

THE JUNE WAR



IN THE LIGHT OF ITS AFTERMATH

JUNE 1967—SUMMER 1969

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DAVID AND GOLIATH

THE real aims of the June War – the most momentous happening of 1967 – will be pondered when its military actions have been embalmed in out-of-date textbooks. Or dismissed by yet further battles with different issues.

Real aims can differ from protested aims as much as solid buildings differ from the flimsy structures of the cinema. The only light which can reveal reality from illusion is provided by actions. The aftermath of the June War has provided such a surgical light. The events of two years have revealed certain stated aims as lies and certain widely held opinions as based on myths. The Middle Eastern scene itself has been revealed as a cinematic landscape heavily mined and laced with tripwires.

Within twelve months of its apparent conclusion, the war's aftermath had already shed a light distorting or rectifying the world's first impressions; in the second year the light was more coldly revealing yet.

When the war started, on June 5, 1967, the issues involved had seemed painfully clear to most people in the West. The flaring headlines meant more than a new stage in a conflict which had flared repetitively for twenty years. To a generation haunted by the Second World War, June 1967 seemed to threaten a renewal of an older and sadder tale: one new stage in the Via Dolorosa of an ancient and persecuted minority. As Jews, this minority had suffered the pogroms of Czarist Russia and the persecutions of Nazi Germany; as Israelis they had come to a land where in the distant past they had enjoyed a brief-lived sovereignty. *With No Roof Over Their Heads* (the title of a work by the British publisher Victor Gollancz) the Israelis had set about *Learning Laughter* (another work, this time by the poet Stephen Spender), cultivating oranges or polishing diamonds. Little David, surrounded by an uncomprehending Goliath, only wanted

peace in the land which the Lord God – or more immediately, the Lord Balfour – had given him.

Those who had experience of Mandate Palestine (from 1919 to 1948) knew that the Israelis had only purchased 7% of the land they occupied; Middle East specialists knew that the rights which tangled in Palestine were by no means all on the Jewish side. But British District Commissioners were now middle-aged or elderly; experts on the area were few. Against them were multitudes of newspaper-readers, few of whom remembered all they read. In the spring of 1967 the newspapers did not bother to remind them how, the previous winter, Israel had launched a surprise attack on the undefended village of Samou, killing many Jordanian subjects. The newspapers describing the event were now yellowing in files; with them were the minutes of the Security Council sternly condemning the Israeli action as out of all proportion to the activities of the infiltrators it was supposed to punish. Few were those who linked what was happening in May 1967 with what had happened in or near Palestine before. Few bothered to recall that the previous most important Middle Eastern event, the Suez War of 1956, had been planned in Tel-Aviv and Europe, not Cairo or Amman. Most linked what was happening, or threatening to happen, with Nazi Europe.

David was facing unmotivated hate; and David seemed alone.

With foreboding, Israel's warm-hearted sympathisers heard, on May 17, that the United Arab Republic had requested the withdrawal of U.N.E.F. soldiers stationed in Sinai (on the Egyptian side of the Armistice line only, since Israel had refused to have them on hers) so that these soldiers 'would not be harmed if hostilities broke out.' It was assumed that David would be the target, not the initiator, of such hostilities.

This assumption was strengthened when, on May 23, the U.A.R. announced that the Strait of Tiran at the entrance

to the Gulf of Aqaba would revert to its position as of 1956: which meant, closed to Israeli shipping. Few people paid much attention to the rest of President Nasser's speech (if, as was unlikely, their newspapers reported more than one paragraph).

'If there is a true desire for peace, we say that we also work for peace. But does peace mean that we should ignore the rights of the Palestinian people because time has elapsed? The U.N. has adopted a number of resolutions in favour of the Palestinians.' (The President was referring to the General Assembly Resolution, repeated annually for twenty years. This required Israel to readmit those refugees who wished to return and to provide compensation for those who did not. The original admission of Israel to the U.N. had been conditional on her compliance with the request.) *'Israel,'* the President went on, *'has implemented none of these resolutions. Her non-compliance brought no reaction from the United States.'*

Nor was serious attention paid to the legal niceties in the Aqaba dispute. These were as tangled as everything else in the Palestine problem. In its editorial on the closing of the Strait of Tiran the *New York Times* conceded that 'it is generally accepted that the U.A.R. exercises sovereignty over the Strait,' but argued that because it joined the Red Sea to a Gulf bordered by four States, the Strait of Tiran was an international waterway. Here too the Arabs had counter-claims unpublicised in the western press. Israel's only opening on the Gulf was its port of Elath (formerly the Arab village of Om-el-Rashrash) which Israeli forces had seized *after* the Armistice of 1949. If the Israelis could retort that the Partition Plan had awarded them Elath, the Arabs could counter that the same Plan had awarded Western Galilee, which the Israelis had taken before the Armistice and which the Arabs had not attempted to win back since, to them. To British critics of the closing of the Strait, Arabs pointed out that during the last three years of the Egyptian monarchy, when British influence in Egypt had been

bolstered by military bases along the Canal, Britain had made no objection to the closing of the Strait or the Suez Canal to the Israelis. Britain herself had closed the Suez Canal in two World Wars to those with whom she was at war, arguing that their security in Egypt was threatened.

But to world opinion the closing of the Strait seemed an attempt to sever Israel's maritime jugular. Even if only 8% of her imports passed through Elath, even if the Strait had only been opened to her shipping as a result of the Suez War of 1956, David was menaced by Goliath. David's sins, if they existed, were peccadilloes; Goliath's legal arguments were special pleading.

