

The Arab-Israel Conflict. -Disengagement-of-Forces Agreement between Syria and Israel. - Successful Conclusion of Dr. Kissinger's Middle East Peace Mission. - U.N. Force for Golan Heights.

More than four months after Egypt and Israel had signed the agreement for the disengagement of their forces on the Suez-Sinai front [see 26317 A], a similar agreement for the disengagement of forces on the Golan front was signed by Syria and Israel in Geneva on May 31, also under U.N. auspices. The agreement led to a cessation of hostilities on the Golan Heights, where Syrian and Israeli forces had clashed almost every day for many weeks, in contrast to the calm prevailing between the Egyptian and Israeli forces in Sinai.

The agreement between Syria and Israel for the mutual disengagement of their forces was concluded after an extended peace mission to the Middle East by Dr. Henry Kissinger, the U.S. Secretary of State, who remained in the area for a month. Arriving in the Middle East on April 80, and not returning to Washington until May 30, Dr. Kissinger made numerous "shuttle" flights between Jerusalem and Damascus over this period, during which he had extensive conversations with President Assad of Syria and Mrs. Golda Meir, Prime Minister of Israel, and conveyed to the two leaders the detailed proposals of the other side. No particulars of these proposals were released at any time during Dr. Kissinger's mission, but it was known that for long the two sides were far apart, and there were occasions on which it was reported that the Secretary of State might have to return to Washington without securing an agreement. On May 29, however—seven months after the end of the October war—it was announced both in Jerusalem and in Damascus that Israel and Syria had agreed to disengage their forces on the Golan Heights, the agreement to this effect being signed at Geneva on May 31.

Dr. Kissinger had begun his Middle East peace mission with a meeting in Geneva on April 28 with Mr. Gromyko, the Soviet Foreign Minister; an official statement said that they had agreed to "exercise their influence towards a positive outcome" of the next phase of the Middle East talks and would "strive to co-ordinate their efforts for a peaceful settlement" in the area. From Geneva Dr. Kissinger flew to Algiers for a meeting with President Boumedienne on April 29, and after talks with President Sadat of Egypt in Alexandria on April 80 he arrived in Jerusalem on May 2 for his first meeting with the Israel Government, followed on May 3 by his first meeting with the Syrian Government. Thereafter, Dr. Kissinger was almost constantly "on the move" between the Syrian and Israeli capitals until the end of the month, on a number of occasions visiting both Damascus and Jerusalem in the course of a single day for talks with President Assad, Mrs. Meir and their advisers. Apart from his numerous "shuttles" between Israel and Syria, Dr. Kissinger also had talks with King Hussein of Jordan in Amman on May 5; a further meeting with Mr. Gromyko in Nicosia (Cyprus) on May 7; and a meeting with King Faisal of Saudi Arabia in Riyadh on May 9. On May 30, before returning to Washington on the successful conclusion of his mission, the Secretary of State had a further meeting in Egypt with President Sadat, who expressed his pleasure and gratification at the success of Dr. Kissinger's peace efforts.

Apart from his talks with Dr. Kissinger in Geneva and Nicosia, Mr. Gromyko also paid a three-day visit to Damascus on May 5–7, and a further visit to the Syrian capital on May 28–29, for talks with President Assad and other Syrian leaders. A communique on May 7 said that Mr. Gromyko had expressed the Soviet Union's "decisive support for Syria's position on the disengagement of armed forces on the Syrian front", adding that both countries were agreed that a just and lasting peace in the Middle East must be based on the withdrawal of Israeli forces from all Arab territories occupied since 1967 and on the ensuring of the national rights of the Palestinians.

The communique issued after Mr. Gromyko's further visit to Damascus at the end of May was on similar lines, and expressed *inter alia* Syria's insistence that "the Soviet Union must participate fully at all the stages for the achievement of a lasting and just peace in the Middle East".

The disengagement-of-forces agreement with Syria was approved by the Israeli *Knesset* on May 30, by 76 votes to 36, with three abstentions, after a heated debate in which the agreement was defended by Mrs. Meir.

