

## **The Arab-Israel Crisis. Defence Past between Egypt, Jordan, and Iraq. - Algerian, Moroccan, and Libyan Military Aid for Egypt. - Syrian President in Moscow. - Mr. Wilson's Visits to Ottawa and Washington. - Proposed Anglo-American Declaration on Freedom of Navigation in Gulf of Aqaba. President Nasser rejects Freedom of Shipping in Gulf. - General Dayan appointed Israeli Defence Minister.**

Developments in the Middle East crisis from May 28 to June 4, the day before the outbreak of war between Israel and the Arab States, are described below in continuation of 22063 A.

President Nasser said at a press conference on May 28 that in the event of a straight war with Israel “nothing will happen to the Suez Canal,” but if others intervened “there will be no Suez Canal”—a threat of closure in such an eventuality. He declared that the Arabs would under no circumstances accept coexistence with Israel; emphasized that Egypt would in no circumstances allow Israeli shipping to sail through the Straits of Tiran; affirmed that this was “a stand from which I shall not budge one inch”; and accused the United States, “the greatest power in the world,” of siding with Israel. He added that Britain, which “should have been seeking atonement for what happened in 1948 and 1956,” had not done this but had instead “followed the United States in taking Israel's side.” On the other hand he praised the “honest attitude” of President de Gaulle, who had adopted “an impartial attitude towards both Israel and the Arab States.”

It was announced in Cairo the same day that Notes had been sent to U Thant and General Rikhye demanding the departure from Egypt within 48 hours of the Canadian contingent of the disbanded U.N. Emergency Force, on the ground (as stated by the authoritative Cairo newspaper *Al Ahrām*) of the Canadian Government's allegedly “biased stand in favour of Israel.”

President Johnson's talks with Mr. Lester Pearson had been the subject of critical comment in the Egyptian Press, which also took strong exception to the Canadian initiative in convening another meeting of the Security Council for May 29. It was stated in Ottawa that the Canadian Government were preparing emergency transport to fly the Canadian UNEF contingent home; Sir. Lester Peterson was quoted as saying that the reasons advanced by Egypt for its action were “based on a regrettable misunderstanding of Canadian policy.” Mr. Pearson had earlier told the Canadian House of Commons that there was complete agreement between himself and President Johnson on the importance of maintaining free passage of shipping through the Gulf of Aqaba, and that everything possible should be done through the U.N. to this end.

In Tel-Aviv, Mr. Eshkol said in a broadcast that Israel wished to try to resolve the dispute with Egypt by diplomatic means and had laid down policy lines intended to “obviate the necessity of

Israel having to use her armed forces for her defence.” At the same time he reiterated that the closure of the Straits of Titan to Israeli shipping constituted an act of aggression against Israel, who had the right to self-defence and would exercise it if necessary. It was reported from Tel-Aviv the same day that Mr. Eshkol had received a personal letter from Mr. Kosygin, the Soviet Prime Minister, the contents of which were not disclosed.

In Moscow, the U.A.R. Defence Minister, Mr. Shamseddin Badran, ended a four-day visit during which he saw Mr. Kosygin, Mr. Gromyko, and Marshal Grechko, the Soviet Defence Minister. A communique said the discussions had been “friendly and cordial” and had dealt with “questions of mutual interest, especially those connected with the Middle East.”

The Chinese Government issued a statement saying that “the 700,000,000 Chinese people, armed with Mao Tse-tung's thought, stand resolutely on the side of the Arab people,” and accusing the United States of “conspiring with U Thant to strangle the anti-imperialist struggle of the Arab States by employing its tool, the United Nations.” The “Soviet revisionist clique,” described as “the No. 1 accomplice of U.S. imperialism,” was denounced for “collusion with British and American imperialism... to sabotage the just cause of the Arab people.”

General mobilization was proclaimed in the Sudan, where full support was expressed for Egypt and Syria.

Within 24 hours of the departure from the Soviet capital of the U.A.R. delegation headed by the Minister of War, Mr. Badran, a Syrian delegation arrived in Moscow on May 29 headed by the Syrian Head of State, Dr. Nureddin el Atassi, and including the Foreign Minister, Dr. Makhous. In Damascus, the Syrian Prime Minister, Dr. Zeayen, made a violent speech threatening the “destruction” of Israel, saying that “conditions today are better titan ever before to wage the battle of Arab destiny,” and declaring that in the event of war Syria would act to “destroy the imperialist monster” by blowing up oil pipelines and sabotaging oil installations.

