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Meetings of D.H. with Prime Minister
Ben-Gurion held on 9 and 10 May
in the office of the Prime Minister.
(verbatim records)

HEADQUARTERS
TRUCE SUPERVISION ORGANIZATIONCONFIDENTIAL

Jerusalem, 15 May 1957

MEETING OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL WITH PRIME MINISTER BEN-GURION

HELD ON 9 MAY 1957 AT 4:00 P.M. ISRAEL TIME

IN THE OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER

United NationsSecretary-General
Dr. Ralph Bunche
Colonel B.V. Leary
Mr. Henri Vigier
Mr. de KemoullariaIsraelPrime Minister David Ben-Gurion
Mrs. Golda Meir, Foreign Minister
Mr. Arthur Lourie, Acting Director-General
of the Foreign Ministry
Mr. Gideon Rafael, Adviser
Mr. Y. Herzog, UN Political Affairs
Mr. Y. Tekoah, Director of Armistice Affairs
Mr. S. Rosenne, Legal Adviser
Mr. P. Eliav, Secretary to the Delegation

SECRETARY-GENERAL: Spoke of his appreciation for the opportunity to sit together with the Prime Minister. He had had the privilege of seeing Mrs. Meir in New York, but things continued to develop. There are issues of various types, some of which may be more fruitfully discussed informally, others to be looked at carefully. He had made it clear in his reply to the Prime Minister that no question should be excluded. It was not his intention to limit the discussion, but to let it follow where it would.

PRIME MINISTER: We have prepared an agenda which comprises five items. Some may be added during the discussion as they arise out of the discussion of these items.

1. What can be done for more peaceful relations in the Middle East between Israel and its neighbours, and the implementation of

of the Charter. The soul of the Charter is peace. The first thing is to see what can be done, if something can be done, so that the principles of the Charter are kept in the Middle East by Israel and her neighbours.

2. Do away with the claim, especially of Egypt, but not of Egypt alone, of belligerency, which means how to ensure that the decision of the Security Council of 1951, about freedom of passage, is implemented.

3. Freedom of passage through the Suez Canal (Security Council resolution of 1951) and in the Gulf of Eilat.

4. The building of a fence in the Gaza Strip to prevent incursions.

5. Article VIII of the Jordan-Israel General Armistice Agreement - Freedom of access to the Holy Places, resumption of humanitarian and cultural institutions on Mount Scopus.

With regard to the implementation of the Charter, we have no illusions that peace will be established tomorrow. However, Members of the United Nations should carry out the first Article of the Charter, according to which international disputes should be adjusted by peaceful means.

SECRETARY-GENERAL: There is no question at all concerning the aim; the purpose of the United Nations and the Charter is to maintain peace and solve international conflicts by peaceful means. A natural angle of approach is to determine what are peaceful means. We have peaceful means provided within the United Nations itself (attempts to work out

compromise solutions through the General Assembly; the setting up of bodies within the General Assembly to work out solutions; the Security Council with its special responsibilities; the Secretariat and its organs). None of these means is very valuable unless the various parties want to avoid force, unless there is a will to peace, as the United Nations is limited in the possibility to force countries into peaceful procedures. The basis question is, what are the underlying questions and tensions which we must control in order to have a basis for using the United Nations machinery? We know cases when the machinery does not work owing to lack of will. Here, it is different. I do not know of any country in the Middle East which does not want a peaceful solution. We have to study why the frictions are such as they are in spite of a certain will to avoid conflict. I think the United Nations tools can be used in order to get somewhere but used only to a modest degree. Last year, we made some experiments. We are engaged in other experiments now. We may find other ways, but all of them do not cut very deep. They are means necessary to control the situation and are not very valuable to change it. We should not leave out of account the technical means provided by the United Nations, whose role is important. We should on the other hand realize that they do not really solve the problem. We would like to get your thinking on the issues to help us get a fuller and clearer picture of how you envisage the problem of tension in the area and what you think should be done about it from all sides.

PRIME MINISTER: Peace is a positive thing. It means also some negative

things. Article II of the Charter states that no Member of the United Nations shall use threat of force. Is there a way to prevent at least that as a first step? We find ourselves in the position that there is never a meeting of our neighbours in which they do not agree on one thing - war against Israel. They are members of the United Nations. Cannot something be done to stop this?

SECRETARY-GENERAL: This repeated talk about war against Israel is a symptom. You get those various statements (King Hussein's lately) but I wonder if you should not discount them. I think you can count on one thing for certain and that is that there is no Arab country at present who sees even the possibility to push Israel into the sea. I think this is a gain, not necessarily in observance of the Charter, but in realism and common sense. I do hope that although these expressions are to be condemned, as they are condemned in the Charter, they should be put into perspective. They are less threatening than they seem or were. The attitude of the competing parties of world politics are of decisive significance. I said last year I did not believe that you would find that the Powers would tolerate an attempt by the Arab world to push Israel into the sea. This expression should not be regarded as a political programme in the serious sense of the word. There are curious elements in the rhetoric in the Arab world. The expression is a kind of incantation. I have criticized it directly in conversation with various Arab leaders. Sometimes the expression covers empty rhetoric, sometimes a sloppy way of referring to the fact that so far there has been no peace settlement. This is a problem which we cannot

leave aside and where we must press forward. What we have to find is in the first instance the mentality reflected, and two, the use of that kind of threat, and three, the technical problem. I have transmitted to Egypt the question you have put regarding belligerency. I have no formal reply, but I can say here that when I got the official communication on the Suez Canal, the Egyptian Foreign Minister indicated that I would get a reply. I have approached him again.

This leads on to another question which cuts very deep into the problem. You have repeatedly offered a non-aggression pact with Egypt and other Arab countries. I felt and still feel that if the question is raised in that form, it takes us too far into the future. There is a more limited, more modest approach which is really inspired by your own stand last year, and that is at least to make Article I of the General Armistice Agreement a reality, and more than this, also to try to give it such application as to make it a very real factor for peace.

PRIME MINISTER: I wish to explain first why I started with "threat of war". Not because it is an infringement of the Charter. Also not because I am frightened now that Hussein, Nasser and the others will push us into the sea. They will not do it. The essence of the whole United Nations Charter is peace. I hope that sometime there will be peace in the Middle East, but if the Arab leaders and rulers state publicly that they are going to make war on Israel, they educate their people, they teach them that this is the only end - which makes the hope of peace sometime almost impossible. This is the only common thing among the Arab people. They make peace impossible. If they go

on saying this for years, I don't see how there will be peace. The United Nations and representatives of the United Nations, the Security Council, the General Assembly, even if they cannot produce peace tomorrow, should prevent this poisoning of the people's minds in the Middle East which makes the hope for peace in the future impossible. If they would be told by the General Assembly - and the General Assembly should be asked to do it - that this cannot be done, that this is incompatible with membership of the United Nations, the damage would be stopped. We must care now for what may happen five or ten years from now. The main root of the trouble in the Middle East now is the quarrel between the East and West. However, at least this poisoning of the people's minds can be stopped. Something should be done to stop it. I cannot understand why no initiative has been taken by the organs of the United Nations to stop it.

SECRETARY-GENERAL: I think you realize that it is not an expression of real intention. I agree about the psychological influence. No Arab leader can go up against it or say anything different. Why is that so? We still have a state in the Arab world which is closer to a tribal state than a national state. It is still fluid and there will always be many competing leaders of a type which we do not know in the West. The other thing is that there is one factor in the picture which is always in his mind. In an election campaign, say, in the United States, we find a group which is undetermined and which can be swayed this or that way. The undetermined group in the Middle East is the Palestinians and there is a constant

woing going on. I did not mention the refugee problem in the first instance because I thought it would be more useful to see what you considered as the source of tension. I think that the biggest shortcoming of the United Nations and of all the Member States, which, in any way, is close to the Middle East problem, is that we have failed so utterly in getting anywhere with the refugee question. I have a strong conviction that before we get over this difficult question we will not kill this competition between the various Arab leaders. There should be much more serious effort to get down to something real on the refugee question. I am not in a position to say to anybody how the refugee problem should be solved as it now stands. For that reason, I would like to have your views. With your permission, I would like to ask you if you see any line that the United Nations could take on the refugee problem.