Replying to strong criticisms of the agreement by the right-wing *Likud*, whose leaders described it as a "sell-out" of Israel's security and as giving Syria "a prize for her aggression in October", Mrs. Meir emphasized that the alternative to an agreement would have been a renewal of the war. Denying that the agreement was in any sense a "sell-out", or represented a sacrifice of Israel's security, she stressed that Israel's acceptance of the agreement "does not deprive us of the basic conditions for self-defence and for defeating the aggressors should they violate their obligations and renew the war against us".

Mrs. Meir laid special emphasis on an undertaking, given by Dr. Kissinger in writing, that raids by armed groups or individuals [i.e. by Arab terrorists] across the truce demarcation line would be contrary to the cease-fire; that Israel, in the exercise of her right to self-defence, "may act to prevent such actions by all available means"; and that the United States "will not consider such actions by Israel as violations of the cease-fire, and will support them politically". Mrs. Meir added: "I assume that the United States would not have made such a declaration to us had it not had a solid foundation for doing so, and I make this statement public with the knowledge and ledge of the United States."

[Much concern had been expressed in Israel at the possibility that the disengagement agreement, involving *inter alia* the return of large numbers of Syrians to former occupied areas, might be followed by a stepping-up of Arab terrorist activities against Israel from Syrian-controlled territory—such fears being particularly strong following the recent massacres at Maalot and Kiryat Shemona: see 26536; 26500 A. Mrs. Meir's reference to "American support" for Israel in counter-terrorist action was widely taken to mean that the U.S.A. would vote any condemnation of Israel in the Security Council for taking retaliatory action against terrorism.]

In Damascus, the disengagement agreement was approved on the same day (May 30) by the ruling *Baath* Party.

The disengagement-of-forces agreement between Israel and Syria was signed at the Palais des Nations in Geneva on May 31 by military representatives of the two countries—Major-General Herzl Shafir for Israel and Lieut.-General Adnan Wahid Tayara for Syria—in the presence of General Ensio Siilasvuo, Commander of the U.N. Emergency Force in the Middle East, who acted as chairman. The United States and the Soviet Union were represented by their chief delegates at the Geneva peace talks, respectively Mr. Ellsworth Bunker and Mr. Vladimir Vinogradov. The Syrian military delegation headed by General Tayara sat at a table together with Egyptian officers headed by General Taha al Magdoub; the Israeli military delegation headed by Major-General Shafir sat at another table; while General Siilasvuo, who presided at the signing ceremony, sat between the two sides. After the signature of the agreement General Siilasvuo described the mediatory efforts of Dr. Kissinger as "an exceptional feat of diplomacy unparalleled in the annals of international relations", and said that the foundations had been laid on which a reliable structure of peace could be built.

The provisions of the disengagement-of-forces agreement signed by Egypt and Syria were as follows:

- (A) Israel and Syria would "scrupulously observe the cease-fire on land, sea and air" and would "refrain from all military actions against each other from the time of the signing of this document, in implementation of U.N. security Council resolution 338 dated Oct. 22, 1973" [see 26197 A].
- (B) The military forces of Israel and Syria would be separated in accordance with the following principles:
 - (1) All Israeli military forces would be west of the line designated as Line A on an attached map [see map overleaf] except in the Quneitra area, where they would be west of the Line A1.
 - (2) All territory east of Line A would be under Syrian administration, and Syrian civilians would return to this territory.
 - (3) The area between Line A and the line designated on the attached map as Line B would be an area of separation between the Israeli and Syrian forces. In this area a United Nations Disengagement Observation Force (UNDOF) would be stationed, in accordance with an accompanying protocol [see below].
 - (4) All Syrian military forces would be east of the line designated as Line B on the attached map.
 - (5) There would be two equal areas of limitation of armament and forces, one west of Line A and one east of Line B, as agreed upon.
 - (6) Air forces of the two sides would be permitted to operate up to their respective lines without interference from the other side.

Under the disengagement-of-force agreement (a) U.N. troops will be stationed in a buffer zone between Lines A and B; (b) Israel will maintain limited forces in a zone west of Line 1 and of Line A1, which creates an enclave around Qunelaters; (c) Syria will maintain limited forces in a zone east of Line B.—(Reproduced by permission from *The Times*)

(c) The disengagement-of-forces agreement and the attached map would be signed by the military representatives of Israel and Syria in Geneva not later than May 31, 1974, in the Egyptian-Israeli military working group of the Geneva peace conference under the aegis of the United Nations, after that group had been joined by a Syrian representative, and with the participation of representatives of the United States and the Soviet Union.

