

C-7382 Transcription

Eban, Abba. United Nations General Assembly. First emergency
special session. 1 November 1956.

Ambassador Abba Eban:

-- Twenty-ninth, the Israel Defense Forces took security measures in the Sinai Peninsula in the exercise of our country's inherent right of self-defense. The object of these operations is to eliminate the bases from which armed Egyptian units, under the special care and authority of Colonel Nasser, invade Israel's territory for purposes of murder, sabotage, and the creation of permanent insecurity to peaceful life. These are the only military activities for which the Government of Israel is responsible. Stretching back far behind the events of this week lies the unique and --

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-- people subjected throughout all the years of its national existence to a furious, implacable, [01:00] comprehensive campaign of hatred and siege for which there is no parallel or precedent in the modern history of nations. Not for one single moment throughout the entire period of its modern national existence has Israel enjoyed that minimal, physical security

which the United Nations Charter confers on all member states, and which all other member-states have been able to command. We meet here within the auspices of the United Nations, a family of sovereign States organized in a system of mutual rights and obligations. Its basic premise is the principle of sovereign equality of all its members. Whatever rights are enjoyed by other members of this organization belong to Israel without addition or diminution. Whatever [02:00] obligation any member-state owes to another, Egypt owes to Israel, and Israel to Egypt. If Egypt denies Israel the plentitude of its charter rights, then it inflicts deep injury upon Israel, and its competence to invoke the charter against Israel is seriously compromised and reduced.

What are the obligations which Egypt owes to Israel under the charter? Under the charter Egypt is bound to practice tolerance and live together in peace with Israel as a good neighbor. Under the charter, Egypt is bound to unite her strength with Israel, to maintain international peace and security. Under the charter Egypt is bound to regard Israel as a state endowed with sovereignty equal to her own. Under the charter Egypt is bound to respect the territorial [03:00] integrity and the political independence of the State of Israel, and especially to refrain from the threat or use of force against that integrity and that

independence. Under the charter Egypt is bound in advance to accept and carry out decisions of the Security Council whenever such decisions are made in favor of Israel as of any other state.

To these broad obligations derived from the charter, there must be added to Egypt's account other obligations of a more specific nature, based on the armistice agreement of 1949. --

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-- is bound to respect the demarcation line between Israel and herself, to prevent any illegal crossings of that line, to abstain from the threat or use of force from its own side of the line against Israel's side, to regard the armistice agreement itself as a [04:00] transitory measure leading to permanent peace, to respond at any time to Israel's request for a conference, to develop the armistice agreement into a peace settlement or to amend and review its provisions, and to abstain from any acts of hostility or any acts of blockade or belligerency.

Is there any resemblance whatever between this list of obligations and of Egypt's actual conduct of her relations with

Israel? Can anyone imagine that if Egypt had been willing to carry out this system of relations with Israel, we should have been assembled here on this tragic and solemn occasion? What we confront tonight is a point of explosion after seven years of illicit belligerency. Belligerency is the key to the understanding of our problem tonight. Egypt [05:00] has practiced belligerency against Israel by land. Egypt has practiced belligerency against Israel by sea. Egypt has established belligerency as the juridical basis of its relations with Israel. Egypt has held belligerency to be the spiritual and emotional mainspring of her conduct toward Israel. Out of this four-fold belligerency, maintained by Egypt for seven years but with special vigor and intensity since the rise of the Nasser regime, is born the crisis which the Assembly of the United Nations confronts tonight.

I would say a word to the General Assembly on each of these aspects of Egyptian belligerency. Belligerency by land took its origins in May 1948, on the very morrow of Israel's [06:00] emergence to sovereignty. On that date, Egyptian forces joined by the converging forces of other Arab armies, marched into the newly established, independent, sovereign State of Israel with the avowed aim of its destruction. Alas, the processes which now move so swiftly in Egypt's protection were much slower at that

time. And it took us eight weeks to secure from the organs of the United Nations the establishment of an effective and stable cease-fire. During that period, every home in Israel stood under the direct shadow of death and extinction. Our men, women, and children fell by the thousands while this wave of aggression threatened to convulse us. At the end of that year, negotiations were held under [07:00] United Nations auspices which, led to the conclusion of the Rhodes Armistice Agreement. This agreement did not promise us an affirmative, trustful, and cooperative pattern of relationships. It did at least, however, promise us immunity from overtly hostile acts. Under the armistice agreement, every citizen of Israel is entitled to till every inch of Israel's soil, and to navigate every inch of Israel's waters, without let or hindrance by any violent encroachment from the Egyptian side.

