

**Middle East - Suez story No
7-14: Middle East - Suez
story No 7-14 - 41**

HS L 179:110



Dag Hammarskjöld's saml.

Middle East / Suez story - 12

4 - 15 May 56

Comments on D.H.'s Mission in Middle East

- Broadcast by G. Rafael over "Kol Israel"
- Walter Eytan's commentary in "The Voice of Zion"
- Comment on D.H.'s report (from Cairo Radio, Lebanese Press and Israeli Press)

Mr. Hammarskjold's Mission

Broadcast by Mr. Gideon Rafael
Counsellor of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs
over "Kol Israel" on 4 May, 1956.

The United Nations Secretary General, Mr. Dag Hammarskjold, concluded yesterday his series of talks in the Middle East capitals. Following his third visit to Jerusalem he left for Cairo on his return journey to New York. Since landing at Beirut in the early hours of the 10th of April, until his departure from Cairo at dawn today, Mr. Hammarskjold conducted an unflagging campaign to avert immediate dangers and to improve the existing critical situation prevailing in the Middle East.

Mr. Hammarskjold came to us on a double mission. First, he came as a special envoy of the Security Council, and secondly as the Secretary General of the U. N. Organization. Ever since 1948, and particularly since that ominous 15th of May, when the Security Council received an official notification from the Secretary General of the Arab League stating that the Arab countries had commenced a war of invasion and aggression against Israel, the problem of relations between Israel and the Arab states has never left the Security Council agenda. During these eight years the Security Council has devoted a considerable part of its time to this problem, in fact more than fifty percent of its sessions. Nevertheless, in spite of this extensive handling of our problem by the United Nations, the conflict between Israel and the Arab states did not become a central international issue until recent months. Though we had already noticed in 1953 the first signs of the approaching cold war in our region, when the first veto on the Jordan development project fell upon us like a clap of thunder from a clear blue sky, the storm only reached its peak in October last year, with the arrival in Egypt of the first large consignment of arms, entirely upsetting the balance of military strength between Israel and the Arab states. That balance acted as a guarantee against any attempt to renew the war of aggression against Israel. This edifice of security collapsed under the heavy load of arms which have been flowing during latter months to Egypt and the other Arab states. Thus a potential threat which has hung over the region, has become an acute danger.

The one-sided rearmament, the sharpening of antagonism between East and West in our region, the intensification of the arrogant and provocative attitude of the Arab states, their incitement and preparation for war against Israel, all these have created a state described by the U.N. Charter as "a danger to the maintenance of international peace and security". In the face of this threat the Security Council found it necessary to take special steps to cope with the situation.

The Armistice Agreements between Israel and the four Arab States defined and regulated ~~between them~~ the relations between them. These Agreements obliged their signatories to end the state of war, to cease all hostile action, and to pass to the restoration of permanent peace. But this is not how the Arabs interpreted these Armistice Agreements. They interpreted the Agreements as a justification for continuing the war by other means, actually by all means short of open and frontal military assault. This Arab interpretation and

conduct created a situation which undermined the Armistice System in its very foundations.

In the face of the international tension which has encompassed the entire Middle East, and of the danger to the Armistice regime the Security Council decided on the 4th of April, 1956, to request the Secretary General of the United Nations to go to the region. At this stage the Security Council charged him with two tasks: 1) To survey the various aspects of enforcement and of compliance with the four General Armistice Agreements. 2) To arrange with the parties for the adoption of measures which would reduce existing tensions along the Armistice Lines.

Mr. Hammerskjold employed all his renowned energy and abilities to discharge this task. Not only did he bring to his mission his wide political experience and famed diplomatic skill, but also all the influence and weight of his high office. Moreover, he came with the full support behind him of all the members of the Security Council, representing all five continents and including the support of both the Eastern as well as of Western powers.