PRIME MINISTER: You explained why the Arab leaders make these declarations. What I am asking is why the United Nations has not done anything for nine years against such declarations. Why the question was never discussed in the General Assembly. Why the General Assembly was never called upon to study it. The United Nations, under the circumstances, should do something. It should try. Why do the people who are responsible for the United Nations do nothing?

DR. BUNCHE: I would like to ask a question. It is not clear to me at all what you might expect the United Nations to do about the political utterances of Arab leaders, what the United Nations might do, apart from criticism.

PRIME MINISTER: The Arab rulers threaten to use force. If they will use force, they will be answered.

DR. BUNCHE: You would interpret such utterances as a threat?

PRIME MINISTER: Yes, it is a threat of war. How would you explain Article 2 of the Charter: "All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force"?

DR. BUNCHE: I do not see a threat of force, for example, if these declarations are not followed by mobilization, border raids or actual threats to the people. What the United Nations could do to stop political statements is what bothers me.

SECRETARY-GENERAL: It is proposed that we discuss the question of what can be done, not by words but by changing the situation, so that the reason for the utterances falls away.

PRIME MINISTER: There are certain political utterances which are very damaging. These threats destroy the peace and the hope of peace in this part of the world. Why do you tolerate it?

MRS. MEIR: You said at the beginning that you do not know of any country in the Middle East that does not want peace, but it is understood that you said that it naturally wants peace on its own terms and it is a question of compromise. I am afraid it does not help the situation to say that a threat of war is the same as "no peace". I could understand if the Arab countries would say, "We do not want peace with Israel until they give us part of their territory, until they stop immigrating, etc." But the situation is different when countries say it is their very

aim to destroy Israel and when two, three or four heads of state combine (heads of countries with or without elections) under a unified military command, when these statements are made separately and jointly and when these states are being armed. You said that no Arab country will throw Israel into the sea and that they have grown realistic. They won't attempt it now, but I am convinced you will not say to Israel, "Don't worry, they will not attempt it." Suppose they are armed and supported well enough. Is this a threat to a state or not? I wonder if the United Nations would sit by and do nothing if, for instance, Scandinavian countries combined against France.

DR. BUNCHE: Who in Egypt is making such statements?

PRIME MINISTER: We will get official texts.

MRS. MEIR: Are their radio programmes sponsored by General Electric, Chesterfields, etc? If you find a statement in the Israel radio that the aim of the State of Israel is to destroy Egypt, you would have a perfect right to say that this is an official statement, because the radio station is Government-owned. As you know, there is no free press in Egypt.

PRIME MINISTER: I understand that the Egyptian radio is official and what I was told

DR. BUNCHE: They do claim that everything said on the Egyptian radio is not an official statement.

MRS. MEIR: Go and say over the Egyptian radio that there should be peace between Egypt and Israel.

DR. BUNCHE: I have done so, three years ago. I would not hesitate to do it today.

MRS. MEIR: That was before the Nasser regime.

DR. BUNCHE: What I cannot say is what a government should do.

SECRETARY-GENERAL: If Dr. Bunche tried it, we would not be cut off the air. They might object. The question is: Why is nothing done about it? To look at it from the practical point of view, I for one would recommend that not only the United Nations but those Governments who have considerable influence should come out more consistently than before and say that the idea of destroying Israel is nonsense. In my personal contacts, I have used that very word. It is stupid, and this can be stated. What is the effect of such statements? Nothing, unless at the same time one diminishes the reasons of the fever. It is my conviction that nothing would be more productive than if the United Nations could get somewhere on the refugee question. My idea would be a resolution which opens up something which makes sense on the question. There must be basic action and a moral line laid down together. I heard a statement from a Swede of the highest integrity the other day, which I may quote. He had travelled around the whole area and his impression of the Middle East was that he was not very well qualified to say what things should be done but without coming to grips with the refugee question we would not get anywhere with the other problems. I think we can discard at least part of the Jordanian trouble in terms of the classic conflict between Palestinians and the Bedouins. In the same

sense, if we did not have the refugee aspect, I ask myself if we would have the Gaza problem in which Egypt took an interest.

PRIME MINISTER: I assume that your raising the question has nothing to do with the declaration made in Egypt two weeks ago, that linked the question of Israel passage through the Suez with the question of the refugees.

SECRETARY-GENERAL: Absolutely nothing.

PRIME MINISTER: If this is the true reason, I must foresee that there is going to be and must be wars throughout the world - in Europe, between the Czechs and Poland, because the Czechs, under a communist regime, asked the Poles to leave; in Korea, there are refugees from the north to the south; there are also Vietnam, Morocco, India, Pakistan ... So far, I have not heard that there must be war between all these countries until all the refugees go back. There is no single man who believes that the refugees will go back. Who is responsible for the refugees? We said we accepted the resolution of the General Assembly on the partition of Palestine. We did not like it because Jerusalem was outside. The Arab States said no. Then began the exodus of the Arabs. It was planned. The mufti had a plan and made it public that he would evacuate them, leaving only those who could carry arms and use them, and they began to leave. This happened when the British were still here. The British Army was stronger than all the other forces, but for some reason there was trouble going on throughout the country. General Stockwell said, "You can fight it out between yourselves

and I will be neutral." The Arabs were told, "You have only to deliver your arms and stay where you are." They left. Jordan had to take them in. You ask us now that we expel the Jewish refugees from Iraq, Yemen, etc. and take back the Arab refugees. There is Article I, the Gulf of Eilat, etc. The United Nations is not so helpless - I have seen where they were very energetic and they threatened sanctions - not against Nasser. But nothing was done, never an Assembly called, and we say these threats should be stopped, as they make it impossible for peace even for more reasonable Arab leaders. The refugees have to be settled in Iraq, Syria and Jordan.

Mr. Johnston, in connexion with the Jordan, said that the waters of the Yarmouk River and the Jordan should be divided between the three countries, Syria, Jordan and Israel, and a number of refugees could be resettled. Although we considered the division of the waters unjust, we agreed to this allocation of the waters and this would help a large number of refugees in Jordan to settle there. Why, when we ask for no declarations of war do you ask us about refugees? We have settled refugees. I am told the people of Iraq are leaving their country. It is one of the richest countries; it has two big rivers. Do you believe that the question of refugees can be solved within the framework of the general settlement?

We thought that if we remained with the United Nations in Gaza we could at least find a solution for those refugees who were there, while we were there. The United Nations decided we had to go. What has this to do with threats of war? Behind the threats are illusions

coming from Russia.

And what is the blockade in the Suez? It is against the decision of the Security Council, the only organ of the United Nations whose decisions are binding upon its members. It is more than six years since the decision was taken, Mr. Hammarskjöld, and what have you done? What are you going to do about it?

SECRETARY-GENERAL: To go back for a moment, I do not wish to go here and now into the question of refugees in the sense that we should take up that problem at this meeting. I bring them into the picture, as I just wish to see the problems as they exist. I did not want to, in United Nations terms, evaluate the refugee problem. I tried to map out what the situation is. From the question of competition among Arab States for Arab refugees we came to the possibilities of the United Nations getting something done. It is a hard political fact that the refugee problem comes into the picture. I think we should leave it at that. It was an attempt to understand a problem. If we could show the way forward on the refugee question, all the other questions would become much easier to handle.

PRIME MINISTER: Have you any idea of how to solve it?

SECRETARY-GENERAL: No, I do not. The Johnston plan would not take care of many refugees.