There was one notable dissident to this simple view: President Charles de Gaulle of France. A proved enemy of Nazism, de Gaulle had symbolised in 1940 a France that would not bow to German force; as the sponsor of the war-time Brazzaville Declaration and then as the statesman who recognised Algerian independence, he had shown prophetic awareness of the anti-colonial current of the 20th century. De Gaulle saw the Middle East crisis of 1967 as a menace to world peace. Of course Israel was as concerned for her security as the Arabs for theirs. Of course the Israelis had their own fears while the Arabs had points of complaint against the Israelis. This was a common situation. It was the kind of situation which in past centuries had been resolved by war. But in a world divided between power blocs armed with weapons of deadly power, disputes could no longer be safely solved by force. It was for this reason that the United Nations had been formed. In this context de Gaulle stated, on June 2, that *'the first state to employ arms – wherever it may happen – would have neither France's approval nor support.'* To an Israel that had considered the France of Pierre Mendès-France and Guy Mollet as her committed ally, these words came as a shock.

Other Great Powers seemed equally concerned about the dangers of war. From Washington, on May 26, President

Lyndon Johnson sent a message requesting the U.A.R. Government to exert control and not fire the first shot – since otherwise *'the Arabs would face dangerous consequences.'* Fair-minded observers assumed a similar message had been sent to Israel. In Cairo on the same night the Soviet Ambassador roused President Nasser in the small hours to add his government's plea that the U.A.R. should not launch an attack.

DEFENSIVE ACTION OR PRE-EMPTIVE STRIKE?

YET early on Monday, June 5, it seemed that the worst had happened. Disregarding the counsels of France as well as of America, of Russia and the U.N. Secretary-General, the Arab Goliath, Israel cried, had hurled his chariots against the Israeli David. An indignant spokesman in Tel-Aviv announced that Egyptian armour had crossed into Israel and was being resisted. In a speech to his army General Moshe Dayan declared: *'Soldiers of Israel! We have no aims of territorial conquest. Our sole aim is to bring to nought the attempt of the Arab armies to conquer our country, and to destroy the encircling blockade and aggression.'* (*New York Times*, June 5).

The world awaited the result. Was the hardly won laughter of David's children to be turned to tears? Were the roofs over their heads about to be pulled down?

In its 6 o'clock news bulletin that evening BBC television showed the Israeli delegate to the Security Council passionately denouncing the Egyptians for their barefaced invasion of southern Israel.

But there was now enough doubt as to who had in fact

started the war – its first victims included Indian troops of the U.N. killed by the Israelis in their assault on Gaza – for the BBC to announce as an afterthought: the U.A.R. had also accused Israel of attacking her territory, in particular her airfields. But not enough doubt for the U.A.R. delegate to be given the same coverage as the Israeli. Neither the face of Muhammad al-Kony was shown nor his words quoted.

Doubts became counter-certainties with Israeli claims of a spectacular destruction of Arab air-planes parked neatly on the ground. As a defensive action against an enemy engaged in an all-out attack on Israel this was unbelievable. It only made sense as a pre-emptive strike by the Israelis.

A triumphant pre-emptive strike was indeed being celebrated in Israeli embassies by as early as Thursday, June 8. The London newspaper *The Guardian* carried a report under the headline: 'Israel says she fired first.'

The report said: '*The Israeli Ambassador (to London), Mr. Aharon Remez, confessed freely at an all-party meeting of MPs last night that it was Israel which had fired the first shot in the Middle East War.*'

The report added: '*He also provided his predominantly sympathetic audience with an electrifying account of tactics involved in the swift military successes of the last few days, including information that Israeli aircraft had flown out into the Mediterranean in order to approach Egyptian airfields from the west rather than the north.*'

On June 9, *The Times* said in a report from Tel Aviv that Israeli soldiers '*will tell anyone with varying degree of fluency in various European languages or with expressive gestures, that they did not seek war, but they struck first on Monday . . .*'

Now that it was won by Israel, the question of who had started the war no longer worried Western moralists. '*This is a day when all free men should rejoice,*' said Britain's Sir Alec Douglas-Home.

Free men need not, perhaps, be too strict about the truth?

Yet the question of who started the war would gravely concern the future. The Arab-Israeli conflict, though particularly severe, was not unique. Other conflicts juxtaposed other disputants in other areas of the world. Would the preemptive strike, with all its advantages to an aggressor, become recognised under international law? A second question – would the world have been equally complacent if the Arabs had struck first? – had already been answered. During the Sinai fighting the American intelligence-ship *Liberty* had been cruising three miles off the U.A.R. coast with a heavy complement of Arabic-speaking ‘experts’. When on June 8 she was suddenly subjected to an aerial attack, U.S. jets took off from the nearest aircraft carrier. As soon as it was discovered that the attackers were Israelis, not Arabs, the jets returned to their deck without firing a shot. Had the attackers been Arabs, it was officially admitted, the response would have been different.

In the west President de Gaulle was almost alone in acknowledging the perils of the Israeli precedent. True to his word of June 2, he was to withhold military aid from Israel despite the strongest pressures. The General’s impartiality almost certainly contributed to the later hostility to his régime of such varied figures as Pierre Mendès-France, Raymond Aron and Daniel Cohn-Bendit.

In the East, the Soviet Union and nearly all the socialist bloc supported the Arab case in word and deed: denouncing the Israeli aggression as such and helping to restore the economies and armies of the victim states. Like France, the East European governments were to be attacked by the partisans of an ‘Israel right or wrong’.

But what of the United States whose President had warned the Arabs against striking the first blow?

United States diplomatic support for Israel was soon shown in the discussions in the Security Council, the body of the world organisation designed to deal promptly and effectively with dangers to world peace. The United States delegate,

Mr. Arthur J. Goldberg, made it plain that he would stymie any call for the obvious demand – a return of both sides to their positions on June 5. Instead, a mere Ceasefire would be demanded: uncoupled with a withdrawal to points of departure. This proposal was submitted to the other delegates with the cynical addition: *'Gentlemen, take your time!'*

For Israel needed time in order to complete measures which showed more and more signs of being long prepared. These included the occupation of all Sinai up to the Suez Canal; the conquest of the West Bank (where Jordanian soldiers, burnt by napalm, were to complain: *'We never saw the enemy – fire rained on us from heaven!'*); and in particular, Jerusalem. Even when the Ceasefire had been accepted, the Israelis continued to advance until they had secured a swathe of Syrian territory, Al-Golan Heights, including the important Syrian town of Kuneitra.

