Stalemate

The War of Attrition and Great Power Diplomacy in the Middle East, 1967-1970

David A. Korn

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To the memory of Iris Dobson Korn and Marie Davey Korn

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The idea for this book was bom along with the events it seeks to describe. I was assigned to the American embassy in Tel Aviv in September 1967 and served there until August 1971, first as political officer and then as chief of the Political Section. There I saw a fascinating drama unfold, and I realized that I had what amounted to a front row seat. I kept notes and copies of newspaper articles and press releases, and I resolved that one day I should write its history.

Not until almost twenty years later, when I could seriously begin, did I realize how complex an undertaking it would be. I want to express here my particular thanks to my many former colleagues in the Foreign Service of the United States of America for the help they gave me in reconstructing the events of the period; and to the many Israelis and Egyptians— diplomats, journalists, and soldiers—who so generously shared with me their experiences and recollections and so patiently answered my many questions. Some did not wish to speak for attribution, even though the events discussed took place more than twenty years ago. I have of course respected their wishes.

The official name borne by Egypt during the time of the events described herein was the United Arab Republic, the name given to the union between Egypt and Syria that was formed in 1958. Even after that union broke up in 1961, Egypt continued to be called the United Arab Republic. After Nasser's death, President Anwar Sadat changed the country's official name to the Arab Republic of Egypt. For the sake of simplicity and clarity I have used the designation Egypt throughout my text, rather than the more cumbersome United Arab Republic.

I want to express here my appreciation to Professor Howard Sachar of George Washington University, who gave me encouragement and much needed practical guidance in launching my work on this book, and to Professor Janice Gross Stein of Toronto University for reading through the completed manuscript. I am deeply grateful to the United States Institute of Peace, headed by Ambassador Samuel Lewis, for its grant that enabled me to travel to Egypt and Israel to conduct interviews and collect material. The help that Ambassador Frank Wisner and his staff at the American embassy in Cairo gave in arranging for me to interview former senior Egyptian officials was invaluable; I am particularly grateful to Mr. Will Moser of the American embassy staff, who very efficiently got me in and out of Cairo airport, accompanied me into the Sinai to look at the last Israeli fort still standing there, and gave so generously of his time and effort to make my stay in Egypt profitable. In Israel, Mrs. Peppi Dotan was my research assistant. She did a magnificent job of arranging interviews and tracking down out-of-print publications. She was enormously helpful.

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David A. Korn
Washington, D.C.

Egypt, Israel, and neighboring states

Introduction

In the second half of the twentieth century no region of the globe has known more wars or been the focus of more intensive efforts at peace-making than the one that Israel and the surrounding Arab states—Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria—occupy in uneasy propinquity. Since 1948, the dispute between Israel and its Arab neighbors has flared into war six times—in 1948, in 1956, in 1967, in 1969 and 1970, in 1973, and in 1982. In each instance diplomacy was called on to put out the fire and restore order. War and diplomacy have marched through these years hand in hand.

Each of the Arab-Israeli wars has had its own particular character, but taken as a whole the six divide neatly into two equal segments. The first three—Israel's 1948 War of Independence, the 1956 Sinai campaign, and the 1967 Six-Day War—were dominated by a single issue: whether there should exist a viable, independent state of Israel. In the wars since 1967, the central issue was no longer the existence of the State of Israel but its territorial dimensions. In the Egyptian-Israeli War of Attrition of 1969 and 1970 and in the Ramadan (or Yom Kippur) War of October 1973, the Arabs sought to reverse the territorial gains made by Israel in 1967, while Israel struggled to hold onto them and, in the diplomatic contests that followed, to transform them into permanent territorial or political achievements. Even Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon was, in its essence, an attempt to settle the issue of Israeli dominance over the occupied West Bank and Gaza.

The history of the diplomacy of the Arab-Israeli conflict divides along identical lines. In the period between 1948 and 1967 no serious or sustained effort was made to bring peace between Israel and its Arab neighbors. The major diplomatic initiatives of the time addressed, unsuccessfully in each instance, the issues of water sharing (the Eric Johnston mission of 1953–1955) and of Palestinian refugees (the Joseph Johnson mission of 1961–1963)—components of the conflict rather than the conflict itself.

As in war, 1967 was the watershed also in diplomacy, for that year marked the beginning of an era of intensive efforts at Arab-Israeli peace-making. The cornerstone for this new phase was laid on November 22, 1967, when the United Nations Security Council approved Resolution 242. In Resolution 242, the international community for the first time set out the principles that it considered should guide efforts to bring to settlement the conflict between Israel and its Arab neighbors. The resolution spoke of the need for a just and lasting peace and for Israeli withdrawal from territories occupied in the June 1967 war, of termination of states of belligerency and respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and political independence of every state, of freedom of navigation and a just settlement of the Palestinian refugee problem. It did not, however, say how any of these things was to be accomplished.

The history of the diplomacy of the Arab-Israeli conflict from 1967 forward can be seen as one long struggle to spell out in practical terms what Resolution 242, in fact, means, to translate into some kind of mutually agreed reality the principles enunciated in it, and also to fill in its major lacuna—which is that it dealt with the Palestinian problem as one of refugee rights rather

than the political rights of a people demanding its own identity and its own state. The drafters of Resolution 242 may be forgiven this oversight. They conceived the conflict between Israel and the Arabs to be exclusively one between states, for until that moment it mainly had been such. In November 1967 it was still too early for them to perceive that Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza would soon transform it into one essentially between Israel and the Palestinians, those in the occupied territories as well as those in exile.

The period dealt with in this study extends from 1967 to 1970, or from the end of the Six-Day War to the end of the Egyptian-Israeli War of Attrition; or in diplomatic terms, from the debates in the United Nations in the summer of 1967 that led to the adoption of Resolution 242 later that year to the American initiative of the summer of 1970 that brought the fighting between Egypt and Israel to a close and opened avenues for further negotiation.

It was a seminal time, but oddly one that has been relatively little scrutinized by historians and political scientists. As before, war and diplomacy marched in unison, only with greater urgency now, interacting with one another as though impelled by some iron rule of physics. As will be seen, Resolution 242 itself had a difficult birth. It came into being not as the result of an early consensus among the combatants or among the major powers over how to proceed to settle the conflict between Israel and the Arabs, but rather as a kind of last resort, after almost six months of frustrating and exhausting debate and wrangling and after efforts to produce a more specific text had failed. This meant that the broad principles it enunciated covered enormous disagreement, a fact reflected in the attitude of the combatants themselves toward it. None rushed to embrace the resolution. Syria rejected it outright. Egypt did not like either its language on peace or on withdrawal, though after mulling it over for a few weeks Cairo settled on the strategy of declaring that it meant full withdrawal by Israel from all the Arab territories occupied in the June war; on that highly equivocal basis the government of Egypt endorsed the resolution. Israel's government was sharply divided over Resolution 242 and did not give it authoritative official acceptance until some two and one-half years after it came into being, and even then only at the price of breaking up Prime Minister Golda Meir's national unity cabinet.

The job of trying to see whether the principles set out in Resolution 242 could be translated into reality fell first to the United Nations itself. The resolution called for the appointment of a UN special representative to "promote agreement and assist in efforts" to reach an Arab-Israeli settlement. For this task a Swedish diplomat, Gunnar Jarring, at the time Sweden's ambassador to Moscow, was chosen. Over the course of 1968 and into the early months of 1969 Jarring was to struggle unavailingly to reconcile diametrically opposed Israeli and Arab interpretations in regard to the two essential provisions of Resolution 242, those dealing with withdrawal and with peace. Each side, Jarring soon learned, wanted all or nothing. Egypt wanted full Israeli withdrawal, while Israel required full peace. An obvious compromise would have been for each to accept both—for Israel to agree to full withdrawal and Egypt to full peace. But neither was prepared for that. Egypt insisted that Israel get out of all the territories occupied in the Six-Day War but would not agree to give the Jewish state full peace even if it did withdraw. And Israel aspired to gain full peace with its Arab neighbors while still retaining some of the territory it took from them in June 1967.

The failure of Jarring's efforts brought both a renewal of hostilities and a renewal, on a more intensive level, of diplomatic activity. After rearming and rebuilding its military forces, in March 1969 Egypt opened a war of attrition against Israel along the Suez Canal line, a war the Egyptians hoped would inflict such casualties on the Israelis that they would be obliged to withdraw. Concurrently, the United States and the Soviet Union began negotiations aimed at

achieving an Arab-Israeli settlement.

The U.S.-Soviet negotiations extended from March 1969 through October of that year. They were unique in the history of the diplomacy of Arab-Israeli peacemaking in that they were the sole instance in which the United States chose to try to reach a settlement in the Middle East exclusively by talking with the USSR. Viewed in the context of the time, Washington's decision to negotiate with Moscow rather than with the parties themselves was not such an unusual one. Jarring's failure was the failure of a negotiator who had no clout, no means of rewarding or of punishing any of the parties; to paraphrase Stalin's famous remark about the Pope, Jarring had no divisions. Theoretically at least, the United States and the Soviet Union had ample means of persuasion at their disposal. The Arabs were almost wholly dependent on the Soviets for arms, and the Israelis were heavily reliant on the United States for their supply of sophisticated military equipment and for political backing. The United States had no diplomatic relations with Egypt and the Soviet Union none with Israel—these ties having been broken during the June 1967 war. If the great powers were to pick up on the UN's stalled undertaking, they had little recourse other than to deal with one another.

The first and most obvious obstacle to U.S.-Soviet collaboration in the search for peace in the Middle East was the two powers' rivalry. At the close of the decade of the 1960s, this rivalry was at its height in the Middle East. There was little mutual trust between Washington and Moscow. Each was ready to suspect the other of trying to turn their talks to his sole advantage. But there was another problem as well. The assumption that underlay the U.S.-Soviet negotiations was that each side would deliver his client, i.e., the Soviets would deliver Egypt and the United States would deliver Israel. First, however, the two superpowers had to reach agreement between themselves. In their attempt to do so, they adopted quite different tactics. The USSR took the position that it would have to obtain Egypt's concurrence in everything it agreed to, at each step of the way. The Soviets gave Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser their commitment that they would not endorse anything he did not accept. The United States took the opposite tack. It did not coordinate its moves with the Israelis or commit itself not to take a position distinct from or at odds with Israel's. And it did not try to oblige Israel to accept, on the spot, what it proposed in its talks with the Soviets. Instead, Washington counted on Moscow to bring the Egyptians to accept its (Washington's) minimal terms. Once that was done, the United States would bring pressure to bear on Israel or calculated that pressure would not be needed because the Israelis would not turn down an opportunity to reach an agreement with Egypt even if the agreement did not fulfill all of their wishes.

Out of the U.S.-Soviet negotiations did come the first American attempt ever to give specific interpretation to the principles of Resolution 242. This was the ten-point program that came to be known as the Rogers plan and that was set out in general terms in a speech by Secretary of State William Rogers in December 1969. But the Rogers plan was rejected by all the parties, by the Egyptians, by the Israelis, and by the Soviets as well.

The lesson the United States drew from the failure of its 1969 negotiations with the USSR was that dealing exclusively with Moscow was both unsatisfactory and unproductive. It was the wrong way to proceed. Henceforth, Washington concluded, it would have to negotiate directly with all the parties. (Here too a pattern was set that would endure into the future.) For this to become practical, the Americans had first to persuade the Egyptians that it was in their interest to talk directly with the United States. This was accomplished in the spring of 1970 through a visit to Cairo by Joseph J. Sisco, the U.S. assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs. Sisco's talk with Nasser opened the way for an exclusively American initiative, one

designed and put in place by the United States alone.

The American diplomatic initiative that followed was commanded mainly by the logic of developments on the military front. Fighting along the Suez Canal escalated steadily during 1969. Israel soon came to realize that it would have to employ its air arm if it were to be able to hold a defensive line along Suez without prohibitive casualties. At the beginning of January 1970 the Israelis extended their bombing raids from the immediate area of the canal to targets deep inside Egypt, striking near Cairo and in the Nile Delta and Upper Egypt. To this Israeli escalation Nasser responded by prevailing on the Soviet Union to provide Egypt an air-defense umbrella. Moscow dispatched its latest model surface-to-air missile batteries and fighter aircraft along with crews to operate both. It was the first time since World War II that the USSR had deployed combat forces to an area outside Eastern Europe.

The implications of this Soviet move were far too grave for the United States to ignore. Washington could respond by escalating its military support for Israel or by trying to bring an end to the fighting. With relatively little hesitation, it chose the path of diplomacy. The initiative that the United States launched on June 19, 1970, was informally dubbed the "stop shooting, start talking" proposal. Those were precisely its two components: a cease-fire and an agreement to resume negotiations. In drawing up this proposal the United States made no mention of the Rogers plan—its peace proposal of the previous fall—and included none of the points contained in it. Instead, it went straight back to the language of Resolution 242, the only document to which the combatants had given their agreement. The tactic the Americans employed for getting the parties to agree to the proposal, however, was the same one they had used in the talks the previous year with the Soviets, in other words, to seek Egyptian concurrence first and only then to ask for an Israeli reply. The rationale for this tactic was as before: Washington calculated that if Egypt were to agree to a cease-fire and to resumption of negotiations, Israel could not refuse.

This time it worked. On July 23, 1970, Egypt endorsed the U.S. proposal. One week later Israel agreed to it as well.

It would be misleading, however, to suggest that the events of these years followed a wholly mechanical or logical progression—from war to diplomacy and back to war, and then once again to diplomacy to bring war to a close. Nothing was quite so tidy as the above summary suggests. The U.S. decision to enter into talks with the Soviet Union was taken before Egypt launched its war of attrition against Israel along the Suez Canal. And Gamal Abdel Nasser's decision to go to war again with Israel was only partly—perhaps not even mainly—the result of the failure of Jarring's diplomatic efforts over the previous year. Even before Jarring set out on his mission, Nasser was persuaded that he could not get what he wanted through diplomacy; he and those closest to him considered that war was really the only way out of the abyss into which the defeat of June 1967 had plunged Egypt and the Arab world. There is substantial evidence that suggests that when the Egyptian president accepted the June 19, 1970, U.S. proposal he did so in bad faith, intending to use the ninety-day term of the cease-fire not in a genuine attempt to reach agreement with Israel but as a respite in which to push his antiaircraft missiles up to the Suez line and gird again for war.

The personality of the players was enormously important; had Nasser, for example, removed himself from office on the morrow of the June 1967 defeat, as he first announced he intended to do, there can be no doubt that subsequent history would have been different. In Israel, domestic politics and factional and personal rivalries shaped policies on territories and peace to an extent difficult to exaggerate. Jockeying for position and power within the ruling Labor Party made it virtually impossible for Israel to devise coherent policies or to respond constructively to

international peacemaking efforts. In the United States as well, the personal rivalry between the national security adviser and the secretary of state, and the two men's conflicting strategies, frequently hamstrung Washington's Middle East peace initiatives. President Richard Nixon's failure to give forthright backing to his secretary of state repeatedly undercut U.S. Middle East peace diplomacy during these years.

The Egyptian-Israeli War of Attrition—the longest of the wars between Egypt and Israel but also the most obscure—ended in stalemate in August 1970, neither side victorious nor vanquished. This fact was poorly understood in Israel, where the war was retrospectively deemed a success for Israeli arms. It is a central thesis of this study that the failure of the Israelis to acknowledge that the War of Attrition did not end in victory for their side, and their failure to grapple with the implications of that fact, led them to a false sense of security; and that this, in turn, caused them to neglect opportunities for an interim agreement with Egypt. Of course, whether the October 1973 war, the most devastating of the Arab-Israeli wars, might have been avoided had the Israelis and Americans appraised the outcome of the War of Attrition more realistically can only be a matter for speculation.

