

TR-3809 to TR-3811 Transcriptions

Eban, Abba. Address to the United Nations General Assembly.

19 June 1967.

Abba Eban: [0:00:02] Mr. President, fellow delegates, the subject of our discussion is the Middle East, its past agony, and its future hope. We speak of a region whose destiny has profoundly affected the entire human experience. In the heart of that region, at the very center of its geography and history, lives a very small nation called Israel. This nation gave birth to the currents of thought, which have fashioned the life of the Mediterranean world, and of vast regions beyond. It has now been re-established as the home and sanctuary of a people which has seen 6 million of its sons exterminated in the greatest catastrophe ever endured by any family of the human race.

Now, in recent weeks [0:01:00], 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, to security, to sovereignty, to economic development, to 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 of the other elements of the conflict are the consequences of this

single cause. There has been danger. There is still peril in the Middle East because and only because Israel's existence, sovereignty, and vital interests have been and are being vitally assailed.

The threat to Israel's existence [0:02:00], its peace, security, sovereignty, and development has been directed against her in the first instance by 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 unbalanced policy of one of the great powers, which under our charter, 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. Today's intemperate utterance illustrates the lack of equilibrium and objectivity, which has contributed so much to the tension and agony of Middle Eastern life.

I come, sir, to this rostrum to speak for a people [0:03:00], which having faced danger to its national survival, is unshakably resolved to resist any course which would renew the perils from which it has emerged. The General Assembly is chiefly preoccupied by the situation against which Israel defended itself on the morning of June the 5th. I shall invite

every peace loving state represented here to ask itself how it would have acted on that day, if it faced similar dangers. But if our discussion is to have any weight or depth, we must understand that great events are not born in a single instance of time. It is beyond all honest doubt, it is beyond all honest doubt that between the 14th of May and June the 5th, Arab governments, led and directed by President Nasser [0:03:59], 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. There is every reason to believe what they say and to observe carefully what they do.

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 discussed in the General Assembly in March 1957. An attempt was then made to inaugurate a period of non-belligerency and coexistence in the relations between Egypt [0:05:00] 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 Israeli shipping, as the Security Council had decided six years before.

In March 1957, these hopes and expectations were endorsed in the General Assembly by the United States, France, the United Kingdom, Canada, and other states in Europe, the Americas, Africa, Asia, and Australasia. These assurances, expressed with a special solemnity by the four governments which I have mentioned, induced Israel to give up positions which she then held at Gaza and at the entrance to the Straits of Tiran [0:06:00], and in Sinai. Non-belligerency, maritime freedom, and immunity from terrorist attack were henceforth to be secured not by Israel's own presences, but by the concerted will of the international community. Egypt expressed no opposition to those arrangements. Bright hopes for the future illuminated this hall on that day 10 years ago.

There were times during the past decade when it 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 [0:07:01]. As his armaments grew, his aggressive designs came more blatantly to light. On the 23rd of December, 1962, he said, "We feel that the soil of Palestine is the soil of Egypt and of the whole Arab world. Why do we mobilize? Because we feel that the land is part of our land and are ready to sacrifice ourselves for it."

The present foreign minister of Egypt, Mr. Mahmoud Riad, echoed 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 that is the triumphant return to Palestine, with the banner of unity flying high in front of the holy Arab march." The newspaper, *Al Gomhuria*, published an official announcement on the same day [0:08:00]. "The noose around Israel's neck is tightening gradually. Israel is no mightier than the empires which were vanquished. In the Arab east and west, the Arab people will take possession of their full rights in their united homeland." Now, 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 the fourth of April that year. "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."

Mr. President, the Assembly will note that this imagery of a hangman's rope, or of a tightening noose, occurs frequently in the macabre vocabulary of Nasserism [0:08:59]. He sees himself perpetually presiding over a scaffold. In June 1967, in Israel's hour of solitude and danger, the metaphor of encirclement and strangulation was to come vividly to life. In February 1964, Nasser enunciated in simple terms what was to become his country's policy during the period of preparation. I quote his simple words. "The possibilities of the future will be war with Israel. It is we who will dictate the time. It is we who will dictate the place."