PERCEPTIBLE SHIFT

FOR the first time a perceptible shift in world attitudes was evident. TV-watchers felt compassion for Goliath when he was shown, not as a cartoonist's abstraction, but as he really was . . . Egyptian soldiers being winged like partridges or sent without boots or water to trudge through the scorching desert . . . (Figures from U.A.R. sources later revealed that while the Egyptians had lost more than 10,000 officers and men, only 250 fell in the first three days of fighting, the rest perishing in the Israeli-harassed retreat) . . . Aged refugees fleeing from their homes, a few belongings on their backs . . . Weeping children . . .

But a stronger feeling than compassion still predetermined: the fighting had been brutal, as fighting usually is – but perhaps at last this would give a chance of peace. The Israelis, it was an axiom, had only one wish: to live in peace with their Arab neighbours. They had no territorial demands. Levi Eshkol, Israel's Prime Minister at the time, had said: 'We do not want one foot of Arab land.'

But disquieting reports began to spoil this hopeful picture.

Israel's pre-June frontier with Jordan was admittedly jagged and irregular. This crazy line, dating from the Armistice of 1949, was mostly to the benefit of Israel, the Zionists having seized the fertile soil in 1948, leaving the Arab villages cut off from their fields. Michael Adams (*The Sunday Times*, June 16, 1968) described one instance of what happened now on this frontier.

'Zeita stands on the old armistice line between Jordan and Israel about 30 miles north-west of Jerusalem. The armistice agreement of 1949, which established a de facto frontier, cut the Arab villagers of Zeita off from the lands which they had always cultivated. Their lands, to their bewilderment, became part of the new State of Israel; their village remained in Jordan.'

'The villagers realised that they had to make a new start in life. They cleared the stones from a new area of land east of the village and began to cultivate it in place of the land they had lost. Over the years they managed pretty well. Then came June, 1967.'

'On June 9, the fifth day of the June war, Israeli troops entered the village. There was no fighting but the Israelis fired some mortar shells into the village, after which the surrender was unconditional. For two days an uneasy peace reigned, the village was under curfew and there were no incidents between the victors and the vanquished.'

'On the evening of the second day, June 11, the local Israeli commander came to the house of the Mukhtar, the village headman, and asked if he had any complaints. None, said the Mukhtar, but he wondered whether it would be possible to shorten the hours of curfew so that the villagers could go out to cultivate their fields.'

'The commander agreed to this and after drinking a cup of tea he took his leave. It had been an amicable encounter.

'Next morning the villagers set out early for their fields but were turned back by Israeli soldiers. The Mukhtar, thinking there was a misunderstanding, asked to see the commander but was told that he was in a meeting with his superior officer. Instead he was ordered to get all the villagers out and into a field on the eastern side of the village. He was not allowed to go back into his own house to get his shoes on.

'When all the villagers were assembled, Israeli guards climbed on to the nearest rooftops and trained their guns on the crowd. It was about 6.30 in the morning. No one was allowed to move and the villagers stayed where they were until 6.0 in the evening.

'No adult could go aside to relieve himself, no child could go and fetch a cup of water. (The sun is hot in Palestine in June.) While they sat there, Israeli soldiers carefully and systematically blew up 67 houses, including a school and a clinic maintained by the International Council of Churches.

'At 6.0 in the evening the commander appeared on a rooftop with a loudspeaker and told them they could "return to their homes". As they did so, the commander approached the Mukhtar and engaged him in conversation.

'"Is that the end of it?" asked the Mukhtar, and the commander replied that "it was not my wish. I had orders from above".

'The Mukhtar replied: "We don't complain about losing our homes in war (referring to the shelling on June 9), but you asked us to surrender and we did. You asked for our arms and we gave them to you. You made no complaint. You came to my house, you let me receive you (this is significant in the context of the Arab tradition of hospitality), and then you do this".'

The same fate, or worse, befell other villages: Beit Nuba, Emmaus, sacred to Christians for its association with the Risen Lord, Qalqilya – these places were simply dynamited from the map of Palestine . . . 'for security reasons'. The Nazis had alleged no other reason for their attack on the Warsaw Ghetto.

While ten thousand villagers (Michael Adams' figures) were in this way rendered homeless, Moshe Dayan's face was a frequent visitant of the world's TV. In 1938 Hitler had boasted that he wanted no non-Aryans in his German Reich – bunting proclaimed in one notorious instance *We Thank our Fuhrer that Bremen is now Jew-Free!*. In his turn the Israeli Defence Minister stated bluntly: 'I don't want Arabs in my Jewish state.' As there were 300,000 Arabs in the pre-war Israel and at least 1,500,000 in the areas now occupied by Israel, the implications were clear: either Israel would have to stop occupying Palestinian Arab lands, or Palestinians would have to stop living in lands that had been theirs for centuries. The General's preference was hardly in doubt.

Increasingly frequent comparisons were made between Israeli behaviour and that of the Nazis. In New York, satirical lapel-buttons were on sale demanding 'Lebensraum for Israel'.

Such overt or covert comparisons outraged millions of Jews who had seen in Nazi Germany the epitome of human evil and who had sent their financial contributions to the United Jewish Appeal.

Yet this deterioration of character in a settler-situation was not unparalleled. The same thing had happened to the Boer settlers in South Africa. It happened regularly in schools where there was bullying. The schoolboy bullied by big boys would bully smaller boys when he had the chance. It requires spiritual character not to take out on others what we ourselves have suffered. The memory of what the Jews had endured in Europe bred in some Jews a detestation of violence and cruelty; in others, particularly those placed in the settler-situation, it bred the opposite.

