

# Trips: Trips - 16

*HS L 179:70*



Dag Hammarskjöld's sand.

D. H. trips 1956 April 17

David Ben-Gurion (Prime Minister of Israel)

— to Sec. Gen.

and Sec. Gen. — to D. Ben-Gurion, 15 April

*At Beirut, 15 April 1956*

Dear Mr. Ben-Gurion,

A private message from me expressing a personal view which I, in the extraordinary situation prevailing the night between Thursday and Friday, considered vitally important to get across to you did, due to unforeseen circumstances, obviously not reach you until Saturday morning — when it was out of context.

Let me, in a few words, now that I have the possibility to do so, without the intervention of any messenger, explain the purpose of this message which was sent from a man with heavy responsibility to a man with even heavier responsibility, and great experience and courage. Let me also explain the method of delivery.

Late during the night, I was informed from New York that, without any contact with Headquarters ~~for~~ me, within one hour after the putting on record of the assurance<sup>s</sup> to comply with Article II, para 2, given by Israel and Egypt, you published a message which, in the most serious way, discredited the Egyptian assurance. This message of yours, obviously could well have robbed the ~~first~~ first foothold we had got on the road to peace, which you yourself had been asking for, of its value, both

by the influence of the message on public opinion generally, and by its possible impact on the Egyptian Government, the reasons for which I need not explain.

Fighting a tough uphill fight -- in what I believe to be a vital interest shared first of all by you -- I felt indeed let down by you, and let down in a situation of the greatest danger, certainly to you and probably to the world. One explanation of your action seems to me to be a wish to follow up the letter -- *the reasons for which I do not know* -- to the Security Council in which you had given an account of your conversation with General Burns on the same subject. *That* But that publication should have taken place by accident was impossible for me to imagine: the seriousness of the matter seemed to exclude any slip and the publication by a delegation, in this form, of such a communication was, in my experience, without precedent. For reasons which I could explain to you orally -- reasons of a very *substantive* nature -- I *had* concluded that the forces for peace now had the upper hand in Egypt, and that, therefore, it was of vital importance to play with and not against those forces, as would be the case if promises given continued to be discredited.

This was the purely personal view I ~~have~~ considered <sup>it</sup> essential to get across to you as quickly as possible, but which I have, for obvious reasons, did not find it possible to transmit over normal U.N. channels. My only alternative happened to be, as I saw it, the one used. Needless to say that I would have preferred another intermediary and that no significance whatsoever may be attached to the nationality <sup>position of</sup> of the messenger. I was unhappy that, facing your request for circulation combined with the fact that your message had already been published in New York, you left me no other choice than to circulate your message which, if circulated, obviously required a clarification of <sup>the</sup> my stand <sup>of</sup> by circulation of the documents for which <sup>of</sup> the Secretary-General of the U.N., and the <sup>of</sup> Agent of the Security Council, <sup>of</sup> was responsible.

My previous circulation of the two general assurances was in no way a precedent : they were co-existing results of negotiations and, arguments presented thus, ~~different from~~ differed from running errands in the course of a discussion. It was in your own interest essential to give them the greatest possible solemnity as steps towards <sup>a</sup> stabilization in the current crisis.

All the same, I may not have had the idea to put them in this way on record, ~~had it not been for the fact put in the record~~ -- an action over which you as well as the Government of Egypt, were informed/well in advance -- had it not been for the fact that you had put your request as a ~~target~~ to the other Party for such an assurance on record by giving a public account of your talk with General Burns.

It may be unnecessary to send you these comments on my oral <sup>personal</sup> ~~views~~ previous message, but in the interest of the purpose which I know you wish to serve, I feel that you should have a clear picture of my thinking in this matter.

Sincerely yours,

Dear Mr. Ben-Gurion,

*The* *involved* *at*  
-A private message from me expressing a personal view which I,  
in the extraordinary situation prevailing the night between Thursday  
and Friday, *at* (considered vitally important to get across to you) *did*  
due to unforeseen circumstances, obviously *did* not reach you until Saturday  
morning — when it was out of context.

Let me, in a few words, now that I have *an able* the possibility to do so,  
without the intervention of any messenger, explain the purpose of this  
message, which was sent from a man with heavy responsibility to a man  
with even heavier responsibility, and great experience and courage.

Let me also explain the method of delivery.