In Cairo, the U.A.R. National Assembly conferred full powers on President Nasser to govern by decrees having the force of law. Colonel Nasser told the National Assembly that Mr. Badran had returned from Moscow with a message from Sir. Kosygin pledging the Soviet Government's support for Egypt. Declaring that “preparations by the U.A.R. and her allies for the liberation of Palestine are complete,” President Nasser said that “our enemy is not Israel alone but also Israel's backers, America and Britain.”

The security Council again met in emergency session to debate the Middle East crisis, no resolution being presented or vote taken.

Mr. Goldberg (U.S.A.) urged unanimous support for U Thant's appeal for a “breathing spell” to ease tension in the Middle East. [In his report to the security Council on May 27—see page 22068, column 2—following his Cairo visit, the Secretary-General had said: “In my view, a peaceful outcome to the present crisis will depend upon a breathing spell which will allow tension to subside from its present explosive level. I therefore urge all the parties concerned to exercise restraint, to forgo belligerence and to avoid all other actions which could increase tension, to allow the Council to deal with the underlying causes of

The U.S. delegate asked the Council to call upon the U.A.R. to forgo her blockade of the Gulf of Aqaba as an interim measure to preserve peace, and emphasized that it was particularly important that the long-established freedom of navigation in the Gulf should not be disturbed. He also said that the military confrontation in Sinai and on the Israel-Syria border was “highly dangerous,” and that the Council should seek special means through U.N. machinery to minimize the danger of a clash and help the opposing forces to disengage.

Mr. Mohammed el-Kony (U.A.R.) maintained that his country was fully entitled in international law to impose a blockade in the Gulf of Aqaba, which crossed undisputed Egyptian territorial waters and had, he claimed, been Arab territory for 1,000 years. He alleged that Israel had occupied the short coastline on the Gulf illegally after the signing of the 1949 armistice agreement and in violation of U.N. resolutions.

Mr. Gideon Rafael (Israel) said that interference with freedom of navigation in the Gulf of Aqaba was “an act of aggression” against Israel. He called for an end to inflammatory statements and threats against Israel's integrity; withdrawal of armed forces to their positions at the beginning of the month; and an end to interference with shipping in the Gulf.

Dr. Fedorenko (Soviet Union) made no reference to the question of freedom of navigation in the Gulf of Aqaba, but attacked Israel for “aggressive acts against her Arab neighbours.”

Lord Caradon (Britain) said that the first need was to find a solution to the critical problem of Gulf traffic; this should take into account not only the normal requirements of all the States bordering the Gulf but also the interests of all maritime Powers. The Argentine and Brazilian delegates supported this viewpoint.

Mr. Parthasarathi (India) said that no State or group of States should attempt to challenge by force the sovereignty of the U.A.R. over the Straits of Tiran. Although a *modus vivendi* [over the Straits] would be “most desirable,” any arrangement worked out “must be within the framework of the sovereignty of the U.A.R.”

Mr. Eshkol told the *Knesset* in Jerusalem on this date that the U.S.A., Britain, and other countries had undertaken to ensure freedom of navigation in the Straits of Tiran, and added: “It is our duty to put the pledges to the test. Very shortly it will be clear if this prospect materializes.” After saying that Israel had been told that practical consultations were in progress on the subject, Mr. Eshkol declared: “President Nasser is driving the region to the brink of war through his blockade, his threats of guerrilla war, the massing of his troops.... As long as the armies of Egypt and her allies are massed on Israel's borders there is the danger of a conflagration.”

It was announced in Algiers that Algerian military units were being sent to the Middle East to help Egypt. An Algerian military mission had returned from Cairo a few days beforehand, and full support for the U.A.R. and Syria against Israel had been expressed in Algiers.

A dramatic development occurred on May 30 when King Hussein of Jordan arrived in Cairo by air and signed a defence treaty with President Nasser during a six-hour visit. The Egyptian-Jordanian defence pact provided that each country would consider an attack on either State as an

attack on both; that joint military operations would be undertaken in such an eventuality; that the Chief of Staff of the U.A.R. would command both the Egyptian and the Jordanian forces in the event of war; and that the two countries would set up (a) a joint Defence Council, and (b) a Joint Command consisting of a Chiefs of Staff Council and a joint General Staff. The treaty was concluded for five years and was automatically renewable for similar five-year periods unless one party gave notice of withdrawal one year before the expiration of the first or subsequent five-year periods.

With the signing of the defence pact, Cairo Radio ceased its attacks on King Hussein and the Jordanian Government. At the signing ceremony, which was broadcast, President Nasser addressed the King as “dear brother,” thanked him for his initiative in flying to Cairo, and said that whatever the differences between them, Arabs forgot everything when the Arab destiny was in question. Among those present at the signing ceremony was Mr. Ahmed Shukairy, head of the Palestine Liberation Organization, who only a week earlier had publicly called on the Jordanian people to overthrow King Hussein [see page 22064 second column].