What is certain is that the events that transpired between the June 1967 war and August 1970 shaped the history of the Middle East from that time forward. The diplomacy of the period laid the foundations for the achievements of Arab-Israeli peacemaking in the half decade that followed the 1973 war, and for all the efforts undertaken since.

1

By Other Means

[War] is a mere continuation of policy by other means.

—Karl von Clausewitz, *On War*

It was as though Clausewitz's famous axiom had been turned on its head.

Even before the guns fell silent, the scene of battle shifted to the glass and steel structures on New York's east side that house the United Nations. For Israel and for its Arab opponents, Egypt, Jordan, and Syria, and for each side's particular supporters, diplomacy was to become the continuation of war by other means.

The fighting that ended on June 11, 1967, with the entry into effect of the last United Nations cease-fire resolution left Israel in possession of the whole of the Sinai peninsula right up to the Suez Canal waterline, of Gaza and its teeming Palestinian refugee population, of the ancient city of East Jerusalem with its wealth of Christian, Jewish, and Moslem shrines, all of the West Bank down to the Jordan River, and, in the north, the Golan Heights, a thick bulge of Syrian territory pointing toward Damascus. The Egyptian army—Israel's largest and most potent adversary—was shattered, and Jordan's was badly mauled; only Syria escaped without crippling losses.

In six days of war, the territory under Israel's control tripled in size. For the Jewish state, it was a victory of unprecedented proportions, but it was not without historical parallel. Less than eleven years earlier, Israel's army had swept across the Sinai Peninsula. But in the diplomatic struggle that followed, Israel was obliged to give up every inch it had won. For its pullback, it did extract two important concessions. A United Nations force was put in place along the Egyptian side of the border and in Gaza and at Sharm el-Sheikh near the tip of the Sinai Peninsula; it was to be a barrier to Palestinian guerrilla raids into Israel and a buffer between Israeli and Egyptian armies. And the Straits of Tiran, the narrow waterway connecting the Gulf of Aqaba to the Red Sea, were declared open for the passage of ships to and from Israel's southern port city of Eilat. With this one stroke, Israel broke out of the blockade Egypt had thrown around its southern exit and gained access to the markets and to the resources of the world that lay east of Suez. No longer did it need rely exclusively on Latin America for its supply of oil or on Western Europe and the Americas for trade. It could now satisfy its petroleum needs from nearby Iran. It could also develop trade and political relations with the states of South Asia and the Far East. In the years that followed the 1956 war, Israelis energetically set about doing just that.

In 1967, with one no less sudden stroke, these gains were wiped out. On May 16, the Egyptian army chief of staff, General Mohammed Fawzi, sent a letter to the commander of the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF), General Rikhye, asking that the UN contingent be removed from "the observation points on our frontier."[1] Fawzi was not telling the UN to get out; he quite deliberately did not ask it to evacuate its two most sensitive positions, those at Sharm el¯Sheikh

guarding the entrance to the Straits of Tiran and those in Gaza. But his letter set off a chain reaction that quickly raced out of control. General Rikhye had no authority to act on the Egyptian chief of staff's request, so he passed it along to his boss, U Thant, the UN secretary general. Thant could have fallen back on the argument that a change in the disposition of UN forces would require approval by the Security Council; or he could have stalled for time to head off the crisis that he surely understood the Egyptian move would ignite. He did neither. Instead, he made the colossal blunder of putting the ball back into the Egyptian court. The UN secretary general told Egypt's foreign minister, Mahmoud Riad, that Egypt was entitled to ask for the complete removal of the UN force but not to decide how it should be deployed.

No doubt Thant thought this would deter the Egyptians. He was wrong. By this time, Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser had whipped up emotions throughout the Arab world. For years his rivals and enemies in the Arab world had taunted and ridiculed him for hiding from Israel "behind the skirts" of the United Nations. His prestige was on the line now, and he could not back down. On May 18, Riad sent Thant a letter asking him to "terminate the existence of UNEF on the soil of the United Arab Republic and in the Gaza Strip."[2] Thant still could have stalled, but he took the narrow, legalistic view that once Egypt asked UNEF to leave he had no choice but to comply. Whatever Nasser's original intent may have been, the withdrawal of the UN force propelled him ineluctably toward confrontation with Israel. A few days later, he declared the Straits of Tiran closed to Israeli shipping and to "strategic cargoes" consigned for shipment to Israel on vessels under other flags. Among other things, this meant Israel would no longer be able to get oil from Iran, which since 1957 had become its major supplier.

It was a step Nasser and those around him knew meant war, for ever since 1957 the Israelis had been proclaiming that interference with navigation would be considered a casus belli.[3] The Egyptian army had 30,000 soldiers in Yemen, but Marshal Abdul Hakim Amer, the commander of the armed forces, assured Nasser that his forces were ready for war with Israel. The president of Egypt sent 80,000 troops and 600 tanks into Sinai. He then proceeded to sign a pact with King Hussein that put Jordan's army, at least theoretically, under Egypt's orders. A frenzy of war hysteria swept the Arab world, and for a brief moment Nasser basked in the adulation of Arabs everywhere. Egypt's propaganda machine told the public and the world that victory was certain.

Analysts in Western defense ministries were sure that the Israeli army was more than a match for its Arab opponents. Israeli generals shared this view, but they feared that victory might come at the pyrrhic price of casualties on the order of 10,000 to 15,000. And as they listened to the blood cries that came across the Arab airwaves, many Israelis became badly frightened. In the last days of May 1967, the government fell into disarray and public confidence began to crumble. Prime Minister Levi Eshkol gave a hesitant, stumbling speech, and Chief of Staff Yitzhak Rabin was momentarily stricken with what the public was told was nicotine poisoning but sounded very much like a nervous breakdown. Israel's existence and the very lives of its citizens seemed to hang in the balance.

Then suddenly came victory—a victory that was quicker, easier, and more overwhelming than anyone could have imagined. In a matter of days, Israelis were propelled from a terrifying vision of an approaching apocalypse to a state of euphoric exhaltation. The impact was traumatic.

No one was more acutely aware than Foreign Minister Abba Eban of the parallel between Israel's situation after the 1956 war and the one it faced eleven years later. Eban was ambassador in Washington in 1956 and early 1957 when the terms of Israel's withdrawal from Sinai were being negotiated. Now, in 1967, he was determined that Israel would give up its military gains only for peace. It was not to be said that Israeli diplomacy had lost what Israeli arms had won—

at least not this time around—on Eban's watch. His role, he was persuaded, was every bit as important as that of the generals who had become instant heroes. After all, Israel's army had won many victories, but never before had Israeli diplomacy been able to translate them into lasting political achievements.

There were, no doubt, profound considerations of principle behind the foreign minister's determination, but there was also a consideration of a personal and professional order. For in the early days of June 1967, Eban was fighting for his political life. Born Aubrey Solomon in South Africa and educated at Cambridge, Eban was perhaps the most eloquent orator the English language had known since Winston Churchill. He was also a gifted linguist. He spoke Hebrew fluently—and Arabic too—but in the richness of that earthy tongue he came through as stilted, academic, and pompous; for many Israelis Eban's Hebrew, with its baroque style and its artful circumlocutions, was at one and the same time admirable and just a little ridiculous. The reserve that his British education inculcated was alien to the free and easy manner of Israeli society. Though it may have been only shyness, it made him seem arrogant. The impression was one Eban did nothing to dispel.

All this would have been a sufficient handicap for anyone in politics in Israel, but there was more. The foreign minister was the only senior political figure in Israel who had not actually lived through the greater part of the British mandate of Palestine and the struggle for independence. He had worked hard to bring the state into being—but from abroad. He first settled in Israel only in 1948; and no sooner had he taken up residence in Jerusalem than he went off to New York to represent Israel at the United Nations. He did not return to live in Israel until 1959. To a great part of the Israeli public, and to many of his fellow cabinet officers, the tall, chubby foreign minister, with his awkward gait, his ample double chin and his Oxbridge accent, was a "foreign import."

These things could be forgiven in a nation of immigrants, particularly to someone so brilliant and successful as Eban. In May of 1967, however, success had eluded the foreign minister. He had failed to win France's support. He came away from a distinctly chilly meeting with de Gaulle on May 23 with little more than the admonition that Israel should leave it to the four "great powers"—the United States, the Soviet Union, France, and Britain—to settle the crisis set off by Nasser's moves in Sinai. To this the French president added a stern warning not to go to war to break Egypt's blockade of Eilat.[4]

Washington was a good deal more sympathetic, but President Lyndon Baines Johnson made it plain that he would not commit the United States to act alone to break the Arab blockade of Israel; whatever America did would have to be in concert with other nations. Johnson pressed Eban for time to try to resolve the conflict through diplomacy. The foreign minister understood that hasty action would undermine the president's and the American public's support for his country, and, in his reports to Jerusalem, he advocated giving Johnson the time he wanted. In Israel, others understood this too; however, as tension rose to almost unbearable levels, Eban's popularity plummeted. He was accused of mishandling his meetings with Johnson and Johnson's secretary of state, Dean Rusk, and of exaggerating, in his cables back home, their pledges of support for Israel.[5] Even in the thrall of victory, many Israelis held Eban responsible for the agony through which they had just passed. There were widespread calls for his resignation. As Eban made ready to return to New York in mid-June to lead the Israeli delegation to the special session of the General Assembly that the Arabs and the Soviets had succeeded in convoking, there was talk of sending Defense Minister Moshe Dayan and Minister without Portfolio Menachem Begin along to serve as "watch-dogs." Eban was outraged. He was determined not to

go to New York under the supervision of other ministers or even accompanied by them. He asked for a private meeting with Prime Minister Eshkol and there laid out his case: The coming diplomatic battle would be as fateful as any in recent years; naming three ministers to head Israel's UN delegation would be as ridiculous as putting three generals in command of an armored brigade.[6]

Getting Dayan and Begin out of the country was an idea that had its appeal for Eshkol; both had been forced on him in the crisis that preceded the war, and now Dayan—or so the prime minister and his aides felt— was in the process of stealing the glory of victory from him. Eshkol, however, respected Eban's abilities and understood his predicament. He promised the foreign minister his support. Eban left for the United States unaccompanied but in such a foul mood that a few days later he was momentarily tempted to cancel the address he was about to make to the General Assembly.[7]

On June 8, 1967, apparently with the approval of Prime Minister Levy Eshkol, Eban had told Arthur Goldberg, the U.S. ambassador to the UN, that Israel was not seeking territorial aggrandizement. It would give back all the conquered territories in return for peace.[8] But this was a matter which only the full Cabinet could decide, and by the end of June it was clear that Eban's assurance was not to be the last word. Eban himself quickly subtracted East Jerusalem from the list of returnable territories. Dayan and others were talking about keeping Gaza as well, and Israeli highway engineers were surveying for a road through the Latrun salient, the finger of land between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem that the Israelis had failed to wrest from the Jordanian army in 1948.

The Cabinet met all day on June 18 and 19 to discuss territorial issues and peace proposals. After lengthy debate, it approved, by unanimous vote, a proposal under which Israel would withdraw from all of Sinai and all of Golan—back to the international borders between Israel and Egypt and Syria—in return for peace treaties with these two countries, demilitarization of Sinai and Golan, guarantees (from Egypt) for freedom of navigation through the Straits of Tiran and the Suez Canal, and (from Syria) for the unimpeded flow of water into Israel from the sources of the Jordan River. The proposal called for Israeli forces to remain on the cease-fire lines until peace treaties were signed. The peace proposal said nothing about East Jerusalem and Gaza; the Cabinet consensus was that they should remain in Israeli hands. They were ruled out from negotiation altogether, and ten days later Israel redrew and expanded East Jerusalem's municipal borders and annexed it.[9]

The Israeli Cabinet's peace proposal left the future of the West Bank for separate discussion. In mid-June of 1967, Israel's government was ready to agree to withdraw from all of Sinai and Golan—these territories were considered security issues only—if Egypt and Syria would agree to peace. The West Bank was a different matter, and already at that early date the Cabinet was deeply divided over its future. Defense Minister Moshe Dayan felt that the West Bank—"Judea and Samaria"—was, in his words, "part of our land and we should settle there and not give it up."[10] Minister without Portfolio Menachem Begin, leader of the right-wing Herut party, felt even more strongly about keeping these territories. Others, however, feared that holding on to these heavily populated Arab lands would have grave consequences for the Jewish character of the State of Israel and would be an unending source of conflict between Israel and its Arab neighbors. So setting the West Bank aside for later discussion was not just a negotiating tactic; it reflected a deep split within the government of Israel.

Even the consensus on the proposal for full withdrawal from Sinai and Golan was reached only with some difficulty. The Cabinet, surprised at its own audacity, decided to keep its

decision secret. The June 19 proposal was to be given to the Americans for transmission to the governments of Egypt and Syria, but it was not to be announced publicly. It turned out to be one of the Israeli Cabinet's best-kept secrets ever. Yitzhak Rabin was to be sent off to Washington as Israel's ambassador early in 1968 without having been informed of it. He learned of it from the Americans after he got there.[11]

On June 22, 1967, Eban called on U.S. Secretary of State Dean Rusk, in Rusk's suite in New York's Waldorf Astoria Hotel, in order to hand over the Israeli proposal. The Americans greeted it with a silence that Eban was persuaded reflected dumbfounded admiration for Israel's generosity.[12] In fact, Rusk and the others were worried that, in demanding peace treaties, Israel was asking more than could be had. They felt that if the Israelis left out Jerusalem, Gaza, and the West Bank it would make agreement difficult if not impossible. The secretary of state asked why Jordan had not been offered a peace treaty; what would happen to the West Bank and to Gaza? Eban tried to skirt the question. Israel's thinking on the issue had not yet crystallized, he replied. Moreover, the wishes of the inhabitants were not yet known. In that case, Rusk asked, why not hold a referendum to find out? The matter was left there.[13]

A few days later, the Americans informed Eban that Egypt and Syria had rejected the Israeli proposal outright.

Even in these very early days after the war, Israel's leaders had begun to see peace treaties as the only valid and acceptable solution to their problems with the Arabs, and they wanted to negotiate these treaties face-to-face with their neighbors. What they feared most was the idea that seemed to lie behind de Gaulle's four-power conference proposal— an imposed settlement, something very much like the one Nasser had brought tumbling down in mid-May. A settlement, however, could be imposed only with the consent of the United States. Keeping America's support became Eban's and Israel's prime objective.

It was not, on the face of it, a difficult task. American public opinion, in the summer of 1967, was overwhelmingly on Israel's side. It would have been practically impossible for Washington to move in directions seen as unfriendly to Israel; even had the administration been so inclined, the Congress and the public would not have stood for it—not that the thought ever crossed the mind of the thirty-sixth president of the United States. Lyndon Johnson, Texas native and bosom buddy of the big money construction firm of Brown and Root whose Arab oil-money connections were already then well established, had not come to Washington in the early days with any particular predisposition in Israel's favor. What ultimately won him to Israel's side was not geopolitics or grand strategy, but simply a very down-to-earth appreciation of the importance of American Jews in the country's political life and a personal appreciation for their qualities.