Late during the night, I was informed from *by* New York that, without  
any contact with Headquarters *and* for me, within one hour after the putting  
on record of the assurance *that they would* to comply with Article II, para 2, (given by  
Israel and Egypt, ) you published a message which, in the most serious way, *sought to*  
discredit the Egyptian assurance. This message of yours, *obviously*  
*could* well have *destroyed* ~~robbed~~ the ~~first~~ first foothold we had got on the road  
to peace, which you yourself had been asking for, ~~of its value~~, both

by the influence of the message on public opinion generally, and by its possible impact on the Egyptian Government, the reason for which I need not explain.

Fighting a tough uphill fight <sup>for</sup> ~~in~~ what I believe to be a vital interest <sup>which</sup> shared first of all by <sup>you</sup> ~~you~~ I felt indeed let down by you, and let down in a situation of the greatest danger, certainly to you and probably to the world. One explanation of your action seems to me to be a wish to follow up the letter - <sup>The reason for which I do not know -</sup>

to the Security Council in which you had given an account of your conversation with General Burns on the same subject. But <sup>gc</sup> that publication should have taken place by accident <sup>(it</sup> was impossible for me to imagine: <sup>)</sup>;

the seriousness of the matter seemed to exclude any slip and the publication by a delegation, in this form, of such a communication was, in my experience, without precedent. For reasons ~~which I could explain~~

to you orally - <sup>Substantive</sup> reasons of a very ..... nature <sup>had</sup> I have concluded <sup>back</sup> that the forces for peace now had the upperhand in Egypt, and that, therefore, it was of vital importance <sup>not to counteract but to assist</sup> to ~~play with and not against~~

those forces, as would be the case if promises given continued to be discredited.

This was the purely personal view I have considered essential to get across to you as quickly as possible, but which I have, for obvious reasons, <sup>I could not</sup> ~~did not find it possible to~~ transmit <sup>through</sup> over normal U.N. channels. My only alternative happened to be, as I saw it, the one used. Needless to say <sup>that</sup> I would have preferred <sup>a denationalized</sup> another intermediary and that no significance whatsoever <sup>is to</sup> may be attached to the nationality <sup>or position of</sup> of the messenger. <sup>P</sup> I was unhappy that, facing your request for circulation combined with the fact that your message had already been published in New York, you left me no other choice than to circulate your message which, if circulated, obviously required a clarification on my stand <sup>the</sup> by circulation of the documents for which <sup>the</sup> the Secretary-General of the U.N., and the Agent of the Security Council, <sup>the</sup> was responsible.

My previous circulation of the two general assurances was in no way a precedent : they were co-existing results of negotiations and thus, ~~different from~~ <sup>arguments presented</sup> differed from running ~~on~~ in the course of a discussion. It was in your own interest essential to give them the greatest possible solemnity as steps towards <sup>a</sup> stabilization in the current crisis.

*It probably would not have occurred to me to ~~of putting~~*

All the same, ~~I may not have had the idea to put them in this way~~

on record, ~~had it not been for the fact put in the record -- an action~~  
*of* ~~ever~~ which you as well as the Government of Egypt were informed/well  
in advance -- had it not been for the fact that you had put your  
request ~~as a target~~ to the other Party for such an assurance on record  
by giving a public account of your talk with General Burns.

It may be unnecessary to send you these comments on my ~~oral~~ *informal*  
~~written~~ *personal* ~~previous~~ message, but in the interest of the purpose which I  
know you wish to serve, I feel that you should have a clear picture  
of my thinking in this matter.

Sincerely yours,

- C O P Y -

The Prime Minister

Jerusalem, April 17, 1956

Dear Mr. Hammarskjold:

I write to confirm, on behalf of the Government of Israel, that, in accordance with Article 11 (2) of the Egypt-Israel General Armistice Agreement, orders are in force, and have been repeated for strict observance as from 6:00 P.M., Israel time, tomorrow, 18 April 1956, prohibiting any firing by units of the Defence Army of Israel across the Demarcation Line, as well as the crossing of the Demarcation Line by military or para-military forces, including non-regular forces, for any purpose whatsoever.

This assurance is given on the understanding of full reciprocity on the part of Egypt.

Sincerely yours,

David Ben-Gurion

Mr. Dag Hammarskjold  
Secretary General of the United Nations  
c/o United Nations Truce Supervision Organization  
Jerusalem

Note for file - 19 April 1956

The attached letter from Mr. Ben-Gurion to the Secretary-General, dated 17 April, replaces an earlier letter of the same date, the precise text of which appears in the Secretary-General's cable No. 2 to Col. Ely, 17 April. A correction to the first text was telephoned and Mr. Ben-Gurion sent the attached letter as confirmation of the earlier letter.

The first letter from Mr. Ben-Gurion was returned to him.