PRIME MINISTER: We are dealing with the refugee problem and are settling refugees. Now we are receiving refugees from an unnamed country. We are settling them. They are not Zionists from Eastern European countries. They have an elementary feeling that they are in their own country among their

own people. Why should not the Arab refugees be settled in their own country among their own people? Why under a foreign government? There is plenty of land. It is practical, it is right and it is possible. In Iraq they don't care for the welfare of the people. King Saud made a statement that he is ready to ascrifice 10,000,000 Arabs in order to destroy Israel. This is the danger of the political utterances. The Arab refugees are being told that they will live on their own land under their own government when they finish Israel.

DR. BUNCHE: The reports we get in the American press are that most of the trouble in Jordan came from the Palestinians.

PRIME MINISTER: If you raise the question of the refugees, you must have a plan or you must accept their plan to push Israel into the sea. We are training our refugees to work on the land in the desert. The Arabs would not do this. If you gave them fertile land and a home, they would be happy. I have not heard yet of any other plan.

SECRETARY-GENERAL: We still have to deal with a generation who are from land on the other side. I still think there is enough in it definitely to make it morally and natural for Israel to see its part of the responsibility. It is an essential point of the solution of the problem. I do not want to raise the practical problem of repatriation. Human reactions must be taken into account in working out a solution. I am not ready to draw conclusions.

PRIME MINISTER: If the refugees were told that Israel would never be

destroyed, they would ask the Arab leaders to resettle them. They are being told to wait and live by charity for the day when Israel will be destroyed. If you would eradicate this illusion, the refugees would be resettled or resettle themselves. I know the moral danger being created among the refugees. Once they would be convinced that Israel would not be destroyed, the problem would be solved.

DR. BUNCHE: I see this problem as a great danger to everyone in the Middle East - to Israel as well as everyone else.

MRS. MEIR: A visitor here the other day, who had a lot of good things to say about the development schemes in Iraq, admitted that there was a shortage of manpower and that he had asked some members of the Government, "Why didn't they take in large numbers of refugees?" The answer was: "If we take them this will solve the problem. The problem must not be solved."

SECRETARY-GENERAL: You said, Mr. Ben-Gurion, that there is this difference between Bedouins and Palestinians. The Palestinians are different people and do not mix very well with the Bedouins.

MR. HERZOG: There is no indication in any Arab country of a readiness to accept a new approach to the refugee problem. Is it realized that this question threatens the Arabs as well as Israel?

SECRETARY-GENERAL: This is not an approach considered seriously at all. But they are realizing the danger. There is competition for 900,000 souls. There is responsibility for the Palestinians.

MR. HERZOG: Iraq should be interested in minimizing the problem.

SECRETARY-GENERAL: I have not for one year been in touch with Iraq on the level which counts. There are two elements mixed in this. You are right in your assumption of the overall situation. They do regard the refugee problem as a very risky thing. On the other hand, there is the problem of not being less Arab than the other Arabs.

MR. HERZOG: There has been evidence of a certain preparedness in certain Arab countries to take an independent line.

SECRETARY-GENERAL: I think that there are several changes in the situation to make it possible to see a break. I was less certain about this last year.

PRIME MINISTER: Regarding repatriation of Arabs to Israel, the Arab countries consider it dangerous to take refugees into their countries. Have you given any thought to what it would mean to Israel if the refugees were returned?

SECRETARY-GENERAL: I have realized this danger. That is the reason why it becomes so tied up with the general problem. I had not the slightest intention of mentioning the refugee question. It is part of an analysis of the problem. You should not listen to anything I say as a proposal to consider this or that. I just want to be perfectly sure that you do not believe that this is a subtle way of expressing a policy line, because it is certainly not. We are back to the basic question of what the United Nations can do, and what you can do.

PRIME MINISTER: I have a great deal of understanding of the Arabs. I lived with them and worked with them, and there is one way out of this vicious

circle. I know there is no easy, prompt solution to these problems, but, unless the Arab world, not only their leaders, but first of all their leaders, are convinced, and we can make it clear - there are powers in the world that can make it clear - that Israel cannot be destroyed - that it came to stay - once this is made clear to them, and the Arab public opinion takes it into their blood, then they will have to begin. But not as long as they believe Israel will be destroyed.

DR. BUNCHE: Do they really believe this?

PRIME MINISTER: They certainly do. They have the Big Power connexion - Russia. They are getting arms, instructors. 200 instructors came over (to Syria?) from a satellite country. Why wouldn't they believe it? When we take in refugees, we must take them in at once. But they can wait. This illusion must be destroyed. It can be, and this is the work of the responsible people in the United Nations. If they would be told that it will not happen, that it will not be allowed, and if they would be educated on that, then they would begin thinking of peace.

DR. BUNCHE: I do not think there is any Arab leader living today who is not aware that, if there were an attack on Israel, there would be decisive United Nations action or a third world war.

PRIME MINISTER: Russia is now for the Arabs, but eight years ago she was for Israel. Would the United States lift a finger?

DR. BUNCHE: The United Nations would intervene. Only seven years ago, the North Korean invasion started, backed by Russia and Communist China. There was a very decisive United Nations intervention.

PRIME MINISTER: They were 19,000,000 people. Do you think that if the Sixth Fleet decided to finish Israel, it could not do it in one night?

DR. BUNCHE: The point is that, five or ten years from now, if the Arab world would attack Israel, there would be international intervention.

PRIME MINISTER: They do not believe it. Why should they think so?

DR. BUNCHE: Would they assume that the international community would intervene for Egypt, but not for Israel?

PRIME MINISTER: It has happened. The United Nations intervened in Jerusalem - after one month. Why should they believe it now that they have Russia behind them? But if the United Nations would tell them, "It will never happen and you must forget it", it would not happen. This is the beginning of a solution. Everything begins in their minds. You must change their minds.

DR. BUNCHE: The Security Council did exactly this in November 1948.

PRIME MINISTER: You did not tell them they must go back to their lines.

DR. BUNCHE: The November 1948 resolution did exactly that.

PRIME MINISTER: No, it did not. Did the November resolution request the Egyptians or Syrians to withdraw?

DR. BUNCHE: It requested an armistice.

PRIME MINISTER: The United Nations never asked them to withdraw, but

you did ask Israel to withdraw and they did, and the Arabs remember it. There were two standards then and now, but I will not mention this now. You said that the November resolution was a notification that Israel was here to stay, but you remember that the resolution itself referred to a provisional measure and the Arabs today interpret it in absolutely the opposite way.

SECRETARY-GENERAL: It is impossible to make a comparison between 1948 and 1957.

PRIME MINISTER: They must be told Israel is going to stay.

SECRETARY-GENERAL: I believe you are right: this is a notion which must be brought into public opinion. You mentioned education and I agree. On the leaders' side, the situation is different. I would say they have realized one thing, which is rather important. If the situation last fall had been the opposite one, the standard of the United Nations would have been the same towards the other side. The situation last fall was something new in the United Nations. It has been realized by governments that there is another side, that there could not be double standards. This has not penetrated to the man in the street.

MRS. MEIR: The Arabs were at the United Nations throughout these months. Three problems were dealt with: Kashmir, Hungary and Israel. They have learned a lesson.

SECRETARY-GENERAL: It is a fascinating problem. I am not taking sides. Mr. Nehru attacks the Kashmir position from the opposite angle.

MRS. MEIR: There was a decision and India pays no attention to it. On Hungary - there were decisions and nothing happened.

SECRETARY-GENERAL: In the case of Hungary, Russia was condemned. This did not happen in the case of Israel. If the United Nations, in a situation of very great political tension orders a Big Power to withdraw, nothing may happen because the United Nations would not have the necessary power behind it. The United Nations took, in the case of Hungary, the strongest stand legally and morally and did not get anywhere, because in that case the conflict would have been between the two big powers, between East and West. We have to draw the conclusion, and we have drawn it, that the decisions taken on one side would be taken on the other side. At least, I would be ready to leave the United Nations, if it were not so.

PRIME MINISTER: Israel is a little country; we are a small people.

SECRETARY-GENERAL: Israel is not a little country.

PRIME MINISTER: Morally I consider our people equal to any people in the world but I know that bombs and planes, and guided missiles, and guns weigh more than moral considerations. Therefore, I am sorry that we are a tiny country.