Mr. Hammerskjold, in his report to the Security Council next week, will himself describe the nature of his discussions, his efforts, accomplishments and ideas for the future. Respecting established custom we must not anticipate him. We have, therefore, to limit ourselves to a description of the background and circumstances of this important and unique mission.

According to what has already been published, all the signatories of the Armistice Agreements—and this means Israel, Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon — have all given an unconditional written undertaking to comply with their obligations to maintain a total cease-fire and to prevent the crossing of the Armistice lines for any purpose whatsoever. As has been already disclosed, this obligation was accepted without any prior conditions. If the Syrian Government, even before the ink had dried on its signature, has declared that it has given its consent only after making all sorts of conditions, then only one of two things is possible: either one cannot have faith in its pledge to the Secretary General of the United Nations, or one cannot believe in its declarations to the Syrian people. We shall leave it to Mr. Hammerskjold, who received the unconditional undertaking to settle this issue with the Syrian Government. Yet we are entitled to maintain a good measure of scepticism about the sincerity of the Syrian Government, a scepticism justified not only by this new experience, but also conditioned by the events of the past.

The second announcement published dealt with certain arrangements meant to ease the tasks of the United Nations observers whilst supervising the cease-fire along the Gaza strip. These technical arrangements, the details of which are known to the public, will go into effect after being formally adopted by Israel and Egypt in the Mixed Armistice Commission. Though they may help to increase border security and prevent a renewal of lawlessness, these arrangements are not the essential thing.

Everyone of the Armistice Agreements contains a paragraph, the first Article, which puts down the essential purpose of the Armistice system and the fundamental obligations accepted by the signatories. According to this article the parties undertake not to employ military force to solve the problems existing between them, and not to carry out acts of aggression against the population or armed forces of the other party. They undertake to honour the right of every party to security and freedom from fear from attack, and recognize and confirm that the Armistice Agreements constitute an obligatory step towards the restoration of permanent peace.

In their discussions with the Secretary General of the United Nations, the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister made this article the central issue. They stressed the flagrant contradiction between the prevailing state of war on the one hand and the obligation undertaken by the parties to advance towards peace; between the incitement and preparations for war and the rights of every party to be secure and free from the fear of attack; between the undertaking not to carry out any warlike act and the continuation of the blockade at Suez and Elath. This first Article is the heart and soul in the body of the Armistice Agreements and upon its proper functioning depends the life of all its other organs. The Armistice Agreements are an integral entity and no party is permitted to chose for itself which undertaking it should fulfil to suit its own convenience.

Mr. Hammerskjold devoted much of his time and efforts to examine the possibilities of carrying out the agreements in their entirety. If he succeeds in this task he will have made an important contribution towards reducing the tension and stabilizing the situation, because the full implementation of the Armistice Agreements, in their spirit and letter, is an important guarantee - although not the only one - to prevent war and to open the road to peace.

So much for Mr. Hammerskjold as the envoy of the Security Council. Now a few ~~more~~ words about the activities of our important guest as the Secretary General of the United Nations. The United Nations Charter entitles the Secretary General to "bring to the attention of the Security Council any matter which, in his opinion, may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security". In its resolution of the 4th of April, the Security Council declared that in its opinion the present situation in the relations between Israel and the Arab States constitutes precisely such a threat. It may be assumed that Mr. Hammerskjold whilst visiting the region also interested himself in the root causes of the situation and the wider problems outstanding between the parties, and that he certainly studied these matters thoroughly. Only Mr. Hammerskjold can know the use to which he will put the things he has learnt, and only time will tell. But one thing is clear. The Secretary General of the United Nations is the guardian of the United Nations Charter to which Israel and her neighbours are both signatories. In the preamble to the Charter is written: "All peoples of the United Nations Organization are determined to practice tolerance and to live together in peace with one another as good neighbours, to unite their strength to maintain international peace and security, and to employ international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of the peoples".