Yet, throughout this period of the armistice our territory has been subjected to constant encroachment. The frontier has not been for Israel a barrier against the sudden leaping forward of violence by day and by night. Our toll of over 400 dead or wounded through these incursions tell the story of an armistice frontier [08:00] which has been violated with consistency, and with special frequency and intensity during the past two years during which the Nasser regime has held sway in Egypt. The toll

of dead and wounded has been augmented and aggravated by countless pipelines blown up, by water supplies demolished, by trees pulled down, by an inferno of insecurity and danger which has raged along peaceful farms and homesteads in the frontier area. Last year, as I shall point out, to all these torments was added the most penetrating and perilous of all, through the organization and mobilization of the Fidayun Movement.

It might be difficult for nations assembled here, which enjoy a normal security, to understand what has been [09:00] involved for Israel by this belligerency on land. While much has been said about Israel's responsibilities to the United Nations, it is a melancholy fact that, since 1948, any Arab State which has ever tried to kill Israelis, to plunder Israel property, to blockade Israel's ports, to intercept Israel's navigation, has never regarded itself as operating under any effective international deterrent.

Thus, the United Nations has not been able to offer Israel the minimal daily security enjoyed by all its other members in nearly every sector of their national life. Surrounded by hostile armies on all its land frontiers, subjected by savage and relentless hostility, exposed to penetrations, raids and assaults by day and by night, suffering constant toll of life

amongst its citizenry, bombarded [10:00] by threats of neighboring governments to accompany its extinction by armed force, overshadowed by a new menace of irresponsible rearmament, embattled, blockade, besieged, Israel alone amongst the nations faces the battle for its security anew with every rising dawn and with every approaching nightfall. In a country of small area and intricate configuration, the proximity of enemy guns is a constant and haunting theme.

These are the fears and provocations hover over us everywhere, but they fall upon us with special intensity in the frontier areas, where development projects vital to the nation's destiny can be paralyzed or interrupted by our adversaries from a position of dominating geographical advantage. In short, it is a small country, where every activity of [11:00] farmers or citizens becomes a test of physical and moral courage. These are the unique circumstances in which Israel pursues its quest for security and peace. On innumerable occasions the active defense of Israel life and territory has been compromised in deference to international opinion.

We know that Israel is most popular when it does not hit back, and world opinion is profoundly important to us. So on one occasion after another, we have buried our dead, tended our

wounded, clenched our teeth in suppressed resentment and hoped that this very moderation will deter a repetition of the offense. But sometimes the right and duty of self-preservation, the need to avoid expanding encroachment, the sentiment that if the claim to peaceful existence [12:00] is not defended it will be forever lost, prevail in the final and reluctant decision.

But this belligerency which assails us by land has its counterpart by sea. In 1948, the government of Egypt established processes of visit, search, and seizure; began to confiscate ships and cargoes bound for Israeli ports, established restrictive regulations, assumed punitive measures against the shipping and flags of other countries desiring to trade and to navigate peacefully with Israel upon and between the high seas. The flags of fifteen nations, endowed with the unconditional right of free navigation in the Suez Canal, have been abused and prejudiced by unlawful acts of interception. Ships have been confiscated and sold, cargoes have been held and [13:00] sequestered, sailors have been tormented and wrongfully imprisoned, and all of this on the great international waterway consecrated nine decades ago to the universal right of all nations for free commerce and navigation.

Thus, classic acts of war by maritime blockade have been added to the pattern of Egypt's land belligerency in the total pattern of Israel's siege. Again, through all the developments of this policy during the Nasser regime, we have witnessed a constant sequence of aggravation.

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-- blockade and interception have been extended, in the name of belligerency, from the Suez Canal to another international waterway, the Gulf of Aqaba. And thus the State of Israel has had to distort the entire pattern of its economy, to bear illicit burdens running into tens of millions of pounds, in order [14:00] to compensate for the impact of this piratical system which Egypt has established at this great artery of the world's communications.