A similar chorus of threats arose during this period from other Arab capitals. President Arif of Iraq and President Ben Bella of Algeria were especially emphatic and repetitive in their threat [0:10:00] to liquidate Israel. But they were far away. The Syrian attitude was more ominous because it affected a neighboring frontier. Syrian war propaganda had been particularly intense in the past few years. In 1964, the Syrian defense minister, General Abdul [Aziada?] announced, "A Syrian

army stands as a mountain to crash 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. It was a terrorist campaign which expressed itself in the dispatch of trained terrorist groups into Israel territory to blow up installations and communications centers, and kill, maim, cripple, and terrorize civilians in peaceful homes and farms [0:10:59]. Often, the terrorists, though trained in Syria, would be dispatched through Jordan or Lebanon. The terrorist war was formally declared by President Nureddin Atassi on the 22nd of May, 1966, when he addressed soldiers on the Israeli Syrian fronts in these words: "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."

It is a strange experience, Mr. President, in this hall of peace, to be sitting with a fellow delegate whose philosophy is we want total war with no limits. The Syrian defense minister, Hafez Assad, said two days later, "We shall never call for nor accept peace. We shall only accept war. We have resolved to drench [0:12:00] this land with our blood to oust you aggressors and throw you into the sea for good."

Mr. President, from that day to this, not a week has passed without Syrian officials adding to this turgid stream of invective and hate. From that day to this, there has not been a single month without terrorist acts, offensive to every impulse of human compassion and international civility being directed from Syria against Israeli citizens and territory. I would have no difficulty at all in swelling the General Assembly's records with 1,000 official statements by Arab leaders in the last two years, announcing their intention to destroy Israel by diverse forms of organized physical violence. The Arab populations have been conditioned by their leaders to the anticipation of a total war [0:13:00], preceded by the constant harassment of the prospective victim.

From 1948 to this very day, there has not been one statement by any representative of a neighboring Arab state indicating readiness to respect existing agreements on the permanent renunciation of force, especially the charter agreement, or to recognize Israel's sovereign right to existence, or to apply to Israel any of the central provisions of the United Nations charter.

For some time, Israel showed a stoic patience in her reaction to these words of menace. This was because the threats were not always accompanied by a capacity to carry them into

effect. But the inevitable result of this campaign of menace was the burden of a heavy race in arms. We strove to maintain an adequate deterrent strength [0:14:00]. And 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 a 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. And thus, at the end of her first decade, Israel had established relations of diplomacy, commerce, and culture with all the Americas, with nearly all 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 [0:15:00] aspiration to translate national freedom into creative economic growth and social progress.

Fortified by friendships in all the 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 couldn't concern ourselves exclusively with the torrent of hatred pouring in upon us from Arab governments. After all, 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 [0:16:00] Israel became increasingly isolated, while Israel's 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 of bringing all of the great powers to a harmonious policy in support of the security and sovereignty of Middle Eastern states [0:17:00]

It was not easy. 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. We were able to limit our response to this aggression, so long as its own scope appeared to be limited. President Nasser seemed, for some years, to be accumulating inflammable material, without any 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 gasses were, for the time being, used to intimidate other Arab states, and to maintain a colonial war against the villages of Yemen and the peoples of the Arabian [0:18:00] Peninsula.

But Israel's danger was great. The military buildup 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 proportion of its resources to self-defense. With a 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 [0:19:00] and conscience of the world.

Mr. President, in three weeks, between May the 14th and June the 5th, 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 unfolding. Egyptian and Soviet sources have claimed, and we heard the claim repeated today, that a concentrated Israeli invasion of Syria, expressed by troop concentrations, 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 [0:19:59] 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 those 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 in mid-May was a monstrous fiction.

Twice, Syria refused to cooperate with suggestions made by the United Nations authorities and accepted by Israel for a simultaneous and reciprocal inspection of the Israeli Syrian frontier. On one occasion, the Soviet ambassador complained to my prime minister [0:21:00] of heavy troop concentrations in the north of Israel. But when invited to join the prime minister that very moment in a visit to any part of Israel which he liked, the distinguished envoy brusquely refused. The prospect of finding out the truth at first hand seemed to fill him with a profound disquiet.

There is only one thing to be said about Prime Minister Kosygin's assertion this morning that there were heavy concentrations of Israeli troops in the Syrian frontier in mid-May. The only thing to say about that assertion is that it is completely untrue. There is only one thing to be said about these descriptions of villages being burned and inhabitants being shot. These are false, inflammatory words of propaganda, designed to inflame passions in an area already too hot with tension [0:22:00].