The Foreign Minister of Israel, Mr. Eban, said on this date that Israel was prepared to accept any solution which guaranteed free and innocent passage of ships, including Israeli ships, in the Gulf of Aqaba, but that in the diplomatic activity aiming at the opening of the Gulf there must be a time limit of “days or weeks” for the restoration of freedom of navigation, not of “months or years.” Saying that Mr. Kosygin, in a letter to Mr. Eshkol, had made a “courteous appeal” for a peaceful solution, and that Israel had received similar letters from other countries urging restraint, Mr. Eban declared: “It is not a question of urging restraint on Israel. I know of few countries which, having had one of their major ports blocked by an overt act of war, would have explored the possibilities of effective non-military co-operation.”

Asserting Israel's right to take action under Article 51 of the U.N. Charter if the problem was not resolved soon, Mr. Eban said that Israel would “act alone if we must” to break the blockade “but with others if we can.” He emphasized that Israel could not compromise on the issue of freedom of navigation in the Gulf, declaring that this was “the kind of national interest for which a nation stakes all it has.”

Criticizing the precipitate withdrawal of the U.N. Emergency Force from the Egypt-Israel frontier, Mr. Eban said—in what he described as “the under-statement of the century”—that “the United Nations has not emerged from the events of the past few weeks with brilliance or credit.”

The President of Syria left Moscow for Damascus at the end of a two-day visit during which he had talks with Mr. Kosygin, Mr. Gromyko, and Marshal Grechko, the Soviet Defence Minister. No communique was issued, but Damascus broadcasts said that the Soviet Union had pledged full support for Syria.

**It was announced in Ankara that the Soviet Government had informed the Turkish Government a week earlier that 10 Soviet warships would pass through the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles into the Mediterranean between May 30 and June 7. Under the 1936 Montreux Convention [see 2192 C] warships of the Black Sea Powers may pass through the Straits in peace-time after giving a week's advance notice to Turkey. Turkish Government**

officials refused to give the tonnages and types of the Soviet warships, saying that international protocol prevented the disclosure of such information until the vessels had completed the passage through the Straits and the Sea of Marmara. Reports from Ankara, however, said that five of the Russian warships entering the Mediterranean were of "heavy tonnage" and the other five destroyers and patrol boats.

**The Soviet naval units reinforced a permanent Soviet naval force in the Mediterranean** which, according to the Naval Correspondent of *The Times*, included a pre-war cruiser, five modern destroyers armed with guided missiles, two minesweepers, and also, it was believed, some submarines.

**It was disclosed in Washington that the U.S. Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean was for the greater part concentrated between Greece and Crete, and that it was being shadowed by two small Soviet warships, a destroyer escort and a trawler. The *New York Times* commented that the Soviet naval force in the Mediterranean was "not regarded as posing a serious military challenge to the Sixth Fleet,"** though it was thought possible that its presence might "encourage the Arab States to harden their position." It was disclosed that the Sixth Fleet included the aircraft carriers *America* and *Saratoga* and the heavy guided-missile cruisers *Galveston* and *Little Rock*.

*A Rabat announcement said that Moroccan military traits would be put at the disposal of the Unified Arab Command to "repulse any aggression by Israel."*

In Washington, the State Department said on May 31 that the United States supported the initiative taken by the United Kingdom in consulting other maritime countries on a declaration stating that the Gulf of Aqaba was an international waterway through which ships of all nations had the right of free passage [this initiative had been announced in a speech to the House of Commons the previous day by the U.k. Foreign Secretary, Mr. Brown.] The State Department spokesman, Mr. McCloskey, issued the following statement:

"The focus of our effort to solve the Middle East crisis without hostilities is in the United Nations. We regard its responsibilities as essential and fundamental, and we are doing everything in our power to seek a fair and just outcome of the crisis in that forum.

"As part of that effort, and in support of this policy, we are supporting the British initiative which was announced by Foreign Minister Brown yesterday. **We are consulting other maritime Powers as to their views on the international character of the Straits of Titan and the Gulf of Aqaba in the light of the President's statement of May 23**" [see page 22066].

Major-General Moshe Dayan (52), who commanded the Israeli forces in the victorious 1956 Sinai campaign, was on June 1 appointed Minister of Defence in the Israeli Cabinet, which was also joined by Mr. Menachem Beigin, leader of the right-wing Heruth (Nationalist) Party, as Minister without Portfolio. It was known that Mr. Eshkol's Government had been under strong pressure for the appointment of General Dayan to the Defence Ministry.

