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Israel and the Prospects for Peace, 1967.

Israel and the Prospects For Peace
Daniel Jeremy Silver
November 19, 1967

These last several weeks our newspapers have been full of news of the renaissance of Naziism in Germany. In the third state election, the national Democratic party, the neo-Nazi party of Germany, again won significant representation. The party's faithful gathered this last week in Hanover for a great convention where they sang Deutschland Uber Alles, raised their clenched fists to race and to nation, and where fiery speeches were made demanding not only the reunification of Germany, but the reuniting to Germany of German oppressed minorities in Poland, Hungary and Austria. Those of us with long historical memories could not help but recall 1936 and 1937. You remember the Anschluss and it proved to us again, if, indeed, we needed proof, that the hates of manking and his black dreams are as resilient as man's great dreams and highest aspirations. The new feuhrer, Adolf Von Thadden, brought out all the paranoia of the German people, all their blackest emotions and deepest hates. Indeed, there is only one item which had not been on the original item, the original curriculum of the first feuhrer, and that was that at this convention the speakers were not allowed to mount the rostrum and spew forth the venom of anti-semitism. But lest we feel relieved that there has been a change of heart, this was a tactical decision. Mr. Von Thadden had apparently decided that the world would accept German nationalism and German imperialism, the folk and the race, but that the world could not yet stomach talk of the concentration camps and the crematorium. Though there was no speech which was anti-semitic, the magazines and the periodicals of the National Democratic Party have been filled with this familiar venom. Last summer one of the men who has come to the front as one of the new Hitler's professors, Herr Doktor P. V. Voormein, wrote an article in "The Nation of Europe", one of the non-neo-Nazi magazines, in which he tried to explain how it was that this mongrel people, the Jews, could win such a clear clean war as they did in June.

We are a people who, genetically, according to the master race theory, were pliant and suppliant. We had no guts. We had no courage. How could Israel have won the war? And Dr. Voormein's answer had at least the virtue of simplicity. His logic lay in this: that the Israelis are not Jews; the Israelis are not the descendants of the peddlers and the hunchbacks of Europe so familiar from the Nazi stereotype. Rather, they are the descendants of fellow huns of a barbarian tribe, the Khazars, which converted from hedonism to Judaism in the ninth century in their Cossack caucus homeland. And so he looked upon the June war not as a Jewish victory, not as the defeat of danger, a threat, but rather as another proof that the white race must ultimately win out over the mixed peoples. The phrases and the pejoratives, I hasten to add, are his own and not, of course, mine. Now here we have proof, if proof again we need, that the black hates of mankind are resilient and that men can invent and then come to believe the most incredible rationalizations for their shadowy purposes.

Now I cite this Nazi experience not to speak this morning of Naziism, for that is not my purpose; I speak of Israel and of the possibility of peace in the Middle East; but because I had to make an extrapolation and I would suggest simply this that if after a total defeat, that if after world-wide discredit, if after every nation and every politician has found it necessary to turn his back or his nation's back on all that Naziism stood for, if Naziism has the ability to recreate itself, to draw the shattered pieces together, to come back to life, what shall we say about the black dream of the Arabs - which was defeated in the quick war, to be sure - but in the war whose cutting edge was blunted by instant rearmament and by the willingness of many of the nations of the world to listen again to Arab complaint, to do again the Arab bidding, because behind that bidding lay oil and markets and geo-political advantage.

