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MEINACE
**THE EVENTS
THAT LED UP
TO THE
SIX-DAY WAR
AND THEIR LESSONS**

MENACE

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SIX-DAY WAR
AND THEIR LESSONS

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PART ONE
INTRODUCTION:
1948-1967

"To hell, O Zionists!"
" (Cover of Syrian army weekly, "The People's Army";
May 30, 1967)



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THE 1948 WAR: DEFEAT OF THE ARAB INVASION

On the very day of its establishment, 14 May 1948, the new-born State of Israel was invaded by the regular armies of Egypt, Trans-Jordan, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon and a Saudi-Arabian contingent. The next day, Azzam Pasha, Secretary-General of the Arab League, proclaimed in Cairo:

'This will be a war of extermination and a momentous massacre which will be spoken of like the Mongolian massacres and the Crusades.'

The Egyptian army reached a point 20 km south of Tel Aviv. Arab forces besieged Jerusalem. The Iraqi army traversed the coastal plain to a point 15 km from the Mediterranean and threatened to cut Israel in two. The Syrian army, advancing westward into Upper Galilee, threatened to amputate Israel's 'finger' in the north.

Israel, with a population then of only 650,000, drove back the invading forces, but at a cost of 6,000 lives. That was the price paid in battle for independence.

After the Arab armies had been driven back, a truce was called and negotiations for an armistice began.

1949 — THE ARMISTICE AGREEMENTS

In the course of 1949, separate armistice agreements were signed between Israel and Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria.

In each agreement it was laid down that its purpose was 'to facilitate the transition from the present truce to permanent peace'.

In 1949, nobody foresaw that, instead of leading to peace:

the agreement with Egypt, after seven years, would end in war and be replaced by an arrangement in which the objective of attaining peace was superseded altogether;
the agreements with Jordan, Syria and Lebanon, after remaining in force for nineteen years, would also end in war.

ARAB POLICY: A STRIVING NOT FOR PEACE BUT FOR ISRAEL'S EXTINCTION

In its Declaration of Independence, on 14 May 1948, the Government of Israel said this:

'We extend the hand of peace and good-neighbourliness to all the States around us and to their peoples, and we call upon them to cooperate in mutual helpfulness with the independent Jewish nation in its Land.'

From that first day onwards, the quest for peace has been a permanent part in the policy of every Government of Israel.

The policy of the Arab States has been symmetrically opposite to Israel's:

- They have not reconciled themselves to Israel's existence and have refused to recognize Israel;
- They have not abandoned the aim of destroying Israel, even if, on occasion, they admit that it is not within their power to realize it;
- On the military level, they have pursued a policy of unceasing build-up designed to carry that aim into effect;
- On the political level, they have constantly sought to bring about Israel's isolation in the family of nations;
- On the economic level, they have pursued a policy of boycott against Israel;
- On the propaganda level, they have pursued a systematic policy of instigating hatred towards Israel, distorting Israel's image by means of anti-Semitic stereotypes and by educating the young generation to a struggle whose objective is the destruction of Israel;
- On the borders, they have pursued a policy of attrition by means of terrorist acts designed to disrupt normal life in Israel and undermine the people's morale;
- At sea, Egypt adopted a policy which attempted to blockade Israel: it closed the Suez Canal to all movement of Israeli shipping, and the Tiran Straits at the entrance to the Gulf of Eilat to all movement of vessels to or from Israel.

THE 1956 WAR: THE THREAT REMOVED AND THE BLOCKADE BROKEN

In 1956, the hostile actions, in which Egypt played a central role, reached their climax:

- The USSR began a massive supply of military equipment to Egypt and Syria, and, within a year, there was a significant increase in the military strength of the two States;
- The Suez Canal and the Gulf of Eilat were still barred to navigation to and from Israel;
- There was a steep rise in the number of attacks by fedayun units sent by Egypt from Sinai, the Gaza Strip and elsewhere;

- A military pact was signed by the Arab States with the one and only practical purpose of action against Israel.

Towards the end of October and the beginning of November 1956, the Israeli Army occupied the Sinai peninsula and the Gaza Strip. This gave Israel the following advantages:

- It put an end to concentrations of the Egyptian army in Sinai, which had threatened Israel;
- It put an end to terrorist acts that had plagued Israel from Sinai and the Gaza Strip;
- It opened the Tiran Straits to navigation and made possible a maritime link between Israel and the countries of Africa and Asia.

1957: WITHDRAWAL IN RETURN FOR PROMISES AND ARRANGEMENTS

At the beginning of 1957, Israel withdrew its forces from Sinai and the Gaza Strip. This it did in return for promises and arrangements in which the USA figured principally. These promises were finalized in a letter, of 11 February 1957, addressed by Secretary of State Foster Dulles to Abba Eban, at that time Israel's Ambassador in Washington. They were given public expression by President Eisenhower in a television speech on 20 February:

'We should not assume that, if Israel withdraws, Egypt would prevent Israel shipping from using the Suez Canal or the Gulf of Aqaba. If, unhappily, Egypt does hereafter violate the armistice agreements or other international obligations, then this should be dealt with firmly by the society of nations.'