Two Jewish witnesses of unimpeachable integrity can here speak from deeper experience than any Arab.

Moshe Menuhin, father of the world-renowned violinist, is a religious Jew in the tradition of the Hebrew prophets.

In *The Decadence of Judaism in our Time* (Exposition Press, New York, 1965) he testifies that as long ago as his Edwardian boyhood in Palestine, the Herzlia Gymnasium '*drummed into our young hearts that the fatherland must become Goyim-rein.*' (Goyim-rein is a Yiddish phrase meaning 'pure of Gentiles'.) The fanatics of the Herzlia Gymnasium were reacting to Czarist, not Nazi, pogroms. The second witness is the late Martin Buber, whose Zionism was spiritual and unaggressive. '*The majority of the Jewish people,*' he said in a New York speech in 1958, '*preferred to learn from Hitler rather than from us. Hitler showed that history does not go the way of the spirit but the way of power, and if a people is powerful enough, it can kill with impunity.*'

NEW EXODUS

SO much for the theoretical basis for Israeli 'Nazism'. Its practical working out was soon apparent. Within six weeks of the June ceasefire, 200,000 Arabs had been induced to flee east from their fertile villages on the West Bank, and another 100,000 from Al-Golan Heights. Arabs living in Gaza were provided with special one-way buses taking them from the shores of the Mediterranean to the Jordan frontier.

No one likes to leave his home for uncertain exile. These Arabs were abandoning dwellings and fields in a Mediterranean climate for the harsh Jordanian plateau where the best they could expect would be a flimsy tent and public charity. How then were they 'induced' to leave? These were not nomads with camels or gypsies with caravans, but agricultural folk living in stone-built houses; their ancestors had tended fig and olive round these peaceful villages since

the time of Jesus. (Though known as Palestinians, they probably derived their chromosomes from the original Canaanites, the inhabitants of Palestine before the Hebrew invasion.) What made them go?

The Israelis got them to sign papers saying they were leaving of their own free choice. (Similar documents had been signed by Jews leaving Vienna and Berlin in the 1930s). Not a single foreign correspondent of repute accepted this version.

The laconic capitals of a wire-service began the tale. On June 23, 1967 the United Press cabled: *'It was clear from the scenes on the Allenby Bridge that the Israelis were forcing the Arabs to emigrate while preventing the entry of anyone heading for the West Bank.'*

Michael Adams wrote on February 1, 1968 in a report from Gaza whose publication was to lose *The Guardian* the advertising account of Marks and Spencer but gain it the gratitude of honest men: *'I had my ups and downs during four years as a prisoner of war in Germany but the Germans never treated me as harshly as the Israelis are treating the Arabs of the Gaza Strip, the majority of whom are women and children.'* The British correspondent told of day and night curfews on camps housing 100,000 refugees; collective punishments such as one at Jabalyah Camp where *'the male population was held on a stretch of marshy ground for 25 hours without food or water.'* In one incident four houses were blown up (eight others collapsed in the explosion) because an Arab child had let off a firecracker. Colonel Mart, the Israeli Military Governor, claimed ignorance of the text of the Geneva Convention, although his Government had signed it. (This Convention outlaws the standard Israeli practice of demolishing civilians' houses when an act of resistance takes place nearby or is attributed to people living in the house. The Nazis, admittedly, had similarly disregarded the norms of the Convention). When the Israeli press counsellor in London tried to deny Mr. Adams' accusation, Mr. David Holden supported his

colleague and said in a letter which was published in *The Guardian* on February 7, 1968: '*I was in Israel and the occupied Arab areas last November and heard, from Israelis and U.N.R.W.A. officials as well as from Arabs, of Israeli actions against the Arabs in Gaza similar to those described by Michael Adams. I spent most of my time on the West Bank, where – as readers of the Sunday Times may recall – I was satisfied that there was considerable Israeli intimidation of Arab inhabitants and, to put it no higher, encouragement for as many as possible of them to leave and for as few as possible to return. One Israeli official assured me then that in Gaza things were worse*'.

Not wonderful if frightened women and children queued for the buses so considerately provided by the Israelis!

FLAGRANT PERSUASION

MORE wonderful was the way, across the Atlantic, delegates to the U.N. Assembly – the Security Council having so far failed to do more than call for a ceasefire – were 'induced' to do nothing. Just as the collusion of 1956 was only fully revealed with the publication in 1967 of Mr. Anthony Nutting's *Memoirs*, so the details of what happened in the corridors of the U.N. would take time to be documented. Only then would it be known how one delegate was induced to reverse his previous stand or another to vote in a way contrary to his government's instructions.

Old hands at the U.N. could remember only one precedent for this flagrant 'persuasion' – the similar action for the Palestine Partition Plan of 1947. Then Harry S. Truman, mindful of Zionist voters, had done the telephoning which mustered a majority for the U.S.-supported Plan. Now it

was Arthur J. Goldberg who managed to 'persuade' enough delegates to make it impossible for the General Assembly to pass an effective resolution.

