

Trips: Trips - 32

HS L 179:70



Dag Hammarskjöld's saml.

D. H. trips 1956 April

D. Ben-Gurion's statement in the Knesset

Extract

Mr. Ben-Gurion's Statement in the Knesset -

April 1956

"In our constant and sincere efforts to maintain security and peace - efforts which long preceded even the establishment of the State - we are now approaching a decisive and perhaps fateful stage. Our constant policy - to increase our defensive capacity and at the same time work unremittingly for a stable peace with our neighbours - must now be intensified in both its parts. On the one hand, the danger of war has increased as never before since the War of Independence, and on the other, opportunities have recently arisen for reducing the tension which never previously existed."

.....

"As I have said, this obligation, Article II, para 2, does not depend on the observance by the Parties of the other clauses of this Armistice Agreement, but we left no room for doubt in Mr. Hammarskjöld's mind that the Israel Government would continue to observe the other clauses of the Armistice Agreement in full on conditions of reciprocity; and we laid particular emphasis on paragraph 1 which lays down the four principles which I mentioned at the beginning of these remarks. No one can tell to what extent and for how long the Egyptian Government will loyally observe the renewed obligation which they have undertaken in accordance with Para 2 (2) of the Armistice Agreement on the cease fire which they have been breaking for so long a time. But even in the most favourable eventuality the cease-fire does not reduce in the slightest the major danger which derives from the preparations by Egypt and her allies

to wage war on Israel. These preparations are being pressed forward without respite and it would be a dangerous illusion if we were to believe that the renewed agreement on the observance of Para 2 (2) mitigates the principal and major danger. For the present we can see no sign of Egypt's accepting the ruling of the Security Council to the effect that the Armistice Agreement is not compatible with a state of war, which Egypt declared, and we know that in contravention of the Agreement and the Security Council's resolution Egypt still maintains her blockade in the Suez Canal and the Red Sea Straits. So far we have no grounds for assuming that Egypt is indeed prepared to accept the obligations contained in para 1 - which is the decisive paragraph of the Armistice Agreements, and put an end to her war propaganda threats against Israel, war preparations and blockade in the Suez Canal and the Straits, or that she is prepared to take steps towards the restoration of peace. Without observance of the first paragraph in the letter and the spirit, without the cessation of the blockade, without a readiness to discuss peace with Israel - the danger of war may still remain or may even grow steadily graver.

The Security Council resolution of April 4 on Mr. Hammarskjöld's mission to the Middle East implies that he is not obliged or authorized to deal on this occasion also with the major question, that is the prevention of war and the achievement of permanent peace, and his official activities will be limited only to ensuring the observance of the Armistice Agreements and taking measures for their implementation.

In the private conversations which the Foreign Minister and I had with Mr. Hammarskjold the discussions of course covered a wider canvas and I will conclude this review with the last statement I made to the Secretary-General on Friday evening before he left for Beirut, I told him that if he found in any of the neighbouring countries a sincere inclination towards peace he could be confident that we on our side would willingly examine all the avenues leading towards permanent peace.

And to the people of Israel let me say this: We will increase our capacity for defence without respite and will strive unwearingly for a stable peace with our neighbours. "