SECRETARY-GENERAL: Regarding the agenda, I would like to add questions about the kind of co-operation we would like to have between the U.N.T.S.O. and Israel.

PRIME MINISTER: Agreed

DR. BUNCHE: A first vital step would be to do everything possible to create an atmosphere for peace by relaxing tension. You could do that best through an extended period in which dangerous, exciting incidents would be avoided. To make a strong effort for the achievement of peaceful conditions towards full peace. It is important to bear in mind that there are some new factors in the Middle East now which could be important. As a result of last fall, there is an intensified concern of the United Nations, a demonstrated willingness and ability of the United Nations to intervene decisively in a situation in which force, even when used by big powers, is involved. There is UNEF. On the Arab side, there is an influence which would be sufficient to keep them restrained, to avoid dangerous actions on their part. On the Israel side, there is need for full understanding that the United Nations is earnestly and honestly seeking peace in this area in every way that it possibly can and that the United Nations can be an important factor in peace. I think there has to be a full recognition of this. This means possibly that on your side there would be some willingness to gamble on the United Nations effort.

PRIME MINISTER: I hope that tomorrow you will explain.

The meeting adjourned at 7:00 P.M. Israel time. The next meeting was set for 9:30 A.M. Israel time, 10 May 1957.

HEADQUARTERS
TRUCE SUPERVISION ORGANIZATIONCONFIDENTIAL

Jerusalem, 16 May 1957

SECOND MEETING OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL WITH PRIME MINISTER BEN-GURION
HELD ON 10 MAY 1957 AT 9:30 A.M. ISRAEL TIME
IN THE OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER

PRIME MINISTER: Opened the meeting by "trying to sum up". He mentioned Article 2, paragraph 3, of the United Nations Charter. He stated that the Arab refusal to negotiate with Israel was in contravention of the Charter. He also mentioned Article 33, paragraph 1, "one of the most important articles", which President Nasser refused to apply - also Article 2 (4), violated by Nasser when he says he will be glad when his army and that of Syria meet on the ruins of this traitorous country - Article 1 (3), violated by the Arab boycott of Israel - Article 25, violated by Egypt - Article 55 (b) and 56 which apply to the Gulf of Eilat. Is it possible for the United Nations Secretariat to do something to implement these provisions?

SECRETARY-GENERAL: Referred to Chapter VI and VII of the Charter, which provided procedures for the implementation of provisions defining the purposes and principles of the Charter. Any country could take the initiative. In addition, there was Article 99 under which the Secretary-General may take limited action.

PRIME MINISTER: I want to know how we can get the blockade stopped.

SECRETARY-GENERAL: This is a political question. Action in this matter would be a kind of mixture between political action by diplomatic means and action through the United Nations. It was not for the Secretary-General to give counsel. As for Article 99, which had been used only once, in the Korean war, he did not think he should use it now. He observed that absence of action "on record" by the Secretary-General was sometimes interpreted as absence of action.

PRIME MINISTER: There was an accumulation of Soviet-Arab menace in Egypt. There were open threats by Ministers in Egypt - not by Nasser; then by Army men. There was the Egyptian, Syrian and Jordanian unified command. In an hour, our state could be cut in two by the Arab Legion and the Egyptian and Syrian airforces could bomb our cities. Then we can't mobilize our reserves; we are defenceless and finished. When the triple military alliance was concluded, a commander stated they would choose the hour of attack. There is a natural right of self-defence. In the Sinai expedition, we did not go into Syria, Jordan or Egypt. What was the result? A few weeks ago, there was some trouble in Jordan. It was a pro-Egyptian, pro-USSR and anti-West process. The American Sixth Fleet was sent to this part of the world. They did not fight. There was no need. But they were not sent by the United Nations, but by American, and now for the time being Jordan is outside the Soviet orbit. Without the Sinai expedition, this would not have happened. Without the Sinai, Saud would not have dared to go to Washington. Without the Sinai, Jordan would be as much Soviet

as Syria. Syria is not finally a Soviet country, but it might easily become so. I heard it from very responsible people who talked to Nasser that Egypt is a Soviet satellite - not in the same way as Poland or Hungary. It was not reduced by force like Hungary. If the whole Middle East is not dominated now by the Soviet, it is largely due to the Sinai expedition. This was not our intention. Our intention was to defend ourselves, but this was a by-product, and I believe a positive one, of the Sinai expedition. Looking back, I believe we have no reason to regret it. It was just, it was useful and I have not the slightest doubt that any power in our position would have done the same. We immediately declared our aim was not occupation or annexation - not even of the Gaza Strip, which never belonged to Egypt. We had the intention that there should be Israeli administration together with the United Nations. But it happened differently. We could not quarrel with the entire world, especially America. Also, we did not like to quarrel with Mr. Menon to whom the Charter is very sacred, as we have seen.

I wanted to tell you what I feel about the events in the last few months. They were useful and they were good. Our people are safe now and there are Arab countries which are more free than before, because before they were dominated by the political terror of Nasser. Whether they will succeed in going on or not, I do not know. I am not quite sure that the situation in Jordan is stable.

Returning to the Charter, so it is for us to bring it up to the United Nations, since you apparently do not think you should draw the

attention of the Security Council to a threat to peace. Article 99 leaves it to your discretion.

SECRETARY-GENERAL: May I explain this Article which came about after considerable hesitation, since it gave the Secretary-General the right to an extremely serious initiative. This Article should be interpreted as subsidiary. The Secretary-General can bring a matter to the attention of the Security Council for action the Security Council may wish to take, if there is a deadlock, in which no country can bring it up itself. Only if and when it is obvious that the aggrieved party, although it would like to do it, cannot bring it up, and no other country wants to bring it up. This Article has been used only once - in Korea, to put the United Nations in the United States operation. The consequent conclusion is that you are quite right. The Secretary-General has to use his own discretion. I think it is his duty to act in certain situations, but his action is subsidiary to the actions of the Members. The other point on which we want to be clear is about how you can act. You can always request to get an issue on the agenda of the General Assembly and you will get it. You may also bring it up in the Security Council - in general terms, or as an immediate crisis - that is another matter - or as an action in self-defence - there are various sorts of ways. But experience shows that no action is very fruitful in the United Nations without some kind of diplomatic preparation.

PRIME MINISTER: I would ask a question which is both legal and political. Until a year ago, I had very little to do with the United Nations and I knew almost nothing about it. But since your visit in

April 1956 and especially during the last few months, I began to be interested in United Nations matters. I followed closely the proceedings in the last few months and I wonder what is now the status of the Charter. Is it still a binding document on the Members, and are they bound to act according to the Charter, or has the United Nations just become an assembly of groups of nations with different interests, who act merely according to their interests? I can understand that a big power like Russia does not care about what the United Nations says about Hungary, and I am the last one to say that America should go to war for that country, which might mean the destruction of humanity. Does it mean that the Charter practically does not exist anymore? After all, there are only two great countries which can do what they like. Most members of the United Nations are middle-class states or small states. For instance, Jordan - a small state, as Israel. Egypt is greater and bigger, but is less than a middle-class state. England and France, let us say, are middle class states. Has the Charter still any practical value? Because, watching the proceedings of the Assembly for the last four months, I have not seen any validity in the Charter. They were simply acting according to their interests, sympathies, antipathies. If it is merely a piece of paper, then the outlook for the world is very bad, because in the Charter are the principles which can insure peace. Has it any practical validity or not? Can we come to the Assembly and say, here is Article 1, Article 99, and you are bound by it, and you must act accordingly? You cannot fight. Can we rely on the Charter? Has it any legal or political validity? The Assembly

is not a legal body; they are all interested parties. Is the Charter still binding? Can we rely on the Charter or not.