After his election to the Senate in 1948, Johnson became closely and warmly associated with prominent American Jews. He valued them as friends and advisers, and he appointed them to high positions. Arthur Krim and Abe Feinberg, wealthy Jewish businessmen, were among the president's closest and most influential friends. Harry McPherson, Johnson's White House assistant who handled liaison with the Jewish community, and who himself was Jewish despite his Irish name, was persuaded that the president must be part Jewish. Not just because of his affection for Jews, McPherson thought, but because of the way he behaved. McPherson saw the president as a "six-foot three-inch Texas, slightly corny version of a rabbi or a diamond merchant on [New York's] Forty-fourth Street." He had the kind of hot nature people associated with Jews, McPherson felt, and like them he would spill out all his woes, his vanity, and his joy, never afraid of making a fool of himself.[14]

Lyndon Johnson did care about American Jews. He sent U.S. Ambassador Walworth Barbour

back to his post in Tel Aviv in 1964 with the admonition: “I don’t care what happens to Israel, but I care a lot about American Jews. Whatever you do in Israel, keep one eye peeled for the American Jews and do nothing which would get them on my back.”[15] Keeping American Jews off Lyndon Johnson’s back of course meant keeping Israelis happy. Barbour, an astute diplomat, eagerly made that his top priority.

The issue of freedom of navigation through the Straits of Tiran was one Johnson knew well. As Senate majority leader in 1957, he had had a hand, albeit indirectly, in the assurances the Eisenhower administration gave Israel. One day in the midst of Eban’s talks with Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, Johnson had picked up the phone and called the Israeli ambassador to ask if the administration was negotiating seriously with him. The Senate majority leader was concerned to know whether his colleagues at the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue were honestly trying to reach agreement with Israel; and he had no hesitation in letting Eban know that he could slow down or speed up legislation in the Congress accordingly.[16] Johnson did, in fact, threaten to hold up key appropriations unless Israel got the assurances it sought.[17]

On February 11, 1957, Dulles gave Eban an aide memoir that said the United States considered the Gulf of Aqaba an international waterway. If Israel withdrew from Sinai and Gaza, the United States would announce its intention to exercise its right of free passage in the Straits of Tiran and would encourage others to do so as well. The United States, the secretary of state added, would “take a heavy responsibility if Israel were to withdraw and the blockade were to be renewed.”[18]

Ambassador Eban thought this a considerable achievement, though he acknowledged that it was not the ironclad guarantee his government would have liked. Later, during the tense days of May 1967, Foreign Minister Eban was to tell President Johnson that the February 1957 documents and the associated public statements made at the time amounted to a commitment by the United States to keep Israel’s southern waterway open.[19]

The case was arguable but not provable. Israelis were firmly persuaded that America had committed itself, and Eban argued his brief with eloquence, skill, and dogged persistence. Yet the American undertaking such as it was, fell into the ambiguous category of “moral commitment.” Dulles had called the Gulf of Aqaba an international waterway; he had affirmed the right of all nations to innocent passage through it. He had not promised that the United States would break Egypt’s blockade if it were renewed, and he could not have done so without the approval of the Senate and the signature of the president. Even leaving aside the passage’s doubtful syntax, Dulles’ pledge that the United States would “take a heavy responsibility” was deliberately vague. It did not commit Washington to any specific course, least of all one that required going to war.

France had made a similar pledge, but the French in 1957 spoke much more strongly and in much more specific terms of their determination to take Israel’s side if a blockade were reimposed. Ten years later, de Gaulle cast his predecessors’ promises aside without so much as a moment’s hesitation. For Lyndon Johnson such a thing was inconceivable. It ran counter both to his sense of personal obligation and to his keen domestic political instincts. Johnson wanted to make good on the assurances the United States had given Israel, even if they were not binding. What he would have done had he not been caught in an escalating and increasingly unpopular war in Vietnam will never be known. As it was, he wanted to move cautiously and only in concert with other nations. He proposed an international naval force to ply the waters of the Gulf of Aqaba. At the State Department, which was given the job of recruiting other governments for this venture, it was dubbed “the Armada.” But it never weighed anchor. Only the Netherlands

and Australia signed up (the British and Canadians were still thinking it over when the war began), and it would have taken the Dutch two weeks to get a destroyer to the Red Sea.[20] Meanwhile, American ambassadors in Arab capitals warned that forcing the Straits of Tiran with U.S. warships—whether collectively or with others—would set off an explosion. They predicted uncontrollable anti-American riots in the Arab world, the breaking of diplomatic relations, and very likely the expropriation of American oil companies.[21]

Clearly, administration officials felt, this was too high a price to pay. As the crisis wore on, some in Washington were heard to say that the Egyptian blockade was, after all, perhaps not so much of a catastrophe as had first been thought. Ships under Israeli flag hardly ever called at Eilat anyway. Israel could once again get its oil from Latin America, and nonstrategic imports and exports could be handled at Eilat by foreign flag vessels.[22] Was there really a need to have a war just because Nasser had closed a waterway to the Israelis?

In the last days of May and early June, the Americans were reduced to a policy of impotent appeals for moderation. Washington called on both Cairo and Jerusalem for restraint. American officials pressed Israel for more time to work out a diplomatic solution, but they had no solution in hand. There were only hopes—that Nasser might relent, that some sort of compromise might be possible, that some miracle might occur. The State Department dispatched one of its most experienced career officers, Ambassador Charles Yost, to pick up the reins at the American embassy in Cairo from the newly arrived American ambassador, Richard Nolte, a political appointee who was pathetically floundering amidst the crisis. Yost worked with Zakariya Muhieddin, Egypt's vice president, on a formula he hoped might resolve the crisis set off by Nasser's closure of the Straits of Tiran. Muhieddin agreed to go to Washington for further talks, but the war intervened before he could get there.

Lyndon Johnson has sometimes been accused of having given the Israelis a silent wink and nod to launch their surprise attack on the morning of June 5.[23] The truth is more complex. In the last days of May, Johnson repeatedly warned Eban and other Israeli officials against going to war. In their meeting on May 26, he cautioned Eban that "Israel will not be alone unless it decides to go alone," and he used this phrase repeatedly thereafter.[24] But at some point early in June, Johnson seems simply to have lost hope that he could succeed in bringing about a diplomatic solution to the crisis. More than that, perhaps, he sensed that the situation Israelis faced was too fraught with danger, and tragedy too near and threatening, for him to tell them what they should or should not do. Above all, he wanted to avoid assuming responsibility for what he feared could all too easily become a disaster. He did not want to be told that Jews had been slaughtered because of his advice, or to be asked to rescue Israel from imminent destruction because it had followed his directions.[25] Once the war was over, Johnson bore Israel no grudge, but he continued to believe that it was a mistake, one Israelis would ultimately come to regret. Nonetheless, he felt the Israelis were right in insisting on peace. The conflict had gone on too long and had become too dangerous, not only for the Israelis and for the Arabs but for the rest of the world as well. The United States, Johnson decided, would back Israel in its refusal to withdraw—short of an agreement that recognized its right to live in peace.[26]

The anxious days that preceded the war left a lasting imprint on American policy in other respects as well. When senior officials of the State Department convened in the second week of June to assess the new situation, they were divided in their views. Some were unenthusiastic at best about Israel's victory. They saw the rebuilding of America's shattered ties with the Arabs as the main task ahead for the nation's diplomacy, and they feared that the U.S. position in the Middle East would be irreparably damaged if the new cease-fire lines were to become

permanent.

Others, though they shared these concerns, saw a different side to it: Israel's victory was also a victory for the United States and a defeat for the Soviet Union. Western arms had won out over Soviet arms; the friend of the United States had defeated the allies of the USSR. The most outspoken proponent of this thesis was Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Eugene Rostow. As the Middle East erupted into crisis in May of 1967, Rostow put himself in charge of the task force set up to deal with it. One of his ideas was to have American warships shoot their way through the Straits of Tiran. Rostow's proposal sent chills down the spines of the staff of the Department of State's Near East and South Asia bureau and found few supporters elsewhere.

In the weeks ahead, however, American policy was to be shaped not in Washington but in New York, in the debates and votes in the Security Council and the Special General Assembly. The American ambassador to the UN would, in any case, have had an important role to play in any matter involving the world organization. But now, Johnson handed over to Arthur Goldberg, his representative in New York, nearly exclusive authority to decide what specific position the United States should take.[27]

An extraordinarily articulate speaker and a remarkable negotiator, Goldberg had made his name as a labor lawyer. He had been general counsel for the Congress of Industrial Organizations and then secretary of labor at the beginning of the Kennedy administration. Kennedy appointed Goldberg to the Supreme Court. In 1965, Johnson asked Goldberg to take the job of ambassador to the United Nations. Though later he was to regret giving up his seat on the court, at the time Goldberg found it dull stuff. He was restless and impatient there, and he readily answered Johnson's call.[28]

Secretary of State Dean Rusk was sufficiently practiced in the ways of bureaucracy to realize that the authority the president gave to Goldberg would take decision making on the Middle East policy out of the hands of the State Department. Rusk was by nature disinclined to challenge Johnson's decisions; he was always the good soldier. In any event, he was too preoccupied with Vietnam to take on other commitments. Rusk appears to have given his endorsement, albeit sometimes after the fact, to Goldberg's moves in the UN.[29] But had Rusk himself been running America's diplomacy at the UN in the fall of 1967, or had the job been entrusted to State Department officials closer to Rusk's own thinking, events might have taken quite a different course. With the latitude awarded him by Johnson, Goldberg was to move U.S. positions closer to those of Israel than many in Washington expected or thought advisable in the summer of 1967.

The president's reasons for empowering Goldberg to run U.S. diplomacy in the Middle East debate at the UN had relatively little to do with a vision of what a future settlement between the Arabs and the Israelis should look like. Johnson's concerns were—as they almost always were—political. "You will know what the political traffic will bear," the president told his UN ambassador.[30] He had faith in Arthur Goldberg's ability to judge American public opinion and stay within its broad mainstream. This was important to Lyndon Johnson, almost to the point of obsession. The war in Vietnam gave him all the controversy he could handle. He wanted domestic consensus on the Middle East. Johnson had no hesitation in telling Eban, while the fighting was still raging, that he could hold firm against pressures for Israeli withdrawal only on the basis of strong American public support for Israel. The president's advisers urged Eban to get out and win that support.[31] For the foreign minister of Israel, it was welcome but unnecessary advice.

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On March 4, 1967, the day before he left Cairo to return to Washington to take up his new appointment as assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, American Ambassador Lucius Battle paid a farewell call on President Gamal Abdel Nasser. The Egyptian president and the tall, urbane American envoy spent two hours together. Nasser talked about everything. Israel was not at that moment his main preoccupation, but when he got to the subject he told Battle that Egypt was not yet ready for another war. But, Nasser vowed, if a war did come it would be "at the time and place of our choosing."[32]

Lucius Durham Battle had had a meteoric career in the State Department. He joined the department in 1946 and was soon assigned to the Canadian desk. Although he was the most junior officer there, one day he was called upon to render an opinion before Under Secretary Dean Acheson on an obscure issue that no one else in Washington knew much about. Battle's view contradicted that of the American ambassador in Ottawa, but Battle turned out to be right. When George Marshall moved to defense and Acheson became secretary of state, Battle was the first and only candidate Acheson interviewed for the job of his personal assistant. He became the secretary's right-hand man, the person closest to him and most trusted by him. When Acheson left government in January 1953, Battle took overseas assignments but found them unsatisfying after his four heady years at diplomacy's summit. He quit the service in 1956, but Dean Rusk brought him back to the State Department in 1961, first as the Department's executive secretary and then as assistant secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs.

When Ambassador John Badeau left Cairo in 1964, Battle went to replace him. Much to his disappointment, but through no fault of his own, relations between the United States and Egypt were to go steadily downhill during his time in Cairo. In the early 1950s, in the first years after the Free Officers overthrew King Farouk, the United States pinned great hopes on Nasser, and Nasser's door was always open to American officials, particularly if they came from the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). Nasser needed the Americans to help the new Egyptian regime get British troops out of Egypt. After that was done, however, the United States usefulness waned. Nasser saw that his future as an Arab and Third World leader lay in nonalignment, and so he resisted Dulles' efforts first to coax him and then to coerce him into joining the British and U.S.-backed Baghdad pact. It soon became apparent to Nasser that whatever he did the Americans were not going to arm him in the manner to which he aspired. The honeymoon went sour and divorce ensued; Nasser turned to the Soviets for arms and went to the 1955 Bandung conference, and he became one of the leading lights of the nonaligned movement. All this made him the bète noire of Secretary of State John Foster Dulles.

After Dulles died, the United States moved to improve its ties with Egypt. The Americans were still not ready to offer arms, but they had something Nasser needed for his country almost as badly: wheat. A massive program of wheat deliveries was launched, and, after John Kennedy became president, relations blossomed still further. Kennedy had an affinity for radical Third World leaders, and he and Nasser quickly developed a warm and frequent correspondence.

But even before Kennedy's assassination, Nasser's ambitions began to intrude upon the newly found rapprochement between the two countries. In 1962 a revolution broke out in Yemen. Nasser sent his army to support the newly established republican government against the forces of the only partially overthrown monarchy backed by Saudi Arabia. As tension mounted and Egypt threatened Saudi Arabia, America's relations with Egypt began to deteriorate once again. But Yemen was not the only flash point. In the fall of 1964, the United States flew Belgian paratroopers to rescue a group of Europeans and Americans who were being held hostage in the former Belgian Congo. Africans protested vehemently. In Cairo a mob burned down the United

States Information Agency library and attacked the embassy. There was substantial damage, but the Egyptian government neither apologized nor offered to pay compensation, though under international law it was required to do so.

Shortly thereafter, the Egyptian minister of supply asked Battle when the next shipment of wheat would be coming. Incensed at the Egyptian's brazenness, Battle replied: "Well, you haven't said you are sorry." Battle's remark soon reached Nasser, and it sent the Egyptian leader into a fury. In a speech at Suez in December 1964, he excoriated Lyndon Johnson and then invited him to "drink the waters of the sea"—the Arabic equivalent of "shove it." Johnson did not reply publicly, but from then on Nasser was in Washington's dog house. U.S. wheat shipments were not entirely stopped, but they were reduced and "fine tuned"; instead of promising a year's supply at a time, the United States committed itself only for three or six months. If during that period Egypt made trouble in Yemen or elsewhere, the shipments ceased for a while.[33]

This step merely fueled Egyptian suspicions that the United States was out to get rid of Nasser. Mohamed Heikal, editor of *Cairo Daily* and *Al Ahram* and Nasser's confidant, saw a vast conspiracy at work: The United States was leading a global counterrevolution, the principal manifestations of which were the overthrow of Nasser's comrades-in-arms in the non-aligned movement—Sukarno, Nkrumah, and Ben Bella.[34] Was not the Egyptian president next on the list? Nasser eventually persuaded himself that the United States was planning to assassinate him.[35] Late in 1966, Egyptian embassies in Europe were given urgent instructions to find and bring to Cairo a private American citizen for Nasser to speak with. John Birdsall, an American businessman on a trip through Europe, was transported to the Egyptian capital and brought into Nasser's presence. There, to his wide-eyed amazement, Birdsall was instructed by the president of Egypt to go to Washington and tell President Johnson that President Nasser knew that the CIA was out to assassinate him.[36]

Neither Nasser's paranoia nor the souring of relations had much effect on Battle's access to the Egyptian leader. He met Nasser frequently and liked him, but he saw his flaws. When faced with a problem, Nasser tended to flay about, to try whatever came to mind, regardless of what had been done before. He had no coherent economic policy and absolutely no understanding of the United States or of American politics. He could not grasp that Democratic party members of Congress could criticize him or Egypt without at least the tacit approval of Lyndon Johnson. All too frequently, when some minor American politician tried to grab headlines by denouncing him, Nasser excoriated the American president in reply. He was sure that Johnson, particularly after his landslide victory in 1964, was practically omnipotent. In his sessions with Battle, he would pound his fist on the table and exclaim "Johnson can do whatever he wants to do." Patiently and rationally, Battle would try to explain the American system of checks and balances. Nasser's reply was, perhaps all too obviously, "if that is so, then I don't believe in democracy."[37]

Though he always had a reserve of doubt about what Nasser told him, Battle was by and large reassured by the Egyptian president's disclaimer that he was preparing to go to war against Israel. Still, Battle sensed something desperate in Nasser's demeanor, and he feared that some rash act might lie ahead. Egypt's economy was in terrible shape—the result of Nasser's lurch toward "socialism" at the outset of the decade and the seemingly endless war in Yemen. In his last cable from Cairo, sent on March 5, Battle warned Washington to expect trouble from the Egyptian leader. Battle saw three possibilities: Nasser might send his troops across the Yemeni border into Saudi Arabia to try to bring Faisal down, or he might try to sabotage the conservative monarch on his western flank, King Idriss of Libya (there were 18,000 Egyptian teachers and

technicians in Libya), or Nasser might move against Israel.[38]

On the day he left Cairo, Battle thought the hypothesis of a move against Israel the least likely of the three, but he did not rule it out. In this he was more prescient than others.