In his letter of 2 March 1957, to Israel's Prime Minister Ben-Gurion, President Eisenhower referred to Israel's withdrawal from Sinai and the Gaza Strip:

'I know that this decision was not an easy one. I believe, however, that Israel will have no cause to regret having thus confirmed the strong sentiment of the world community, as expressed in the various United Nations resolutions relating to withdrawal.'

The arrangements and promises of 1957 concerned:

- Free passage through the Gulf of Eilat: the promises given by the USA were reinforced by a declaration of eleven other maritime States acknowledging Israel's right to free passage. France was one of the eleven, and its UN delegate, Georges Picot, so affirmed in the General Assembly on 1 March 1957;

- The establishment of a UN Emergency Force in Sinai and the Gaza Strip: the purpose of the Force was to separate Egypt and Israel and in that way prevent war;

- Non-return of Egyptian forces to the Gaza Strip: Israel was given promises that Egyptian forces would not return to the Strip, but, despite the promises, they did return — one day after Israel had left the Strip, in March 1957;

- Opening of the Suez Canal for transit of goods to and from Israel: Israel was given promises that the Canal would be open for such transit, but the promises were never honoured.

1957–1967: A DECEPTIVE CALM

For ten years, the UN Emergency Force remained in its positions between Egypt and Israel. Throughout that period, that was the quietest of Israel's borders. Throughout the same period, the Gulf of Eilat was open to the movement of ships to and from Israel.

But it was an illusory calm.

"How to use the Star of David. . ." (Iraqi daily "Al-Manar"; June 8, 1967)



DESTRUCTION OF ISRAEL REMAINS THE ARAB AIM

Not for a moment in all that decade did the processes of Arab hostility and hatred slacken. Egypt continued to be the chief instrument of those processes, and they were spelt out forthrightly in speeches and letters of its President, Gamal Abdel Nasser. We shall quote only three examples:

- In a letter sent to King Hussein on 13 March 1961, he wrote, referring to Israel:

'We believe that the evil which was placed in the heart of the Arab world should be eradicated.'

- In a speech broadcast from Cairo on 24 February 1964, he said:

'The prospects are for war with Israel. It is we who will dictate the time. It is we who will dictate the place.'

- On 25 May 1965, Nasser published a statement jointly with President Aref of Iraq:

'The Arab national aim is the elimination of Israel.'

SYRIA HEIGHTENS THE TENSION

In February 1966, a revolution took place in Syria, the ninth since 1949. In it, the Ba'ath party, which enjoyed the active backing of the USSR, came to power. The new Government carried out an all-out policy of hostility and hatred towards Israel, manifested in the following spheres:

At all levels, it preached the waging of a people's war of liberation against Israel, and the avowed purpose of the war was Israel's destruction;

In line with that doctrine, Syria activated terrorist organizations against Israel, from its own and other territories;

The Syrian army, entrenched on the Golan Heights, shelled Israeli villages in the Jordan Valley below;

The Syrian Government persisted in its attempts to divert the sources of the Jordan and deprive Israel of the water vital to its citizens and its development.

By the first months of 1967, as a result of this active policy of hostility towards Israel, tension had risen between Syria and Israel. In early May, the tension was exploited by the USSR, Egypt and Syria to generate the escalation which led to the Six-Day War.

PART TWO

THE THREE WEEKS 15 May to 5 June 1967

Cover illustration for "Salem in the Army", a reading and writing primer for the Syrian army.



The roots of the Six-Day War are in the unremitting hostility of the Arab States towards Israel and their constant incitement to destroy our country. The immediate causes of the war are to be found in the escalation which took place during the second half of May and early June. In that escalation, the USSR, Egypt and Syria were partners from the start. Other Arab States eventually also joined the planned campaign of war upon Israel. Each partner, had it wished, could have stopped the escalation at any one of its successive stages. But no attempt of that kind was made. On the contrary, at every stage, an unrestrained zeal was evinced to proceed to the next one, which would heighten the crisis and bring it nearer to war.

FIRST STAGE OF ESCALATION – FALSE REPORTS OF CONCENTRATIONS OF ISRAELI FORCES ON THE SYRIAN BORDER

In the first fortnight of May, the USSR and Syria began to spread fabricated reports about the concentration of thirteen Israel brigades on the Syrian-Israeli border. These were also communicated to an Egyptian parliamentary delegation which was then visiting the USSR and returned to Egypt on 14 May.