The appointment was also announced in Tel-Aviv of General Haim Barlev (43) as Deputy Chief of Staff to General Rabin, the Israeli Chief of Staff. Born in Yugoslavia, General Barlev fought in the Palestine War of 1948 and was Chief of the Armoured Brigade in 1956.

General Dayan relinquished the post of Army Chief of Staff in 1958, later became Minister of Agriculture, but resigned in 1964 after a policy dispute with Mr. Eshkol. He joined Mr. Ben-Gurion's Israel Labour Party (*Rafi*) which was formed in 1965 when Mr. Ben-Gurion broke with the *Mapai*—see 21086 A.

Iraqi troops and armoured units were reported on May 31 to be moving into Jordan to take up positions alongside Jordanian troops on the Israel border. On June 1 Iraqi Air Force jet fighters took off from the Habbaniyah base to fly to “front line” positions in an Arab country bordering Israel. Both the country concerned and the number of aircraft involved were kept secret.

The Iraqi Chargé d’Affaires in London told the British Foreign Office that in the event of Western countries aiding Israel against the Arab States, Iraq would nationalize Western oil companies in her territory and break off diplomatic relations with Britain and America. Kuwait and Saudi Arabia also threatened to suspend oil shipments to all Western countries aiding Israel, while Syria, as stated above, had already threatened to blow up oil pipelines and seize oil installations in the event of war between Israel and the Arab States.

In Teheran, the Persian Government issued a statement expressing support for the Arab States in their confrontation with Israel, and saying that it would support and respect the legitimate rights of the Palestine people as provided for by U.N. resolutions.

The West German Cabinet agreed to an Israeli request for the despatch of 20,000 gas masks for use in case of an Arab attack. A Bonn spokesman said that this was a “humanitarian measure” and not a delivery of war material to the Middle East.

The British Prime Minister flew to Ottawa on June 2 for brief but intensive talks with the Canadian Prime Minister, Mr. Lester Pearson, after which he flew to Washington for similar talks with President Johnson. Mr. Wilson's talks in both Canada and the U.S.A. were understood to have dealt primarily with the Middle East crisis, and it was believed that the Washington discussions had centred particularly on the question of a declaration by the maritime nations on the maintenance of freedom of navigation in the Gulf of Aqaba.

At a press conference in Ottawa before leaving for Washington, Mr. Wilson described the Gulf of Aqaba as the “flashpoint” in the Middle East situation, and said that both he and Mr. Pearson felt strongly that the solution to the problem lay through the United Nations. “Only if we fail,” Mr. Wilson added, “might other action have to be considered”—a statement on which he did not elaborate. Stressing that there were perhaps only a few days left to solve the Aqaba crisis, Mr. Wilson urged the return of an adequate U.N. peace-keeping force between the U.A.R. and Israel which should function on both sides of the frontier.

At a Washington press conference later in the day, Mr. Wilson reiterated that freedom of shipping in the Gulf of Aqaba was the key to the Middle East crisis. Stressing that “time is not on

our side” and that “we must use every minute,” he said that failure to end the blockade peacefully could lead not only to a Middle East war but to a “much larger conflict” within hours.

According to press reports, an Anglo-American declaration affirming the right of free and innocent passage through the Gulf of Aqaba had been presented to more than 20 maritime nations for their support; it was understood to be in the form of a statement of principles, and to contain no provisions for any enforcement action. Although its text was not made public, the U.S. State Department said that it had been worded in such a way that a number of maritime nations were expected to sign it. The Israeli Embassy in Washington announced its acceptance of the declaration, which was also supported by Australia, New Zealand, and the Netherlands; on the other hand France, as well as the Soviet Union, was reported to be opposed to it. According to the Washington correspondent of *The Times*, the declaration was believed to consist of three points laying down as a matter of principle: (1) that the Gulf of Aqaba was an international waterway open to all shipping; (2) that the signatories were prepared to exercise their right of free and innocent passage; and (3) that this right applied to all nations.

In Paris, a statement on the Middle East situation was made by the Foreign Minister, M. Couve de Murville, to a meeting of the French Cabinet attended by President de Gaulle. Afterwards the Minister of Information, M. Gorse, issued a statement quoting General de Gaulle as having (1) said that both Israel and the Arab States had “the right to live”; (2) that the worst thing that could happen would be the outbreak of hostilities; (3) that, if this happened, “the country which is the first to use arms will have neither our support nor our aid”; (4) that the problems of navigation in the Gulf of Aqaba, of the Palestine refugees, and of the general relations between Israel and the Arab States should be “settled by international decision”; (5) and that only the four great Powers which were members of the security Council [i.e. the U.S.A., the Soviet Union, Britain, and France) should take part in such decisions.