Belligerency by land and belligerency by sea are both expressed in a doctrine of juridical belligerency. This doctrine has been discredited by the Security Council of the United Nations, but it continues to be maintained. On the 12th of June, 1951, an Egyptian representative said, "We exercise our rights of war. We are legally at war with Israel. This armistice does not put an end to a state of war. It will not prohibit Egypt from

exercising certain rights of war." In the Security Council of the United Nations, the Foreign Minister of Egypt declared, "The Egyptian-Israel General Armistice Agreement will not be interpreted [15:00] by us as terminating, in any legal or technical sense, the state of war between Egypt and Israel." This jurisprudence continues to be maintained long after it has been adjudicated and discredited. It furnishes the basis for our contention, that in juridical and legal terms, that Egypt has cut itself off from its charter obligations towards Israel, and does not even avow a legal basis upon which its conduct towards us can legitimately be explained.

The fourth aspect of this belligerency should be studied in those statements of Egypt's intentions towards Israel which furnish the philosophical background to the belligerent acts which I have described. Here is a typical example of the kind of utterance [16:00] which bombards the ears of Israel's population by day and by night: "Wait and see," says the Egyptian dictator, "soon will be proven to you the strength and the will of our nation. Egypt will teach you a lesson and quieten you forever. Egypt will grind you to the dust." On the 11th of April, celebrating the exploits of Egypt's commando units in Israel, the Egyptian Minister of Religious Properties declared: "There is no reason why the faithful Fidayun, hating their enemy,

should not penetrate into Israel and transform the lives of its citizens into a hell. Yes, we will be victorious because our motives are holy and our aims are the highest. We will be victorious because we are more diligent in death than is Israel in life. On the 14th of October, the Egyptian dictator himself [17:00] said: "I am not solely fighting against Israel. My task is to deliver the Arab world from destruction through Israel's intrigue, which has its roots abroad. Our hatred is very strong. There is no sense in talking about peace with Israel. There is not even the smallest place for negotiations." The press, all the agencies, and media of information take up the chorus. A typical example is in the leading Egyptian newspaper: "Israel will not be saved from the Arabs. She will be destroyed under the feet of Arab fighters and the flag of freedom will be unfurled over Palestine."

There is a tendency in some quarters to underestimate the importance and the impact of these pronouncements. I can assure members of the General Assembly that it is a unique and disquieting experience to live in a country [18:00] surrounded by neighbors which bombard you by day and by night with predictions and menaces for your physical destruction. There is no doubt whatever that these authoritative directives furnish the psychological and emotional background against which

belligerency by land and by sea is organized, with growing and increasingly explosive intensity. But all of these aspects of belligerency together would not of themselves automatically invite a drastic response in self-defense. And I wish to explain frankly and candidly to the Security Council, the special background against which our actions of last Monday took place. World opinion naturally asks itself what are these Fidayun units [19:00], what their activities imply for Israel's security, whether their actions in the past and their plans for the future are really full of peril for our country, whether the peril was really so acute that Israel might reasonably regard its elimination as a primary condition of its security, and indeed of its very existence.

The government of Israel represents a people endowed with a mature understanding of international facts. We are not unaware of the limits of our strength. We are perhaps amongst the half-dozen smallest members of this organization. We fully understand how certain measures might at first sight evoke a lack of comprehension, even in friendly minds. Being a democracy, we work under the natural restraints of a public opinion, which compels us to weigh drastic choices with care and without [20:00] undue precipitation. It is in short a government which determines its actions by its single exclusive aim of ensuring

life and security for the people whom it represents, while safeguarding the honor and trust of millions linked to it by the strongest ties of fraternity.

Now in recent days, this Government of Israel had to face a tormenting question: do its obligations under the United Nations Charter require us to resign ourselves to the existence of uninterrupted activity to the South and North and East, of armed units practicing open warfare against us, and working from their bases in the Sinai Peninsula and elsewhere for the maintenance of carefully regulated invasions of our homes, our land, and our very lives? Or, on the other hand, are we acting legitimately within our inherent rights of self-defense, when, having found no other remedy [21:00] for over two years, we cross the frontier against those who have no scruple in crossing the frontier against us? Members of the General Assembly may be in a better position to evaluate the choice and to identify themselves with this situation if they hear something of the background of this movement and its place in the total pattern of Egyptian intransigence and aggression.

Let it be plain that the system of waging war against Israel by commando penetrations is the product of Colonel Nasser's mind.