The Egyptian Government was almost certainly aware, from the very outset of the crisis, that the reports were false. At the trial in Cairo of Shams Badran, Egypt's former Minister of Defence, early in 1968, the following testimony was given:

'General Fawzi was sent to Syria shortly before the war to check Syrian and Soviet allegations of Israeli military concentrations on the Syrian frontier. He discovered that these allegations were unfounded.' (Middle East News Agency, 24 February 1968).

The UN Supervisory Organization (UNTSO), which had observers in the Syrian-Israeli border zone, could – and did – verify that there was no truth in the allegations. Indeed, the Secretary-General of the UN confirmed the fact in an aide-memoire handed to the Egyptian delegate to the UN on 18 May 1967:

'On the basis of the fully reliable reports received from the Chief of Staff of UNTSO in Palestine, there have been no recent indications of troop movements or concentrations along any of the lines which should give rise to undue concern.' (A/6669).

U Thant reaffirmed this rebuttal the next day:

'Reports from UNTSO observers have confirmed the absence of troop concentrations and significant troop movements on both sides of the line.' (S/7896).

Had the USSR, Egypt, and Syria acted on the basis of the authentic information provided for them by the UN and by their own sources, the escalation might have been halted at an early stage. Their Governments, however, preferred to ignore the facts. The Soviet Ambassador to Israel, Tchubakhin, even declined Prime Minister Eshkol's offer to go out to the Syrian border so as to verify for himself that there really were no concentrations of Israeli forces there.

Why did these Governments refuse to use the UN assurance, that there were no concentrations of Israeli forces on that border, as a means of arresting the process of escalation? Almost certainly, because they had not the slightest interest in arresting it.

ESCALATION: SECOND STAGE – EGYPT MOVES A LARGE EXPEDITIONARY FORCE INTO SINAI

The trumped-up tales of concentrations of Israeli forces on the Syrian border were used by Egypt as a pretext for moving its army into Sinai. On 14 May, Field-Marshal Amer issued Battle Order No.1 calling for the mobilization of all Egypt's armed forces, proclaiming a state of total alert throughout the army and deploying all units to forward positions. On 15 May, Egyptian armour and infantry started moving from Cairo to the Sinai desert, and Egyptian Migs were transferred to forward airfields in Sinai.

Altogether, two armoured and five infantry divisions, totalling 90,000 men and 900 tanks, were assigned to enter Sinai.

ESCALATION: THIRD STAGE – EVACUATION OF THE UN EMERGENCY FORCE ON EGYPT'S DEMAND

On 16 May, the Egyptian Chief of Staff, General Fawzi, instructed General Rikhye, Commander of the UN Emergency Force, to withdraw his troops from their positions along the international frontier and from Sharm el-Sheikh, as Egyptian forces had been posted along it, ready for action against Israel. General Rikhye informed the UN Secretary-General of this Egyptian demand. That same evening, U Thant summoned the Egyptian delegate to the UN and told him that the UN would regard the demand for a partial withdrawal of its troops as a demand to withdraw the entire Emergency Force from its positions. Thereupon the Egyptian Foreign Minister, Mahmoud Riad, wrote to the Secretary-General on 18 May requiring that an end be put to the presence of the Emergency Force in Sinai and the Gaza Strip and that it be withdrawn as soon as possible.

The Secretary-General expressed deep misgivings about the likely disastrous consequences of the withdrawal of UNEF and indicated his intention to appeal urgently to President Nasser to reconsider the decision. Later in the day, the representative of the United Arab Republic informed the Secretary-General that the Foreign Minister had asked the Permanent Representative by telephone from Cairo to convey to the Secretary-General his urgent advice that the Secretary-General should not appeal to President Nasser to reconsider the request for withdrawal of UNEF and that, if he did so, such a request would be sternly rebuffed.

Already four hours before the Egyptian demand was presented to U Thant, Egyptian soldiers had made their appearance in Sharm el-Sheikh and called upon the UN contingent there to withdraw forthwith. Yugoslav soldiers on the Egyptian-Israeli border were forced to withdraw from their positions, and in several instances Egyptian troops went so far as to open fire on UN units.

On the very same day, the UN Secretary-General, after consulting with the representatives of the States with contingents in the Emergency Force, replied to Egypt that its demand would be met and that instructions would be given without delay for the withdrawal of the Force. On 19 May, all positions of the UN Force were evacuated and, in a special ceremony in Gaza, the UN flag was lowered. Egyptian units took over the places of the units of the Force.