SECRETARY-GENERAL: The Charter is a mixture of two elements - it is a political document in part and a legal document in part - the legal document sets out the procedures and operative rules. It depends, as to the first part, on the way in which all the various members tied together grow to creating centres of power. It indicates an idea and the degree to which we approach the idea is the matter of current politics. The principles, the very existence of the principles must have and has had a considerable influence. If you will take the United States, with its strong moral attitude - at least in the White House - it is a very great influence. When you come to the operative part - corresponding to a criminal code - and civilian code - I would say that the Charter is observed with considerable strictness. My reply to your question is that we must make the distinction between the two elements - the elements of moral rule can be eliminated by the simple fact that they are not adhered to. The second element, legal, is the means of putting the principles into effect. At the very early stage of international development at which we are, we are surprisingly strict.

The Charter is very much a political fact in the present situation. We have the long drawn-out Arab threat of war, which definitely falls somewhere within the moral law, and which I condemn, personally and officially. However, when you come to the question of how you or I can straighten it out, then we pass from the moral law to the technical law, and then it is so arranged that whether or not the Charter has

been violated becomes a matter of a decision in the first instance in the Security Council. It is extremely difficult to get a determination as to whether there is a threat to the peace, as the five permanent Members are in different camps and they do not co-operate. Under some circumstances, Article 39 is somewhat unrealistic, not because it is dead, but because it is extremely difficult to get a decision that there is a threat to the peace.

PRIME MINISTER: Because it is difficult to prevent a veto?

SECRETARY-GENERAL: Yes. There is also the possibility of a transfer to the General Assembly which can also in a decision find that there is a threat to the peace. However, the action that can be taken in such findings by the General Assembly, once the Security Council is out, is much more limited because the General Assembly has not got the right to enforce anything. For a good reason, because we do not know what kind of majorities might develop in the future. There is no possibility for the General Assembly other than to recommend and no country is forced to follow the recommendation. However, the Charter is not dead.

PRIME MINISTER: I ask this question because it has a practical bearing on the situation. If I understand what the Charter means, how can it be that there can be war between two members of the United Nations? How is it that Egypt has maintained for six years that she is in a state of war with Israel? What is to be done to finish that state of war or belligerency?

SECRETARY-GENERAL: I would like to comment on this from two angles and to my mind it is high time that you sit together and thrash out your affairs. I refer to Chapter VI, which refers to conciliation. The other question, however, which is much more complicated, is the legal one. After the Second World War, there has been a growing tendency not to go to war in the old sense - which has led to situations where we have political deadlocks in various areas, such as Korea, China. If you take the situation in Korea, America, for example, considers itself to be technically in a state of war with Northern Korea. I mention it only in order to illustrate the complications.

PRIME MINISTER: Can there be Members sitting in the United Nations in a state of war among themselves?

SECRETARY-GENERAL: Legally, undoubtedly yes.

PRIME MINISTER: Under Articles 1 and 2?

SECRETARY-GENERAL: Because it does not mean anything else except that there is no final settlement. An armistice cannot be accepted by the United Nations as anything but a step towards peace. If there is an armistice, then there must be continued effort on the part of the United Nations to push the Members into a state of peace. If there is open conflict, the United Nations is duty bound to obtain an armistice. If there is an armistice, it is the duty of the United Nations to help the Members out of the armistice into peace. Therefore, you should have the full support of the United Nations for a peace settlement. On the other hand, I would like to make quite clear the use of the words, state of war, belligerency, state of non-peace. If we say that, if

there is no peace we have a right to attack, we are completely wrong. If action is in that way limited by an armistice agreement, we are very far from being in a state of war. The question is what actions are justified in the narrow margin between an armistice agreement and peace.

MRS. MEIR: I can understand the situation which you call no-peace. There is no peace between Egypt and Israel - no diplomatic relations - no agreements - no contacts. But if what you call no-peace is a situation where one of these countries is doing something about it short of an armed attack - by boycott, blockade - are not a state of war of that kind and "no-peace" identical?

DR. BUNCHE: The legal status between Israel and Lebanon and Israel and Egypt is the same, but the actions are different.

MRS. MEIR: Lebanon has joined the boycott. Calling belligerency no-peace takes away the moral pressure. Suppose in Moses' law, "you shall not steal", and I steal and somebody says I have no power to stop you but I don't call this stealing; you have added something to your own. The moral stamp is immediately taken away from this act. This definition, "no-peace", takes away the moral pressure from the Secretary-General who is the highest officer in the United Nations, when he can look at a state of belligerency and say: "Let us call it no-peace". We know there is a difference between no peace and a state of belligerency. One is passive and the other active.

SECRETARY-GENERAL: I do not wish to condone those things which are acts

of belligerency. When I phrased my reply, I had to take into account the Korean situation. What I want to bring up is that it is extremely dangerous to be vague in terminology. If there is something which is a state of non-peace but with an armistice, there are certain actions which can be permitted and others which cannot be permitted. The Security Council has found that some acts of blockade cannot be permitted. It has not said that there is peace between Egypt and Israel. We would run into a very dangerous situation, as I see it. Acts of blockade are excused by the fact that there is no peace. On the other hand, there are certain acts of self-protection which are in conformity with the armistice. This, as I see it, builds up vagueness which permits this confusion to go on. Let us make a distinction on belligerent acts. Aggressive acts are ruled out.

PRIME MINISTER: In the armistice between America and Northern Korea, is it said that the establishment of an armistice is an indispensable step towards peace between North Korea and America?

MR. ROSENNE: The armistice is between North Korea and the United Nations.

SECRETARY-GENERAL: There has been and is the fact that the armistices between Israel and its neighbours go beyond most armistice agreements because the principle that the armistice is a step towards peace has been written into the agreements. It is very right to give the armistices in this case a wider interpretation than usual. I agree that there is a basic difference between Korea and here. Here, there is so far no peace settlement. This is put on record and is not in itself contrary

to the Charter, provided that there is a goal to work towards.

DR. BUNCHE: There are two basic assumptions: The United Nations and all of us here are seeking peace in this area; secondly, there is an assumption on which you would agree - that it is not a happy position for Israel to have to exist as a permanent military camp. It is not a happy life for any people. Therefore, the question is how to move towards peace. If there should be an advance that the United Nations, in co-operation with Israel and Egypt, could bring about, temporarily as a first step only, roughly equivalent to the situation along the Lebanese border, no one here would deny that this would be a step towards peace. This is what we are striving for. There is a very practical difference. There are three things in your dealings with Egypt which are not present on the Lebanese border: 1. Fedayeen; 2. the Gulf of Eilat; 3. the Suez Canal. We think that progress has been made on the first two. An important progress has been made towards the elimination of Fedayeen. This need not be done in formal declarations, but you can bring about the possibility of peaceful conditions as a step towards the final stage. We think there is a possibility to do this, to bring about peace without a peace settlement.

PRIME MINISTER: There is a difference between no-peace and belligerency. Egypt says it is in a state of war and will not let Israeli ships pass through the Suez. And it is certain that belligerency is not consistent with the Charter - even if non-peace is. Egypt cannot be in a state of war according to the Charter. Is there a chance of Egypt giving up its

claim of belligerency and if it refuses to give up this claim, what can the United Nations and what can we do?

SECRETARY-GENERAL: As a practical question, the problem is this. In a situation where there is no peace settlement, but an armistice regime, an armistice agreement with a general indication of movement towards peace, can the Egyptians do the things you mention? My reply regarding the blockade is no. The Security Council has found they are wrong. They are out of line with the armistice. The state of no-peace, but with an armistice regime, does not permit any action against the armistice regime. I think there is justification for Ralph Bunche's statement on the Fedayeen story. On the Suez problem, I really do not know exactly where we are. We will see what reply comes to us. There have been various public statements which I personally regret. There are two questions: 1. blockade, 2. what the situation is, with ships flying the Israeli flag. I do not make this distinction in principle at all, but there is the other aspect - what is our constructive policy, and there the distinction might come into the picture. There are two legal bases for your claim: 1. the Security Council decision; 2. the Convention of 1888. Both the Convention and the Security Council decision could, for instance, be before the International Court of Justice for its findings. I could not go into the political aspect, as I am sure you know as much as I do.