It is one of his contributions to the international life and

morality of our times. After intensive preparations during the spring and the summer of 1955, this new weapon was launched in August of that year, breaking a period of relative tranquility on the Egyptian-Israel frontier. [22:00] Indeed, coming at a time when Egypt and Israel were engaged in hopeful negotiations with the United Nations Chief of Staff, looking towards the integral implementation of the 1949 armistice Agreement. Between the 30th of August and the 2nd of September last year, the Egyptian Government proclaimed its official responsibility for these invasions. On the 30th of August, it broadcast: "Egyptian forces have penetrated into the territory of occupied Palestine and pursued the attackers." On the 31st of August, 1955, an official communiqué informed the Egyptian people of this new military technique: "Egypt has decided to dispatch her heroes, the disciples of Pharaoh and the sons of Islam, and they will cleanse the land of Palestine. Thus we have decided and thus is our belief, there will be no peace on Israel's border [23:00] because we demand vengeance, and vengeance is Israel's death."

On the 31st of August, another official communique stated: "The Egyptian Fidayun have begun their activities inside the territory of Israel after repeated clashes on the border during the past week. The Egyptian Fidayun have penetrated into Israel's settlements, spread out in the Negev up to Beersheba

and Migdal Ashkelon, at a distance of 40 kilometers from the Egyptian border, and have taught our aggressive enemies a lesson that they will not forget. The Egyptian Fidayun sowed fear and consternation amongst the citizens of Israel." And on the 2nd of September, the following official statement was broadcast in Cairo: "The forces of the Egyptian Fidayun moved towards Israel, approached her capital, and caused [24:00] heavy casualties along the border between Gaza and Tel Aviv."

These, Mr. President, are some of the documents which mark the origin of the Fidayun movement. United Nations authorities repeatedly condemned these activities, designated them as aggression, held the Egyptian Government responsible for them, called for their cessation. As one example, I quote a statement at that time by the United Nations Chief of Staff, General Burns. Reporting to the Security Council, he wrote: "The episode of August was soon followed by an organized series of attacks on vehicles, installations, and persons, carried out by gangs of marauders in Israel territory which, according to my information, resulted in the deaths of eleven military and civilian personnel. The number and nature of these acts of sabotage, perpetrated well within the territory of Israel, are such as to suggest that they are [25:00] the work of organized and well-trained groups."

That was the opening shot in the Fidayun offensive in the summer of 1955. In the spring of this year, the activity of these groups took on a new scope and intensity. This was the period during which the arms race, initiated by Colonel Nasser, with external help, was running most drastically to Israel's disadvantage. Members of the General Assembly will recall how close we were then to the threshold --

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-- these units came in and out of Israel every day on their missions of murder and plunder, accompanied by the official exhortations of Colonel Nasser and his officials, and by exuberant shouts of triumph in all the media of Arab information.

In an address to the Security Council last week, I submitted a detailed chronicle of acts of violence [26:00] carried out by penetrating Fidayun units, day by day and night by night in the period between April of this year and a few days ago. Throughout the whole of that period, United Nations officials concerned with security on our frontier were devoting great attention to this problem. On the 8th of April of this year, the United

Nations Chief of Staff addressed a letter to the Foreign Minister of Israel. In this letter, General Burns includes the following passages: "I will dispatch to the Foreign Minister of Egypt a protest against the action of the Fidayun, assuming it to have been authorized or tolerated by the Egyptian authorities, and requesting the immediate withdrawal of any persons under Egyptian control from the territory of Israel. I consider," said General Burns, "that if Egypt has ordered these Fidayun raids, she has now put itself in the position of the aggressor." [27:00]

I will not weary the General Assembly with this sordid chronicle in all its details. Suffice it to say that during this period of Egyptian belligerency there had taken place against Israel 435 cases of armed incursion, nearly 2,000 cases of armed robbery and theft, 1,300 cases of armed clashes with Egyptian armed forces, 172 cases of sabotage perpetrated by Egyptian military units and Fidayun in Israel. As a result of these activities, 465 of our people have been killed and wounded. In 1956 alone, so far, as a result of this one aspect of Egyptian belligerency, 28 of our people have been killed and 127 have been wounded. I have said that this activity is merely the spearhead of Egyptian belligerency. It is a new device [28:00] for making war, and for making with safety. The doctrine is one of unilateral

belligerency. The Egyptian-Israel frontier is to be a one-way street. It is to be wide open for these armed Egyptian units to penetrate deeply into Israel to accomplish their mission and to return. It is to be closed in their favor against any defensive response.