Effective? It is doubtful if any resolution would have 'persuaded' the Israelis. For even Mr. Goldberg could not prevent over a hundred delegates to the General Assembly from passing an unopposed resolution (America abstained) demanding that Israel should do nothing to change the status of Arab Jerusalem. In the light of America's abstention, it was ironic that the clearest statement of why Israeli control over the Holy Places – or for that matter the Holy Land – was intolerable had been published for the State Department by the U.S. Government Printing Office:

*'With the best possible intentions, it may be doubted whether the Jews could possibly seem to either Christians or Moslems proper guardians of the Holy Places, or custodians of the Holy Land as a whole. The reason is this: the places which are most sacred to Christians – those having to do with Jesus – and which are also sacred to Moslems, are not only not sacred to Jews, but abhorrent to them. It is simply impossible, under these circumstances, for Moslems and Christians to feel satisfied to have these places in Jewish hands, or under the custody of Jews. There are still other places about which Moslems must have the same feeling. In fact, from this point of view, the Moslems, just because the sacred places of all three religions are sacred to them, have made very naturally much more satisfactory custodians of the Holy Places than the Jews could be.'*¹

No statement beyond that of common sense was required to show the injustice of incorporating a city of 60,000 people, with its own property, customs and institutions, in another state simply because that state so wished.

¹ U.S. Department of State, *Papers relating to the Foreign Relations of the U.S. The Paris Peace Conference 1919*. Washington U.S. Government Printing Office 1947. Full text quoted page 351, 'The King-Crane Commission, Harry N. Howard, Khayat, 1963'.

But though this point of view was now embodied in a resolution backed by the representatives of mankind (and China, that great unrepresented giant, gave undeviating support to the Arab case) the Israelis announced that they were unimpressed. The 1947 Partition Plan had been binding (though voted on a narrow margin) because it suited them; the 1967 Resolution on Jerusalem, which did not suit them, was not binding, though voted overwhelmingly. They expected the world to defend the first resolution; they themselves would defy the second. At once they began replacing the Arab street names in East Jerusalem with Hebrew signs; Arab houses by the hundred and a number of mosques were bulldozed; it was planned to turn the austere beautiful hills near the Old City into replicas of the hideously gimcrack New. (The Israelis were to show as little respect for the Security Council as for the General Assembly. When in the spring of 1968 it passed a unanimous resolution calling on Israel not to drive a procession of tanks and guns through Old Jerusalem, Israel treated the order with contempt).

Despite Israel's affirmation of deep spiritual attachment to the city, witnesses have noted the lack of religious feeling displayed by the Jews of Israel in Jerusalem. G. H. Jansen of the *Indian Sunday Statesman* has written: *'I visited the Wailing Wall in the evening and then on the morning of the Sabbath, spending half an hour there each time. Perhaps three or four hundred persons came to see it during this period but not more than 20 stayed to pray and they were all, without exception, either rabbis or theological students. . . . The other Israelis, from what I saw, came to have a look, to take photographs and buy souvenir postcards.'* The satisfied tourist could then move on to satisfactions of another kind. The Israelis had opened many night-clubs and strip-tease joints in the Old City.

The fact is that Israel wants Jerusalem because of its strategic position, dominating the entire West Bank; by separating the northern half from the southern, Israel can control its commerce and communications. She can dis-

rupt its civic and administrative life and command the approaches to the Jordan River, while absorbing all the material benefits of the tourist trade. In March, 1969 Teddy Kollek, mayor of the 'unified city', was to claim that Bethlehem and Ramallah would be included in the municipality of Greater Jerusalem.

NEW ARAB MOOD

WHILE Israel thus staked claims to Arab real estate, the Arabs were staking claims to a reasonable future.

The disaster of June 5 had been made possible, Arabs recognised, by many faults within the Arab countries. One fault which had caused much damage to the Arabs was a tendency to exaggerated language. (The Arabs found it hard to imitate the Madison Avenue techniques at which their enemies were masters. Their own traditional speech lent itself to overstatement.) As a result the victims of Israeli expansionism had been seen by many as the bullies. The lack of Arab influence on the press and other news media in the west was another reason why the Arab case often went by default. (There were no Arab producers in Hollywood to show the other side of 'Exodus'.) But after June the Arabs sought no scapegoats. In self-critical reassessment they strove to plan their future policy in as sober a spirit as they could, without discarding the rights of the Palestinian Arabs.

This sober mood dominated the fourth Arab summit meeting held in Khartoum between August 29 and September 1, 1967.

Aware of the historic challenge confronting them, the Arab kings and presidents reached concrete and useful

decisions. The Arab states would, in total unity, work 'to remove the traces of Israeli aggression' – that is, get the Israelis out of every inch of territory they had occupied by force in the June War. They would work for this by political action. They would use international machinery; they would not enter into direct negotiations with Israel (who could use her occupation of important Arab lands and cities as an instrument of blackmail) nor would they abandon the rights of the Palestinian people to their homeland. Again, while recognising that in an oil boycott the Arabs could have forged a powerful weapon, they considered that the funds secured to Arab exchequers through the sale of oil could be constructively used in consolidating Arab economies. Following a Kuwaiti suggestion, an Arab Development Fund would be established. Foreign bases on Arab soil would be quickly removed. The most concrete symbol of renewed Arab unity was the decision of three Arab monarchies with vast oil reserves and comparatively small populations – Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Libya – to contribute some £130 million to the Arab states which, through geographical proximity to Israel, were bearing the brunt of the common Arab struggle.

The Khartoum Conference showed a new Arab mood. It also showed an Arab willingness to work for peace in the interest of a humanity which included, beside Jews and Arabs, thousands of millions belonging to other nations. But this peace must be based on respect for Arab freedom and Arab rights. An unspoken corollary of this decision was that, if peaceful means failed, the Arabs would have to consider the only alternative, the eventual use of force, to recover Sinai and Gaza, Arab Jerusalem, the West Bank and the Golan Heights.

FRAGMENTED CEASEFIRE

ALTHOUGH a formal ceasefire had silenced the guns in the region, this was not to prevent the guns from regular explosion. Israel argued openly that one of the advantages she had secured from the war was her new ability to hit Arab civilian targets, whether Ismailia and the other Canal towns in the west, or the villages of Jordan in the east. She soon began to put this advantage to use.

On October 21, 1967, the Israeli destroyer *Elath* was sunk near Port-Said, within U.A.R. territorial waters.