PRIME MINISTER: The main questions are our relations with our neighbours and the way to peace. But there is a question I would like to put to Dr. Bunche. As you realize that belligerency is - you say against the General Armistice Agreement - I say against the Charter which is

previous to the General Armistice Agreement - and as you know that Egypt claims rights of belligerency and undertakes acts on the basis of rights of belligerency, on what grounds did you bring them back to Gaza? Nobody claims that Gaza is Egyptian territory. They were there on the basis of an invasion and an armistice agreement. You know they were violating the General Armistice Agreement, the Charter, and that it is not Egyptian territory. On what basis did you bring them back to Gaza? I will not discuss the General Armistice Agreement.

DR. BUNCHE: Why do you put the question in those terms, "bring the Egyptians back"? We did not bring them back to Gaza. They came back.

PRIME MINISTER: Why did you let them in? Does the armistice agreement give only rights or does it impose obligations also? What right have they to go back to a non-Egyptian country on the basis of an armistice agreement which they disregard and which you know they disregard?

DR. BUNCHE: The Security Council has taken a position which is very well known with regard to Suez. On the other hand, as you also well know, the United Nations had fully endorsed the armistice agreement.

PRIME MINISTER: Did you include that there should be no belligerency? They said to the United Nations: "We do not accept your decision". So what right had they to come back to Gaza?

DR. BUNCHE: There was no dispute between the Israeli Delegation and the United Nations with regard to the legal position in Gaza. It has not been contested that there was a legal basis for Egypt in Gaza, under

the Armistice Agreement. The question of Egypt's return was another question.

PRIME MINISTER: We left Gaza on the clear assumption that the Egyptians would not come back and they did not come back by themselves.

SECRETARY-GENERAL: The General Assembly, with a majority which was not trumped up but a very real one, took a firm stand and that stand was endorsed by countries, which in other respects might have been against it. How can that very same Assembly endorse non-observance?

PRIME MINISTER: This decision of the General Assembly does not mean that only one side should observe. Then you should have told Nasser, "If you want to return to Gaza, you must observe scrupulously the General Armistice Agreement." You did not make it a condition. It was your duty as the executive power to ask Nasser before he tried to come back.

SECRETARY-GENERAL: I think your question should be addressed to the General Assembly. The General Assembly made it very clear indeed that the withdrawal was a prior condition. When you come to the question of return, I think the important thing is that the other party made various references to the armistice agreement. (There was a reference here to statement made by Mr. Lodge.)

PRIME MINISTER: The armistice agreement must be scrupulously observed also by Egypt.

MRS. MEIR: Mr. Hammarskjold, you refer to the statement of Mr. Lodge.

We said on March 1st what our assumption was as far as the Gaza Strip was concerned, about the exclusive occupation by the United Nations Forces, how long they should stay there. I did not hear in Mr. Lodge's statement anything to the contrary. I have reason to believe you saw the statement before 1 March. Neither you nor Mr. Lodge nor any other of the many people who spoke on that issue on 1 and 4 March said: No, the assumption is impossible. I am convinced that the majority of the United Nations were united on the idea that we would have to leave, but they had no idea that the Egyptians would be back in Gaza.

PRIME MINISTER: The Assembly said the Armistice Agreement must be scrupulously observed. Why did you not carry out the resolution of the Assembly? A country which has violated and will violate the armistice agreement, why should it enjoy the benefits of the armistice agreement?

DR. BUNCHE: There is a tendency to put too much emphasis on what happened before 29 October. There may be new influences and possibilities in this area. It has to be tested. On this very question, there is always the question of what a given word means - which has to be proved in practice. Egypt accepted the resolution of the Assembly which involved scrupulous observance of the provisions of the General Armistice Agreement. On two occasions, the Egyptians formally authorized the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly that they would scrupulously observe the provisions of the armistice agreement.

MRS. MEIR: The test is what will happen over this. One of the tests is with regard to the Fedayeen.

PRIME MINISTER: Why could not the Representative of Egypt make this declaration himself in the Assembly? Didn't he declare that the armistice agreement meant no state of war? Was this your impression when he made this declaration to the Secretary-General - that he would not blockade the Suez?

DR. BUNCHE: There are legal aspects to these questions and no one has the right to say to any Government that it cannot take the necessary steps to determine its legal position.

PRIME MINISTER: The position you have taken is meaningless.

DR. BUNCHE: You assume that the Egyptians' return to Gaza was a question on which the United Nations was consulted. Nobody let them in.

PRIME MINISTER: They could not just walk in. There is UNEF. Why didn't you ask Nasser about scrupulous observance of the General Armistice Agreement before. Why did you leave the Suez question open before letting them into Gaza?

SECRETARY-GENERAL: He would have given two replies ...

PRIME MINISTER: Why didn't you ask him? What he would answer is another matter.

DR. BUNCHE: We had two affirmations from the Egyptian Government that they would scrupulously observe the terms of the armistice agreement. We do not question the good faith of a government until it is disproved through actions.

PRIME MINISTER: I understand from what you said that at that time you thought that Egypt gave her promise to stop the blockade and let Israeli ships pass the Suez. The scrupulous observance of the terms of the armistice agreement would have required an investigation as to whether after eight years Egypt is ready to interpret the armistice agreement.

DR. BUNCHE: It would be tested in whatever acts Egypt would be responsible for.

PRIME MINISTER: So I believe you believed them and that there would be no blockade of the Suez.

DR. BUNCHE: I did not say that this means that I believed them. But as a member of the United Nations Secretariat, I cannot question the good faith of a government's word except as lack of good faith is demonstrated in acts.

PRIME MINISTER: Since then, has it been demonstrated or not?

SECRETARY-GENERAL: Should we start making conditions about this or that part of the armistice agreement? It is an impossible situation.

PRIME MINISTER: The General Armistice Agreement does not exist for us as far as we are concerned. (Referred to double standard)

DR. BUNCHE: Since your withdrawal, could you cite instances of Egyptian violation of the Armistice Agreement?

PRIME MINISTER: The boycott, the blockade.

MR. HERZOG: In a speech, it was stated that no Israeli ships would be allowed through the canal.

DR. BUNCHE: With regard to the Gaza Strip, there was no authority in UNEF flowing from any action of the Assembly known to me which would have entitled that Force to keep the Egyptians out of the Gaza Strip.

MRS. MEIR: Do you mean that anyone going to the checkpost could walk through?

DR. BUNCHE: With regard to the Egyptian-Israel General Armistice Agreement, has there been or will there be a formal denunciation by Israel?

PRIME MINISTER: Before the Secretary-General came, I wrote him a letter in which I stated that I am not prepared to discuss the question of the General Armistice Agreement.

SECRETARY-GENERAL: This brings us to a very practical question. As I mentioned to you privately, there is always for me the fact that progress or lack of progress on the various aspects of General Assembly action is one about which Members want to be informed. Already, before this question arose, because of the very strong stand taken on various issues, the question was raised with me if the time had not come to say, "Well, we are here or we are not." That view is maintained and will be thoroughly pressed and there may be a case for it. Especially if we get a reply from Egypt on belligerency, whatever it is. I foresee,

in the course of the next few weeks, that I will have to go on record. It may be that the right way is to handle just this point which Dr. Bunche raised without any comments at all. Just present your view on it: your letter and mine would be documents for the record. From your point that may be an adequate way to give an account of it. I am not very happy with it, but that does not matter. If we come to the point where there is a report on what has happened out of the resolutions, your question about belligerency and the Egyptian reply would be in the report. Could we in such a situation use my last letter and your reply as giving an account?