It was in these circumstances that the Government of Israel faced the tormenting problem of its duties and obligations under the charter of the United Nations. We are not satisfied with a justification of our actions in pure terms of national expediency. There is perhaps no member of this Organization more sensitive to all the currents of international opinion, more vulnerable to the [29:00] disfavor and the dissent of friendly world opinion, broader in the scope and extent of its universal associations, less able to maintain its life and its existence on any principle of self-sufficiency and of autarky. It was within a full knowledge of this fact that we have been forced to interpret Article 51 of the charter as furnishing both a legal and a moral basis for such defensive action as is literally and specifically applicable to the dangers which we face. Under Article 51 of the charter, the right of self-defense is described as inherent, in the French translation it is naturel. It is something which emerges from the very nature of a state and of humanity. This inherent right of self-defense is

conditioned in the charter by the existence of armed attacks
[30:00] against a member-state.

Can anyone say that this long and uninterrupted series of encroachments did not constitute its totality the essence and the reality of an armed attack? Can it seriously be suggested that we made no attempt to exhaust peaceful remedies? Time after time at the table of the Security Council and in meetings of the Mixed Armistice Commission, efforts were made to bring about tranquility on this frontier. And yet all this well-intentioned, enlightened and, at certain times, hopeful effort ended without making the life or the security of a single citizen of Israel greater than it was --

(break in audio)

-- is perhaps natural that a country should interpret its own obligations for the preservation of security more stringently than those who enjoy greater security [31:00] far away. If we have sometimes found it difficult to persuade even our friends in the international community to understand the motives for our action, this is because nobody in the world community is in Israel's position. How many other nations have had hundreds of their citizens killed over these years by the armed action of

armies across the frontier? How many nations have had their ships seized and their cargoes confiscated in international waterways? How many nations find the pursuit of their daily tasks to be a matter of daily and perpetual hazard? In how many countries does every single citizen, going about his duties, feel the icy wind of his own vulnerability? It might perhaps require an unusual measure of humility and imagination for others to answer the [32:00] question how they would have acted in our place. Nobody else is in our place and is therefore fully competent to equate the advantage and the disadvantage of our choice.

The Government of Israel is firmly convinced that we have done what any other nation would have done in our place, with the reservation that many would have done it earlier, and with perhaps greater impact of resistance. It is especially moving to us to find that, despite the uniqueness and the eccentricity of our position, something of it is making its way into the generous consciousness of mankind. Since this discussion proceeds not merely from the rostrum of the General Assembly, but also against the bar of world opinion, it is, I think, it is legitimate to quote an eloquent and a cogent passage [33:00] from one of the great organs of opinion published in this, the host city of our Organization. In yesterday's edition of the New

York Times: "it would be ridiculous," it wrote, "to permit Colonel Nasser to pose before the United Nations or the world as the innocent victim of aggression, or to hold a protecting hand over him. On the contrary, insofar as there is any one man guilty of aggression, it is the Egyptian president. For he has waged war against Israel, Britain, and France, by gun-running, by propaganda, by infiltration of murderous bands, by stirring up rebellion in Africa, by seizing the Suez Canal with force, and scrapping a treaty in the same manner in which Hitler marched into the Rhineland, by blocking the canal for Israeli shipping in defiance of United Nations orders, finally by the whole loudly proclaimed program of throwing Israel into the sea in alliance with other states [34:00] and creating an Arab extending his hegemony which would expand his influence in concentric circles through all Africa and to the whole Muslim world. "

In these circumstances, Mr. President, both the position and the attitude of the Israel Government are clear. The attitude is based upon our fundamental concept of reciprocity. If the frontier between Egypt and Israel is to protect Egyptian territory against Israeli entry, then it must protect Israeli territory against Egyptian entry. We hold it as a self-evident truth that the lives of Israeli men, women, and children are not

less sacrosanct, or less worthy of international protection, than are the lives of the hired Fidayun groups, which are the main instruments of Nasserism in its assault upon the peace and the decent --

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-- life. Beyond [35:00] these incidents, grave as they are, we discern issues of even greater moment. World opinion must surely choose between the two candidates for its confidence. On the one hand, the farmers and workers, the men, women, and children of Israel. And on the other hand, the fanatic warriors of the Fidayun groups. Behind that confrontation there stands the much broader and more significant alignment between Israel and Nasser. A small people builds its society and culture in its renascent homeland. In the early days of its independence it is set upon by the armed might of all its neighbors who attempt to wipe it off the face of the earth. In the following years, its neighbors continue their assault.