By the 9th of May, the secretary general of the United Nations, from his own sources on the ground, had ascertained

that no such Israeli troop concentrations existed. This fact had been directly communicated to the Syrian and Egyptian governments. The excuse had been shattered, but the allegation still remained. The steps which I now come to describe could not possibly have any motive or justification in an Israeli troop concentration in the north, which both Egypt and Syria knew did not exist. Indeed, the Egyptian buildup ceased very quickly, even to be described by its authors as the result of any threat to Syria.

Let us now see how the design of May and June began to unfold. On May the 14th, Egyptian forces began to move in strength into Sinai. On May the 16th, the Egyptian command [0:23:01] ordered the United Nations Emergency Force to leave the border. The following morning, the reason became clear, for on the 17th of May at 6:00 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.

His orders read: "One, 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. Two, formations and units allocated in accordance with the operational plans will advance from their present locations to the designated positions. Three, the armed forces are to be in

full preparedness to carry out any combat tasks on the Israel front, in accordance with developments."

On the 18th of May, Egypt called for the total removal of the United Nations Emergency Force [0:24:00]. 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 General 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.

Now, it is often said that United Nations procedures are painfully slow. This one, in our view, was disastrously swift [0:24:59]. Its effect was to make Sinai safe for belligerency from north and south, to create a sudden disruption of the local security balance, and to leave an international maritime interest exposed to almost certain threat. I will not say anything of the compulsions which may have led to these steps. I

speak only of consequences. I have already said that Israel's attitude to the peacekeeping functions of the United Nations has been traumatically affected by this experience. 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 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 the 14th of May and the 23rd of May, Egyptian [0:26:00] concentrations in Sinai increased day by day. Israel took corresponding precautionary measures. In the absence of an agreement to the contrary, it is of course legal for any state to place its armies wherever it chooses in its territory. But 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 the 18th of May at 24:00 hours, the Cairo Radio, Sawt al-Arab, published the following order of the day by Abdul Mohsen Mortagy, 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 amongst the members of our

armed forces, because this is the day for which they have been [0:27:00] 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 the 21st of May, General Amer gave orders to mobilize reserves, and now came the decisive step. The decisive step, the turning point. All doubt that Egypt had decided upon immediate or early war was no dispelled. For appearing at an air force base at 6:00 in the morning, President Nasser announced that he would blockade the Gulf of Aqaba and the Straits of Tiran to Israeli ships, adding, "The Jews threaten war, and we say, 'By all means, we are ready for war.'"

On the 25th of May, Cairo Radio announced, "The Arab people is firmly resolved to wipe Israel off the map and to restore the honor of the Arabs of Palestine [0:28:00]." And on the following day, the 26th of 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 insufficient, 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." These are Nasser's

words. "Taking this step makes it imperative that we be ready to undertake a total war with Israel."

Now, writing in *El Ahrām* on the 26th of May, Nasser's spokesman, Mr. Hassan Hassanein Heikal wrote with engaging realism, "I consider that there is no alternative to armed conflict between the United Arab Republic and the Israeli enemy. This is the first time that the Arab challenge to Israel attempts to change an existing fact in order to impose a different fact [0:29:00] in its place."

On the 28th of May, President Nasser had a press conference. Indeed, he was now having them every day. He said, "We will not accept any possibility of coexistence with Israel." And on 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." Now, there are various ways of threatening Israel's liquidation. Few ways could be clearer than to ask to move the clock of history back to before 1948, the date of Israel's establishment.

The troop concentrations and blockade were now to be accompanied by encirclement. The noose was to be fitted [0:29:59] around the victim's neck. Other Arab states were closing the ring. On the 30th of 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."

Mr. President, these are not words of response to any anticipated aggression. These are words of indoctrination about a war-like initiative. Similarly, on the 4th of 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 [0:30:59] 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."

Mr. President, fellow delegates, nothing has been more startling in recent weeks than to read discussions about who planned, who organized, who initiated, who prepared, who wanted, and who launched this war. Here we have a series of statements, mounting crescendo from vague warning, through open threat, to precise intention. Here we have the vast mass of the Egyptian armies in Sinai with seven infantry and two armored divisions,