PRIME MINISTER: We don't see ourselves at war with Egypt and we will not undertake any hostile action - on the basis of reciprocity. We made an official declaration in the General Assembly. We have not gotten such a declaration from Egypt, but the opposite - that they are in a state of war. You had an official answer - which you could not question - but, as we know, they will continue to blockade us. Is Egypt still in a state of war? Will they or not let Israeli ships through the Suez? What are you going to do? As far as the question of publication is concerned, I will publish the exchange of letters about double standard and the reply, the letter which I had about the Secretary-General's visit and the reply which I gave, the cable which I got from Geneva, the letter which followed from Geneva and my telegram in reply. I will publish and submit all these letters to the United Nations. But remember that when we make a declaration we mean it, that we are not at war and we will not undertake any hostile action against our neighbours - on the basis of reciprocity.

SECRETARY-GENERAL: Your own general statement has been very carefully noted and I think it is good to bring it again to the attention of everybody and the natural place for that is the report, when it comes on the belligerency question. You have my full authorization to use any letters of mine, as I trust that you will always use them in the spirit in which they are intended. I suggest we come to an agreement about publication through your Delegation in New York.

PRIME MINISTER: Yes. I deny the right of Egypt to be in Gaza, because Egypt broke the Charter and is breaking it. Egypt broke a written undertaking which it signed with us, which is called the Armistice Agreement, and therefore, in my humble view, they have no right whatsoever to be in Gaza. I am sorry that they got the permission of the United Nations, that they were allowed to come back. They have no business to be there. The United Nations has. Egypt, no. You cannot question their statement, but I question their word. I say they have lied to you. This was a terrible mistake that they were let in.

SECRETARY-GENERAL: We have covered to a large extent your next item.

PRIME MINISTER: When do you expect to have an answer from Egypt about belligerency and about the Suez?

SECRETARY-GENERAL: I have again requested a reply. About 10 days ago they advised that now that the Suez rush was behind them, they would reply. I continue to press for a reply. If we get from Egypt a reply on Article I sufficiently positive, if I see there are possibilities to get somewhere on that line, I do not exclude that this may provide a useful opening.

PRIME MINISTER: Even according to your view, what you have in mind is a certain state of affairs - no-peace and then peace. Well, you have our answer. First of all, we undertake no hostile act against any neighbour on a mutual basis. We are ready at any moment to carry out the main purpose of your work - to establish peace - after nine years. Is this sufficient for you?

SECRETARY-GENERAL: I think it is, because I read it with hopes and aspirations.

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PRIME MINISTER: (Brought up question of the fence around Gaza Strip).
I think this should be left to Colonel Leary and our local people.

DR. BUNCHE: From press reports and from what I heard from Mr. Kidron, there seems to be some confusion as to what was involved here. I came into the question again only since 29 October. As I understand it, in the fall of 1954, there were discussions on this issue of a fence. In early April 1957, I was with General Burns when he brought this question up with General Gohar. In bringing the question up with General Gohar, General Burns alluded to previous conversations that had been held last summer. He brought it up in the context of these previous talks, saying he wanted to revive this idea and made it very explicit that the idea was the same: The erection of a barbed wire fence at those sections where the risk of infiltration was greatest. At the next talk with General

Gohar, the question was not raised of a continuous fence along the Strip. This wasted up with a necessity for resurveying the line - an official survey. Subsequently, General Burns had a talk with Colonel Ze'era in Tel Aviv and we have not seen him since, but his reports indicate that the proposal had been discussed in the same terms. That is where the matter rests at the moment. There was also the question of the possibility of including mines with the fence. General Burns indicated that one of the reasons for the mines would be to keep the fence from being stolen by the Bedouins. There has been no discussion of policy with regard to the mines, and the remaining open question, which would involve agreement on both sides as well as execution by the United Nations, of an official survey as an essential first step.

GENERAL DAYAN: We are waiting for the party to make the survey. This has been agreed to.

MRS. MEIR: What is the reason for opposing a fence along the entire border of the Strip?

DR. BUNCHE: This has apparently not been raised since the very beginning. It was always a question of erecting a fence in sectors where infiltration is most likely.

MRS. MEIR: Would this not open up other sectors?

MR. TEKOA: General Burns' original proposal in 1954, which was discussed in greater detail with General Gohar, was a continuous fence. I have the document which was submitted by General Burns in the course of these

discussions, in which he proposed two continuous double-apron fences. It was Egypt's view that they would not like to have a continuous fence. At that point, General Burns thought a partial fence was better than no fence at all and began thinking in terms of a partial fence. I understand he does not reject the efficiency of a continuous fence. He mentioned the problem of the cost.

PRIME MINISTER: I think this discussion must be continued with General Burns or Colonel Leary.

MRS. MEIR: It should be clear that as far as we are concerned, we believe it would be much more effective if it were a continuous fence. We have no reservations to such a fence and we agree to it.

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PRIME MINISTER: With regard to Article VIII of the Israel-Jordan General Armistice Agreement, I was recently asked a question in the Knesset whether I knew that the Mount of Olives Jewish Cemetery, was desecrated and that many graves were destroyed. I mention this only because of its emotional importance from a religious point of view to a large number of people. There is one question which is a practical one - the road to Latrun. Article VIII of the General Armistice Agreement, which provides for the creation of a Special Committee, stipulates that there are three issues on which agreement in principle already exists:

1. Freedom of movement on the Latrun Road.
2. Resumption of the normal functioning of the cultural and humanitarian institutions on Mount Scopus - the library,

hospital, university which we need and are entitled to use and it is a clear undertaking by Jordan that there should be resumption of the normal functioning of these institutions and free access thereto. (The fortnightly convoy is not enough.)

3: Free access to the Holy Places.

This country was under the rule of many different rulers. During all these periods we had free access to the Wailing Wall. This means a great deal and it was agreed in principle that there should be free access to the Holy Places, which certainly includes the Wailing Wall. We have in this country Christian citizens. For them, freedom of access is a matter of course - in Jerusalem and Bethlehem. The Latrun pumping station, also referred to in Article VIII, can be left out, as it was destroyed. As to the Wailing Wall, only a Jewish person can understand. Under the terms of the General Armistice Agreement, Article VIII was to be applied immediately the Agreement came into effect. I think we are entitled to ask that this Article be implemented. The railroad to Jerusalem, also referred to in Article VIII, was taken care of. It is clearly stated that on these various questions there was agreement in principle. I would not press this issue now, as I don't like to embarrass King Hussein and, if it is necessary to wait for some time, I would wait, but we insist that Article VIII be implemented.

SECRETARY-GENERAL: If you remember, we discussed this at great length in April or May last spring and in July. It was stated that we should at least try to get some token visits to the Wailing Wall. However, the situation was so tense then it was agreed that we should wait. The

present situation is such that an approach on this specific issue would not be very wise. On this clause as on other clauses, the United Nations is duty bound to press for implementation and compliance. Colonel Leary will have to look again at what can be done about it, if something can be done.

PRIME MINISTER: What will the procedure be?

DR. BUNCHE: It is well to keep in mind how Article VIII came about and what was its motivation. Before the end of the Jordan negotiations, members of both Delegations left Rhodes for a few days and there was an important meeting and they returned with what they had agreed on. In those talks in Rhodes, we had taken up all these details, and there was a possibility to get agreement in Rhodes. But this idea of a Special Committee came to the fore. The basis of the Special Committee was that this eliminated the United Nations neutral third party and made it possible for the two Delegations to work out these questions in direct negotiations alone. It did convene and the one decision it did reach was on the Jerusalem railroad. Then the Committee fell apart. This is important in order to bear in mind what the role of the United Nations is.

PRIME MINISTER: What do you advise the procedure should be next time?

SECRETARY-GENERAL: In our discussions last year, General Burns and I were really at a loss on the practical arrangements. I remember saying I felt it would be very helpful if you could assist us in giving some indication of how it could be done.

PRIME MINISTER: The Jerusalem-Latrun Road: It should be open and there should be no shooting. Mount Scopus: The difficulty is in the free access. There should be a road agreed upon to and from Mount Scopus and there should be no shooting. Every Christian in Israel should be allowed on Holy Days to visit the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem and to visit Bethlehem. The same for Jews as regards the cemetery on the Mount of Olives, or at least the Jordanians should not be permitted to desecrate it. Passengers on vehicles going to these places should not be shot at and should not undertake any action which would be injurious to the other side. It is only a question of good will. The question of access to the Wailing Wall may be a little more difficult. We shall thrash it out. The question is how to get this Committee working. This is not the time, but in a few weeks, maybe more, the situation may be stabilized. Then, how should we proceed? I think the best way would be through New York, through the Jordan Representative in New York. You, Mr. Secretary-General, are there and the time will come when it can be done in New York. A procedure can be agreed upon.