The precise delineation of a detailed map and a plan for the implementation of the disengagement of forces would be worked out by military representatives of Israel and Syria in the Egyptian-Israeli military working group, who would agree on the stages of this process. The military working group would start their work for this purpose in Geneva within 24 hours of the signing of the disengagement-of-forces agreement, and would complete it within five days. Disengagement would begin within 24 hours after the completion of the task of the military working group, and the process of disengagement would be completed not later than 20 days after its commencement.

(D) The provisions of paragraph, (A), (B) and (c) would be inspected by personnel of the U.N. Disengagement Observation Force set up under the agreement.

(E) Within 24 hours of the signing of the disengagement-of-forces agreement, all wounded prisoners of war held by each side, as certified by the International Committee of the Red Cross, would be repatriated. The morning after the completion of the task of the military working group, all remaining prisoners of war would be repatriated.

(F) The bodies of all dead soldiers held by either side would be returned for burial in their respective countries within 10 days of the signing of the agreement.

(G) This paragraph stated: "This agreement is not a peace agreement. It is a step toward a just and durable peace on the basis of security Council resolution 338 dated Oct. 22, 1973."

The attached protocol relating to the establishment of this Force, referred to in the agreement, contained the following provisions:

(i) Israel and Syria agreed that the role of the U.N. Disengagement Observation Force (UNDOF) would be "to exert utmost efforts to maintain the cease-fire and ensure that it is strictly observed".

(ii) UNDOF would supervise the areas of disengagement and of limitations of forces and armament. In undertaking its mission it would "observe in general the Syrian laws and regulations in force and will not obstruct the work of the civilian administration".

(iii) UNDOF would enjoy the freedom of movement and communications necessary for its mission. It would be mobile and provided with weapons of a defensive nature, which would not be used except in self-defence.

(iv) The strength of UNDOF would be about 1,250, recruited by the U.N. Secretary-General in consultation with U.N. member-countries which were not permanent members of the security Council.

UNDOF would be under the command of the United Nations vested in the Secretary-General and under the authority of the security Council.

(vi) UNDOF would conduct inspection operations under the agreement and submit reports to the parties on a regular basis, not less frequently than once in every 15 days and additionally when requested by either of the two parties. It would put landmarks on the two opposite lines indicated on the map attached to the agreement.

(vii) Israel and Syria would support the security Council resolution for the establishment of UNDOF.

(viii) The initial term of UNDOF would be for a period of six months, subject to renewal by resolution of the security Council.

As provided under the agreement and the accompanying protocol, the buffer zone between the Syrian and Israeli forces would be patrolled by the U.N. Disengagement Observation Force of about 1,250 soldiers, which would not include troops from any of the permanent members of the security Council. East and west of the U.N. buffer zone, Israeli and Syrian forces would be thinned out in three parallel zones, as follows: (a) in the first zone (i.e. the one nearest the U.N. buffer zone), which would be six miles wide, the number of troops on each side would be limited to 6,000, with no more than 75 tanks and a maximum of 36 light artillery pieces; (b) in the second zone, also six miles wide, there would be no long-range artillery, ground-

to-ground missiles or rockets, but up to 450 tanks and an unlimited number of light artillery pieces would be permitted on either side; (c) the third zone, three miles wide but also including the first two zones (thus an area 15 miles in width), would be free of anti-aircraft missiles.

The general effect of the agreement was that Israel would withdraw from all the areas taken in the October 1973 war, as well as from some areas occupied in the 1967 war, including the war-devastated town of Quneitra (Kuneitra), the chief centre of the Golan region. Israel would, however, retain control of three strategic hills west of Quneitra. As stated in the agreement, Syrian civilians who fled from these areas during the hostilities would be able to return, and Syrian administration in the areas would be restored.

An agreement on final details of disengagement of forces, limitation of armaments in the above-mentioned zones, and repatriation of all prisoners of war was signed in Geneva on June 5 by Generals Shafir and Tayara, in the presence of General Siilasvuo. The negotiations, conducted in the Egyptian-Israeli military working group (which was joined by Syrian officers), were completed within five days of the disengagement-of-forces agreement, as stipulated in that agreement. As a result, disengagement of Syrian and Israeli forces on the Golan Heights began on the same day (June 5), to be completed within 20 days as agreed upon.