This former British warship, now flying the Israeli flag, had for long weeks patrolled up and down the coast of Sinai, turning with impudence inside Egyptian territorial waters at Port Said and, in the words of *Time* magazine, doing everything but cock a snook at the watching Egyptians. (Three weeks earlier she had sunk three Egyptian boats in Egyptian waters, killing 34 Arab seamen.) No one has denied that the *Elath* was a military objective; Israel tried in vain to deny that it was within U.A.R. waters when it was struck by four rockets on October 21, 1967, but the Egyptians announced that they would welcome an impartial investigation of the position of the wreck. Instead, in a ferocious reprisal, Israeli artillery shelled the port of Suez, killing and wounding numerous civilians and largely destroying the Suez Refinery. This was only the beginning. By the spring of 1969 Ismailia and Suez had become ghost towns, their mosques, churches and schools showing grim reminders of the Israeli presence on the Sinai Bank. The frequent Israeli shelling of civilian objectives forced the U.A.R. to evacuate around half a million people from their endangered homes.

THE SECURITY COUNCIL STIRS

ISRAEL'S action inside the occupied territories, her refusal to make any gestures towards a peaceful settlement, led to a significant change in world opinion.

There were, of course, material interests involved.

The United States did not seem too disturbed over the fate of the Suez Canal. Its closure made it more costly for the European socialist countries to send supplies to North Vietnam, which continued to suffer from U.S. intervention. South Africa, on the other hand, benefited from the closure; its ports and Stock Exchange were booming as never before.

To the rest of the world the closure had been an economic disaster. Trade between Europe on the one hand and the countries of East Africa, of the Indian Ocean and the Far East had been severely affected. Britain was perhaps the heaviest sufferer, losing twice as much as the U.A.R. (£20 millions a month as against £10 millions). This was, indeed, one factor compelling Britain to devalue its currency.

But such economic pressures apart, there was a growing recognition that the Israeli David was behaving like a Nazi Stormtrooper and that this Stormtrooper, insisting on maintaining his rights of conquest, was endangering peace. Israeli defiance of the U.N. Resolution on Jerusalem had antagonised even those U.N. delegates who had harkened to Goldberg earlier in the year. Israel's treatment of the Arabs had an increasingly unfavourable press. Israeli arguments that the Arabs were gloriously happy persuaded those who could believe similar South African claims about the *joie de vivre* in a Bantustan. But most important of all, the outside world saw that if Israel was allowed to continue her occupation of Arab territory, the time must come, sooner or later, when a new Middle Eastern war would be inevitable.

As a direct result of this concern the Security Council,

long immobilised by American delaying tactics, passed, on November 22, 1967, a resolution sponsored by Great Britain.

This unanimous resolution – it won the apparent support of the United States – emphasised in its preamble ‘the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war and the need to work for a just and lasting peace in which every State in the area can live in security’. It then went on to state that such a peace should ‘include the application of both the following principles:

- (i) Withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict;
- (ii) Termination of all claims or states of belligerency and respect for and acknowledgment of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every State in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognised boundaries free from threats or acts of force’.

The Resolution also affirmed the need to guarantee freedom of navigation through the international waterways in the area, the need for a just settlement of the Palestinian Arab refugee problem, and the desirability of demilitarised zones.

The briefest consideration of the Resolution shows that it represents less than the Arabs had argued for during the previous twenty years. The Arabs had contended that the constitution of a separate settler-state for Jews in the Arab land of Palestine represented an injustice to the people at whose expense this state was created.

But despite this, the U.A.R. and Jordan accepted the Resolution without equivocation. In a letter of May 9, 1968, the U.A.R. Foreign Minister went further: he informed Dr. Gunnar Jarring, the Swedish diplomat appointed to implement the Resolution, that the U.A.R. would agree to a timetable prepared by Dr. Jarring for the stage by stage implementation of the Resolution.

Those Arab states which accepted the Resolution did so in the interests of peace and in obedience to the principle that in any dispute every disputant must make concessions. The only concessions Arabs could not make were those at the expense of the Palestinians. Thus the U.A.R. considered that the just settlements of the Palestinian refugee question was linked to the question of navigation through Suez.

What of Israel's reaction? From November 22 on, she spoke with as many voices as there had been tribes in Bronze Age Palestine. Abba Eban argued that 'withdrawal' did not mean 'complete withdrawal', and that 'secure and recognised boundaries' meant 'boundaries chosen to suit Israel's convenience'. Other voices argued differently in other rooms.

At a closed session of the Israeli Labour Party the Defence Minister, Moshe Dayan, argued that acceptance of the Resolution was not at all in Israel's interests. Unlike Eban, however, who continued to prate of a generous peace settlement reached by the Arabs face to face (the Israelis holding the stick of occupation, be it understood), General Dayan was more honest. In an interview with the *Jewish Observer and Middle East Review* (May 10, 1968) he said bluntly: 'As to signed peace treaties with the Arab States at this time, this too is perhaps possible, but the price we are being asked to pay is such that I pray we won't get to such a day.' On July 5 the same year Dayan revealed his thoughts even more frankly when he addressed a meeting of Kibbutzim youth leaders in the Golan Heights. The speech was meant to be confidential, but Uri Avneri, the courageous and anti-Zionist Israeli, obtained the text and published it with his own critical commentary in his best-selling weekly, *Ha'Olam Hazé*.¹ 'Our fathers,' Dayan told the military settlers of this part of Syria, 'reached the frontiers which were recognised in the

¹ Issue of August 7, 1968.

Partition Plan.¹ Our generation reached the frontiers of 1949.² Now the Six Day War generation have carried these frontiers to Suez, the Jordan and these Golan Heights. But this is not the end. For after the present ceasefire lines, there will be new ones which will extend beyond the Jordan, and perhaps inside Lebanon and as far as Central Syria as well.

