “Arab aggression.”

Since 1955 the Soviet Union has supplied the Arab States with 2000 tanks, of which more than 1000 have gone to Egypt. The Soviet Union has supplied the Arab States with 700 modern fighter aircraft and bombers; more recently with ground missiles, and Egypt alone has received from the USSR 540 field guns, 130 medium guns, 200 – 120 mm mortars, 695 anti-aircraft guns, 175 rocket launchers, 650 anti-tank guns, 7 destroyers; a number of Luna M and Spoka 2 ground to ground missiles, 14 submarines and 46 torpedo boats of various types including missile carrying boats. The Egyptian army has been trained by Soviet experts. This has been attested by Egyptian officers captured by Israel. Most of this equipment was supplied to the Arab States after the Cairo Summit Conference of Arab leaders in January 1964 had agreed on a specific program for the destruction of Israel; after they had announced and hastened to fulfill this plan by accelerating their arms purchases from the Soviet Union. The proportions of Soviet assistance are attested to by the startling fact that in Sinai alone the Egyptians abandoned equipment and offensive weapons of Soviet manufacture whose value is estimated at two billion dollars.

Together with the supply of offensive weapons the Soviet Union has encouraged the military preparations of the Arab States.

Since 1961, the Soviet armaments have assisted Egypt in its desire to conquer Israel. The great amount of offensive equipment supplied to the Arab States strengthens this assessment.

Thus, a Great Power which professes its devotion to peaceful settlement and the rights of States that for fourteen years afflicted the Middle East with a headlong armaments race; with the paralysis of the United Nations as an instrument of security; and with an attitude of blind identification with those who threaten peace against those who defend it.

The constant increase and escalation of Soviet armaments in Arab countries has driven Israel to a corresponding though far smaller procurement program. Israel’s arms purchases were precisely geared to the successive phase of Arab, and especially Egypt, rearmament. On many occasions we and others have vainly sought to secure Soviet agreement for a reciprocal reduction of arms supplies in our region. These efforts have borne no fruit. The expenditure on social and economic progress of one half of what has been put into the purchase of Soviet arms would have been sufficient to redeem Egypt from its social and economic ills. A corresponding diversion of resources from military to social expenditures would have taken place in Israel. A viable balance of forces could have been achieved at a lower level of armaments, while our region could have moved forward to higher standards of human and social welfare.

It is clear from Arab sources that the Soviet Union has played a provocative role in spreading alarmist and incendiary reports of Israel intentions amongst Arab governments.

On 9 June President Nasser said:

“Our friends in the USSR warned the visiting parliamentary delegation in Moscow at the beginning of last month, that there exists a plan of attack against Syria.”

Similarly an announcement by TASS of 23 May states:

“The Foreign Affairs and Security Committee of the Knesset have accorded the Cabinet on 9 May, special powers to carry out war operations against Syria. Israeli forces concentrating on the Syrian border have been put in a state of alert for war. General mobilization has also been proclaimed in the country...”

There was not a word of truth in this story. But its diffusion in the Arab countries could only have an incendiary result.

Cairo Radio broadcast on 28 May an address by Marshal Gretchko:

“The USSR, her armed forces, her people and government will stand by the Arabs and will continue to encourage and support them. We are your faithful friends and we shall continue aiding you because this is the policy of the Soviet nation, its party and government. On behalf of the Ministry of Defense and in the name of the Soviet nation we wish you success and victory.”

This promise of military support came less than a week after the illicit closing of the Tiran Straits, an act which the USSR has done nothing to condemn.

The USSR has exercised her veto right in the Security Council five times. Each time a just and constructive judgment has been frustrated. On 22 January 1954 France, the United Kingdom and the United States presented a draft resolution to facilitate work on the West Bank of the River Jordan in the Bnot Yaakov Canal project. The Soviet veto paralyzed regional water development for several years. On 29 March 1954, a New Zealand resolution simply reiterating UN policy on blockade on the Suez Canal was frustrated by Soviet dissent. On 19 August 1963, a United Kingdom and United States resolution on the murder of two Israelis at Almagor was denied adoption by Soviet opposition. On 21 December 1964 the USSR vetoed a United Kingdom and United States resolution on incidents at Tel Dan, including the shelling of Dan, Dafne, Shaar Yashuv. On 2 November 1966, Argentina, Japan, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria joined to express regress at “infiltration from Syria and loss of human life caused by the incidents in October, November 1966.” This was one of the few resolutions sponsored by member States from five continents.

The Soviet use of the veto has had a dual effect. First, it prevented any resolution to which an Arab State was opposed from being adopted by the Council. Secondly, it has inhibited the Security Council from taking constructive action in disputes between an Arab State and Israel because of the certain knowledge that the veto would be applied in what was deemed to be the Arab interest. The consequences of the Soviet veto policy have been to deny Israel any possibility of just and equitable treatment in the Security Council, and to nullify the Council as a constructive factor in the affairs of the Middle East.