Israel won a victory on the battlefield beginning on the fifth of June. Beginning on the tenth of June the nations of the world undid that victory for they did not allow the Arab nations to dwell on its defeat, to accept the simple fact that they had been beaten, bloodied. In Israel, in June and July, the peoples used a phrase from our Bible. They said: "We were as dreamers", and by this they described that immensity of relief, that sense of walking on air, the overwhelming euphoria which had come to them after the threat to their jugular had been removed. In another sense the Arabs, for the last generations, have been dreamers except they have been dreaming nightmares, red dreams, dreams of marching into Israel on a carpet of blood, dreams of driving the Yishuv into the sea, dreams of destroying the Jewish state. And they have walked about with this dream and they have dreamt of carrying out these nightmares; and three times they have precipitated a war, and three times thousands of their men have died in battle. Tens of thousands of their families have been made homeless and tens of millions of dollars have been poured down the drain in feckless military undertaking, monies desperately needed for food and for clothing and for shelter and for schooling, for the basics of life, in these desperately poor countries which are without any of the modern amenities for the masses. That June war might have been that dash of cold water which shakes the Arabs awake, which forces them to open their eyes, to see the daylight, to admit reality, to see that Israel is not a crusader state born of military peoples who have come to the Middle East and squatted there, who can be hectored and harried and ultimately driven home, that this is an indigenous people with strong ties to the land and this is their home, their only home, and their legitimate home.

The Arabs could have been shocked, for war is a form of shock treatment, shocked into the realization that here was a military power that they could not defeat and that it was pointless and fruitless to enter again that escalation cycle of raids, economic pressures and attack and, ultimately, provocation of war itself. But the tragedy

of July, the tragedy of August, the tragedy of September and October and of this month has been that there are powers in the world which said to the Arabs, sleep on, dream on.

In June Egypt's army lay strewn over the Sinai desert: charred tanks, destroyed planes. The Syrian army had left behind its armaments in the bunkers in the Golan Heights. The rest of the Jordanian legions' equipment lay hither and yon in the West Bank. Then, in June, Russia promised new arms and made good on their promise and within a week after the armistice was announced the first of the armada of Russian freighters was at the port of Alexandria and unloading at Port Said. Eighty percent of the equipment lost by Egypt and by Syria has been returned to their arsenal: more expensive equipment, more sophisticated equipment, more powerful equipment, faster jet planes, the MIG 21's, the MIG 19's, heavy-duty tanks - the T35 instead of the T55, better ground-to-air missiles as before, the ground-to-ground missiles as never before. Five months after an absolute defeat the Egyptian army has greater fire power today than it had in May of this year. The Arabs were told by Russian act, dream on, what have you lost? A worthless officer corps? A few tanks which we can replace, a few guns, a few planes? Here it is, all back, dream on begin again. Defeat could have forced the rude awakening, but it did not. The Arab nations were rearmed

Perhaps over a longer period the economic cost of the war might have shocked the Arabs into reality because bread lines, domestic needs, political unrest - these have a way of bringing out new leadership of men who are willing to take a new look at things. Egypt long before June was tottering on the edge of bankruptcy. Their economy was a shamble. The World Bank would no longer lend them money. They had bartered their cotton goods for armaments credit to China and to Russia. The Filahi were actually far worse off in 1966 than they had been ten years before in the second year of their social revolution. The rate of population growth and Nasser's imperialistic ambitions had created a drain on the social reform and the population explosion ate up

whatever new industry, whatever new productive power, Egypt now had. Syria was bankrupt. There were serious economic dislocations attendant to this war, but what happened? Russia hastened to Damascus and to Cairo and offered credits. The Arab States drew together at Khartoum in what was brooded about to be a convention of moderates. And what did they do? They voted, shall we call it alimony, to Egypt and to Jordan regular routine monthly payments of oil royalties to keep their economies going. These countries were not to suffer because of their defeat. They were to be protected and to be encouraged. Foreign aid, Soviet aid, Arab aid - all these have conspired to convince the Arabs that they can weather the economic price of this war, that they can wage war without real structural damage to their economy. And so no one was really surprised when, at this same Khartoum conference, the end resolution read, among other things:

"There can be no peace with Israel; there can be no negotiation with Israel; there can be no recognition of Israel. "