M. Gorse said that there was no question of France's friendship with Israel being affected, but reiterated that France was not bound in any way. He added that a declaration by the maritime powers on the Gulf of Aqaba would “not fit into the framework of the four-Power contacts we wish for, and would not help matters forward.”

Mr. Ahmed Shukairy, leader of the Palestine Liberation Organization, called for a *jihad* (holy war) “for the liberation of palestine and the cleansing of our land from the infidels.” Addressing a large Moslem congregation—predominantly Palestine Arabs—in the Haram el Sharif mosque in the Old City of Jerusalem, he said that the Arabs wanted “fighters, not Beatles” and called upon Arab women to don battledress, adding that “this is no time for lipstick and miniskirts.” This was Mr. Shukairy's first public appearance in Jordan since his return from Cairo following the signing of the Egyptian-Jordanian defence pact.

Two Israeli soldiers and a Syrian infiltrator were killed near the Syrian border when an Israeli patrol intercepted a Syrian terrorist group which had been carrying out a sabotage mission in Israeli territory.

Mr. Wilson concluded his talks with President Johnson in Washington, and before returning to London paid a brief visit to New York for a meeting with the U.N. Secretary-General, U Thant.

At a press conference the Prime Minister said that he had reached “complete agreement” with President Johnson and that Britain and America should work for a “multilateral solution” of the Middle East crisis through the United Nations. Asked if and when the Anglo-American declaration on the Gulf of Aqaba would be published, Mr. Wilson hoped it would be made public “quite soon” but added that “there are a number of countries involved—we can't dictate to them.”

The security Council under the chairmanship of Hr. Hans Tabor (Denmark) again held an indecisive meeting following the receipt from the U.A.R. Foreign Minister, Dr. Riad, of a statement denouncing the Anglo-American move for a declaration by the maritime Powers that the Gulf of Aqaba should be open to all shipping.

Dr. Riad described the declaration as “a new phase of pressure and threats by some States who claim to speak on behalf of the maritime Powers,” and as an attempted reversion to the “gunboat diplomacy” of the 19th century. After emphasizing that the U.A.R. would “not permit any act of aggression against its territorial waters and will take all necessary measures to secure its sovereignty,” Dr. Riad gave a warning that “the interests of those States which call themselves maritime Powers might be gravely threatened if they participate in any aggressive acts against the sovereignty of the United Arab Republic.”

Mr. Gideon Rafael (Israel) said that nothing less than complete non-interference with free and innocent passage through the Gulf of Aqaba would be acceptable to his Government. After saying that one Arab delegate after another had come to the security Council, not to seek a reduction of tension but to “fan the flames of violence, tension, and hatred,” he declared: “Many Arab spokesmen have quoted Israeli leaders as saying that Israel is ready to march against Syria and overthrow its regime. I can state categorically that no such statements were made.” On the contrary, Israel's files were “bulging” with statements by Arab leaders that their aim was the destruction and annihilation of Israel.

General Dayan, Israel's new Defence Minister, said at a press conference that while Israel welcomed all the help she could get on the diplomatic front, she wished to fight her own battles with her own troops; he added that he did “not want British or American boys to get killed” in the defence of Israel. Asked whether Israel had lost the military initiative in the Middle East crisis, General Dayan replied: “If you mean to say we stand no chance in battle, then I cannot agree with you.”

An Iraqi delegation visited Amman and Cairo on June 4 to sign the Egyptian-Jordanian defence pact, which thereby became a tripartite defence treaty. On the same day the Libyan Foreign Minister, Mr. Ahmed el Bishty, arrived in Cairo, where it was announced that a Libyan military contingent would fight side by side with the U.A.R. in the event of war, that Libya would deny oil to any countries that helped Israel, and that the U.S. Wheelus air base in Libya would be closed if the United States attempted to aid Israel.

Speaking at the signing ceremony when Iraq joined the Egyptian-Jordanian defence pact, President Nasser said that the Arabs would never recognize any declaration by the maritime nations of freedom of passage in the Gulf of Aqaba. Any such declaration would be considered as a transgression of the U.A.R.'s sovereignty and “a preliminary to an act of war.”—(Times -



Daily Telegraph - Guardian - Sunday Times -Le Monde - New York Times - International Herald Tribune U.S. Information Service - Soviet Embassy Press Department, London - Peking Review) (Prev. rep. middle East, 22063 A)

Note.—Further developments in the Middle East crisis will be described in subsequent issues.—  
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