SECRETARY-GENERAL: There is concerning Mount Scopus side issues coming into consideration. There is the fear which is expressed by the Jordan side about the whole question of the military positions on Mount Scopus. Mount Scopus might, they say, develop into a stronghold.

PRIME MINISTER: This would be taken into account. We would be prepared to give all possible assurances.

SECRETARY-GENERAL: Let us keep this in mind and see how time may improve the situation. Dr. Bunche is highly qualified to discuss it in New York.

We have now the question of co-operation with the United Nations on the spot.

DR. BUNCHE: My belief is that there is a new possibility for peace. I do not think that the developments and efforts since October 29 have been wasted. During these nine years of armistice regime, there has been a continuing problem for the United Nations to establish itself with you and officials of your Government as an actually free body here for the purpose of assisting you and the Arab governments in maintaining quiet along the demarcation lines, and in working for the creation of conditions which could result in full peace. Relations have often left much to be desired. There seems to be basic difficulties for the United Nations. Mr. Tekoah is familiar with many of them - with regard to freedom of movement, access of UNTSO Observers to areas where difficulties actually break out - which handicaps the United Nations in determining what has happened and in a fair appraisal. There has been reluctance to report to the United Nations on incidents, - particularly with Egypt. (This is explained by your position regarding the General Armistice Agreement with Egypt.) UNEF is on the Egyptian side of the line for the primary purpose of helping avoid incidents. If we do not get from your people reports on incidents, there is not much the United Nations can do several days later. Your Delegation has reported to the Security Council about incidents UNEF had heard nothing about. This is obviously faulty machinery. General Burns has made representations in Tel Aviv. I feel a lot more could be done on your side to assist us.

SECRETARY-GENERAL: The United Nations or UNTSO are a means to an end. There has been a growing feeling with us that the means are not used or are reduced to very modest proportions. When you treat means in that way, they always more or less wither away. We believe in the machinery as a necessary form in the picture for the time being.

MR. TEKOA: To the best of my knowledge, there is an arrangement between the Israel Army and UNEF under which we do inform UNEF of every incident. This arrangement also covers a certain method of investigation and conditions of investigation on the Gaza side. Reports are passed on to us with respect to the various conclusions to which UNEF comes on the Gaza side. This arrangement goes back to the end of March. There was, it is true, a lapse of a week or ten days before this arrangement was reached. To the best of my knowledge, it is working very well now, though the results of these investigations have been limited to reports in writing and there has been no effort to locate in the Strip stolen Israeli goods, e.g. pipelines. Let us hope that there will be more constructive results in the future. To what extent is UNEF authorized to look for these goods and return them to Israel?

DR. BUNCHE: Of eight or nine incidents mentioned in Mr. Kidron's letter to the Security Council in April, only two had been reported to General Burns. He got his information from us.

MR. TEKOA: I understand this information is now being transmitted regularly.

Regarding UNTSO, when we discussed the basic problem of belligerency,

the Prime Minister referred to the importance of Article I of the General Armistice Agreements. That is the basic problem. Whatever happens on the border is only a reflection of the attitude of the Arab governments to the issue of peace and war. Is there a desire to keep the border quiet or not? Judging on the experience of the past nine years, I think there is no doubt whatever that when the Arab countries wanted to keep the border quiet, they did it. When the armistice agreements were signed and the MAC machinery was constructed, the idea was to erect a framework for dealing with certain problems during a limited period of time, on the assumption that both sides had good will, and would implement all the provisions. Those very methods which were meant to be useful and efficient to deal with border problems for a short period of time turned out to be not as useful or efficient over a longer time, against a background of continued belligerency. The goal of the Mixed Armistice Commission machinery should be to ensure peace along the front and reduce tension. Experience has shown to us that the operation of the Mixed Armistice Commissions has not brought about much success in achievement. Incidents continued along the border. The MACs have not always served to reduce tension, but frequently they have increased it. MAC resolutions, instead of creating an understanding, are increasing tension among the Parties.

DR. BUNCHE: I was thinking of freedom of movement of UNTSO and UNEF. Their reports go to the Security Council on important incidents.

MR. TEKOA: In the light of this experience, I know that both the

the United Nations and United Nations representatives here have come to realize that the old methods are not always the best methods and some new method should be found. There have been some instances where it has been successful. On the Jordan border, parallel to certain limitations of UNTSO operations, we have developed new methods of direct contacts with the Jordanians. As an example, since our last change of attitude, we have had several meetings of the Sub-Committee. There is a difference in procedure. We discuss matters in a constructive way. In addition, the Jordanians themselves have suggested to us several weeks ago an extension of these contacts by means of fixing meetings along the border, in addition to the meetings of the Sub-Committee. The general atmosphere throughout the past few months - and I give credit to the United Nations for allowing this development - has been of improved relations. It is true that this change of method does involve a limitation of the operations of UNTSO, but the results are constructive and we should proceed in this manner. This, of course, applies also to the more general question of freedom of movement. UNMOs move in the exercise of their duties under the General Armistice Agreements.

PRIME MINISTER: They should move without radios.

MR. TEKOAH: We have not always called upon Observers to investigate incidents for several reasons. There have been discussions with Colonel Leary concerning the ability of UNMOs to determine who started the firing - we are referring to the situation on the Syrian border - investigations did not help to improve the situation or to impress on the responsible party. We have thought, even in the field of investigation,

of a method which is more constructive. We have tried on the Jordan border joint investigations in which Jordanian officers and Israeli officers cross into each other's territory and examine on the ground what has happened. So far we have not had many of them, but they have been successful. I think that the present gradual development really works out to the benefit of all concerned.

SECRETARY-GENERAL: If it can be done without breaking down or blocking what we have got. We should not start off by blocking the old machinery and replace it with a method not properly developed. It seems to me direct contacts can be extremely helpful. One of the difficulties is that there must be a certain measure of objectivity in judgment. The avenues you indicate as possibilities must not be favoured in such a way as to cut us off. There is a strong feeling that the very manifestation of working United Nations machinery in assistance of the Parties would be an important factor in the whole picture. Your method has aspects of anti-United Nations action, especially in concrete cases. It must not get the overtone that Israel is cutting itself off from the United Nations. About the matter of radios, the trouble is what are the conditions for a real, effective function - in your interest? If there is a need for it, then there is a way.

PRIME MINISTER: The situation in Syria is a little worrying. It seems there is anarchy there. Russia is becoming more and more dominating in Syria. The Russian press is spreading lies that there are American atomic basis and British and French armies in Israel - that we are

preparing an attack on our neighbours. There was a matter of the diplomatic corps - Russia said it would not take part in it because it was not a purely civilian body, but the main reason was that they knew before 21 June there would be a joint attack by France and Israel on one of the Arab States. They never do anything without a purpose. They know it is not true. I am very much worried whether they get together with Sarraj. There have been cases of firing lately.

SECRETARY-GENERAL: This is everybody's worry. We are all scared of rumour-mongering and also fooling ourselves by not taking things as seriously as we should. We are very much in the dark on this whole problem. I have no idea how far this has gone, but I believe it is true that the USSR may be interested in keeping the temperature in the Middle East fairly high, though I have a feeling that they would not like to precipitate a conflict they are not in a position to deal with. They are certainly not willing to engage in a naval conflict. I wonder if your concern is justified. I am just thinking aloud.

MRS. MEIR: There can be many points of danger short of an all-out attack, but there can be a lot of trouble stirred on the border.

PRIME MINISTER: I am afraid of another Korea - that it will boil over. I don't think the Russian press has ever been so vicious.