the largest 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 positions in the hills. Here we have the mobilized forces of Jordan [0:32:00] with their artillery and mortars trained on Israel's population centers in Jerusalem and along the vulnerable, narrow coastal plain. Troops from Iraq, Kuwait, and Algeria converge towards the battlefield at Egypt's behest. Nine hundred tanks face Israel on the Sinai border, while 200 more are poised to strike the isolated town of Eilat 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 the 27th onwards, Egyptian air squadrons in Sinai were equipped with operation orders which are now in our hands, instructing them in detail on the manner in which each Israeli airfield, and they are pathetically few in number, were to be bombarded, thus exposing Israel's [0:33:00] 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. When that doctrine was proclaimed, and incidentally, not challenged by Egypt at the time, it was little more than an abstract principle for the maritime world. For Israel [0:34:00], it was great but unfulfilled prospect. It was not yet a reality. But during the 10 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 constructed Israel's bridge towards the friendly states of Asia and East Africa, a network of relationships, which is the chief pride of Israel in its second decade, and on which its economic future largely depends. All this, then, has grown up as an effective

usage under the United Nations flag. Does Mr. Nasser really think that he can come upon the scene in 10 minutes and cancel the established [0:35:00] legal usage and interest of 10 years? There was in this wanton act a quality of malice, for surely, the closing of the Strait 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 for the law of nations, the application of which, in this specific case, had not been challenged for 10 years.

And it was, in the literal sense, an act of arrogance, because there are other nations in Asia and East Africa which trade with the port of Eilat, 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. These countries are not colonies of Cairo. They can trade with Israel [0:36:00] or not, as they wish, and President Nasser is not the policeman of other African and Asian states.

When we examine the implications of this act, we have no cause to wonder that the international shock was great. There was another reason for that shock. Blockades have traditionally been regarded in the pre-charter parlance as acts of war, and

now as acts of aggression. To blockade, after all, is to attempt strangulation, and sovereign states are entitled not to have their trade strangled. 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 the 24th onward, the question who started the war, or who fired the first shot, became momentarily irrelevant. There is not difference in civil law between murdering a man by slow strangulation [0:37:00] or killing him by a shot in the head. From the moment at which the blockade was posed, 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 Montreal or New York Harbor by the use of force, what would happen? Would there be any discussion about whether a shot had been fired? Would anyone ask whether aggression had begun?

Less than a decade ago, the Soviet Union proposed a draft resolution in the General Assembly on the question of defining aggression. The Soviet resolution reads, "In an international conflict, that state shall be declared an attacker which first commits one of the following acts: A, naval blockade of the coasts or ports of another state." This act constituted, in the Soviet view, direct aggression as distinguished [0:38:00] 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 the 1st, 1957, the minister for foreign affairs, my predecessor, announced, and I quote, "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 straits or the gulf was contrary to international law, entailing a possible resort to the measures authorized by Article 51 [0:39:00] of the charter. The United States, inside and outside 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 either to be choked to death in her southern maritime approaches, or to await the deathblow from northern Sinai.

Mr. President, nobody who lived those days in Israel between May the 23d and June the 5th will ever forget the air of heavy foreboding that hovered over our land. 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 our manpower [0:40:00], our economy and commerce beating with feeble pulse, our main supplies of vital fuel choked by a belligerent act, we in Israel faced the greatest peril to our nation's existence that she had known since her resistance against aggression 19 years before at the hour of her birth. By the end of May, our children were building air raid shelters in their schools. There was peril for Israel wherever she looked, and she faced it in deepening solitude.

On May the 24th and on succeeding days, the Security Council conducted a desultory debate, which sometimes reached a point of levity. Russian and Oriental proverbs were wittily exchanged. The Soviet representative asserted that he saw no reason for discussing the Middle East situation at all. On the 24th of May, the Soviet representative said that he saw no reason [0:41:00] for discussing the Middle East situation at all. The distinguished Bulgarian delegate uttered these unbelievable words: "At the present moment, there is really no

need for an urgent meeting of the Security Council." That's the 25th of May.

A day-and-a-half after the imposition of the blockade, which held world peace trembling in the balance, 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 and parties and groups and affiliations marched in horrified protest at the approaching stage of politicide, the murder of a state. Writers and scientists, religious leaders [0:42:00], trade union, liberal, and labor 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.

Now, 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 states 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 [0:43:00], 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 such undeflecting purpose had come to pass. The noose was tightly drawn. And so, on the fateful morning of June the 5th, 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.

I will not narrate what then transpired. 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 [0:44:00] as men cherish freedom, so long as small states strive for the dignity of survival, the exploits of Israel's defense forces on that day will be told from one generation to another with the deepest pride. Today again, the Soviet Union has described our resistance as aggression and sought to have it

condemned. There is no accurate foundation for this assertion. We reject it with all our might.