POSITION OF THE PARTIES AFTER WITHDRAWAL OF THE EMERGENCY FORCE

When the withdrawal of the UN Force from the Egyptian-Israeli border zone and Sharm el-Sheikh took place on 19 May, the positions of Israel and Egypt could be described as follows:

ISRAEL'S POSITION — A SEARCH FOR WAYS TO REDUCE THE TENSION

- On the political level — an appeal was made for diplomatic action by the Powers to restore quiet to the region. In his speech in the Knesset on 22 May, Prime Minister Eshkol assured the Arab States, and Egypt and Syria in particular, that Israel had no aggressive designs against them.
- On the military level — on 16 May, a limited number of reserve units had been called up, and there was a second, still partial, call-up of reserve units on 19 May, after the withdrawal of the UN Force and the entry of a further Egyptian force into Sinai.

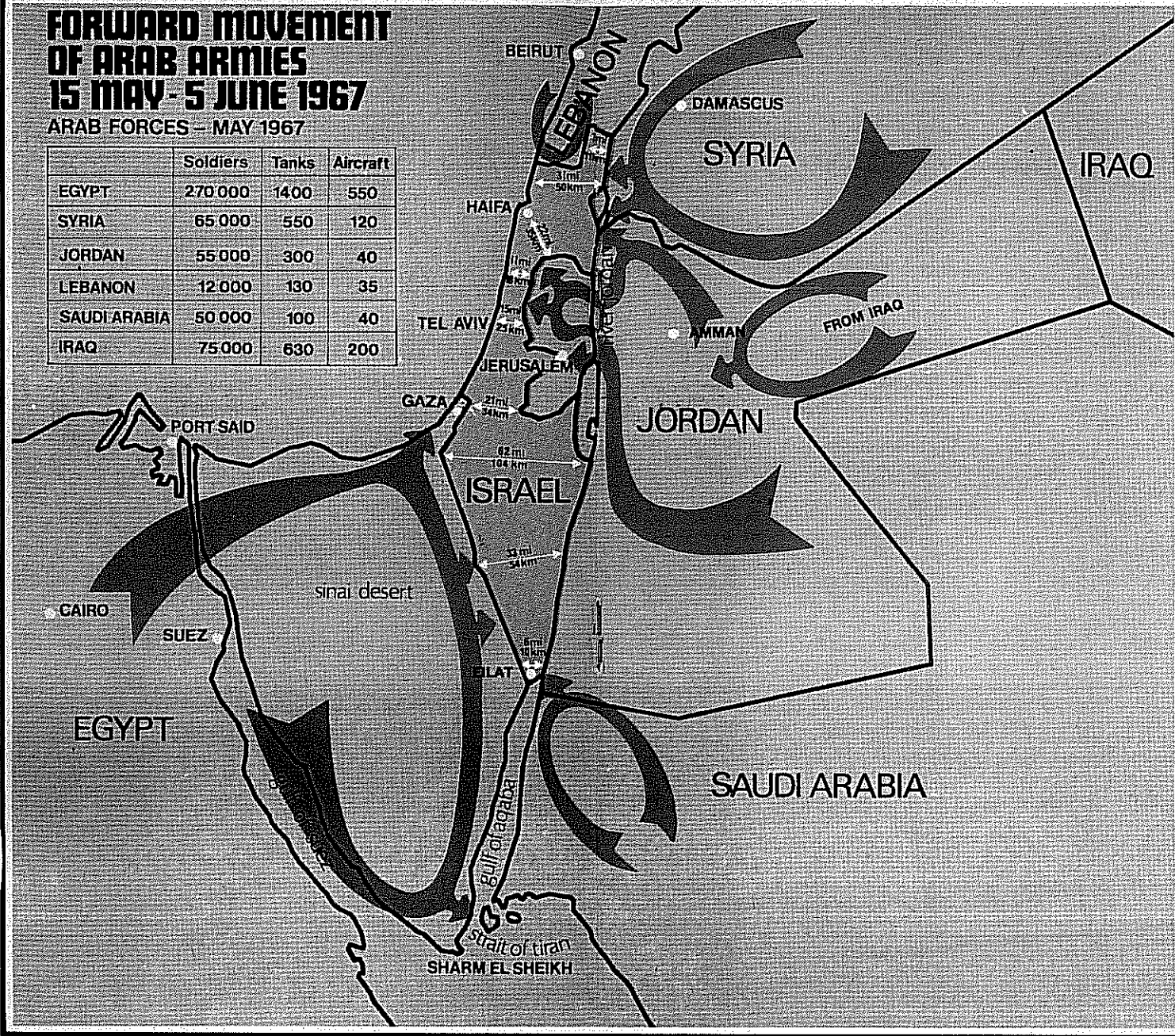
Demonstrators in Cairo calling for war against Israel ▶



FORWARD MOVEMENT OF ARAB ARMIES 15 MAY - 5 JUNE 1967

ARAB FORCES - MAY 1967

	Soldiers	Tanks	Aircraft
EGYPT	270 000	1400	550
SYRIA	65 000	550	120
JORDAN	55 000	300	40
LEBANON	12 000	130	35
SAUDI ARABIA	50 000	100	40
IRAQ	75 000	630	200



EGYPT'S POSITION – PREPARING FOR AGGRESSION

Among the secret documents that fell into the hands of the Israel Defence Forces in June 1967 was a Battle Order of the Egyptian air force, dated 18 May, the eve of the withdrawal of the UN Force.