In its words and in a letter to the Israel Government the USSR has formulated an obscene comparison between the Israel Defense Forces and the Hitlerite hordes which overran Europe in the Second World War. There is a flagrant breach of international morality and human decency in this comparison. Our nation never compromised with Hitler Germany. It never signed a pact with it as did the USSR in 1939. To associate the name of Israel with the accursed tyrant who engulfed the Jewish people in a tidal wave of slaughter is to violate every canon of elementary taste and fundamental truth.

If the Soviet Union had made an equal distribution of its friendship amongst the peoples of the Middle East, if it had refrained from exploiting regional rancors and tensions for the purposes of its own global policy, if it had stood in evenhanded devotion to the legitimate interests of all states, the crisis which now commands our attention and anxiety would never have occurred. To the charge of aggression I answer that Israel’s resistance at

the lowest ebb of its fortunes will resound across history, together with the uprising of our battered remnants in the Warsaw Ghetto as a triumphant assertion of human freedom. From the dawn of history the people now rebuilding a state in Israel has struggled often in desperate condition against tyranny and aggression. Our action on the 5<sup>th</sup> of June falls nobly within that tradition. We have to show that even a small state and a small people have the right to live. I believe that we shall not be found alone in the assertion of that right which is the very essence of the Charter of the United Nations.

#### THE VISION OF PEACE

Similarly, the suggestion that everything goes back to where it was before the 5<sup>th</sup> of June is totally unacceptable. It was not Israel, but Syria, Egypt and Jordan who violently shattered the whole fabric and texture of interstate relations which existed for a decade since 1967. That situation has been shattered to smithereens. It cannot be recaptured. It is a fact of technology that it is easier to fly to the moon than to reconstruct a broken egg. The Security Council acted wisely in rejecting the backward step, now advocated by the Soviet Union. To go back to the situation out of which the conflict arose would mean that all the conditions for renewed hostilities would be brought together again. Our watchword is not backward to belligerency – but forward to peace.

In free negotiation with each of our neighbors we shall offer durable and just solutions redounding to our mutual advantage and honor. The Arab States can no longer be permitted to recognize Israel's existence only for the purpose of plotting its elimination. They have come face to face with us in conflict. Let them now come face to face with us in peace.

In peaceful conditions we could imagine communications running from Haifa to Beirut and Damascus in the North; to Amman and beyond in the East; and to Cairo in the South. The opening of these blocked arteries would stimulate the life, thought and commerce of the region beyond any level otherwise conceivable. Across the Southern Negev communication between the Nile Valley and the Fertile Crescent could be resumed without any change in political jurisdiction. What is now often described as a wedge between Arab lands would become a bridge. The Kingdom of Jordan, now cut off from its national maritime outlet, could freely import and export its goods on the Israeli coast. On the Red Sea, cooperative action could expedite the port developments at Elath and Aqaba which give Israel and Jordan their contact with a resurgent East Africa and a developing Asia.

The Middle East, lying athwart three continents, could become a busy center of air communication, which are now impeded by boycotts and the necessity to take circuitous routes. Radio, telephone and postal communication which now end abruptly in mid-air would unite a divided region. The Middle East with its historic monuments and scenic beauty could attract a vast movement of travelers and pilgrims if existing impediments were removed. Resources which lie across national frontiers – the minerals of the Dead Sea and the phosphate of the Negev and the Arava – could be developed in mutual interchange of technical knowledge. Economic cooperation in agricultural and industrial development could lead to supranational arrangements like those which mark the European Community. The United Nations could establish an Economic Commission for the Middle East, similar to the Commissions now at work in Europe, Latin America and the Far East. The specialized agencies could intensify their support of health and educational development with greater efficiency if a regional harmony were attained. The development of arid zones, the desalination of water and the conquest of tropical disease are common interests of the entire region, congenial to a sharing of knowledge and experience.

In the institutions of scientific research and higher education on both sides of the frontiers, young Israelis and Arabs could join in a mutual discourse of learning. The old prejudices could be replaced by a new comprehension and respect, born of a reciprocal dialogue in the intellectual domain. In such a Middle East, military budgets would spontaneously find a less exacting point of equilibrium. Excessive sums devoted to security could be diverted to development projects.

Thus, in full respect of the region's diversity, an entirely new story, never known or told before, would unfold across the Eastern Mediterranean. For the first time in history, no Mediterranean nation is in subjection. All are endowed with sovereign freedom. The challenge now is to use this freedom for creative growth. There is only one road to that end. It is the road of recognition, of direct contact, of true cooperation. It is the road of peaceful coexistence. This road, as the ancient Prophets of Israel foretold, leads to Jerusalem.

Jerusalem, now united after her tragic division, is no longer an arena for gun emplacements and barbed wire. In our nation's long history there have been few hours more intensely moving than the hour of our reunion with the Western Wall. A people had come back to the cradle of its birth. It has renewed its link with the mystery of its origin and continuity. How long and deep are the memories which that reunion evokes.

For twenty years there has not been free access by men of all faiths to the shrines which they hold in unique reverence. This access now exists. Israel is resolved to give effective expression, in cooperation with the world's great religions, to the immunity and sanctity of all the Holy Places. We ask world opinion which rallied to us in our plight to accompany us faithfully in our new opportunity. The Middle East, tired of wars, is ripe for a new emergence of human vitality. Let the opportunity not fall again from our hands.