When you can enter a war and court defeat and know that all will be made good in short order, there is no reason to seek to stabilize an area to bring the reality of security to one part of the globe. And so the Arabs were rearmed and the Arabs were refinanced and they were told to dream on, dream their nightmare dreams, and they were told this not only militarily and financially, but politically. Immediately the armistice was in effect the United Nations began to seek a formula for peace. Immediately the armistice was in operation the United Nations began to speak of what? Of a return of the Middle East to the conditions before the war. Immediately the diplomats of the world forgot the provocation, the threats, the years of El Fatah and terrorist attack. Immediately they forgot their own impotency before the Arab noose as it was tightened around Israel. And immediately their concern became the narrow legalistic concern of returning the world to what it had been before Humpty Dumpty had sat on his wall and

had his great fall. In the United Nations Israel has one vote and one voice and the thirteen nations that went to war on Israel have thirteen votes and thirteen voices. And the Arabs know that if there ever should be a Has v'chalila, God forbid, a spurt of world-wide conscience, and the world body should begin to put together a package, a peace package which speaks of security, which speaks completely of the right of free and innocent passage of waterways, which speaks of large demilitarized zones, which speaks of an armaments control for the Middle East, that Russia has a veto in the Security Council and will quickly undo any attempt of the world to bring peace.

The United Nations, in effect, in reality, promises the Arab world that they can attack Israel again and again and again, and each time, if the attack fails, somehow the legal machinery, the endless debate, the logic-splitting, will allow them to come back in time, in six months or a year's time, to the original borders, to the jumping-off places from which marauders attack Israel, to the air fields from which their jets can, within five minutes, dump a load of warheads on Tel Aviv from the missile silos where the missiles can be ready.

The United Nations is a place in which the Arabs can hope to undo any damage caused by the war. It is a place in which those who pay an economic price for the war, the Englands of the world (England, we are told, is spending 70 million dollars a month in much needed currency because of the closing of the Suez Canal) when the Englands of the world and when the West Germanys of the world can cloak their economic interest in grand and noble words about peace, adjustment and compromise and no one being too bellicose and belligerent. The United Nations is a place where old political debts can be paid and new political arrangements can be made, in which a France can show a Russia that she is willing to go along. The United Nations is a place in which the hard realities of the Cold War can be worked out in intricate and complex antagonisms,

in which Russia can get her pound of flesh because of the United States involvement in Vietnam, by opposing Israel in the Middle East, in which the United States, because of its preoccupation with Vietnam, finds that it must walk a delicate moderate balance and cannot speak out fully and completely in understanding of Israel's case.

The United Nations is a place in which the long hand of Rome can be seen; Rome's ancient desire to internationalize Jerusalem, a desire which has not been affected, but which each new turbulence in the Middle East allows Rome, through the Latin American states, other states, to seek to bring about. The United Nations is a place in which the diplomats of the world can cancel out the instinctive reactions of the peoples of the world that David had a right to defeat Goliath, that a peace-loving people has a right to stand up against a threat to life itself, and begin the intricate, complex, wordy maneuvering which seeks to bring about the adjustments to the largest powers and to the 'force meilleure' in which they can forget and overlook the needs of a little state.

The United Nations is a place where the Secretariat itself is responsible in part for the war, in which those troops of the United Nations that were on the border between Israel and Egypt were not of clean hands for there is evidence that they did, in fact, cooperate with the country in which they were stationed; and where the United Nations Secretariat is afraid to speak out openly for the need for direct confrontation. The Security Council's head himself, Mr. U Thant, has spoken out about what he calls 'the unrealistic hope of Israel for direct negotiation between Israel and her neighbors.' Here again we have the blunting of the effect of the war. Here again we have help given to the Arab States by states which have their own positions in the cold war, by states which have heavy Moslem minorities, by states which want to enter into the markets of the Middle East. Here we have all manner of pressure directed against little Israel, pressure which is of an economic and political and ideological nature. Here there is

the very real hope for the Arabs that 1956 will repeat itself, that world pressure will force Israel to retreat from her advance without the hard guarantees of security which she requires.