Here is its first paragraph:

'Top Secret
UAR Eastern Command HQ
Office of the Chief of Staff No. td/3/1967/124
Date: 18 May 1967
Battle Order No. 3/67

1. *An offensive is planned to cut off the Southern Negev and conquer Eilat. . .*

The Order then specifies how air units will be assigned in support of the ground troops.

This Order, for a military operation aiming to cut off the Southern Negev from Israel and take Eilat, was issued on the selfsame day when the Secretary-General of the UN informed Egypt that he had given instructions for the withdrawal of the Emergency Force from its positions and that UN observers had confirmed that there were no Israeli concentrations on the Syrian border.

On 19 May, Radio Cairo announced:

'This is our chance, Arabs, to deal Israel a mortal blow of annihilation, to blot out its entire presence in our holy land.' Egyptian broadcasts kept calling for 'a just liberation war of the Palestinians'. Ahmad Shukeiri, leader of the Palestine Liberation Organization, in a broadcast on Radio Cairo, proclaimed: 'Israel will be totally destroyed.'

ESCALATION: FOURTH STAGE – EGYPT CLOSES THE TIRAN STRAITS AND CALLS FOR WAR

On the evening of 22 May, addressing pilots at an Egyptian air force base, Nasser announced the closure of the Straits of Tiran and the denial of passage to Israeli ships or goods destined for Israel. He went on to say that any ship that tried to run the blockade would be sunk. When he made this announcement, he knew that the Secretary-General of the United Nations would be visiting Cairo forty-eight hours later in an endeavour to settle the conflict. Instead of waiting for him, Nasser chose to present him with a further stage of escalation. He took no notice of U Thant's specific appeal to him to abstain from any new measures until his own arrival in Cairo.

On 23 May, Cairo Radio reported Nasser addressing his troops thus:

'We will in no circumstances whatever permit the flag of Israel to pass through the Gulf of Aqaba. . . If the Israelis wish to threaten us with war, they are welcome.'

On 24 May, the Egyptians made it known that heavy guns had been mounted on the island of Tiran at the entrance to the Gulf of Aqaba, and that Egyptian submarines were patrolling the area. A Liberian vessel, on its way to Eilat, reported that fire had been opened upon it from the Egyptian side.

ISRAEL'S POSITION – PATIENCE AND FORBEARANCE

By international law, the steps that were taken by Egypt in the Straits were cause enough for the threatened State to start war. Even so, and notwithstanding the fact that Israel had, in the past, declared that it would regard closure of the Straits as a *casus belli*, the Government of Israel decided to adopt a policy of forbearance. On 23 May, the Foreign Minister, Abba Eban, left for Paris, London and Washington. Israel's purpose was to try and persuade these – and other – capitals to act so as to put an end to the closure of the Straits and bring about the withdrawal of Egyptian forces from Sinai, where they constituted a direct menace to the south of Israel.

EGYPT'S POSITION – A CALL FOR WAR TO DESTROY ISRAEL

While Israel waited for the Great Powers, the maritime States and the UN to induce Egypt to reverse the steps that it had taken and that were leading to war, Egypt's President and its mass media fulminated that war was Egypt's consuming desire:

• Cairo Radio, on 25 May:

'The Arab people is firmly resolved to wipe Israel off the map and restore the honour of Palestine.'

• President Nasser, in a speech on 26 May:

'The Arab people wants to fight. We have been waiting for the right day when we would be fully prepared. . . Recently, we have felt strong enough to triumph, with God's help, if we enter into battle with Israel. On that basis, we have decided to take the actual measures. Sharm el-Sheikh implies a confrontation with Israel. Taking this step makes it imperative that we be ready to embark on total war with Israel.'

- Again the President of Egypt, at a press conference on 28 May: *'Israel's existence in itself is an act of aggression. . . We accept no kind of coexistence with Israel.'*

While Nasser was agitating Arab public opinion to a war of extermination against Israel, two other events ought to be recorded:

- The Egyptian Minister of War, Shams Badran, arrived in Moscow on 25 May, heading an Egyptian delegation to discuss military matters with the Kremlin;
- On 27 May, Egypt asked that the Security Council be convened to discuss 'the danger to world peace due to Israel's aggression. . .'

ESCALATION: FIFTH STAGE

THE ARAB STATES FORM A WAR-FRONT AGAINST ISRAEL

On 23 May, Nasser let it be known that Egypt would welcome the forces of other Arab States.