With warlike acts of their own choice, they attempt her destruction by armed intervention. They send armed units into her territory to murder and [36:00] plunder. They strive by every means to ensure that nowhere shall there be tranquility

for peaceful pursuits. They blare forth the most violent threats of Israel's destruction. They accumulate vast armaments for bringing this about. They announce, as they did last week from Cairo, that it is they who will choose the time and the place for the final assault, and that it is for us to wait passively for the moment of their selection. They proclaim that a state of war with Israel already exists. They seize the greatest of the world's international waterways and convert it into an instrument for unilateral national pressure.

Across Africa and Asia, wherever Nasserism spreads its baneful influence, it works actively to subvert all peace and progress, and to establish an ambitious and insatiable hegemony. Now, having considered that it has humbled and defeated the [37:00] international community and the maritime powers, Nasser's action returns to his first target, Israel, which is to be swamped from three sides with a new wave of Fidayun violence. The assembly will recall that the new wave began shortly following the Tripartite Military Alliance concerted ten days ago between the governments of Syria, Jordan and Egypt, under Egypt's control.

Mr. President, while studying with attention all proposals for strengthening security in the Middle East, we must reject with vehement indignation the charges of aggression launched against

us here, launched by some states whose own current international and security activities are well in the forefront of today's international attention.

There is aggression, there is belligerency [38:00] in the Middle East, but we for eight years have been its victims, not its authors. That is what I mean when I say that world opinion as here represented should decide whom to trust. Shall it be the small free people establishing its homeland in peace and constructive progress? Or shall it be the dictatorship which has bullied and blustered and blackmailed its way across the international life of our times, threatening peace in many continents, openly avowing belligerency, placing its fist on the jugular vein of the world's communications, bringing the Middle East and the world ever nearer to the threshold of conflict, intimidating all those who stand in its path.

All except one people, at least, which will not be intimidated. One people whom no dictator has ever intimidated. The people which has risen up against all the tyrants [39:00] of history. The people which knows that the appeasement of despots yields nothing but an uneasy respite, and that a government which allowed its own citizens to be murdered daily in their homes

would lose the dignity and the justification for which Governments are instituted among men.

In conclusion, Mr. President, I would ask the General Assembly to believe that Israel, the Arab States, the region in which they and me must forever live now stand at a crossroads of their history. An aggressive dictatorship has for the first time encountered successful and glorious resistance. Some elements of its pride have been broken. Those whom he has outraged with impunity have stood up and asserted their rights, and the hope of freedom burns brighter in the Middle East today, not only for Israel but for many others in our region [40:00] who have found ways of communicating to us their own deep apprehensions of what Nasser's encroachment means for their own cherished sovereignty.

If the power of this tyranny is not artificially revived, our region will again become a place where men of all nations, including Israel, can live and work in peace, where legitimate universal interests will be respected under the sanction of law, where contracts with other lands will be held in respect, where all those in Asia and Europe whose fortune is linked by history and geography with the Middle East will receive justice and respect for their legitimate interests. It will be a region where the great maritime nations will not have to suffer the

indignities which they underwent in this building last month, when they had to hang with exaggerated deference on every wave of the hand, on every nod of condescension from the [41:00] representative of the territorial Power which had converted the unconditional right of navigation into an act of grace or privilege to be conferred or withheld at will.

Such a Middle East, free from domination and totalitarian influence, will enter, perhaps soon, upon its new birth of freedom. This is the crossroad at which we might soon stand. We could have wished that we had reached it less drastically, with smaller peril and sacrifice. But having reached it, surely we must go forward and not back. This momentous discussion today has made it plain that one thing will not do. It will not do to go back to an outdated and crumbling armistice regime designed by its authors to last for a few months and now lingering for eight years in growing paralysis of function. Least of all can [42:00] we be satisfied to return to an imperfect armistice, distorted by unilateral belligerency, to a system designed seven years ago as a transition to peace, and interpreted for seven years by one of the parties as a continuing state of war.

Israel has no desire or intention to wield arms beyond the limit of her legitimate defensive mission. But whatever is demanded of

us by way of restoring Egypt's rights and respecting Egypt's security under international law must surely be accompanied by equally binding Egyptian undertakings to respect Israel's security and Israel's rights under the identical law. Egypt's obligation to abstain from acts of hostility, to liquidate its commando activities, to abolish its illicit discrimination against [43:00] Israeli shipping in the Suez Canal and in the Gulf of Aqaba, is equal and identical in law to Israel's obligation to respect the established armistice lines. Our signpost is not backward to belligerency, but forward to peace. Whatever Israel is now asked to do for Egypt must have its counterpart in Egypt's reciprocal duty to give Israel the plenitude of her rights.