The tragedy of 1967 is that the Arabs were not allowed to accept the simple statement, "We were beaten; we were defeated; we were routed; we need to come to grips with new projects, new hopes, a different attitude towards coexistence in the Middle East." Instead, they were encouraged, encouraged to dream on the ghastly gray dreams of the military attack, and proof of this, if proof you need, lies not only in the shelling which periodically occurs across the Jordan or the Suez, nor does it lie in the attack by the Alsac missile ship of the Egyptians, on the Israeli destroyer, the Eilat, which sunk it. Nor does it exist in the presence of the Soviet military fleet within thirteen miles of Israeli gun placement. Rather, it lies in the statements of the so-called moderate among the Arab leaders, King Hussein, who rushed to this country a week ago to talk of compromise, to offer adjustment. There was an opportunity to dicker, to work out, to negotiate, and then he went before a select audience at Georgetown University. And what did this moderate say? He said that the only hope for peace in the Middle East lay in the dissolution of Israel and the absorption of its inhabitants under Arab governments. He showed in that speech that all the so-called compromises of the Arab world are, in fact, smoke screens designed to gain time, designed to allow the Arabs to dream on and plan for the final war of liberation, as they call it.

Population, geo-politics, economic markets, ancient hates, the cold war, the timidity of diplomats and their lack of basic human instinctive response to events - all this has conspired to blunt the defeat, to make peace well nigh impossible in the Middle East. Is there, then, any hope for peace in this embattled corner of the world? Yes, there is, a dim one, but it is dim, indeed, and it depends not upon the diplomats and the Arab leaders of Palestine of the West Bank today are beginning to talk again in

of the world or the political machinery of the world, not upon the United Nations voting some kind of resolution. It depends upon one fact and one fact only - the ability of Israel to stand firm, the ability of Israel to stay at the present boundaries and to say we will not retreat a single inch until we have the ironclad guarantees which are necessary to our existence. Such intransigence alone any hope of peace in the Middle East. The minute Israel collapses its front, the minute Israel says, 'yes, we will negotiate', and gives in before these guarantees are fixed and are certain and are unbreakable, then the hope of peace in the Middle East goes down the drain because there will be, surely, a fourth round. If Israel can remain firm, remain firm in the face of increased Russian truculence, remain firm in the face of economic pressure from many of the nations in western Europe, remember that Israel needs markets in western Europe, remain firm in the face of the so-called 'peaceniks' of our world who said not a word when Israel was being attacked daily by marauders and terrorists, but who, when Israel defended her very life, suddenly spoke of the fact that war cannot be used to settle international disputes, only if Israel can remain firm, only then is there a hope for peace. A firmness retains Israel's bargaining power. It retains whatever cutting edge of this defeat is left. Jordan has lost her markets. Jordan has lost her tourists. Egypt has lost her canal. Syria has lost her southern heights. Land has been lost. Crops have been lost. Budget profit has been lost. And there will be a time when other nations will cease to want to make up for the Arab losses. There may be a time when nations will cease to want to build up again the Arab armies. There certainly will be a time when the Arabs now within Israel will begin to stand up for their own rights for, mark you, the Palestinians, the so-called Jordanians of the West Bank, were never intended to be part of Jordan. Jordan has no claims west of the river. The original partition provisions of the 1947 United Nations decision talked of an independent Palestinian state and the Arab leaders of Palestine of the West Bank today are beginning to talk again in

these terms. The longer that Israel waits the more possibilities arise, the more chances there are for buffer states, for demilitarized zones, the more countervailing pressures begin in the Arab world to destroy that unity, that fragile unity, which is based only upon the single desire to drive out Israel, the old yechad, the old drive toward what is called a Holy War.