If Mr. Hammerskjold succeeds to make these principles a living reality in our region the entire enlightened world will be profoundly grateful to him. But until that ~~time~~ we will have to act with caution and to refrain from illusions. We will rejoice in every minute of tranquillity, but we will not close our eye for one minute before the dangers confronting us. The imbalance of armaments ~~which~~ still prevails and threatens our peace and security. Joint declarations in London for peace in the Middle East, on the one hand, and arms' shipments to Syria on the other hand; announcements of unconditional cease-fire from New York and denials from Damascus, all these ~~circumstances~~ highlight the colourful political landscape of the Middle East in which the darker shades still prevail. Let us hope that the real results of Mr. Hammerskjold's mission will add a brighter touch to the picture.

C O P Y

Dr. Walter Eytan's Commentary

The following talk by Dr. Walter Eytan was broadcast by "The Voice of Zion" in English on 13th May:

"If Mr. Hammarskjoeld's report on his mission to the Middle East were the work of the Prime Minister of an independent country, it would undoubtedly be called a great State document. As it is, it is a political paper of first-class importance, the most important, I should say, to deal with Israel-Arab relations since Israel came into existence and survived the Arab attempt to destroy her eight years ago.

"The report is characterised by a clear, factual and political analysis of the situation, without going uselessly into petty detail. The occasion, as Mr. Hammarskjoeld says in a telling phrase, is not one for a recapitulation of past failures but for a constructive forward look from the vantage-point reached. There is much more chance of making progress in this spirit than by recrimination or by an attitude of quasi-judicial aloofness, such as has sometimes marked the approach of the Powers or the Security Council itself.

"There is no tendency on Mr. Hammarskjoeld's part to say impatiently, 'A plague on both your houses.' Instead, he has gone carefully into the problems involved, and tried to see both how they arose and how they could now best be solved. The approach is much more like that of a doctor or psychiatrist or friend of the family than like that of the professional politicians who, with axes of their own to grind, have for so long been telling the peoples of the Middle East how to run their affairs.

"This does not mean that Mr. Hammarskjoeld minces words; he has left no problems and no source of conflict untouched, and he gives his opinion on each one of them quite clearly. He stresses the importance of making efforts towards an improvement of the general political relations between the parties concerned, and thereby the creation of a spirit of less distrust; and he feels that the UN has here a contribution to make by the continued assistance it can render to member Governments.

"As in the negotiations he conducted during his tour of the Middle East, he attaches primary importance to the cease-fire obligation, which must be upheld irrespective of whether all the other articles of the armistice agreement are being observed or not. But again Mr. Hammarskjoeld puts this problem within the framework of existing political relations and emphasises as particularly important the dependence of the cease-fire arrangement on the general situation. His report includes this telling passage:

'Strains may develop which put the arrangements (?to a test) for which the reestablished legal obligations may prove too weak. It is first of all a question of the general atmosphere in which the cease-fire is implemented. Anything which gives the other party a feeling that he is exposed to increased risks may represent a threat to the cease-fire, and any single incident may, in a situation which is still far from stable, have the same effect.'

"It would be tempting to quote further passages from this lengthy report which the Secretary-General of UN has now laid before the Security Council. But to take out extracts must destroy its savour, and cannot do justice to its significance. In the long run, of course, the savour will remain, but the report's significance must depend on what steps are taken next. These depend partly on the countries of the Middle East themselves, and partly perhaps on the Security Council, but in the main they must depend on the great Powers.

"At a time when the Middle East is caught up in the throes of the cold war, the really vital decisions are taken not in Jerusalem, Damascus or Cairo, but in Washington, Moscow, London and Paris. And these decisions are not merely platonic but find their expression in concrete action, such as the supply or the withholding of arms and the nature and extent of economic aid. It is difficult to resist the feeling that Mr. Hammarskjöld's report has done more than state the facts or clear the air: it seems to have created an opportunity for a real advance towards better relations in the Middle East.