Here was armed force employed in a just and righteous defensive course, 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 extinction. What should be condemned is not Israel's action, but the attempt to condemn it. Never have [0:45:00] freedom, honor, justice, national interest, or international morality been so righteously protected.

And while fighting raged on the Egyptian-Israel frontier and 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 any continuing hostilities. I sent a message to him to this effect through General [Bulru?], the United Nations representative, at half-past-twelve, some hours after the beginning of hostilities. A message to this effect reached him several hours after the outbreak of hostilities on the southern

front on June the 5th. Jordan answered, tragically, not with words, but with a torrent of shells.

Artillery [0:46:01] opened fire fiercely along the whole front, with special emphasis on the Jerusalem area. It was a day of ordeal and of agony, and of death and of bereavement in Jerusalem's streets. Thus, Jordan's responsibility for the second phase of the concerted aggression is established beyond doubt. Surely, 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 that city can never forget this fact or fail to draw its conclusions.

Mr. President, I have spoken of Israel's defense against the assaults of neighboring states. This is not the entire story. 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 [0:46:59]. When the Soviet Union initiates a discussion here, our gaze is inexorably drawn to the story of its role in recent Middle Eastern history, which is a sad and shocking story. It must be frankly told.

There was in Soviet policy a brief but important period of balanced friendship. In 1948, the Soviet Union in the Security Council condemned what it called Arab aggression. But in the

last 14 years, the picture has changed. First of all, there has been the arms race. Since 1955, the Soviet Union has supplied the Arab states with 2,000 tanks, of which more than 1,000 have gone to Egypt. It 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 [0:48:00], 130 medium guns, 200-120 millimeter mortars, 695 anti-aircraft guns, 175 rocket launchers, 650 anti-tank guns, seven destroyers, a number of Luna-M and Sopka 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. Most of the equipment was supplied to the Arab states after the Cairo Summit conference of Arab leaders in January 1964, which agreed on a specific program for the destruction of Israel after they had announced and hastened to fulfill this plan by accelerating arms purchases from the Soviet Union. The great proportions of Soviet assistance in the military field are attested to by the startling fact that in Sinai alone, the Egyptians abandoned equipment [0:49:00] and offensive weapons of Soviet manufacture whose value was estimated at some \$2 billion.

Together with this supply of offensive weapons, the Soviet Union has encouraged the military preparations of the Arab

states. And since 1961, Soviet armaments have assisted Egypt in their desire to conquer Israel. The great amount of offensive equipment supplied to the Arab states strengthens this assessment. And thus, a great power, professing devotion to peaceful settlement and the rights of states, has for 14 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 [0:50:00] arms purchases were and are precisely geared to the successive phases of Arab, and especially Egyptian, rearmament. On many occasions in recent months, 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. And a corresponding diversion of resources from military to social expenditure would have taken place in Israel. A viable balance of forces could have been achieved at a lower level of armament,

while our region could have moved forward to higher standards of human and social welfare. For Israel's attitude is clear. We should like to see the arms race [0:51:00] slowed down. But if the race is joined, we are determined, for our very existence, not to lose it.

A fearful waste of economic energy in the Middle East is the direct result of the Soviet role and the constant stimulation of the race in arms. It seems clear from Arab sources that the Soviet Union has played an alarmist role in spreading incendiary reports of Israeli intentions amongst Arab governments. On the 9th of 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." A great power is telling Egypt that Israel is about to attack Syria. This is 10 days after the secretary general of the United Nations has published a report stating that there are no troop concentrations at all in northern Israel against Syria [0:51:59].

Similarly, an announcement by TASS of the 23rd of May states, "The foreign affairs and security committee of the Knesset have accorded the cabinet on the 9th of 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 is not one word of truth in this story, but its diffusion in Arab ears could only have an incendiary result.

Cairo Radio broadcast on the 28th of May an address by Marshal Grechko at a farewell party in honor of the former Egyptian minister of defense, Shamsuddin Bardan. "The USSR, her armed forces, her people in government will stand by the Arabs and will continue to encourage and support them. We are you faithful friends, and we shall continue aiding you, because this is the policy of the Soviet nation, its party and government." Now [0:53:00] this promise of military support, Mr. President, came less than a week after the illicit closing of the Tiran Straits, an act which the Soviet Union had done nothing to condemn. So much, then, for the arms race, and for the portrayal of Israel in anxious Arab ears as being poised for some fictitious aggression.