Throughout the early months of 1967, Israeli leaders confidently pre-dieted that there would be no war. "I don't think there will be a full-scale war in the next few years," Prime Minister Levy Eshkol told an American news magazine in mid-April.[39] This was not only Eshkol's personal assessment. Israel's military intelligence branch was confident that with Egyptian forces bogged down in Yemen the threat of war between Israel and Egypt lay safely beyond the immediate horizon.[40]

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The war that broke out on June 5 was not the war Nasser had discussed with Lucius Battle three months earlier. It did not come at the time and place of Egypt's choosing; and it clearly did not turn out as Nasser had planned. It quickly became a replay of the war of 1956, on a grander and more disastrous scale for Egypt. But during the first days of the war, even after Israel had destroyed Egypt's air force and the Egyptian army in Sinai was crumbling under the assault of Israeli planes and tanks, Cairo issued victory bulletins one after another. Anwar Sadat later described how he watched, dazed and broken-hearted, as crowds filled the Pyramids Road chanting, dancing, and applauding the fake victory reports put out by the Egyptian media.[41]

It was not only the Egyptian people who were misled, so were Egypt's representatives at the United Nations. So confident of his nation's victory was Ambassador Mohammed el-Kony that when the United States put a cease-fire resolution before the Security Council on the morning of June 5, the Egyptian showed no interest in it. Even after it became clear that Israel was winning, el-Kony and the Soviet ambassador, Nikolai Fedorenko, held out for a resolution calling on the Israelis to pull back to the June 4 lines. Finally, when the magnitude of Egypt's defeat could no longer be ignored, Cairo frantically ordered el-Kony to stop insisting on conditions and get a cease-fire. The ambassador announced to the Security Council that his government accepted a cease-fire, pure and simple. Then he withdrew to a nearby lounge and burst into tears.[42]

If the war was a replay of 1956, why should its diplomatic sequel not be a replay of 1957? The thought transfixed Egyptian diplomacy. From the moment of their defeat, the Egyptians, and their allies the Jordanians and the Syrians, grasped desperately at the hope that they could win back in the halls of the United Nations what they had just lost on the field of battle. Nasser himself at first assumed that the aftermath of 1967 would be like that of 1956.[43] The memory of Israel's coerced withdrawal to the prewar lines, without so much as a UN resolution calling on Egypt to give up its claim to belligerency, was for a short while to become an obsession for the Arabs. Their stubborn insistence on making history repeat itself was to thwart them of satisfaction in the UN debates time and again in the weeks ahead and was to hand Israel's foreign minister victory after victory.

The problem with the 1956–1957 parallel was that a decade later the circumstances were all different. In 1956, Israel had conspired with Britain and France to attack Egypt; its only provocation were fedayeen raids from Gaza that the Egyptians allowed or abetted. But in 1967, for more than two weeks before the Israelis launched their forces, the delegates in New York had listened while el-Kony defended Egypt's blockade of the Straits of Tiran and its army's move into Sinai on grounds that a state of war existed between itself and Israel. After that, it was hardly surprising that the Arabs should have had difficulty in rallying a majority to brand Israel the aggressor.

The great-power lineup was different too. In 1956 and 1957, the United States had joined the

Soviet Union in obliging Israel to give up its territorial gains. Dwight Eisenhower was outraged by what Britain, France, and Israel had done. In June 1967, after weeks of vain effort to contain the crisis, Lyndon Johnson was resigned to the prospect that the Israelis would take matters into their own hands. And congressional and public opinion were squarely on Israel's side.

To all this, Nasser added an impetus of his own. Desperate for a scapegoat and in the humiliation of defeat—and perhaps momentarily actually believing the story—he accused the United States of having sent its warplanes to take part in the Israeli air strikes of the morning of June 5 that wiped out the Egyptian air force.[44] Once Nasser made the accusation, he had practically no choice but to break relations with America, the power he would need most if he were to have hope of regaining anything through diplomacy. For Lyndon Johnson, this was simply one more personal insult.[45] Nasser's accusation left a deep feeling of rancour among officials in Washington. The abrupt expulsion of U.S. embassy personnel and American citizens in Egypt compounded American resentment.

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From May 24 to June 14, 1967, the United Nations Security Council met twenty-one times and spent sixty-seven hours in debate on the Middle East crisis.[46] This mountain of effort, in the view of the Soviets and the Arabs, had produced only the most disappointing of results—a string of cease-fire resolutions that left Israel with all its territorial gains intact. Plainly, the Security Council, with the threat of America's veto hanging over it, was not the place where one could obtain the kind of resolution that the Arabs and the Soviets now desperately wanted.

On June 13, Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko sent a letter to U Thant asking that an emergency special session of the General Assembly be convened within twenty-four hours.[47] In the General Assembly there was no veto. There the Soviets and the Arabs could together deliver a substantial block of votes. With the support they could anticipate from Third World neutrals, it seemed logical to suppose that they might muster the strength to pass resolutions condemning Israel as the aggressor, demanding its full and unconditional withdrawal, and even calling for it to pay war damages to Egypt, Syria, and Jordan. This at least was what the Arabs wanted, and the USSR unreservedly backed these Arab demands. Soviet positions deviated from those of the Arabs in only two respects. The Soviets made clear that they continued to recognize Israel's right to exist despite their having broken off diplomatic relations when the Israeli army stormed the Golan Heights. In their speeches in the Security Council, and later in the Special General Assembly that opened on June 17, they very cautiously and ambiguously endorsed the idea of a peaceful settlement between Israel and its Arab neighbors.

Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko led his country's delegation in the Security Council's debates during the war. But now, with the convening of the Special General Assembly, Moscow dispatched Alexei Kosygin, chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Supreme Soviet, to New York. It was a move calculated to demonstrate, to the Arabs and to the world, that the USSR attached the uppermost importance to helping its Arab friends. The Soviets had been vilified for failing to rescue Egypt and Syria during the shooting war; they would not be accused of standing aside from the diplomatic battle.

Kosygin opened the General Assembly's debates with a speech on June 19 that called on the world body to condemn Israel as the aggressor. He appealed for the elimination of "all consequences of the aggression committed by Israel." By this the Soviet leader meant, among other things, "restituting the material damage inflicted by the aggressor upon those whom it attacked and whose lands it occupied and pillaged."[48] Squads of Arab speakers followed Kosygin to the podium to endorse his resolution. The most extreme statements were delivered by

the president of Syria, Nuraddin al-Atassi, and by Saudi Arabia's delegate, Jamil Baroody. A Palestinian by origin, Baroody was well known for his colorful and explosive rhetoric (his name was a derivative of the Arabic word for gunpowder) and for his outrageous remarks. True to form, Baroody proclaimed that "the Arab world cannot accommodate Zionism in our midst."[49] It was noted that the least extreme of the Arab speeches was delivered by the special representative sent by Cairo, former Foreign Minister Mahmoud Fawzi.[50]

Lyndon Johnson spoke on the Middle East that same morning, not in New York but in Washington, and an hour before Kosygin stepped to the UN rostrum. The Special General Assembly was a Soviet idea. The president of the United States was not going to give it his stamp of legitimacy by going there. But Goldberg and Joseph Sisco, the assistant secretary of state for International Organization Affairs, considered it important that the United States not allow the Soviets to steal the show in New York. And ever since the war began, officials at the White House and the State Department had seen the need for an address by the president to set out America's views on how the dispute between Israel and its Arab neighbors should be settled. The first draft of the speech was done at the State Department, largely by Sisco. At the National Security Council, the State Department's draft was given to the speechwriters to polish, but the substance remained largely unchanged. The president declared the United States "committed to a peace based on five principles." They were:

First, the recognized right of national life.
Second, justice for the refugees.
Third, innocent maritime passage.
Fourth, limits on the wasteful and destructive arms race.
And fifth, political independence and territorial integrity for all.

Johnson added, "Clearly the parties to the conflict must be the parties to the peace. Sooner or later it is they who must make a settlement in the area. It is hard to see how it is possible for nations to live together in peace if they cannot learn to reason together."[51]

This last passage delighted the Israelis. It was precious endorsement for Israel's demand for direct negotiations with its Arab neighbors. The speech did have a few barbs aimed at Israel. "No nation," the American president declared, "would be true to the United Nations Charter or to its own true interests if it should permit military success to blind it to the fact that its neighbors have rights and its neighbors have interests of their own." The five principles themselves fell well short of Israel's own program; they made no mention of peace treaties, of demilitarized zones, or of border changes, and in this they laid bare important differences in America's and Israel's views on the ultimate shape of a Middle East settlement. But the five principles were not a specific plan for a peace settlement. Johnson did not give even the slightest hint of endorsement to the idea the French continued to push, a conference of the four "great powers" to draw up—and by implication impose—a settlement. In fact, the American president added that "the main responsibility for the peace of the region depends upon its own peoples and its own leaders."

The Arabs ignored the difference of views between Washington and Jerusalem reflected in Johnson's speech. At that moment, barely ten days after the war's close, they were in no mood to look closely at anything said by Washington or by Lyndon Johnson—who was reviled by Cairo's cartoonists as their enemy and Israel's evil patron. They roundly denounced the speech. In Israel the president's speech was welcomed with practically unbounded enthusiasm. Like their adversaries on the other side of the cease-fire lines, Israelis were in no mood to search for

differenees between themselves and their American friends. From that moment forth, the Israelis were to echo the American president's statement that "the parties to the conflict must be the parties to the peace." It meant no imposed settlement, and together with the rest of the passage it was a mandate for face-to-face talks. Holding the United States to these positions became one of the major aims of Israeli diplomacy.

Even though Eban was not wholly satisfied with it, he counted Johnson's June 19 speech an achievement for Israel—and for him.[52] He was to have an even bigger success soon thereafter, owing as much to the intransigence of the Arabs as to his own eloquent oratory and skillful lobbying. On July 4, after days and nights of debate and innumerable corridor consultations, a resolution sponsored by Yugoslavia and India in the name of the nonaligned bloc was brought to a vote. It enjoyed the support of the Soviet Union and the acquiescence of the Arab group. This resolution differed from the Soviet and Arab line in that it did not ask for condemnation of Israel or payment of reparations. Because of these omissions its sponsors calculated, or at least hoped, that it would win the backing or abstention of enough Third World delegates to put it past the two-thirds mark needed for approval. Its main feature was its call for Israeli forces to pull back to the positions they held before June 5. Once Israel's withdrawal was completed, the Security Council would "consider all aspects of the situation … and seek peaceful ways and means for the solution of all problems."[53]

Eban and his delegation lobbied furiously against this resolution and so did the United States. In the debate that preceded the vote on July 3, Arthur Goldberg dismissed it as fundamentally flawed. The resolution, he said, "calls for withdrawal now and leaves every other essential step to the uncertain future." It levied no requirement at all on the Arabs to live in peace with Israel in exchange for the withdrawal that it demanded. It could "scarcely bring more than a pause between rounds in this long and terrible conflict."[54]

The Yugoslav-Indian resolution garnered a slim majority but fell well short of the two-thirds required, mainly because moderate African govemments would not support it.[55]

This dramatic vote was followed immediately by another that might have changed the whole face of Middle East diplomacy for over a decade to come. The Latin American bloc had drafted a more moderate resolution. It too called on Israel to withdraw from all the territories occupied in the war, but it coupled this with a call for the parties to the conflict to end the state of belligerency and "to establish conditions of coexistence based on good-neighborliness. …" This clause won the Latin American resolution the support of the United States and of Third World moderates who had abstained on or opposed the Yugoslav-Indian text. The Latin American resolution fell far short of what Israel's position was very soon to become, but at the beginning of July it was still minimally acceptable to Israel. In the vote on it the Israeli delegation abstained.

Had the Arab delegations been in a less enraged state of mind, the Latin American resolution would have won the two-thirds necessary for adoption. The United Nations would have put itself on record, unequivocally and unambiguously, as calling for Israel to withdraw from all the the territories it captured in the war. But the resolution's requirement for an end to the state of belligerency, and its faint-hearted endorsement of coexistence and good-neighborliness were too much at that moment for the Arabs to swallow. They, the Soviet bloc states, and the more radical nonaligned voted against it, and it narrowly fell short of the required two-thirds.[56] It was a missed opportunity of monumental proportions.

The Arabs got another chance soon afterward, but they let it slip for much the same reasons. Around the middle of July, the Americans and the Soviets began talking privately about putting

together a resolution. By that time Kosygin had gone back to Moscow, but he left Gromyko, his foreign minister, to stay through the end of the Special General Assembly. The session was about to close, and after the failure of the Latin American resolution it looked as though the delegates were going to have to disperse with nothing at all to show for themselves. This bothered the Soviets in particular, but also the Americans. Moscow did not want the debate to close without a resolution calling for Israel's full withdrawal. Washington wanted, at the very least, to get an Arab commitment to end once and for all the state of war with Israel and to begin the process of building a stable and peaceful order in the Middle East. Though the Soviets wanted a resolution, they were not ready to separate themselves from the Arabs, and the Arabs opposed any text that used the word "nonbelligerency." The challenge was to draft a formula that skirted the forbidden words but embraced the thought. For Arthur Goldberg, star lawyer and former Supreme Court justice, this was hardly a problem. Goldberg's formula was long and convoluted, but it did the job: It called on the parties to acknowledge that each of them "enjoys the right to maintain an independent national state of its own and to live in peace and security" and required them to renounce "all claims and acts inconsistent therewith. …"[57] This satisfied the Soviets.