Beyond the moment when fire will cease, the prospect must be not one of unilateral claims by one party against the other. The horizon must be of peace by agreement, peace without maritime blockades in the Gulf or in the Canal, peace without frontier raids or commando incursions, peace without constant threats to the integrity or independence of any State, peace without military alliances directed against Israel's independence.

[44:00] Egypt and Israel are two people whose encounters in history have been so rich and fruitful for mankind. Surely they

must take their journey from this solemn moment towards these horizons of peace.

(applause)

(break in audio)

Rabbi Herbert Friedman:

This is Rabbi Herbert Friedman. You are listening to this recording know of the developments in the Middle East in the last days of October and the early days of November. These events are among the most important which have yet taken place in that area since Israel came into existence. Just before these momentous changes, our 85 man UJA Study Mission was visiting Israel. Israel's leaders spoke to us, and said much that is illuminating now in terms of what happened so soon afterwards. [45:00] This is a time of decision, it is for us now, through the United Jewish Appeal, to come to the aid and support of newcomers to Israel while Israel's free, valiant, and heroic people strive to meet the vital problems of their own security.

This recorded program has been prepared so that you may hear for yourself, as we heard, the highlights of those inspiring messages delivered to our Study Mission members by the

distinguished leaders of the Israel Government and the Jewish Agency. You will hear references to immigration from Eastern Europe, and to continuing immigration from North Africa. I ask you to bear in mind that what you hear in this record is highly confidential. These references to immigration should not be reprinted, or played at any public meetings, or broadcast. What I hear I'm sure will make it clear to you how [46:00] great is the task that lies before us in the months ahead. Our all-out help is required, and required desperately to save lives, to build lives, to meet vast humanitarian needs which, this year especially, the people of Israel cannot possibly undertake themselves.

Listen now to what David Ben Gurion, Israel's Prime Minister; Mrs. Golda Meir, the Foreign Minister; Doctor Giora Josephthal, the Treasurer of the Jewish Agency; Avraham Harman, of the Jewish Agency Executive; and Levi Eshkol, Israel's Minister of Finance; have to say about the current situation. First we hear from Doctor Giora Josephthal, who has not only served the Jewish Agency as its treasurer, but also as the head of its immigration absorption department. In Paris, [47:00] at the Country Director's Conference of the Joint Distribution Committee, which took place just before we left for Israel, Doctor Josephthal had

this to say on the subject of Israel's social and welfare services.

Doctor Giora Josephthal:

The first consideration of any state must be its survival. The Jewish needs must be met as the first priority. So social services in times of emergencies have to move down to a lower priority.

Rabbi Herbert Friedman:

Doctor Josephthal explains that, despite the lack of funds, immigration has been increasing rather than diminishing. An increase from October, 1955 to October, 1956 by 60% over the 12 months preceding

Doctor Giora Josephthal:

Last year, at this conference, we said that the [48:00] developments in North Africa made it necessary to speed up immigration, especially for Morocco. We decided on 45,000. And during six months of October alone, 8,500 people will arrive in Israel. Israel did more in taking in North African Jews last year than could possibly have been expected from us. However, we did not do enough. The conscience of the Jews of North Africa, and especially of Morocco, cannot be cleared. The sacrifice we,

all of us, make in order to save the Jews from Morocco before the curtain goes down was not big enough. [49:00] Too much complacency, and clever theory, and maybe too little warmth of feeling, and real solidarity.

During the last year we had to realize that the curtain is going down on the Jews of Morocco. There were 80,000 people left who had applied already for immigration to Israel. We went as quickly as we could, but we did only half the job in saving the Moroccan Jews before the pressure of the Arab League did close this country for immigration. And what about the other score [?] of immigration, about Eastern Europe? Where in 12 months, ending September '55, a total of 610 Jews [50:00] came from those countries. The corresponding 12 months, ending September '56, brought an immigration of 1825; three times as many. The figures are increasing each month. In October, this present month, we expect no less than thousands immigrants from Eastern European countries, 800 of those from Poland alone.

Rabbi Herbert Friedman:

Doctor Josephthal pointed out that increasing numbers of Israel's European immigrants are younger people.