On the same day, the Syrian Prime Minister and his Chief of Staff arrived in Cairo, followed the next day by the Algerian Chief of Staff and an envoy of the King of Morocco. Simultaneously, Iraq announced its despatch of troops to Egypt, Syria and Jordan.

On 25 May, it was reported that Saudi troops were deployed in the vicinity of Aqaba, and, at the end of May, troops from Kuwait landed in Egypt.

On 30 May, King Hussein of Jordan arrived in Cairo. Within a few hours, an Egyptian-Jordanian defence pact was signed. Clause 7 of the pact put the Jordanian army under Egyptian command, and the Egyptian General Abd el-Muna'am el-Riad was appointed as commander of the Jordanian front.

On 4 June, the Iraqi Foreign Minister signed a similar pact with Egypt.

DEPLOYMENT OF ARAB FORCES ALONG ISRAEL'S BORDERS AT THE BEGINNING OF JUNE AND THEIR OBJECTIVES

On the Egyptian Front

- Seven Egyptian divisions in the Sinai desert and the Gaza Strip, two of them armoured, were deployed within a distance of between one and three hours' march of Eilat, Beersheba and other centres of population in the south and centre of Israel.

- A distance of no more than 40 kilometres separated the Egyptian forces in the Gaza Strip from the Jordanian forces on Mount Hebron.

- The Egyptian air force had 450 planes, and its principal air fields in Sinai were within twelve minutes flying-time from Jerusalem and Tel Aviv.

On the Jordanian Front

- Practically the entire strength of the seven infantry and two armoured brigades of the Jordanian army was concentrated in the West Bank and the Jordan Valley. By way of reinforcement, two Egyptian commando battalions were deployed in the Latrun area, midway between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. Both those cities were within range of the Jordanian artillery.

- An Iraqi division, including 150 tanks, was concentrated in the East Bank and was making its way to the West Bank. An Iraqi squadron was attached to the Jordanian air force.

- Saudi forces were concentrated in the vicinity of Aqaba, facing Eilat.

On the Syrian Front

Almost the whole Syrian army was concentrated on the Golan Heights. It was a force of five infantry and five armoured brigades. The Syrian air force had about 120 planes.

OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVES

Egypt

- The Egyptian air force Battle Order No. 3/67 of 18 May, cited above, sets Egypt's operational target as the severing of the Southern Negev and the seizure of Eilat. By that seizure, Egypt presumably hoped to complete the maritime blockade of the Gulf.
- On 3 June, the Commander-in-Chief of the Egyptian land forces, General Murthagi, issued the following declaration to his troops:

'The historic moment has arrived . . . You must put your heart and your body into the holy war in which you are about to engage for the restoration of the plundered Arab rights in Arab Palestine.'

- In a speech on 4 June, Nasser said:

'We are burning with impatience for this battle to avenge the treachery of 1956.'

Jordan

- An Order by the commander of the Jordanian 27th brigade — Imam Ali ibn Abu Taleb — to the commanding officer of its reserve battalion fell into Israel's hands after the war. It instructs the battalion to attack Motza, a village in Israel territory, slaughter all the population and raze it to the ground. This village is six kilometres west of Jerusalem on the highway to Tel Aviv, and the Order for its attack fits in with a design to cut off Jerusalem.
- According to the Lebanese paper *al-Hawadeth*, of 7 June 1968, the operational target of the Jordanian forces in June 1967 was to advance beyond Lod, Israel's only international airport, and prevent its use. In 1967, the armistice line between Jordan and Israel ran only eleven kilometres east of the airport.

Syria

- Syrian documents which fell into Israel's hands in the course of the war include a plan to drive into Israel along two lines, through Mishmar Hayarden to Safad and Nazareth, and from the south of the Sea of Galilee to Afula. The two drives were meant to link up in Haifa.
- On 29 May, the President of Syria declared: 'The time has come to start the battle of liberation.'

Iraq

- President Aref spoke, on 1 June, on Radio Baghdad:
'We are resolved, determined and united, to achieve our clear aim of wiping Israel off the map . . . This is the day to wash away the stain. God willing, we shall meet in Tel Aviv and Haifa.'

Algeria

- On 4 June, President Boumedienne spoke on Radio Algiers:
'The true freedom of the entire homeland must be won through the liquidation of the Zionist State.'

The Palestine Liberation Organization

- In an interview on 4 June, the leader of the Organization, Ahmad Shukeiri, was questioned as to the fate of native-born Israelis after an Arab victory. His answer was this:

'Those who survive will remain in Palestine, but I estimate that not many of them will survive.'

ATTITUDES OF THE POWERS AND THE UN

For three weeks, from 15 May until 5 June 1967, Israel waited patiently for the Powers and the UN to induce Egypt to reopen the Tiran Straits to navigation and withdraw its forces from Sinai where their presence, within so short a range of Israel's border, represented a constant threat. The waiting produced nothing but disappointment.