There were two formulas in regard to withdrawal. Neither specifically singled out Israel. One stated that "withdrawal by the parties to the conflict to the positions they occupied before June 5 is expected." The other was somewhat less specific. It called for withdrawal "from territories occupied by [the parties] in keeping with the inadmissibility of the conquest of territory by war."[58]

The Americans didn't let the Israelis in on the secret of their dealings with the Soviets until agreement had been reached on Goldberg's text. Eban was invited to the American mission on the morning of July 20. Israel's position had by this time evolved to one of categorical opposition to full withdrawal. By his own later account, the Israeli foreign minister exploded in indignation when he read the joint U.S.-Soviet texts.[59] The Americans, Eban exclaimed in outrage, were giving up everything that they and the Israelis had fought to protect throughout the Security Council and General Assembly debates. The text was inconsistent with President Johnson's June 19 address as well as with Goldberg's own statements; it would have Israel withdraw to the old borders without peace treaties or secure boundaries. The allure of an accord with the Soviets had, Eban charged, uprooted the Americans from their own principles. The foreign minister's flight of rhetoric was interrupted by word of a telephone call. Against Soviet advice, the Arabs had rejected the draft.[60]

Paradoxically, it was the Algerians, their country untouched by the war, who together with the Syrians held out for rejection both of the Latin American resolution and of the Soviet-American text. It was to be the last chance the Arabs would have to get a resolution calling unambiguously for full Israeli withdrawal. The Egyptians in particular were soon to regret having missed it. Egyptian Foreign Minister Mahmoud Riad was later to be roundly criticized at home for having let these opportunities slip. Riad claimed that he had instructed the Egyptian delegation to vote for the Latin American resolution but that the delegation chief, former Foreign Minister Mahmoud Fawzi, had ignored the instruction, arguing that he could not go against the Arab consensus.[61] Other Egyptian diplomats said Riad still entertained the hope, at the time, that Egypt would not have to pay the price of declaring an end to the state of belligerency in order to get a UN call for Israel's withdrawal, and that he, in fact, did order Fawzi to vote against the Latin American text.[62]

Eban flew back to Israel vindicated, to a welcome as near to a hero's as a diplomat could aspire. His success in New York had stilled his critics at home and had even made some of them

recant. Israel had emerged victorious and almost unscathed from a diplomatic battle that many on the home front had been sure it would lose. The world body, a hostile forum at best in the view of most Israelis, had not condemned Israel or branded it the aggressor; it had not even passed a resolution calling for the Israeli army to give up its newly won positions. During a quick trip home a few weeks earlier, Eban had been met at the airport by an enthusiastic crowd. Prime Minister Eshkol had congratulated him on his achievements in New York, and a poll had given him an 89 percent popularity rating. On August 1, the Knesset passed a resolution praising him.[63]

By that same resolution, the Knesset took a fateful step. Israel's legislature put itself on record as calling for the army to hold the cease-fire lines until peace treaties were achieved through direct negotiations. This decision—that Israeli soldiers would not budge from the lines they reached at the war's end until the conflict between itself and its Arab neighbors was settled once and for all—was to shape the contours of the diplomatic and the military confrontation in the Middle East for the next six years. The decision had already been made secretly by the Cabinet in its June 19 peace proposal. Now it was given endorsement by the full Knesset and made a central element in Israel's declared policy.

2

The United Nations at Center Stage

While Foreign Minister Abba Eban happily basked in the glow of his unaccustomed popularity, both he and his staff were keenly aware that their success in the Special General Assembly was little more than a fluke.[1] Only Arab intransigence had prevented the UN body, at the beginning of July, from giving its stamp of approval to the Latin American resolution that called for Israel to withdraw to the 1949 armistice lines in exchange only for an Arab commitment to end the state of belligerency and coexist on terms of "good-neighborliness." Realistically, the Israelis knew that they could not forever count on the Arabs to be so stubbornly suicidal. The issue would inevitably come up again, either in the annual General Assembly that would open in the second half of September or after that in the Security Council.

After it convened on September 17, the General Assembly did take up the Middle East crisis, but its debates dragged on inconclusively. There was a feeling among the delegations that the fall session would be no more able to produce a resolution than the summer one had been. The issue would really have to go back to the Security Council for solution. But the delegates who sat around the Security Council's circular table had no magic formula either, and they were in no hurry again to see themselves deadlocked. Had the cease-fire lines remained quiet, the stalemate might have continued indefinitely. But on October 21, Egyptian missile boats sank the Israeli destroyer *Eilat* while it cruised off Port Said—outside Egyptian territorial waters according to the Israelis, inside according to the Egyptians. Forty-seven Israeli sailors were killed or missing. Three days later, Israeli artillery and aircraft struck Egypt's oil refineries and the city of Suez at the canal's southern entrance. The flare-up brought the Middle East issue back to the Security Council. The Soviets tabled an angry resolution condemning Israel's bombardment of Suez and demanding payment of reparations for the damage. The United States countered with one that condemned all violations of the cease-fire. The resolution that was adopted, on October 25, was a barely modified version of the U.S. text. It dealt only with the narrow issue of the cease-fire, but it imparted a sense of urgency to the search for solutions to broader issues.[2]

When the council again took up the Middle East crisis, Eban was well prepared. He had returned to New York in the second half of September with one goal uppermost in mind: to prevent the passage of any resolution that called on Israel to return outright to the 1949 armistice lines. Coupled with this was another objective of only slightly lesser importance: to get as much language as possible on peace in any resolution that was approved, even if no specific mention could be had of the peace treaties that Israel sought. These goals could be achieved, Eban well knew, only through the energetic support of the United States. To win that support it was not necessary to go knocking on the door of the president or of the secretary of state in Washington. The key lay right there in New York, in the person of Arthur Goldberg, U.S. ambassador to the United Nations with the rank of cabinet officer and second in order of precedence in U.S. diplomacy only to Secretary of State Rusk himself.

The education of Arthur Goldberg was a subject to which Eban had given considerable time and effort over the previous months. Now he stepped up his efforts. Goldberg felt a deep sympathy for Israel, and he had a personal commitment to its survival; he did not hesitate to tell Egyptian Foreign Minister Riad that he counted himself a Zionist.[3] At the same time he was keenly mindful that he was the representative of the president and the people of the United States of America. The goals of his government might run parallel to those of Israel but did not coincide with them on all points. Goldberg was prepared to differ with Eban if need be but also to listen to him. It took Eban's vigorous intervention, in the early hours after the war broke out, to persuade Goldberg to extirpate from the American draft of the first cease-fire resolution a call for Israel and its Arab neighbors simply to return to the armistice agreements of 1949. Armistices, cease-fires, and UN truce arrangements had all failed; now was the time to aim for the goal of peace, Eban exhorted. Goldberg was, at least momentarily, persuaded. The American cease-fire resolution called for steps toward the establishment of a "stable and durable peace in the Middle East."[4]

But Eban had won only a point, not the game itself. For the Americans, peace between Israel and its Arab neighbors was an eminently worthy goal but not something they considered reasonable to expect anytime soon. Looked at pragmatically, what was needed was to work for what could be obtained, for realistic objectives that would be less than peace but could be built upon to achieve peace at some later stage. An Arab renunciation of belligerency was a first and essential step in this direction. The idea that more far-reaching arrangements could be achieved in the foreseeable future was still regarded in Washington as a chimera.

Even less likely was the proposition that the Arabs could be expected to agree to give up territory to Israel. If there was a consensus in Washington in mid-summer 1967 on anything concerning the Middle East, it was that peace between Israel and the Arabs, if and when it did come, could be had only on the basis of full Israeli withdrawal to the 1949 lines. There might be room, it was felt, for some minor changes in Israel's favor in the border with Jordan but nothing more.

It was these basic notions that Eban set out to alter in a series of conversations with Goldberg in New York after he returned there in September. Eban argued his case ceaselessly and unrelentingly. There could be no return to the June 4, 1967, borders, Eban declared. New territorial lines would have to be drawn, lines that would reflect security considerations. Eban also made these points to Rusk during a visit to Washington on October 23.[5]

When the Security Council resumed discussion of the Middle East crisis, in late October, the Israelis warned the Americans that Israel would reject any resolution that called for full withdrawal.[6] This threat, it appears, persuaded Goldberg that a new formula would be needed. The resolution introduced by the U.S. delegation on November 7 called for "withdrawal of armed forces from occupied territories. …" This formula was revolutionary in its implications. The other texts presented up to that time called for Israel to withdraw to the June 4, 1967, lines, or from "all the territories," or from "the territories" occupied in the recent conflict.[7]

Goldberg had simply excised the definite article before the word territories. With one very small stroke of the pen he changed the entire meaning of the withdrawal clause. Eban's objection to a resolution that called for full Israeli withdrawal was met. The Israeli foreign minister declared himself pleased with the new formula.[8] Withdrawal "from territories" clearly did not mean the same thing as "from all the territories" or even "from the territories." It was not total withdrawal.

Goldberg made the meaning plain in the speech he delivered before the Security Council on

November 15. The boundaries of peace "would have to be established by the parties themselves as part of the peacemaking process."[9] Neither the armistice lines of 1949 nor the cease-fire lines of June 1967 could be regarded as final, he declared. The implication was clear: Territorial changes in Israel's favor were to be considered permissible.

That Goldberg had charted an entirely new course for U.S. Middle East policy, in the November 7 U.S. draft resolution and in his November 15 speech, did not pass unnoticed in Washington, particularly in the Bureau of Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs. There were strong expressions of objection by some mid-level officers. Though Lucius Battle, the bureau's assistant secretary since late May, shared his subordinates concerns, he was in no position to take on Arthur Goldberg. Neither, evidently, was Secretary Rusk inclined to try to rein in the U.S. Ambassador in New York. The November 7 formulation was accepted as the price that would have to be paid to get Israel's cooperation in the implementation of a UN resolution.

The U.S. text drew strong objections from the USSR and from Egypt and its Arab and nonaligned supporters. India, Mali, and Nigeria put forward a resolution that affirmed, in its first operative paragraph, that "occupation or acquisition of territory by military conquest is inadmissible under the Charter of the United Nations and consequently Israel's armed forces should withdraw from all territories occupied as a result of the recent conflict."[10] Clearly, neither the American nor the nonaligned resolution could be expected to win approval. The council again faced the prospect of deadlock. Either resolution, if brought to a vote, would draw its opponents veto.

At this point the British delegate, Lord Caradon, stepped in to try to find a compromise. Educated like Eban at Cambridge, though a decade earlier, Caradon had had a distinguished career in the British colonial service that included eight years in mandate Palestine. He knew from personal experience just how deep the conflict was between Arabs and Jews, but Caradon wanted to build bridges not emphasize differences. For weeks Caradon had been trying to find a compromise formula. Now he saw his opportunity. He launched his drive in a speech on November 15 with these words:

> The Arab countries insist that we must direct our special attention to the recovery of their territories. … The Israelis tell us withdrawal must never be to the old precarious peace; that it must be to a permanent peace, to secure boundaries, to a new era of freedom from the use or the threat or the fear of hostility or force. … Both are right. The aims of the two sides do not conflict. They converge. … They are of equal validity and equal necessity.[11]

As a realistic assessment, Caradon's assertion that the aims of the two sides did not conflict would not have earned him a passing grade. But as a formula for reconciling the irreconcilable it was a stroke of genius.

Caradon's enterprise still might not have been possible without the change that occurred on the Soviet side in October. Early that month, Gromyko went back to Moscow and First Deputy Foreign Minister V. V. Kuznetsov came to New York to head the delegation. Many saw Kuznetsov's appearance on the scene as a signal that the Soviets were ready to compromise.[12] As a youth, Kuznetsov had spent a year working in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He spoke an easy, colloquial American English, and with Americans he exuded enthusiasm for his time in their country. People in the U.S. delegation found Kuznetsov far more candid, and more reliable, than Anatoly Dobrynin or Fedorenko, and he seemed to have more authority than either of the two Soviet ambassadors.[13] Caradon too had worked with Kuznetsov over the years and had come to like and respect him.[14]

Caradon was aware that Goldberg's text would have to be the basis for his effort. The

American ambassador was not prepared to go back to the language of the Latin American resolution. The United States would oppose any resolution that did not clearly set a just and lasting peace as its goal, and Goldberg would not back off from his new formula on withdrawal. But the American resolution would have to be amended to give some satisfaction to the Arabs, the Soviets, and the nonaligned. The Arabs needed reassurance that they would get their territory back. Caradon took the cardinal element of the resolution introduced by India, Mali, and Nigeria on November 7 and transformed it into the words "emphasizing the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war." This formula he put in the introductory paragraph of his resolution. It passed muster with Eban, for from a strictly legal point of view it would have no binding effect so long as it was not a part of an operative paragraph.[15]

After some textual adjustments and a few other minor amendments, Caradon took his draft to the Egyptians and the Soviets. By this time the Egyptian delegation, now headed by Foreign Minister Riad, was reconciled to the prospect that it would have to accept language not only on nonbelligerency but even on peace. Riad had Nasser's authority for this, so long as he did not commit Egypt to a peace treaty or to face-to-face negotiations with Israel.[16] But Riad objected strongly to Goldberg's formula on withdrawal and so did the Soviets and the Jordanians. They urged Caradon to go back to the words "withdrawal from all the territories," or at the very least "withdrawal from the territories."[17] But Goldberg wouldn't budge on this, and neither would the Israelis. Caradon told the Egyptians and the Soviets that he had gone as far as he could. Any further changes would mean no resolution at all. Besides, Caradon argued, his clause on the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war gave the Arabs all the assurance they needed; read alongside the American clause on withdrawal, it should satisfy their basic requirement.

In his own version of these discussions, Riad was later to claim that both Caradon and Goldberg had assured him categorically that the Ianguage of both the United States and the United Kingdom resolutions meant full Israeli withdrawal and that it was on this basis that he agreed to Caradon's text.[18] Riad's claim may not be wholly unfounded, but it would appear that what he was told may not have been quite so unambiguous as he wanted to believe. In a meeting with Goldberg on November 8, Riad repeatedly pointed out that the language in the U.S. draft resolution did not reflect the assurances the United States had been giving in private on the matter of withdrawal. It would, he said, legalize Israel's right to withdraw to wherever it wanted. Goldberg assured Riad that the United States would not support Israeli claims to Egyptian and Jordanian territory, but he added that territorial adjustments would undoubtedly be necessary.[19] Both Goldberg and Caradon used this kind of ambiguity repeatedly in their efforts to bring Arab delegations on board.

The Americans had already taken on the job of persuading the Jordanians. King Hussein was in the United States at the beginning of November, and Goldberg and Hussein met privately in New York on November 3. Goldberg told Hussein that the United States would help Jordan obtain a role in Jerusalem. The United States, he said, did not visualize a Jordan limited to the East Bank but it could not guarantee that the entire West Bank would be returned. There would have to be territorial adjustments. But, Goldberg assured, Israel ought to compensate Jordan for any "adjustments" it made in the border.[20] Rusk repeated this point when he met with Hussein in Washington on November 6. The United States would use its influence to obtain compensation for Jordan for any territory it was required to give up.[21] Hussein left satisfied. He felt he had a commitment from the United States that would get him back as much territory as he lost. On that basis, he was ready to support the resolution the Americans were planning to introduce in the

Security Council.

As Caradon worked to marshall a consensus for what was now a British compromise resolution, the Soviets made a move that seemed to put in doubt his prospects for success. Chairman Kosygin sent President Johnson a message asking American agreement to a text almost identical to the draft resolution put together by the American and Soviet delegations in July, four months earlier. But the Soviet move came too late. Too much time had gone by, Johnson told Kosygin, to return to earlier formulas.[22]

The question now was what would the Soviets do. If they held to Kosygin's proposal, all the work of recent weeks stood to be undone. The UN had failed to prevent the June 1967 war. Would it now also fail to find a formula for dealing with its results?