Doctor Giora Josephthal:

In earlier years, only very old folks were allowed out. Now, every month, the age composition of our immigrants is more favorable. I wouldn't like to go into theories as to why the authorities in some of the satellite countries and in Soviet [51:00] Russia look more favorable on Jewish immigration than before. What is more interesting for us to consider is why the desire of the Jews to immigrate from those countries is as strong as we find it to be. Some of us may have thought that 40 years of Soviet rule in Russia would have eradicated the longing of Jews to live as Jews among Jews. That's been proven wrong. Somehow, this longing has been preserved and revised. We are here in the presence of a force, which is historically significant, and -- to the minds of some of us -- may I say approaches even the mystical.

Rabbi Herbert Friedman:

With the aid of huge JA funds, some [52:00] 51,000 immigrants arrived in Israel during the 12 month period just ending September, 1956. Here's Doctor Josephthal's description of what has been accomplished for them.

Doctor Giora Josephthal:

The greatest achievement seems to me that the Ship To Settlement Program has been maintained in spite of the speeding up of

immigration. The immigrants were transferred from the ship direct to their final places of residence. We opened new area, at the work of our immigrants, 40 new agricultural settlements: [G'Nahish?] in the South and [Tanakh?] in the North, mostly created by immigrants from North Africa. Agricultural production went up this year by 10%, industrial production by 12%, and that is mostly due to the work [53:00] of our new citizens. This achievement of productive absorption, especially in agriculture, was made by possible because we prepared integration facilities long before. The water pipelines were prepared before the actual settlement began. We started the Negev Line four years before we put the first settlement in the Lachish area.

Rabbi Herbert Friedman:

Summing up, Doctor Josephthal concluded in this manner:

Doctor Giora Josephthal:

And you'll fight on so many fronts for the life and the freedom of other Jews, and the life of your own country. Each of them, the communists, Morocco, and the Arab League, water and housing, and old people from Russia, and undernourished children from North Africa, and border incidents, and shelters; and in the midst of all that, we try [54:00] to create a nation, and fight for new ways of life in a hard country, in a hot climate, and

changing people from peddlers to farmers, and creating a new language and culture, and you don't know how to do it. And then you go around Israel, and you see the new Jew; the Jewish farmer, and the Jewish laborer, the new type of Jew who, after eight years of statehood, cannot grasp that there was a time when the Jews didn't have a state of our own. And those are completely normal ones amongst us, those who are already free from the complexes and conflicts of a Jewish life without a country. And they convince us that the burden is not too great, that no burden is too great.

There is a sentence in the [55:00] Talmud which applies to us, to all those who devote their life to their fellow Jews: the day is short, the labor is great, the workmen are slothful. The reward is great, the master is present. It is not for us to complete the work, but neither are we free to desist from it. And with every respect, and with all the earnestness at my command, I commend to all of us this quotation: the master of Jewish history is present. We are not free to desist.

Rabbi Herbert Friedman:

On October 18th, in Herzliya, Israel, the members of the UJA Study Mission heard some memorable words from Avraham Harman of

the Jewish Agency Executive on why immigrants still want to come to Israel despite [56:00] obvious dangers and tensions.

Avraham Harman:

This has been a travelled year in Israel. It has been a year of continuous and unrelenting danger. While the Jews who come here know that, this hasn't been a secret. Surely it must be because there is an insecurity surrounding them in their countries of residence, in North Africa, and in Eastern Europe today, which is so strong, so menacing, that in weighing the danger of living where they are against the danger of coming to Israel, they prefer to come to Israel. And I ask myself, what must be [57:00] in the mind of a Polish Jew in October, 1956, who comes to Israel? He is not a young adventurous. Our immigration this last year has not been an immigration of young unmarried people with no responsibilities except for themselves. Our immigration is an immigration of family units. And it is inconceivable that a Jew in Poland, with a wife and children, and perhaps with aged parents dependent upon him, should not be asking himself whether he is morally justified in October, 1956 [58:00] to bring his family from Warsaw to Tel Aviv.

But he comes. He comes because he knows that there is no future for him there, and because he knows from very bitter experience

that in Poland, and in Morocco, when the chips are down the Jew hasn't got a fighting chance to live. And in Warsaw he is reminded wherever he turns of the heroism of Jews who tried to fight but left the objective [59:00] opportunity of succeeding. And he comes here because he knows that in this country that has been created by the Jewish people, an area in which the Jew has got an objective opportunity to resist attack.

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