Dayan's views have been mentioned at length because it is often argued that, Palestine-born, he understands the Arabs, and wants peaceful co-existence with them. No one can accuse Menachim Beigin of such softness. Like Dayan, a member of the Israeli coalition government, he is the leader of the Herut Party. In his autobiography Beigin glorifies 'the necessary slaughter' of around 250 Arab women and children at Deir Yassin in April 1948. The massacre is eulogised as 'the military victory at Deir Yassin' and its consequences described as 'the maddened, uncontrollable stampede of 635,000 Arabs' whose political and economic significance could hardly be exaggerated. Unsecretly Herut and its leader demanded not only that Israel should not budge from the lands already occupied, but that, on the contrary, it should expand into Lebanon and Jordan proper.

¹ *These frontiers gave the Jews, then around a third of the Palestine population, 55% of the land.*

² *The Zionists extended their occupation of Palestine to include such areas as Western Galilee which had been awarded to the Arabs by the Partition Plan. The 1949 frontiers left the Israelis occupying 80% of the land.*

ARAB RESISTANCE

A natural result of Israel's policies in the occupied zones and her refusal to state publicly that she intended to withdraw, was the growth of a resistance movement by Palestinians. The Palestinian Arabs, whether in exile in the other regions of the Arab world or living under Israeli rule, numbered at least two and a half million souls – or a shade more than the Israelis who had been resettled at their expense. A new generation had grown up since 1948. It was well educated and idealistic. Young Palestinians by the thousands joined one of several militant organisations: Al-Fatah, the National Liberation Front and the Palestine Liberation Organisation being the best known. These young Palestinians (and as in Algeria, Arab women played a prominent role) were determined to fight for their rights on Palestinian soil, using every weapon they could lay hands on. They were denounced as 'terrorists' by the Israelis, whose own activities during the British Mandate had included the blowing up of the King David Hotel as well as the torture and murder of British soldiers and whose terrorist acts soon after the establishment of Israel had included the assassination of U.N. mediator Count Folke Bernadotte of Sweden. But the rest of the world was not taken in by the Israeli attempt to denigrate the Palestinian Arab fighters for freedom. Perhaps the simplest and most eloquent statement of their case came from the pen of Lady Fisher of Lambeth. In a letter to the *London Times* (March 26, 1968), she wrote from the Dorset rectory where her husband, the 99th Archbishop of Canterbury, was living in retirement:

'When French men and women formed themselves into resistance groups to embarrass the German forces occupying their land, we hailed them (quite rightly, I believe) as heroes and heroines. Why therefore must Arabs, who try to do the same thing against enemy forces occupying their land, be referred to as "terrorists" and "saboteurs"? Surely they are only doing what

brave men always do, whose country lies under the heel of a conqueror?'

The Israeli reaction to the Arab Resistance was in character. First the Israeli authorities flatly denied that there was any opposition to their rule whatsoever. Then they claimed that there had been a terrorist network – but that it had been entirely dismantled. Then, when the successes of the Resistance could not be concealed, the Israelis resorted to their old policy of massive 'reprisals'. Vast hordes of heavily armed troops backed by airpower and tanks physically invaded the East Bank of the Jordan. One professed aim of such attacks, as well as the frequent use of artillery and air strikes, was to turn Jordan's last area of agricultural land, the East Bank, into a desert. But although upwards of 70,000 Jordanians were indeed forced to flee further east, the Israeli actions were counter-productive. They showed an ugly face in the 'Mirror of Justice' which Israel had claimed to be. And at Karameh – on March 21, 1968 – the Israelis suffered their first major military reverse since the June War. The Jordanians still could not match the airpower of U.S.-supported Israel, yet fighting together, regular soldiers and Resistance guerillas inflicted heavy casualties on the Israelis (who admitted losing 100 in killed and wounded) as well as large losses in tanks and armoured cars. A year later, when two Palestinians tried to blow up an El-Al airliner at Athens (El-Al regularly carries military supplies for the Israeli army), Israel countered by destroying the bulk of Lebanon's commercial air-fleet at Beirut's unarmed civilian airport. Israeli officials had been present at the interrogation of the Palestinian gunmen in Athens and knew that they had spent only 45 minutes in Lebanon, in transit through the same civil airport that handles millions of travellers every year. But such Israeli reprisals were as counter-productive as Nazi reprisals in wartime Europe. They stiffened the will to resist of the Palestinians and aroused disgust abroad.

ONE UNANSWERED QUESTION

TWO years after the Ceasefire and Israel had still not withdrawn from the positions she had seized as a result of her pre-emptive strike. She was still occupying an area of Arab territory four times larger than her pre-June self. In Sinai she was exploiting Egyptian oil-wells and implanting fishing communes on the north Sinai coast. Her airlines had opened a new direct route to Johannesburg (after New York, the South Africa of apartheid was her strongest ally) over Sinai. She had established parliamentary colonies in the Golan Heights, whose status she now claimed was 'non-negotiable'. Having evicted more than 200,000 Jordanians from the West Bank, she was establishing settlements there also. In Jerusalem she was taking over Arab areas and doing everything to change the appearance and nature of the Arab city.

These actions answered many questions about the June War. Who could now believe that the acquisition of territory had not formed part of Israeli war aims? Not only Israeli 'hawks' of the calibre of Dayan, Allon and Beigin reneged on Levi Eshkol's profession of not wanting one foot of Arab soil. Eshkol himself, in his last interview, reneged on his own words himself. *'As for the Golan Heights, we will quite simply never give them up. The same goes for Jerusalem. Here there is no flexibility at all.'*¹

The contradiction between Eshkol's words after the June War and his earlier protestations was not ignored by idealistic Israelis. One such was Shimon Tzabar who, having fought in all three of Israel's wars, described his feeling of revulsion at the time of Israel's capture of Arab Jerusalem. (The article was published in the *Daily Telegraph's* first anniversary supplement on the June War,

¹ *Newsweek*, February 11, 1969.