USA — For all its open friendship and its understanding of Israel's distress, the USA could not find any practical method of making good the promises which it had given Israel in 1957. Even the attempt to get a number of maritime States to sign a joint declaration on the right to freedom of navigation in the Straits ended in failure.

France and Great Britain — Both were concerned, first and foremost, to announce that they no longer considered themselves bound by the Tripartite Declaration of May 1950 but were depending on the UN. In the Tripartite Declaration, Great Britain, France and the USA had undertaken to guarantee the armistice lines against any attempt to alter them by force. France even abstained from association with those Western countries which expressed support of the principle of free passage through the Straits, and contented itself with describing the situation as 'complicated'.

A French proposal to refer the handling of the matter to the Big Powers won the backing of the USA and Great Britain, but the USSR opposed it.

USSR — The Soviet Union continued to charge Israel with aggressive designs. On 23 May, following Egypt's closure of the Tiran Straits, the USSR published a statement that whoever started aggression would encounter not only the resistance of the Arabs but also the USSR's strong opposition. No attempt was made by the Soviet Union to help in restoring the previous situation. On the contrary, the reception of an Egyptian delegation led by the Minister of War at the height of the crisis, the spreading of anti-Israel propaganda that grew increasingly violent, and political support for the Arab States — all these gave rise to an unmistakable impression that the USSR was unreservedly committed to the Arab side.

UN — The part taken by the UN in this period may be summarized as follows:

- The Secretary-General's hasty acceptance of Egypt's demand that he withdraw the Emergency Force allowed Egypt to escalate the crisis without any hindrance.
- Nasser's retort to the Secretary-General's attempt to halt further escalation by paying a visit to Cairo was the closure of the Tiran Straits on the eve of U Thant's arrival.
- The Security Council, meeting on 29, 30 and 31 May and on 2 and 3 June, did not succeed in formulating any practical resolution.

ISRAEL'S SITUATION

After waiting for three weeks, Israel could sum up its situation as follows:

On the Strategic Plane

- Egypt had imposed a blockade on Israel's southern maritime approaches;
- Arab armies under unified command were massed along all Israel's borders within ranges of between ten minutes' and three to four hours' distance from its centres;
- The Arab leaders made no secret of the fact that their aim was a war in which Israel would be destroyed. The minimum objective which they set themselves was to cut off certain parts of Israel;
- In view of the concentration of Arab forces along its borders and the Arab statements on the objectives of the war, Israel had to mobilize its own forces to the utmost.

On the Political Plane

It was clear that, though many nations were offering sympathy, not a single Government was prepared to take any practical steps that would induce Egypt to reverse its actions of escalation. Israel was left alone. The only alternative was to act or to throw itself upon the mercy of other States. Israel chose the way of independence.

WAR BREAKS OUT

- War broke out on the morning of 5 June 1967.
- That morning, Israel delivered to the Chief of Staff of the UN Observer Corps, General Odd Bull, a message from its Prime

Minister to King Hussein. In it, Israel made it clear that it would not start any operation against Jordan unless Jordan attacked, but, if Jordan did attack, Israel would counteract with all its might. (In his memoirs published after the War, King Hussein acknowledged that he received the message.)

- Jordan's reply was to open artillery fire all along the armistice line. Its guns shelled Jerusalem mainly, but other urban centres, including Tel Aviv and its suburbs, were also bombarded. On that same morning, a Jordanian force crossed the armistice line in Jerusalem and occupied the headquarters of the UN Observer Corps. Thus, on 5 June, Jordan symbolically brought to a climax in Jerusalem what Egypt had begun on 15 May in Sinai.

To recount the course of the war, which lasted only six days, is not the concern of this pamphlet. The lessons to be learnt from the war are, likewise, the principal concern of military experts. But, for Israel as a nation, there is still a series of lessons that reflect its experience during the period of the three weeks that preceded the war. We shall try to summarize those lessons.

Cannon muzzles of eight Arab States: Sudan, Algeria, United Arab Republic, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon. (Lebanese daily "Al-Jarida", May 31, 1967)



PART THREE THE LESSONS

Israel is surrounded again: "The pincer arms - Egypt and Syria." (Lebanese weekly "Al-Siad", May 25, 1967)



FIRST, HOSTILITY AND HATRED ENCOURAGE AGGRESSION

The crisis of May 1967 would not have developed so swiftly into war hysteria in the Arab States, had not hostility and hatred towards Israel been persistently fanned by the Arab Governments.

THE LESSON - Israel must constantly examine whether any change has taken place in Arab enmity and Arab incitement to hatred of Israel. It must especially examine what the Arab leaders tell their people in their own language, and not necessarily what they say to foreign representatives in a foreign language.