On November 20, Kuznetsov asked to speak privately with Caradon. As soon as the two were alone, the Russian said "I want you to give me two days." Caradon's first thought was that the Soviets were playing for time in which to muster more support for Kosygin's text. Evidently reading the British ambassador's thoughts, Kuznetsov pleaded: "I am not sure that you fully understand what I am saying to you. I am personally asking you for two days." Caradon knew Kuznetsov well enough to feel intuitively that he could trust him. The British ambassador went back to the Council chamber and asked for a two-day postponement.[23]

When the British resolution was put to a vote on November 22, Caradon still did not know what the Soviets would do. As the president of the council called for a count of those in favor, he heard a cheer go up from the crowded gallery. Caradon turned to his right to see, to his surprise and delight, Kuznetsov's finger raised in assent. The Soviet vote meant that the resolution had carried unanimously.[24]

■ ■ ■

The resolution was catalogued under the number 242 (Appendix A). It was to become the basic document for diplomacy on the Arab-Israeli conflict for the next decade and even beyond.

The argument over what it actually meant was to begin immediately. There was much to argue about. Even before the resolution came to a vote on the floor of the council, debate erupted over the meaning of the withdrawal clause. A few days before the vote, the Indian ambassador told Caradon he would support the British resolution but would state that he had voted for it on the understanding that it called for full withdrawal.[25] Kuznetsov threatened veto; he warned Caradon that the USSR would oppose any resolution that did not call for full Israeli withdrawal.[26] To these objections Caradon had a typically oblique reply: Each delegation was entitled to its own interpretation of the resolution, but individual interpretations could, of course, not be binding on the Council.[27]

True to his word, on the day of the vote the Indian ambassador declared: "It is our understanding that the draft resolution … will commit it to the application of the principle of total withdrawal of Israeli forces from all the territories."[28] The British ambassador replied:

> I am sure it will be recognized by all of us that it is only the resolution that will bind us, and we regard its wording as clear. All of us, no doubt, have our own views and interpretations and understandings_On these matters each delegation rightly speaks only for itself.[29]

Goldberg seconded his British colleague: The voting, he said, "of course takes place not on the individual or discrete views and policies of the various members but on the draft resolution."[30]

If this was to be so, then the advocates of full Israeli withdrawal among the council's members —the French, the Soviets, and the radical non-aligned—had their own solution. The French text

of Resolution 242 carried the definite article in front of the noun “territories.” Mixing grammar and politics, the French conveniently argued that their language would not countenance the mutilation to which the English text had been subjected. Accordingly, the French text called for “retraite des territoires.” The Soviets took their cue from the French; the Russian language text issued by the UN also carried the definite article in front of the word “territories.” Secretary General U Thant was, characteristically, not about to venture to correct these discrepancies, and the British and Americans regarded it as futile to try. When the issue came up later, both the British and the Americans pointed out that 242 was a British resolution; therefore the English-language text was authoritative and would prevail in any dispute over interpretation.[31]

With the passage of Resolution 242 the Security Council heaved a collective sigh of relief. Not so the parties to the conflict. None of them rushed to embrace Resolution 242. Syria rejected it outright. Damascus, the capital of Arab irredentism, was not ready to subscribe to anything that spoke of renunciation of belligerency or acknowledgment of Israel’s sovereignty and independence; for the next six years, Syria was to retreat into an angry and defiant isolation. For Egypt, rejection and isolation were not a practical solution; Egyptians feared that if they followed Syria’s example they would give Israel a pretext for annexing all or part of Sinai.[32] But some weeks were to pass before Egypt’s position on Resolution 242 was to be made clear. Foreign Minister Riad avoided all mention of the resolution in his remarks to the council following the vote on it. Mohamed Heikal wryly called it “a masterpiece of British diplomatic skill in drafting statements of which no two persons can give the same explanation.”[33]

Nasser himself often spoke scornfully of it. King Hussein inclined sympathetically toward the resolution but dared not accept it before Egypt had done so.

Eban too carefully avoided giving the resolution any endorsement in his remarks before the council on November 22. The decision on this would be up to the Cabinet. And in the Cabinet since the beginning of June sat at least one minister—Menachem Begin—for whom the very word withdrawal was anathema.

■ ■ ■

Resolution 242 called on the United Nations Secretary General to appoint a Special Representative for the Middle East. This was an idea that had been in the air for months. It had found expression in several draft resolutions circulated in the General Assembly and in the Security Council. Some of these resolutions caused Eban intense anxiety, for they seemed to confer broad authority upon the special representative. The Israelis feared that an arbitrator was being created, someone empowered to impose his—or the powers—views of what a settlement should look like. For a solution to this problem, Eban again turned to Goldberg. He insisted to the U.S. ambassador that the special representative’s mandate should be strictly limited; it should be only to “promote agreement and assist efforts” to achieve a settlement, nothing more.[34] To his satisfaction, these words were inserted in the resolution.

Who the special representative would be was almost as important as what that person would do. U Thant would need someone acceptable to both the Americans and the Soviets and, at the very least, unobjectionable to both Arabs and Israelis. The American assistant secretary of state for International Organization Affairs, Joseph Sisco, had had his eye on this problem ever since the idea of a special representative surfaced. Sisco had a candidate. He went to Secretary of State Rusk and proposed an old friend, Gunnar V. Jarring, a Swede. Jarring had earlier been Sweden’s ambassador to the United Nations, and it was then that Sisco had known him. Now he was ambassador in Moscow. He had never served in the Near East, but Sisco knew Jarring as a cool, level-headed individual. He seemed an ideal choice. Rusk had never heard of Jarring, but he

promptly accepted Sisco's recommendation.[35] The proposal was then put to U Thant. The Secretary General broached the idea with the Soviets, and they agreed. On November 23, the day after Resolution 242 was approved, Thant announced Jarring's appointment.

Jarring was in Moscow, but he lost no time. Within three days he was in Thant's office in New York. After consulting with the Secretary General, he held a brief round of talks with the representatives of Israel, Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon. The tall Swedish diplomat then proceeded to Cyprus, where he established his headquarters. After that he set out on a series of visits to Jerusalem, Amman, Cairo, and Beirut. Jarring was quickly to learn just how vast the gap was between the two sides and what astoundingly different interpretations they could give to the same text.

On Jarring's first visit to Jerusalem, Eban greeted him cordially and joked about the climatic affinity that seemed to be developing between Israel and Sweden; a heavy fall of snow—a rare occurrence—had covered the Israeli capital just before Jarring's arrival. But soon the Israeli foreign minister became very businesslike. He lectured Jarring sternly about the limits of his mandate. The UN special representative, Eban intoned, was not to consider himself a mediator. Eban warned that if Jarring were to venture to put forward proposals of his own, Israel would reject them out of hand and would consider his usefulness to be at an end. He left Jarring in no doubt that, in Israel's view, his job was limited to little more than that of a postman. He was to carry the positions of the parties to one another and, above all, encourage them to meet and talk. Eban was equally categorical when it came to Israel's views on a settlement. Israel wanted peace treaties with its Arab neighbors, and these treaties had to be achieved through direct negotiations. There could be no question, he added, of Israel's withdrawing its forces from the cease-fire lines before peace treaties were achieved. But on the matter of whether Israel actually accepted Resolution 242, Jarring found Eban evasive.[36]

Jarring, in fact, needed little coaching from Eban. The Swedish diplomat was a man who went strictly by the rules. At first, reporters waited eagerly for him at the gates of the foreign ministries in Jerusalem and Cairo, but they soon learned that he had nothing for them. They repaid his silence by labeling him "tall and taciturn." Jarring went by his mandate, and, as he saw it, his mandate and his role as the representative of the UN Secretary General called on him to deal only with foreign ministers. What Eban and Riad told him he accepted; he never sought meetings with Nasser or Eshkol; he never talked with other influential personalities or tried to probe behind official Israeli and Egyptian positions.

On his first visit to Cairo, Jarring found the Egyptians as adamant as the Israelis, though in different ways. Mahmoud Riad, Egypt's dour foreign minister, flatly told the UN special representative that there was no need at all for negotiations. All that had to be done was to implement Resolution 242. The Security Council document needed no elaboration, and there was no call for negotiations. The matter was quite simple. Israel should withdraw to the 1949 lines, whereupon the Arabs would declare their readiness to live in peace with it. After that, one would see.[37]

In their public statements, the Egyptians emphasized the withdrawal provisions of the resolution to the exclusion of all else. Egyptian officials repeatedly referred to Resolution 242 as "the Security Council resolution concerning withdrawal from the occupied Arab territories."

The Israelis wanted direct negotiations and a peace treaty. The Egyptians—and the Jordanians who followed in their footsteps—did not want to hold any talks at all until Israel had pulled out of the territories it had taken in the June war; and by this, Foreign Minister Riad made clear, he meant not just Sinai, but the West Bank and Golan as well. Jarring decided to approach the

problem from a different angle. In January 1968, he sent memoranda to Israel, Egypt, and Jordan asking for specific assurances that they accepted Resolution 242 and that they would implement it.[38]

This posed no problem for the Egyptians. By this time Riad had authority from Nasser to accept Resolution 242. Riad was a former army officer. He enjoyed Nasser's confidence, and the Egyptian leader allowed him a good deal of leeway in the management of foreign policy. As to the problem of Resolution 242's ambiguity on the matter of Israel's withdrawal, Riad resolved it simply by affirming that there was none: Resolution 242 meant full Israeli withdrawal from all the territories occupied in the war. That was all there was to it. In his reply to Jarring, Riad gave formal written assurance that Egypt accepted Resolution 242, and he pressed the UN special representative to take steps to implement it.[39]

But for Eban, Jarring's memorandum posed serious problems. The Israeli foreign minister would dearly have liked to be able to say that Israel accepted Resolution 242; he personally favored accepting it, and he was sure that sooner or later Israel would have to subscribe to it. But he could not give Jarring any such formal assurance. He still had no authority from the Cabinet to do so.

Resolution 242 got a cool reception in Israel from the very beginning. The Israeli press greeted its passage with undisguised skepticism. The resolution, it was pointed out, made no mention of direct negotiations; and though it spoke of peace, nowhere did it specify that there should be peace treaties. And as the Tel Aviv newspaper *Yediot Acharonot* put it, 242 was "as clear as pea soup."[40] Several influential members of the Cabinet inclined toward ignoring both the resolution and Jarring.[41] Eban realized that this was quite impossible and so did Prime Minister Eshkol. But so strong was Israeli suspicion of the UN and its instruments that it took Eshkol all of a week to get his Cabinet colleagues to authorize him just to say that Israel would cooperate with Jarring. Even then he had to say it in terms quite different from those of Resolution 242's mandate. "We shall cooperate with the special representative of the UN Secretary General in his task of bringing the parties to direct negotiations between them," Eshkol said, although nowhere did Resolution 242 speak of direct negotiations. "We shall greet him," Eshkol added, "with the wish that he may succeed in bringing the neighboring countries and ourselves to a common conference table."[42]

Like Egypt, Israel was ready to speak of Resolution 242 only in words of its own interpretation. And even to get this meager result, Washington had to give Israel assurances that Resolution 242 did not mandate total Israeli withdrawal.[43] It was not only, or even mainly, Israeli public opinion that made Eshkol so cautious. He headed a "national unity" government that commanded a majority of over one hundred in a parliament that numbered one hundred and twenty. In appearance he enjoyed enormous preponderance. In fact, his government was a coalition that was sharply divided on basic issues and wracked by seemingly perpetual personal rivalries.

Eban replied to Jarring on February 19 with a carefully worded statement that assured the UN special representative of Israel's full cooperation in his effort to "promote agreement." Eban neatly skirted the issue of whether Israel accepted Resolution 242, but he had something to offer on the issue of negotiations. Although all along Israel had considered direct negotiations to be "the best way" to achieve the Security Council's objectives, Eban said, it would not object to an indirect approach to negotiations, provided indirect negotiations led later to direct negotiations.[44]

Eban's agreement to indirect negotiations gave Jarring his first real opening. He put the idea to Riad, and to his satisfaction got a seemingly positive response. Egypt would not agree to direct

negotiations with Israel, Riad said, but it did accept indirect negotiations. First, however, Israel would have to declare "in clear language" that it would implement the resolution.[45] This meant that Israel would have to say it was willing to withdraw from all the territories occupied in the war. Only then would Egypt consent even to indirect talks.

It was not a formula likely to find favor in Israel. Still, Jarring felt he was making progress. For all the differences between the otherwise discordant parties, he did seem to have discovered some common ground on which to build: Both agreed to indirect negotiations. Jarring flew back to New York to confer with U Thant. Then, ignoring Riad's insistence on a prior Israeli declaration of readiness to "implement" 242, he issued invitations to Israel, Egypt, and Jordan—the Lebanese had let Jarring know that they wanted to be left out at this stage—to send representatives to meet him in Cyprus.

Jarring's optimism was not to last long. When he visited Cairo on March 7, he sensed a distinct change of mood. Riad would give him no direct answer to his invitation to meet in Cyprus. Instead, the Egyptian foreign minister had an angry lecture for Jarring. Israeli leaders, he said, were following an expansionist line. It would no longer be enough to have Israel give assurances of intent to implement Resolution 242; the Arabs would have to be satisfied that the Israelis were going to "implement it for action." What this meant, Riad explained, was that Israel should first withdraw from the occupied territories; then peace could be arrived at by the implementation of the other provisions of Resolution 242 under the Security Council's guidance. This was a retreat to Egypt's earlier position, all the way back to the Yugoslav resolution of the previous year: Israel would withdraw now, and provision for peace would be made later, not directly between the parties but through the Security Council.[46]

Undaunted, Jarring proceeded to Jerusalem where Eban gave his personai, and later official, agreement to the invitation to talks in Cyprus. Jarring pressed Eban to put the Israeli government clearly on record as accepting Resolution 242. In this way he hoped to give at least partial satisfaction to Riad's demand for an Israeli statement acknowledging readiness to withdraw. The State Department was also pressing Israel for a public statement accepting 242; it sent Ambassador Walworth Barbour to Jerusalem to convey its message. Yet Eban was still in no position to comply.

Jarring went on to Amman and there got some encouragement. The Jordanians said they would agree to meet in Cyprus provided the text of Jarring's invitation was amended to read that the parties had "declared their readiness to implement the resolution." But Jordan soon fell into line with Egypt. On Jarring's next swing through Cairo and Amman, the two Arab governments had a counterproposal: Rather than meet in Cyprus, Jarring should invite the parties to have their representatives confer with him in New York.[47] For the Egyptians in particular, Cyprus sounded too much like Rhodes—the Greek island to the northwest where another United Nations emissary, Ralph Bunche, had convoked Arab and Israeli officials nineteen years earlier for talks that brought into being the armistice agreements that ratified the lines Israel held until June of 1967. The Egyptian-Israeli armistice agreement had been signed by the government of King Farouk. Nasser did not want anyone to think he was about to follow in the footsteps of his despised predecessor.

Eban objected strenuously to the change of venue. For the Israelis, Cyprus held the same association as for the Egyptians, albeit in reverse. It meant serious talks aimed at reaching agreement, and it meant a chance for the two sides to deal directly, even if only behind the scenes. Furthermore, the implication that talks in New York would be exclusively between Jarring and the parties—with no contact between Israel and Egypt and Jordan—was not at all to

Israel's liking. Eban let Jarring know that if Cyprus were not acceptable to the Arabs he would prefer a European city over New York, but the Egyptians were dead set against meeting anywhere but at the UN. So Jarring gave up the idea of a formal letter of invitation; Arab and Israeli wrangling over its terms could go on forever and undercut everything he hoped to accomplish. Instead, he issued a brief press statement saying he was going to New York for consultations in pursuit of his mission. The meetings were scheduled to begin on May 15. Jarring still had hopes that the three governments would send their foreign ministers to New York.