"The situation, of course, remains fairly tense. Incidents of the kind Mr. Hammarskjöld mentions have not stopped. Even in the short time since he left the area, and even since the publication of his report, there have been attacks against Israel from both Jordan and Egypt. If Mr. Hammarskjöld's report is not followed up pretty soon by action designed to improve Israel-Arab relations, the opportunity which it has created may be lost. Nothing can be achieved, as Mr. Hammarskjöld himself makes clear, by forcing solutions on the countries concerned. But a great deal could be done to increase mutual confidence in a way that will make possible an agreed peace. If the Powers will make this their aim, and it is explicitly the aim of the armistice-agreement control, there is no reason why it should not be achieved."

COMMENT ON MR. HAMMARSKJOELD'S REPORT

Period: 13th - 15th May 1956.

Arab Statements in Damascus

ANA reported comment on the UN Secretary-General's report to the Security Council by the Syrian Premier and by the Egyptian, Saudi Arabian and Jordanian envoys in Damascus. The Premier said the report represented a political gain for the Arabs in international quarters. Below are summaries of the other statements:

Brig. Mahmoud Riyadh (Egypt): Mr. Hammarskjöld skilfully wrote his report "in a courteous manner which in some instances wanders from the straight path". He has tried not to bring down Israel's anger on himself. Thus, he has magnified certain Arab defects to the point of equating them with the Zionist evil and aggression. Hammarskjöld's success in the Arab countries was offset by his failure in Tel Aviv, which attributed no importance to his mission.

Sheikh Abd al-Aziz ibn Zaid (Saudi Arabia): Hammarskjöld has befriended Zionism "and moved in the orbit of the countries of the Tripartite Declaration". The Arabs had no hope that his mission would support their just rights. In offering him extensive facilities, they wished to prove that it is Israel, and not the Arabs, which creates an atmosphere of tension in the Middle East.

Sharif Hamid Sa'd al-Din (Jordan): The UN will not restore usurped Arab rights. The world recognises "the fait accompli policy", and the pro-Israel States will be the first to congratulate us if we win the coming round against Israel. (15.5.56)

Cairo Radio's Quotation of the Lebanese Press

Cairo radio reported the following comment by Lebanese newspapers on the report submitted by the UN Secretary-General:

'Al-Jarida': Despite its precise and painstaking attempt at complete impartiality, the report in general indicates that the Arabs were more concerned to facilitate Hammarskjöld's mission than were their opponents. The report advises the Security Council not to take any action which might disturb the prevailing calm. The Arabs, who have more than once had their fingers burned at the UN, now believe that whatever does them no harm is good. What we can see is that Hammarskjöld has done no evil.

'Beirut al-Masa': UN observers in Palestine have often blamed Israel and decided that she has been the aggressor, but we feel no confidence in observers whose countries are not free from Jewish influence and pressure, regardless of their claims to neutrality. We ask for Orientals to be given a share in the supervision; we ask for observers from India, Burma, Afghanistan and from their kin (Arabic: aqarib) such as Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia and Greece.

Dr. Walter Eytan's Commentary

The following talk by Dr. Walter Eytan was broadcast by "The Voice of Zion" in English on 13th May:

"If Mr. Hammarskjöld's report on his mission to the Middle East were the work of the Prime Minister of an independent country, it would undoubtedly be called a great State document. As it is, it is a political paper of first-class importance, the most important, I should say, to deal with Israel-Arab relations since Israel came into existence and survived the Arab attempt to destroy her eight years ago.

"The report is characterised by a clear, factual and political analysis of the situation, without going uselessly into petty detail. The occasion, as Mr. Hammarskjöld says in a telling phrase, is not one for a recapitulation of past failures but for a constructive forward look from the vantage-point reached. There is much more chance of making progress in this spirit than by recrimination or by an attitude of quasi-judicial aloofness, such as has sometimes marked the approach of the Powers or the Security Council itself.