At the same time, the Security Council's role has been paralyzed, for the Soviet Union has exercised her veto right there five times. Each time, a just or constructive judgment has been frustrated. It is important that we should analyze what these five vetoes have been.

On the 22nd of January, 1954, France, the United Kingdom, and the United States presented a draft resolution to facilitate

irrigation work on the west bank of the River Jordan in the Bnot Yaakov Canal project. The Soviet veto paralyzed regional water [0:54:00] development for several years.

On the 29th of March, 1954, a New Zealand resolution, simply reiterating United Nations policy against blockade on the Suez Canal was frustrated by Soviet dissent. On the 19th of August, 1963, a United Kingdom and United States resolution on the murder of Israelis at Almagor on Israel territory was denied adoption by Soviet opposition. On the 21st of September, 1964, the Soviet Union vetoed a United Kingdom and United States resolution deploring incidents at Tel Dan, including the shelling of Dan, [*Dafnish, Ari Ashuf?*]. And finally, on the 2nd of November, 1966, Argentina, Japan, Netherlands, New Zealand, and Nigeria joined to express regret at infiltration from [0:55:00] Syria, and loss of human life caused by the incidents in October-November 1966. A mild expression of regret at the loss of life by Syrian infiltration, one of the few resolutions in United Nations history sponsored by delegates from all the five continents.

Let me then summarize what the proposals are that have been vetoed. The use of water for irrigation instead of being waster, veto. Free passage in international waterways, veto. An expression of regret that Israeli citizens had been murdered on

Israeli soil, inadmissible, veto. An expression of regret at the bombardment of Israeli villages from Syrian guns, impossible, a veto. And a resolution by eight [0:56:00] countries from five continents, expressing in the most mild terms regret at infiltration from Syria and loss of human life in October-November 1966. The door is closed even to such mild expressions of condemnation.

Now, this use of the veto has had a dual effect. First, it has prevented any resolution to which an Arab state was opposed from being adopted by the council. The council has therefore become a one-way street. Secondly, it has inhibited the Security Council from taking constructive action in many disputes between an Arab state and Israel, because of the certain knowledge that the veto would be applied in whatever was deemed to be in Arab interest. The consequences of the Soviet policy have been to deny Israel the possibility of just and equitable treatment in the Security Council, and very largely, to nullify the council as the constructive factor that it should be in the [0:57:00] affairs of the Middle East.

Now, does all this really add up to a constructive intervention by a great power in the Arab-Israel tension? The position became graver when we recall the unbridled invective against the permanent representative of Israel in the Security

Council. In its words and in a letter to the Israeli government, the Soviet Union 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 elementary human decency and of international morality in this odious comparison, Israel with Hitler Germany.

Our nation never compromised with Hitler Germany. It never signed a pact with Hitler Germany, as did the Soviet Union in 1939. To associate the name of Israel with the accursed tyrant who engulfed the Jewish people [0:58:00] in a tidal wave of slaughter is to violate every canon of elementary taste and of fundamental truth.

In the light of this history, the General Assembly will easily understand Israel's reaction to the Soviet initiative in convening this special session, not for the purpose of proposing constructive or balanced solutions, but for the purpose of condemning our country and recommending it withdraw to the position and situation that existed before June the 5th. In respect to the request for a condemnation, I give a simple answer to the Soviet government. That government's record in the stimulation of the arms race, in the paralysis of the Security Council, in the encouragement throughout the Arab world of unfounded suspicion of Israel's intentions, the constant refusal

to say a single word of criticism at any time, any criticism of declarations [0:59:00] threatening the violent overthrow of Israel's sovereignty and existence, all this gravely undermines your claims to objectivity. You come here in our eyes, not as a judge or as a prosecutor, but rather, as a legitimate object of international criticism for the path that you have played in the somber events which have brought our region to a point of explosive tension.

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 tensions for the purposes of global policy, if it had stood in even handed devotion to the legitimate interests of all states, then 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 [1:00:00] lowest ebb of its fortune 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 its history, the people now rebuilding a state in Israel have struggled, often in desperate conditions, against tyranny and aggression. Our action on the 5th of June falls nobly within that tradition. We have tried 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 our charter.