On May 1, as Jarring prepared for the talks, he got from the Israelis what he had so long sought. Israel's new ambassador to the United Nations, Yosef Tekoa, read this statement to the Security Council:

> In declarations and statements made publicly and to Mr. Jarring, my government has indicated its acceptance of the Security Council resolution for the promotion of agreement on the establishment of a just and durable peace. I am also authorized to reaffirm that we are willing to seek agreements with each Arab state on all the matters included in that resolution.[48]

Although it claimed otherwise, Tekoa's statement was, in fact, the first public declaration of acceptance of Resolution 242 to be made by a representative of the Israeli government. The Americans and Jarring hoped that it would smooth the way for the talks that the UN special representative was about to conduct. In this they were to be disappointed. The Egyptians and Jordanians designated their UN ambassadors to represent them—their foreign ministers did not come to New York—and the Israelis followed suit. The talks lasted on and off for five weeks. Neither side budged so much as a centimeter from its positions.

What Tekoa's statement did produce was a near Cabinet crisis in Israel. Eban and Eshkol had not consulted their Cabinet colleagues about the instruction to Tekoa or even informed them about it. The UN ambassador's statement was delivered in New York on the eve of Israel's twentieth anniversary celebration. Evidently the prime minister and the foreign minister hoped that with the public's attention captured by events at home it would escape notice. For a while it seemed that might be the case. Tekoa's declaration passed unreported for two weeks, but by mid-May rumblings began to be heard. On May 17, *Hayom*, the newspaper of Menachem Begin's Herut party, thundered that "diplomatically the country is in a state of retreat. … Who has authorized Mr. Eban to interpret the declared policy of the country out of existence?" *Hayom* demanded that the Cabinet meet urgently to "halt this dangerous trend."

Meet the Cabinet did, on May 19, and Begin, since June of the previous year a minister without portfolio, bitterly attacked Eban for not having cleared Tekoa's statement with his colleagues. Defense Minister Moshe Dayan, although a member of the same party as Eshkol and Eban, sided with Begin. The government, Dayan pointed out, had made no decision to accept the Security Council resolution. Dayan made clear that, in his view, Tekoa's statement had no validity. Eban, though hard pressed, defended himself. There was, he pointed out, considerable difference between announcing acceptance of Resolution 242, as Tekoa had done, and agreeing to the Arab interpretation of it or to Arab demands for its implementation. The debate dragged on through the rest of the day and spilled over into the following one. Begin and his Liberal Party ally Yosef Saphir reportedly threatened to resign if the Cabinet approved Tekoa's remarks. With Eshkol's support, Eban had the majority on his side, but the best he could get was a compromise. At the close of the Cabinet meeting on May 20, it was announced that the government had "noted"— not approved, but only noted—Ambassador Tekoa's statement regarding Israel's acceptance of Resolution 242.

Eban was defiant. He had his aides tell the press on May 22 that Tekoa's statement was "an

exact and authoritative description of Israel's stand." But Begin, Saphir, Dayan, and others were later to point to the Cabinet's use of the word "noted" and to argue that it showed that no endorsement had been given to the Security Council resolution. The debate continued publicly and privately for several months thereafter. When George Ball visited Israel in July 1968, shortly after succeeding Arthur Goldberg as America's ambassador to the United Nations, Dayan told Ball that he personally did not consider that the Israeli government had ever agreed to accept Resolution 242. He added that if a proposal were made to the Cabinet to approve Resolution 242 he would oppose it.[49]

3

Between Cairo and Washington and Cairo and Moscow

Days before the war broke out, the American embassy in Cairo hurriedly began burning its hoard of classified papers. Put in charge of this task, Richard B. Parker, the embassy's political counselor, soon discovered, much to his chagrin, that the military attaches and the CIA people had enormous quantities of documents that they did not want to give up. They loved their precious paper. They would lie and cheat rather than hand it over to be consigned to the flames.

On the morning of June 5, hours after the war started, the embassy still had a mass of classified material that regulations required be destroyed in a crisis. Parker went to the roof of the embassy to survey the work. A new, fast-burning chemical was being tried. "They had this barrel full of papers, and they put the chemical in it, and they put the lid on it," Parker later recounted. The chemical was not meant to be confined. The barrel gave off an ear-splitting roar. Its lid shot several hundred feet in the air and a great column of fire and smoke followed. Within minutes the Cairo fire department was at the embassy gate, sirens blaring. The Egyptians thought the Israelis had bombed the American embassy.

For the newly arrived American ambassador, Richard Nolte, for the deputy chief of mission, David Nes, and for Parker, the rest of that first day of the war was filled with Egyptian communiques heralding the slaughter of the Israeli air force and the victorious advance of the Egyptian army. The next day, June 6, they awoke to the announcement by Egyptian television that American and British aircraft had participated in Israel's surprise air attack of the previous day. By then it was clear that Egyptian communiques about the downing of Israeli planes and the triumphant march to Tel Aviv were sheer fantasy.

That evening Egypt broke relations with the United States and ordered embassy personnel—all but a small team of eight—to leave immediately. Parker was designated to head the contingent that was to stay behind. On the evening of June 9, he went to the ambassador's residence for a farewell dinner with Nolte, Nes, and others who were to depart that night. They were drinking Nolte's last bottle of champagne and eating filets mignons found in the freezer when the telephone rang. At the other end of the line was the Spanish ambassador who, since the breaking of relations on June 6, was in charge of American interests. "Mr. Parker, I have orders that you are to leave with the others tonight," the Spanish envoy said. "Impossible," Parker protested. He had not been home since June 5. He couldn't leave without picking up his belongings from his house in Maadi, south of Cairo, and making arrangements for the shipment of his dog. Nolte sent the CIA representative to see the Egyptian director of intelligence, but there was nothing to be done. The order came from Nasser himself. Egyptian plainclothes detectives were at the train later that night to verify that Parker was on it. The man left behind in Parker's place, to head the American Interests Section until the arrival of another State

Department officer, was the CIA station chief. Some twenty years later, Parker learned the reason for his expulsion: Nasser thought he was the CIA station chief.[1]

Parker went back to Washington to head the State Department's Office of Egyptian Affairs, and Donald C. Bergus, the director of that office, was sent to Cairo to head the newly established United States Interests Section. A great hulk of a man with a restless energy and a hearty sense of humor, Bergus knew Egypt inside out, and he had a real affection for the people and the country. He had been political counselor at the embassy in Cairo from 1961 to 1964. He returned to Cairo in July 1967 to as warm a welcome as could be expected, under the circumstances, from the many Egyptian friends he had from his earlier tour of duty. For Bergus and his small staff, the embassy chancery, a gracious old building just a block off Cairo's Tahrir Square, fit like a suit that was several sizes too big. Bergus now sat in the ambassador's office, and he lived in the beautiful old mansion in fashionable Zamalek that, until the break in relations, had been the residence of the American minister. But at the official level his contacts were limited. He quickly established good working relationships at the Foreign Ministry with Mohammed Riad, Foreign Minister Mahmoud Riad's chief aide, and with Under Secretary Salah Gohar, and at the Presidency with Hassan Sabri al-Khouly. But the door of the foreign minister himself was only infrequently and reluctantly made open to Bergus, and it was not until January 1968—six months after his arrival— that he was able to see Nasser.

In the summer of 1967, in the months after the defeat, relations between Cairo and Washington hung by a thread. President Gamal Abdel Nasser had wildly ambivalent and sharply contradictory feelings about the United States. The defeat multiplied several times over his bitterness toward the Americans and his paranoia about their intentions. His suspicion—fueled very likely by the Soviets—that he was on a CIA hit list was only one element of the picture he kept in his head of American policy. Nasser was persuaded that the United States saw Israel's victory as an opportunity to crush the progressive Arab regimes—his own and those that arose in Syria and Iraq in the 1950s; he even suspected that the Americans had concocted the war to that end. Now America's aim was to preserve the stalemate until Egypt came on hands and knees begging for a settlement— a settlement on American terms. This he was determined not to do.[2]

After he accused the United States of taking part in Israel's June 5 surprise air strike, Nasser had no choice but to break formal diplomatic relations with Washington, but he did not want to sever all contact. The Syrians and the Iraqis threw the Americans out after the June defeat. American embassies in Damascus and Baghdad were shut tight, all Americans were expelled, and for years thereafter no direct channel of communication existed between these two capitals and Washington. This was not Egypt's or Nasser's way. At most moments of the day, Nasser had little if any hope of anything positive from the Americans. But even in the worst of earlier times he had always kept in touch with them, and now too he did not want his government to be wholly cut off from contact with Washington.

There came a time, a little over a month after the defeat, when Nasser evidently hoped for more. Nasser called John Birdsall, the American businessman to whom the year before he had confided his fears of assassination at the hands of the CIA, back to Cairo. He gave Birdsall a hand-written, sealed letter to President Lyndon Johnson, and he made the American businessman swear that he would deliver it personally to Johnson. Birdsall proceeded posthaste to Washington where he told Lucius Battle, the assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, of the mission with which Nasser had charged him. Battle urged Birdsall to hand the letter over to him; he would see to its delivery to the president. Birdsall refused; he had given Nasser his word of honor that he would give the letter only to Johnson. Battle had no idea what

the letter might contain, but he did not want to neglect any opportunity for improvement of relations with Egypt; he took Birdsall over to the White House. The letter turned out to be very brief. It said simply that Egypt wanted better relations with the United States. Johnson was unimpressed and, as far as Battle could tell, uninterested.[3] He had long since written Nasser off as an impossible Third World radical who had sold out to the Soviets.

The State Department drafted a polite reply to Nasser's letter, saying the United States also hoped for better relations. In due course it was approved by the White House, Johnson's machine-penned signature was added, and it was sent to Bergus for delivery. It evidently elicited no interest, for nothing further was heard.[4]

Washington had no clear policy toward Egypt in the months after the war and made little effort to formulate one. Nasser had broken relations, the general view ran, so it was up to him to take the first step to get back in touch. Officials in the State Department's Bureau of Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs felt it important to try to reestablish a dialogue with the Egyptians, but topside, on the department's seventh floor where the secretary of state and the under secretaries sat, and at the White House, the idea found no sympathy. Nasser's accusations of U.S. participation in Israel's air attack and his abrupt expulsion of Americans left a residue of bitterness all around Washington that practically ruled out any high-level initiative toward Egypt. When Bergus left Washington for Cairo in July 1967 he was given no instruction to try to improve relations with Egypt. He was told all that was expected of him was that he do what he could to protect remaining American interests in Egypt—in particular the American University of Cairo—and that he report on what was going on there and let Washington know if and when opportunities occurred.[5]

Matters were much the same on the Egyptian side. The Egyptians moved with a calculated absence of haste to establish their own Interests Section in Washington. To fill this post Foreign Minister Mahmoud Riad chose Ashraf Ghorbal, Harvard educated and then a mid-ranking officer in the Egyptian diplomatic service. Ghorbal was not sent to the U.S. capital until January 1968. Before leaving for Washington, he had a brief interview with Riad, but the foreign minister did not set out any broad policy objectives for him. Riad told Ghorbal that he was simply to be an Egyptian presence in the United States, to explain Egypt's position to whomever would listen, and to attend to the needs of the several hundred Egyptian students who were continuing their studies in the United States.

In the physics of American politics and diplomacy, it is a rule that whenever a void occurs on the official side private emissaries come forward to volunteer their services. Just a few weeks after the war, Robert Anderson contacted Lucius Battle at the State Department. As secretary of the treasury in the Eisenhower administration, Anderson had tried unsuccessfully to arrange a meeting between Nasser and Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion. Now Anderson was planning a trip to Cairo, and he wanted to go as an official emissary. Lyndon Johnson didn't like or trust Anderson and he told the State Department not to use him. Anderson nonetheless went to Cairo and represented himself as speaking for the American government despite having been told he should not.[6] John McCloy and David Rockefeller, both frequent advisers to American presidents and old acquaintances of Nasser's, did go to Egypt with the administration's blessing. However, nothing came of any of these private efforts.

In the end it was the professional diplomats who moved to fill the policy void, each acting on his own and without instruction from his government. Each was impelled by his own personal conviction that it was in the interest of his country to begin the job of bridging the gap between the two governments. Each, however, proceeded in his own way. The Egyptian diplomatic

service neither encouraged nor rewarded initiative, and the Egyptian political system set even more stringent limits. Ashraf Ghorbal, a man of great charm and extraordinarily keen intelligence, eventually came to carry much weight in the councils of his government but he was not yet at that point. He knew he had to move cautiously and quietly. The initial objective that he set for himself was a limited one: to start a dialogue with the Americans and to make himself a sounding board in Washington—to let people at the State Department know what would work in Cairo and what would not.[7]

Ghorbal's first request for a meeting with Lucius Battle, who was now the assistant secretary for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, threw the State Department into a quandary. Interest Sections were a new device as far as U.S. diplomacy was concerned. The department's legal adviser sent Battle a memorandum saying he could meet the Egyptian Interest Section chief only in the presence of the Indian ambassador, India having taken over formal protection of Egyptian interests in the United States after the break in diplomatic relations. Battle found this preposterous. It would fatally cripple communication in Cairo as well as in Washington, for the Egyptians would surely follow the American example and see Bergus only in the company of the Spanish ambassador. Battle decided simply to disregard the legal adviser's opinion. He invited Ghorbal in alone for a talk. Once set, the precedent enabled Ghorbal to operate in Washington, and Bergus in Cairo, almost as freely as the head of any recognized diplomatic mission.

Bergus was an activist by inclination, and the traditions of the American diplomatic service generally encouraged and rewarded activism. So Bergus' ambition went beyond merely reestablishing a dialogue; he wanted to bring about a renewal of diplomatic relations between Washington and Cairo. The obstacle that had to be overcome on the American side was Nasser's accusation that the United States had helped Israel make war against Egypt, Syria, and Jordan. It was clear to Bergus when he left Washington that unless it were retracted neither Johnson nor Rusk would ever agree to receive an Egyptian ambassador.

In the first days after the Israeli attack, Cairo's television, radio, and press repeatedly trumpeted the charge that Egypt had been victim not solely of Israel but of the mighty United States and Britain. It was a convenient explanation, one that for a while found wide currency. Israel, with a population of two and one-half million, had trounced the armies of three Arab states with populations thirteen or fourteen times its number. The defeat was so crushing that, for a brief time at least, Egyptians could hardly believe Israel alone could have been capable of inflicting it.

The allegation evidently grew out of a genuine misunderstanding by King Hussein, who thought blips on his radar screens were American and British warplanes from aircraft carriers nearby in the Mediterranean rather than Israeli craft. Hussein and General Abdul Munim Riad, who was in Amman at the head of the largely fictive United Arab Command, told the story to Nasser in a telephone conversation in the early morning of June 6. The Israelis monitored the call. Their tape of it, which they broadcast with much fanfare, seemed to suggest a conspiracy, but it was not conclusive. "I will issue a statement and you will issue a statement," Nasser said to Hussein on the Israeli tape. "We will also let the Syrians issue a statement that there are American and English aircraft operating against us from aircraft carriers."[8]

The Americans and the British issued indignant denials, but the accusations played for another several weeks. In October, however, Egypt restored diplomatic relations with Britain. This gave a boost to Bergus' hopes, but there was still the problem of getting Nasser to retract his statement that the United States had taken part in Israel's June 5 surprise air attack.