The first exchange of prisoners of war took place on June 1 under the aegis of the International Red Cross, when 25 Syrians and a Moroccan were flown to Damascus in exchange for 12 Israelis who were flown to Tel Aviv; all the p.o.w.s were badly wounded in the October war, some of them having undergone amputations. The repatriation of all remaining prisoners of war was completed on June 6, when Red Cross planes flew 367 Syrians, 10 Iraqis and five Moroccans to Damascus in exchange for 56 Israeli prisoners who were flown to Tel Aviv.

In a statement on June 12 to the *Knesset* after debriefing of the returned Israeli p.o.w.s, Mr. Shimon Peres, who had succeeded General Dayan as Defence Minister [see 26578 B], said that it had been established beyond doubt that while in Syrian hands at least five Israeli prisoners were maimed as a result of torture and excesses, and two apparently died after torture; other prisoners had been beaten and whipped, had their finger-nails torn out, and had electric shocks applied to sensitive parts of the body. In the case of some captured air pilots wounds had been deliberately inflicted on their ears to render them Useless for any further combat missions. Moreover, Israeli p.o.w.s had been held in grossly overcrowded and insanitary conditions, as many as 30 in a narrow cell, without adequate ventilation or sanitary facilities, and had been given poor food and only minimal medical treatment. Accusing Syria of having flagrantly violated the Geneva Conventions on the treatment of war prisoners, Mr. Peres said that the International Red Cross would be informed and that Israel would demand that those responsible should be brought to trial by an international court and punished.

A resolution for the establishment of the U.N. Disengagement Observation Force (UNDOF), presented jointly by the United States and the Soviet Union, was adopted by the security Council on May 31 by 18 votes to nil, with China and Iraq abstaining and dissociating themselves from the decision to set up the Force. The resolution authorized the Secretary-General, Dr. Waldheim, to set up UNDOF under the authority of the security Council and established the Force "for the initial period of six months, subject to renewal by further resolution of the security Council".

By the first week of June about 1,000 troops of UNDOF had taken up positions in the buffer zone between the Syrian and Israeli lines, varying in width from 500 yards to six miles in different areas. Drawn from the U.N. Emergency Force (UNEF) in Sinai, the UNDOF contingents consisted mainly of Peruvian and Austrian troops, under the command of General Gonzalo Briceno of Peru.

Dr. Waldheim left New York on June 2 for an eight-day tour of the Middle East which, it was announced, would include visits to Lebanon, Syria, Israel, Jordan and Egypt; he would also have talks with the Syrian and Israeli authorities on the role to be played by the U.N. Disengagement Observation Force.

The disengagement-of-forces agreement brought about the cessation of hostilities on the Golan Heights, where a cease-fire went into effect on May 31 within an hour of the signing of the agreement in Geneva. As stated in, artillery shelling had gone on almost every day on the Golan front since the end of the October war, with air battles from time to time and, in mid-April, heavy ground fighting on and around Mount Hermon. On April 28 the Israelis suffered their heaviest casualties in a single day since the October war when they lost 14 soldiers killed—eight by Syrian shellfire in the Mount Hermon area, and six in a helicopter crash in the same area. On April 29 a fierce air battle was fought over the Golan Heights in which the Syrians claimed the shooting-down of five Israeli *Phantoms*, while Israel claimed to have shot down four Syrian *MiGs*. The cease-fire on May 31 ended 80 days of consecutive and often heavy artillery exchanges on the Golan Heights.

In her speech to the *Knesset* asking for approval of the disengagement-of-forces agreement with Syria [see above], Mrs. Meir disclosed that 54 Israeli soldiers and six civilians had been killed on the Golan front, and a further 176 soldiers and three civilians wounded, since the end of the October war. Syrian casualties were not known.—(Times - Guardian - Daily Telegraph - New York Times - International Herald Tribune -Le Monde - Soviet Embassy Press Department, London - U.N. Information Centre, London) (*Prev. rep. Middle East, Egyptian-Israeli Disengagement-of-Forces Agreement, 26493 A; 26317 A; Golan Fighting, 26403 A.*)

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