London, June 7, 1968). *'We had captured the Old City of Jerusalem. We had captured the Wailing Wall. At that very moment a victory ceremony was going on in front of it. I heard the voice of our Prime Minister, Levi Eshkol, say: "For twenty years we have waited for this moment." So that was what the politicians were doing all the time: waiting to be Masters of the Wailing Wall, But they kept the secret well. To me and to the world they had sworn that Israel had no territorial claims whatsoever.'*

But the Israeli expansionism which distressed Israeli moderates such as Tzabar and Avneri seemed to have another effect on American makers of policy. Although the United States had voted for the November Resolution calling for Israel's withdrawal 'from territories occupied' in the recent conflict, American proposals for a settlement implied that Israel should be allowed to keep at least some of her acquisitions.¹

This raised anew the question of why America had supported Israel with such unbalanced fervor, though such support gained her few advantages and lost her popularity in years when her policies in Vietnam and racial problems at home had left her little to lose.

At no time has the U.S. seen fit to demand unequivocally that Israel should withdraw from occupied Arab lands. It is perhaps noteworthy that in making proposals for Middle East Peace on June 19, 1967, President Johnson said:

¹ *Americans sometimes tried to argue that the Resolution did not require Israel to evacuate all the territories she had occupied. This argument carried little weight with the unbiased. America had herself supported the preamble to the Resolution which spoke of the 'inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war.' If Israel kept even a mile of territory taken in war, this 'inadmissibility' would have been admitted. Further, the official translation of the Resolution into French is quite unambiguous: the phrase in question is 'des territoires occupés'. If the Resolution only covered some of the territories, it would have been 'de territoires occupés', which would have borne a contradiction to the preamble unacceptable to French, as a logical and precise tongue.*

'There are some who have urged, as a single simple solution, an immediate return to the situation as it was on June 4. As our distinguished Ambassador Goldberg has already said, this is not a prescription for peace but for renewed hostilities'.

President Johnson's proposals of June 19, 1967 represent a departure from American policy, as proclaimed after World War II. At that time the U.S. emerged as a leading champion of freedom. Its declared policy was to uphold peace and prevent the use of force.

In repeated statements during the May 1967 crisis, prior to the June War, the U.S. maintained its adherence to the principle of the political independence and the territorial integrity of all the states in the area. After Israeli occupation of Arab lands, this principle was consistently ignored.

As the myth of Little David collapsed, a change began to show itself in the attitudes of ordinary people, and in particular informed people, towards the Middle East. Those who knew the area were indignant at the way the problem had been simplified for the benefit of Israel. In England a spontaneous new grouping, the Council for the Advancement of Arab-British Understanding, linked men and women of very different political views. Similar organisations, equally spontaneous, were formed in France, Holland and other countries. In Paris, M. Eric Rouleau, a former resident of Egypt and a non-Zionist Jew, made *Le Monde* the world's best informed newspaper on the Middle East.

Perhaps in the long run the most fruitful development was an open admission by some Israelis of the true nature of the problem which their state had created. Arabs had for long been used to Zionists never speaking except to deceive. When they now read (*Le Monde*, March 12, 1968) of a hundred Israeli intellectuals denouncing 'the violation of the Rights of Man in Israel and in the occupied territories' or of a young Israeli, Ilan Shliff (*The Times*, June 27, 1968) being ostracised in his kibbutz for signing this declaration, they were heartened. They had long affirmed that Jews

could coexist with Muslims and Christians; when it had been a penal offence for Jews to set foot in England (from the reign of Edward I to the time of Oliver Cromwell) Jews had played prestigious roles in the public life of such Arab cities as Baghdad and Cairo. This affirmation now involved a human – and a Jewish face. Positive friendship, not merely coexistence, was possible with Jews who put conscience above expediency.

What was impossible was Arab acquiescence in a Zionist *Diktat*.

The aftermath of 1967 raises one final question which must be asked by the world and answered by Israel. What kind of society does Israel aspire to be? On the answer to this question depend the issues of possible peace or further war.

If Israel is to be a normal civilised country – that is, a country which does not differentiate between people because of their religion or race – then the demand that the Arabs co-exist with her is not absurd. It is sensible. But words are not enough. Actions alone can answer the question. The test will come over the Palestinians who were displaced because they were not Jews. If Israel welcomes them back, or sees that they are compensated for what they have lost, and if Israel treats the Christians and Moslems under her jurisdiction precisely as she treats the Jews, then the omens will be good.

But if Israel sees herself as an ethnocentric theocracy, a state in which Jews are like the Spartans in ancient Greece, with non-Jews as helots or 'resident aliens', the omens are bad. With such a state co-existence is impossible. Confronted by a beach-head of racial fanatics, refusing the return of Palestinians while clamouring for armed recruits from the West, the only Arab policy possible will be resistance.

Some Israelis – such as the moderates quoted in these pages – undoubtedly share the first version. But they are not the rulers in Israel. Uri Avneri, though a member of the

Knesset, is not in the Cabinet, while Beigin is. Many Israeli liberals feel forced to live abroad.

The second vision, or something like it, has prompted every utterance and action by Israeli rulers since the Ceasefire. The ministers such as Golda Meir, Abba Eban and Moshe Dayan, who repeat that the 'old frontiers' are no more, base their plans for the future on military force. Their trust is not in justice but in the 50 Phantoms promised by America the very day of the Beirut Raid.

In June 1967, at the West Wall of Solomon's Temple, Israel's first Prime Minister David Ben Gurion was asked by a French journalist what emotions he felt at this sacred site on that unforgettable day. The old man brushed emotions aside.

'Tell the West,' he brusquely answered, *'to send me three million young Jews.'*





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