SECOND, SHORT TERRITORIAL RANGES ARE A TEMPTATION FOR AN AGGRESSOR

- Egypt was tempted to close the Tiran Straits because it was there, on the spot. It was tempted to plan an operation that would cut off the Southern Negev and seize Eilat because its army was at a distance of one to three hours from those targets.
- Jordan was tempted to open war in Jerusalem and to bomb Tel Aviv because those two cities were within the operational range of its units.
- Syria attacked the Israeli villages in the Jordan Valley because they were within the range of its guns.

The military force which the Arabs had concentrated, and the short range of the targets against which that force was deployed, inspired the Arabs with the conviction that, whatever happened, they would be able, at the very least, to achieve important partial gains, if not the total aim of Israel's destruction.

THE LESSON - The boundaries of Israel, which will be determined in negotiations with the Arab States, must be secure and defensible. Secure boundaries are such as will not again expose Israel to temptations of Arab aggression or give an Arab aggressor decisive advantage in various sectors.

THIRDLY, THE UNITED NATIONS ORGANIZATION AND UNITED NATIONS FORCES ARE INEFFECTIVE IN RESOLVING A CRISIS

- The UN Emergency Force was withdrawn from its positions within four days of the start of the first serious crisis in the region where it was stationed.
- The personal intervention of the Secretary-General could not prevent further escalation.

- The Security Council did not get even as far as deciding what should be done.

THE LESSON — Neither the UN, the Security Council nor a UN Force is a reliable guarantee of the security of any State, and certainly not of any small nation. This lesson has been driven home still more pointedly in the sequel of crises that have arisen since 1967 in other regions of the world. (An outstanding example of the ineffectiveness of the Security Council was the India-Pakistan war in 1971.)

FOURTHLY, IN A CRISIS, GUARANTEES AND PROMISES GIVEN BY THE POWERS IN THE PAST LACK CREDIBILITY

In the test of the 1967 crisis, the Tripartite Declaration of 1950 and the promises made by the USA in 1957 were shown to be futile.

THE LESSON — Guarantees may perhaps come after the determination of secure and defensible borders, but can certainly not supplant them. Such guarantees must be the result of agreement between the parties.

AS REGARDS EGYPT

The Sinai Peninsula and the Gaza Strip — Three times in nineteen years the Sinai desert and the Gaza Strip have served as the area of concentration of Egyptian forces preparing to invade Israel.

THE LESSON — Israel will not agree to Egyptian forces returning to Sinai. Egypt will not return to the Gaza Strip. That part of Sinai that would be restored to Egypt under an agreement with Israel will have to be demilitarized. Demilitarization can be assured by a mixed Israel-Egyptian force.

Sharm el-Sheikh — Twice in nineteen years Egypt has exploited its presence in Sharm el-Sheikh for the purpose of imposing a maritime blockade on Israel's southern approaches. It has no other use for Sharm-el-Sheikh.

THE LESSON — Sharm el-Sheikh must continue to remain in Israel's hands so as to deny Egypt the temptation to exploit it once more to close the Straits. In order that Sharm el-Sheikh remain in Israel's hands, there must be territorial continuity between it and Israel.

AS REGARDS JORDAN

The West Bank — Twice in nineteen years this has been used as an area for the concentration of Arab forces meant to attack Israel.

Practically all the populated areas of Israel were within the range of the Arab artillery emplacements in the West Bank.

THE LESSON — The River Jordan will no longer be open to crossing by Arab troops. To assure that, Israel must have a foothold in the Jordan Valley.

AS REGARDS JERUSALEM

Twice in nineteen years the city has been the objective of a war launched by Jordan. It was Jordan's aggression that led to the city being split in two.

THE LESSON — Jerusalem will remain unified as part of Israel and as its capital.

AS REGARDS SYRIA

The Golan Heights — These have served Syria as a base for attack upon the Jewish villages in the Jordan Valley.

THE LESSON — Israel must stay on the Golan Heights that command the Valley.

CONCLUSIONS

- These are the lessons derived by Israel from the period when it stood alone facing a coalition of Arab Governments which had decided that Israel should be destroyed.
- The lessons constitute Israel's positions, not Israel's conditions, in the negotiation of secure borders between Israel and the Arab States. Israel does not lay down any prior conditions, and accepts that, in negotiations, everything will be open for discussion.
- Israel announced in the Knesset on 4 August 1970 its readiness to carry out Security Council Resolution 242 of 22 November 1967 in all its parts, with the object of reaching a binding and agreed peace treaty between the parties.
- Israel has expressed its readiness, within that framework, to withdraw its armed forces from the areas administered by it since the 1967 fighting, and as a result of that fighting, to secure, recognized and agreed borders that will be determined in peace treaties.
- The need for secure, recognized and agreed borders is Israel's principal lesson from the events that preceded the war of June 1967.
- The need for negotiations between Israel and its Arab neighbours is the chief lesson of the years that have since elapsed.

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