There are ancient enmities between the revolutionary states and the royalist states, between the Hakshenite house and the Egyptian house. There are ancient bitternesses between the oil-producing states and the poorer states which have no oil. There are great bitternesses between those emirs and sheiks who have grabbed power and their brother emirs and sheiks who are without power. There is a battle between the Communists and the non-Communists within the Arab world. There is a traditional battle between Egypt and the Tigres-Euphrates area. All these tensions and frictions do exist, and as long as Israel remains firm there is the hope that the Arab world will shatter and break apart and there will become living room in which to breathe and in which to negotiate.

It is interesting to me that the peace-loving peoples of the world said not a word in 1948 about the Jordanian conquest of the West Bank, about the need to withdraw and to pull back to the Jordan River and allow the Palestinians to have their own state, but when Israel comes to the West Bank in defense of its own right, then they begin to talk of withdrawal. It is interesting to me that as long as the Egyptians held the Gaza Strip which was never intended to be part of Egypt and never has been part of Egypt, this was to be a demilitarized zone, as long as the Egyptians held the Gaza Strip nobody talked about the withdrawal of the Egyptian authority, the withdrawal of Egyptian troops even though everybody knew that this narrow strip of coastal land was a jumping-off place for attack on Israel. Only when Israel has conquered this land do people talk of pulling back, of withdrawal.

I wonder about the equity of it all. I wonder how people can really believe that Israel, the most realist of all the countries in that area, can think of withdrawal, the withdrawal from Gaza, from this area of land which points at its coastal road; withdrawal from Sinai where the jet bases are within minutes of any target in Israel; withdrawal from the West Bank from whose heights howitzer guns can rain down shells on the coastal highway; withdrawal from the Golan. Such a withdrawal would, of course, make the Galillean settlements sitting ducks for the Syrian gunners; or even withdrawal from Jerusalem, withdrawal from the sacred places and the graveyards of our people. In the full knowledge of having withdrawn, they would again be desecrated in contempt.

The only hope of peace, and it is a dim hope, is for Israel to remain firm and steadfast and to await that time when the nations of the world are willing to say to the Arabs not 'dream on', but 'wake up'; when they are willing to say to Nasser and to Hussein and to Hudad, 'we've had it, we can no longer afford your reckless ambition, we can no longer afford the arms race in the Middle East, we can no longer afford to have an eyeball eyeball confrontation between East and West. We need peace and we need security. You can live with Israel. Israel can be of great benefit to you for skills of manpower, for trade. Learn to live with reality. Learn to accept the Israeli roots as they have accepted yours. Turn your attention and your concern away from arms and guns and wars to the real war, the war against poverty, the war against disease, the war against blight, the war against the destruction of your own nation.'

Egypt is falling further and further behind in the race to become a technological power. The people are eating up the new agricultural output faster than it can be produced. The gross national product cannot keep up with its rate of growth of population. Egypt is falling farther and farther behind into a have-not nation status and this rate will be geometrically compounded as long as Nasser and the leaders continue to fight and to plan against Israel and to dream of an Egyptian hegemony over North

Africa and over the Middle East and over central Africa. Only if Israel stands firm is there a chance for peace.

I was pleased to read this last week Israel's decision in this regard. Mr. Abba Eban's statement, a clear, brief, concise statement, to the United Nations:

It is Israel's firm resolve never to return to the danger and vulnerability from which we have emerged. This resolve will prevail over every other consideration, to avoid a return to any of the conditions which prevailed on June 4 is a supreme national purpose worthy of every effort and any consequence. "

To this we can only say, hazak v'emas, 'be strong, be of good courage.' And so far as we can we will stand with you. Our dream as yours must be the dream of peace. And we know that the guardian of Israel, who neither sleeps nor slumbers, wills peace, that with your courage and with the support of men of good will throughout the world, there may yet be some hope for the Middle East.

The war was short. The peace will be long in coming. The battle was swift. Peace is delayed, but peace there can be if Israel does not buckle in her resolve, if we continue as best we can, the freedom-loving peoples of the world, to voice our understanding and to show in tangible ways our support.