"There is no tendency on Mr. Hammarskjöld's part to say impatiently, 'A plague on both your houses.' Instead, he has gone carefully into the problems involved, and tried to see both how they arose and how they could now best be solved. The approach is much more like that of a doctor or psychiatrist or friend of the family than like that of the professional politicians who, with axes of their own to grind, have for so long been telling the peoples of the Middle East how to run their affairs.

"This does not mean that Mr. Hammarskjöld minces words; he has left no problems and no source of conflict untouched, and he gives his opinion on each one of them quite clearly. He stresses the importance of making efforts towards an improvement of the general political relations between the parties concerned, and thereby the creation of a spirit of less distrust; and he feels that the UN has here a contribution to make by the continued assistance it can render to member Governments.

"As in the negotiations he conducted during his tour of the Middle East, he attaches primary importance to the cease-fire obligation, which must be upheld irrespective of whether all the other articles of the armistice agreement are being observed or not. But again Mr. Hammarskjöld puts this problem within the framework of existing political relations and emphasises as particularly important the dependence of the cease-fire arrangement on the general situation. His report includes this telling passage:

'Strains may develop which put the arrangements (?to a test) for which the re-established legal obligations may prove too weak. It is first of all a question of the general atmosphere in which the cease-fire is implemented. Anything which gives the other party a feeling that he is exposed to increased risks may represent a threat to the cease-fire, and any single incident may, in a situation which is still far from stable, have the same effect.'

"It would be tempting to quote further passages from this lengthy report which the Secretary-General of UN has now laid before the Security Council. But to take out extracts must destroy its savour, and cannot do justice to its significance. In the long run, of course, the savour will remain, but the report's significance must depend on what steps are taken next. These depend partly on the countries of the Middle East themselves, and partly perhaps on the Security Council, but in the main they must depend on the great Powers.

"At a time when the Middle East is caught up in the throes of the cold war, the really vital decisions are taken not in Jerusalem, Damascus or Cairo, but in Washington, Moscow, London and Paris. And these decisions are not merely platonic but find their expression in concrete action, such as the supply or the withholding of arms and the nature and extent of economic aid. It is difficult to resist the feeling that Mr. Hammarskjöld's report has done more than state the facts or clear the air: it seems to have created an opportunity for a real advance towards better relations in the Middle East.

"The situation, of course, remains fairly tense. Incidents of the kind Mr. Hammarskjöld mentions have not stopped. Even in the short time since he left the area, and even since the publication of his report, there have been attacks against

Israel from both Jordan and Egypt. If Mr. Hammarskjöld's report is not followed up pretty soon by action designed to improve Israel-Arab relations, the opportunity which it has created may be lost. Nothing can be achieved, as Mr. Hammarskjöld himself makes clear, by forcing solutions on the countries concerned. But a great deal could be done to increase mutual confidence in a way that will make possible an agreed peace. If the Powers will make this their aim, and it is explicitly the aim of the armistice-agreement control, there is no reason why it should not be achieved."

Israeli Press Comment

As compared with Dr. Eytan's comment on Mr. Hammarskjöld's report, press comment reported by Israel radio was less favourable.

'Ha'aretz' said that Hammarskjöld's success was "transitory", and that the great Powers must tackle the difficult problem of the Egyptian maritime blockade and similar matters; 'Jerusalem Post' and 'Shearim' that peace could be promoted only by supplying arms to Israel and thus restoring the balance of power in the Middle East. (13.5.56)

'Al-Hamishmar' objected to a passage in the report which assumed (it said) that the armistice lines were borders which had no historic or ethnic justification, and that they were the cause of incidents and of the danger of war: such an approach was "tantamount to a justification of the acts of aggression from the other side of the border, or at least to a lenient attitude towards the aggressors whose actions are thus explained by allegedly impersonal factors".

'Hamodia' said it was very doubtful whether Hammarskjöld had eliminated the possibility of war in the near or distant future. (14.5.56)