Similarly, the suggestion that everything goes back to where it was before the 5th of June is totally unacceptable. The General Assembly cannot ignore the fact that the Security Council, where the primary responsibility lies, has emphatically rejected such a course. It was not Israel [1:01:00], but Syria, Egypt, and Jordan, who violently shattered the whole fabric and texture of interstate relations, which existed for a decade, since 1957. 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. Something organic has been destroyed. Something new must be built. Therefore, the Security Council acted wisely in rejecting the backward step now advocated again 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. I repeat what I said to the Security Council. Our watchword is not backward to belligerency, but forward to peace. What the assembly should prescribe, in our view, is not a formula for renewed [1:02:00] hostilities, but a series of principles for the construction of a new future in the Middle East, with a ceasefire established. Our progress must be

not backward to an armistice regime, which has collapsed under the weight of years and the brunt of hostility. History summons us forward to permanent peace.

The peace that we envisage can only be elaborated in frank and lucid dialogue between Israel and each of the neighboring states. We dare not be satisfied with intermediate arrangements, which are neither war nor peace. Such patchwork ideas carry within themselves the seeds of future tragedy. Free from external pressures and interventions, imbued with a common love for a region which they are destined to share, the Arab and Israeli nations must now transcend their conflicts in dedication to a new Mediterranean future. In concert with a renascent [1:02:59] Europe, and an Africa and Asia, emerging at last to their independent role on the stage of history.

In free negotiations with each of our neighbors, we shall offer durable and just solutions, redounding to our mutual advantage and honor. But surely, 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 build a new region with communications running to Haifa to Beirut, and Damascus in the

north to Amman and beyond in the east. The opening of blocked arteries would stimulate the life, thought, and commerce in 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 [1:04:00]. The Kingdom of Jordan, now cut off from its natural 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 Eilat and Aqaba, which give Israel and Jordan their contact with a resurgent East Africa and a developing Asia.

And so the Middle East, lying athwart three continents, could become a busy center of air communications, now impeded by boycotts and circuitous routes. Radio, telephone, and postal communications, which now end abruptly in mid-air, would unite a divided region. The Middle East, with its historic monuments and scenic beauty, could attract vast movements of travelers and pilgrims, if existing impediments were removed. Resources which lie across national frontiers, the minerals of the Dead Sea, the Araba, could be developed in mutual interchange of technical knowledge [1:04:59]. 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 point is that the old prejudices must be replaced by a new comprehension and respect, borne 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.

And thus, in full respect of our region's diversity, an entirely new story never known or told before could 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: The road of recognition [1:06:00], of direct contact, and of true cooperation, of peaceful coexistence. And this road 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 a mystery of its origin and its continuity. How long and how deep are the memories which that reunion evokes? For 20 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 the holy places [1:07:00].

The prospect of a negotiated peace is less remote than it may seem. Israel waged her defensive struggle in pursuit of two objectives, security and peace. Peace and security, with their juridical, territorial, economic, and social implications, can only be built by the free negotiation, which is the true essence of sovereign responsibility. A call to the recent competence to negotiate the conditions of their future coexistence is surely the only constructive course which this assembly could take.

We ask the great powers to remove our tormented region from the scope of global rivalries, to summon its governments to build their common future themselves, to assist the Middle East, if they will, to develop social and cultural levels worth of its past. We ask the developing countries to support a dynamic and forward-looking policy, and not to drag [1:08:00] the new future back into the outworn past. And to the small nations, which form the bulk of the international family, we offer the experience which teaches us that small communities can best secure their interests by maximal self-reliance. Nobody helps those who do not help themselves. We ask the small nations, in the solidarity

of our smallness, to help us stand firm against intimidation and threat, such as those by which we are now assailed. And we ask world opinion, which rallied to us in our plight, to accompany us faithfully in our new opportunity.

We ask the United Nations, which was prevented from offering us security in our recent peril, to respect our independent quest for the peace and security which are the charter's higher ends. We are going to do what the Security Council decided should be done: Maintain the ceasefire and reject the course which the Security [1:09:00] Council emphatically and wisely rejected but a few days ago. It rejected the concept of returning to the situation of belligerency, out of which the crisis arose, back to the old situation.

Now, it may seem that Israel stands lonely amongst numerous and powerful adversaries. But we have faith in the undying forces in our nation's history, which have so often given the final victory to spirit over matter, to win a truth over mere quantity. Mr. President, the Middle East, tired of wars, is ripe for a new emergence of human vitality. Let the opportunity not fall again from our hands. Thank you. [applause]

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