By the beginning of 1968 Bergus thought he had found a solution. Working through

Mohammed Riad at the Foreign Ministry and Sabri al-Khouly at the Presidency, Bergus arranged an interview with Nasser for William Atwood, then editor of *Look* magazine. It was agreed that Atwood's interview would be the vehicle for ridding the U.S.-Egyptian agenda of this troublesome issue. Atwood saw Nasser in mid-February. Atwood asked whether, in light of what the Egyptian president knew at that time, he believed the allegations of American involvement in the June 5 attack to be false. Nasser replied with a cautious "You can say that."[9]

Even this timid retraction was not to be allowed to stand. The Egyptians pulled back. Atwood published Nasser's exact words, but they were missing from the version of the interview put out by *Al Ahratn.* When the Western press pointed out the discrepancy, *Al Ahram* ran editorials reiterating the allegations of American involvement in the Israeli attack and defiantly vowed that Egypt would never take them back.

What happened? Bergus was never given a satisfactory answer. He guessed that Nasser and his aides simply became frightened over likely public reaction. A few days after Atwood's meeting with Nasser there were demonstrations in Cairo. Students from Cairo University marched to the city center and were joined along the way by ordinary citizens. The crowd swelled to several thousand, and shouts were heard for Nasser's removal.[10] Workers in the capital's industrial suburbs also struck and demonstrated. The demonstrations were sparked by lenient sentences handed down in the trial of four senior air force officers accused of negligence in the June 1967 war, when Egyptian planes were caught on the ground, lined up like ducks and their pilots—quite literally—out to breakfast.

Nasser ordered a retrial for the four officers and scrapped whatever thought he may have had of moving toward a renewal of relations with the United States.

■ ■ ■

The June 1967 war propelled relations between Cairo and Moscow to heights they had never before attained. The Arab defeat created big opportunities for the Soviets. For one thing, the USSR no longer had to worry about American competition for the favor of the Arabs. Egypt, Syria, and Iraq—the three most important states in the area—all broke relations with the United States, and Algeria, Mauritania, Sudan, and Yemen followed suit. The few remaining friends of the United States in the Arab world—principally Jordan, Libya, and Saudi Arabia—were under heavy siege. Not only was the Soviet Union the sole source of arms for rebuilding Egypt's shattered army and replacing Syria's losses, for the moment at least, it was also the Arabs only hope for making headway on the diplomatic front.

There was of course a downside. Egypt and Syria had fought with Soviet weaponry, and their defeat was seen as a defeat for Soviet arms. Soviet diplomacy before the war had been bumbling at best. In the aftermath of the defeat, the Arab media poured out a stream of recrimination, alleging that Moscow had misled Egypt and Syria with false intelligence reports that Israel was massing troops and then had urged Egypt to refrain from striking the first blow. Angry crowds demonstrated in front of Soviet embassies in Cairo, Beirut, Baghdad, and Khartoum. But the Arabs could not long afford the luxury of being angry at Moscow. Near the end of June, Arab ambassadors in Moscow put out a statement praising the USSR for its support for the Arab struggle against Zionism and imperialism. Heikal laid down the official line for the Egyptian public in one of his typically long and convoluted editorials in *Al Ahram.* The USSR was one of the Arabs' closest friends and definitely the strongest, Heikal wrote. The Arabs should not slavishly accept everything the Soviets suggest, but Soviet-Arab friendship represented "one of the most important achievements of the modern Arab revolution."[11] The message was clear: Criticism of the USSR was to stop.

The Soviets threw themselves wholeheartedly into the role of patron and defender of the Arab cause. On June 16, the politburo hustled Premier Alexei Kosygin off to New York to head a determined—if ultimately unsuccessful—Soviet drive to get a UN resolution condemning Israel and requiring it to withdraw from the territories it won in the war.[12] Five days later it dispatched President Nikolai Podgorny to Cairo, accompanied by Marshal Matvei Zakharov, chief of the Soviet General Staff, and a large military delegation. Podgorny stayed for four days and held a series of meetings with Nasser. He had the double task of reassuring Nasser of the USSR's support while making clear to him that Moscow would not back hasty and unrealistic schemes for liberating occupied Arab territory. The USSR would rebuild Egypt's armed forces, but it expected Nasser to look for a diplomatic rather than a military solution. Rather than the analogy of Britain in 1940 or the Soviet Union in 1941, which Nasser brought up, Podgorny said Egypt should think of the example of Brest Litovsk, the treaty Lenin signed with imperial Germany in World War I that enabled him to salvage the revolution.

If this advice grated, so even more did Podgorny's heavy-handed efforts to get Nasser to agree to give the USSR naval and air bases in Egypt. The campaign against "foreign military bases" was one of the major planks of the nonaligned movement. The Soviet Union had given it wholehearted support, for in the 1950s and early 1960s foreign military bases in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia still meant Western bases. Nasser had inveighed against the Iraqi and Libyan monarchies for allowing British and American forces on their soil. Now he was being asked to give the Soviets what he had denounced others for allowing the West. It was a bitter pill to swallow, the more so, according to Heikal, as Nasser got the impression that the Soviets were blatantly exploiting Egypt's defeat so as to get bases for their fleet and aircraft.[13]

Nasser finally told Podgorny the USSR was welcome to put its ships at Port Said and at Alexandria; a Soviet military presence in these two Mediterranean ports would help keep the Israelis away. Pressed to grant more extensive facilities and to allow the USSR to fly its flag over them, Nasser in exasperation declared that the Soviet Union could have all the bases it wanted if it would take responsibility for Egypt's air defense.[14] In June of 1967 this was too tall an order for the Soviets to consider, even in exchange for bases. Podgorny backed away. He told Nasser he was not authorized to discuss mutual defense arrangements. Nonetheless, in the months ahead the Soviets did get most of what they wanted in the way of military facilities in Egypt. In April 1968, Egypt and the Soviet Union signed a secret five-year agreement granting the Soviet fleet "maintenance facilities." At about that same time the USSR began deploying long-range reconnaissance aircraft in Egypt. For the next four years, until Sadat ordered the Soviet military out in 1972, a squadron of TU-16s, based at Cairo West airfield, kept vigilant watch over the movements of the American Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean.[15]

Podgorny's visit may have left Nasser with a bad taste in his mouth—Heikal was later to describe it in words ranging from "unsatisfactory" to "disastrous"[16]—but it did not deter Nasser from the course he had set for himself. Nasser and the Soviets had a long history of friendship and cooperation. It was by his daring to turn to the Soviets for arms in 1955 when the Middle East was still considered a Western preserve that Nasser had first attained leadership in the Arab world and in the nonaligned movement. This was to be the beginning of a long and close association in which a pattern was set: Every time Nasser got into trouble with the West the Soviets would come to his rescue. When the United States and Britain pulled out of the Aswan High Dam project in 1956, the Soviets stepped in and built it for Egypt. When Britain and France attacked Egypt after Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal, Khrushchev threatened them with nuclear devastation. When the Iraqi monarchy was overthrown in July 1958, Nasser, who was in

Yugoslavia visiting Tito, was panic-stricken that the Americans might think he was behind the Baghdad coup and try to abduct or kill him on his way back to Cairo. Khrushchev sent a plane to whisk Nasser off to safety in Moscow until the crisis passed.

In the years after 1958 there were frictions, but the Moscow-Cairo alliance remained essentially intact. Nasser's and the Soviets' goals usually coincided. He was basically comfortable with their way of doing business, and he got to know and understand them very well, much better than he understood Western leaders, with whom he had no direct contact after 1956.

After the 1967 defeat, the pattern reasserted itself. The Soviets stepped in once more to rescue Nasser, and this time they put him into a kind of triple A category in the hierarchy of their attentions. He was now, so far as Moscow was concerned, the key to Soviet influence in the Middle East, the survival of his regime very nearly a matter of the Soviet Union's vital national interest. This was just what Nasser wanted. Even in the earlier high years of his relationship with Moscow, he had been careful to put restraints on the Soviet presence in Egypt. He had sent Egyptian communists to jail and quarreled with Khrushchev about it. And he had (with steadily decreasing capital on the American side) played the game of making the United States and the Soviets bid for Egypt's favor. But from the moment of the defeat, he was ready to put all reserve aside. There was nothing left for him, Nasser felt, but to throw his lot squarely in with the Soviets, or to surrender—to go crawling to the Americans or sit down at the negotiating table with Israel and sign an agreement on its terms. Surrender was unthinkable. The Soviets were the only acceptable option. He wanted them involved on Egypt's side in every way, diplomatically and militarily. As Heikal later wrote, he wanted "to ensure that they felt Egypt's defeat was their defeat; that their prestige was bound up with that of Egypt."[17]

Kosygin's campaign on Egypt's behalf at the UN turned out to be a failure, but on the military side the Soviets more than fulfilled Nasser's hopes. The Egyptian air force had lost nearly all of its planes, and the remnants of the army of 80,000 that straggled back from Sinai left most of its heavy equipment there. On June 9, the day after the cease-fire went into effect on the Egyptian-Israeli front, the Soviet military attache went to see General Fawzi to ask for a report on materiel lost and destroyed. Two days later the Soviets launched a massive airlift to resupply the Egyptian army.[18] It was well underway by the time Podgorny and Zakharov arrived in Cairo. Through the rest of June and July huge Antonov cargo planes shuttled between bases in the Soviet Union and Al Maza, Inshas, and Cairo West airfields, bringing hundreds of fighter aircraft, tanks, artillery pieces, and other weaponry to Egypt, and much other equipment arrived by boat at Alexandria. By the end of the year some 60 to 80 percent of Egypt's war losses had been replaced. Soviet military personnel joined the influx of equipment. Before the war they numbered only about 500 and were mainly there to help maintain complex equipment. Afterward at least another 1,500 came. The Soviets took over training and planning, and they moved down from division to brigade and even to battalion level.[19] They gave their aid at virtually no cost. Nasser was later to announce that Egypt had not had to pay a cent for its rearmament. The USSR had replaced his lost weapons without charge and had given long-term loans for the purchase of other equipment.[20]

However, it was the canal defenses that were Nasser's most immediate concern. In the second half of June 1967, the roads leading from the canal to Cairo were undefended; the Israelis could have rolled their tanks through to the Egyptian capital without having to face any serious military opposition. Nasser feared Israel would seize the west bank of the Suez Canal and then open the canal and operate it itself.[21] He put Marshal Zakharov in charge of building a line of defenses

along the entire length of the canal and ordered him to give the job top priority. The Soviet chief of staff had Nasser's writ to proceed as he saw fit, and he was given first call on men and material. He began building what was to become a three-line defense of bunkers and trenches, a Soviet textbook classic.

By November, Zakharov could report that the assignment had been completed. He handed in a memorandum in which he assured the Egyptian president that the canal defenses were solid and that Nasser need no longer fear an Israeli move on his capital.[22]

4

General Rabin Goes to Washington

The idea came to him even before the June war, but when he first broached it with Levy Eshkol, the prime minister exclaimed in amazement: “Yitzhak, hold on to me, I’m going to fall out of my chair. That is the last thing I would have imagined you would want.”[1]

General Yitzhak Rabin, chief of staff of the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), wanted to be Israel’s next ambassador to the United States. Eshkol wanted to know if Rabin thought he could bear up under the strain of cocktail parties and the boredom of long dinners. Was he capable of that? Rabin’s answer, typically, was that he was capable of what he thought was the real job of Israel’s ambassador in Washington—that of strengthening ties and building a strategic defense relationship with the United States. To assure its future security, Rabin believed, Israel would have to look to the United States. He was sure that his military background and the political experience he had gained as chief of staff would compensate for his lack of diplomatic experience. As for the dinners and cocktail parties, he would learn to cope with them.[2] Eshkol said he would have to speak with Foreign Minister Eban. The prime minister made no commitment, but Rabin left that meeting in March 1967 with the feeling that Eshkol liked the idea.[3]

Yitzhak Rabin was one of Israel’s most successful chiefs of staff, probably the most successful after Moshe Dayan. Rabin was born in British mandate Palestine, of Russian parents who came there at the end of World War I. He grew up in the pioneering tradition of Zionism, which for young Jewish men in Eretz Israel in the 1930s meant dedicating oneself to the land. Rabin enrolled in the Kadouri agricultural school in Lower Galilee, near Mount Tabor. Many of the future leaders of Israel passed through Kadouri; it was the elite institution of learning of its day. Rabin was a bright boy and an excellent student, and he graduated first in his class. After Kadouri he wanted to study hydrological engineering. His teachers got him a scholarship to the United States, to Berkeley, but war had broken out in Europe, and he did not want to leave Palestine. In 1940, when he was barely eighteen, he joined the Haganah. After that, hydrological engineering went by the board. Rabin transferred to the Palmach, the Haganah’s elite combat force, and from there on out he rose in rank at vertiginous speed. He commanded the Harel brigade that broke the Arab blockade of the road to Jerusalem in the first stage of the War of Independence and then took part, under Yigal Allon’s command, in the defeat of the Egyptian army in the Negev and in Sinai. In 1949, at the age of twenty-seven, Yitzhak Rabin was a lieutenant colonel in the newly created Israeli Defense Forces.

By then Rabin’s friendships and political alliances were fully formed. Though he had no part in politics, his Haganah and Palmach background placed him in the mainstream of labor Zionism. The young Rabin was one of Ben-Gurion’s favorites. Yigal Allon, the Palmach’s commander, was Rabin’s friend and mentor; it was Allon who first taught Rabin how to use a gun, and while still in his teens Rabin had done guard duty at Ginnosar, Allon’s kibbutz on the

shore of the Sea of Galilee. In the tight little society of the Jewish community in mandate Palestine, which until independence numbered only some six hundred fifty thousand, the choice of one's friends often brought with it a selection of adversaries. Allon and Moshe Dayan were rivals, and even though Allon left the army at the end of the War of Independence and Dayan stayed in it the rivalry continued. Rabin's friendship with Allon made his relations with Dayan uneasy. Dayan was older and senior in rank to Rabin, but there was an undercurrent of rivalry between them as well.

Nonetheless, Rabin's talent and Ben-Gurion's interest in his career continued to propel him upward. In 1955 Rabin became the commander of the northern front, and in 1959, after Dayan left the army, he became chief of the Operations Branch of the General Staff, the number two position in the Israeli army. On January 1, 1964, Rabin was sworn in as chief of staff.

With this appointment, Rabin became not only the top military officer but also the central figure of Israel's defense establishment. David Ben-Gurion had dominated military policy, but he resigned in 1964. Ben-Gurion's successor as prime minister, Levy Eshkol, lacked a military background, and he had none of Ben-Gurion's authority in security matters. Shimon Peres, deputy minister of defense under Ben-Gurion and wonder boy of Israeli arms procurement and manufacture in the 1950s, soon followed Ben-Gurion out of the government and the Mapai party, and so did Dayan. So Rabin came into a void, and he filled it enthusiastically. He quickly became the government's main public spokesman on defense matters. Rabin made speeches and gave interviews like a politician on the campaign trail. His booming double-bass voice filled Israel's airwaves, and the analytical brilliance that had helped him reach the top of his military career made him an admired and respected public figure.

The May crisis came near to breaking Rabin. Some in the government blamed him for having brought it on with his bellicose public threats against Syria. Overcome by fatigue and a sense of guilt, on the evening of May 23 Rabin called to his home General Ezer Weizman, the General Staff's chief of operations, and offered Weizman his job. Weizman refused. He pointed out that for the chief of staff to resign in the midst of the crisis would be a great psychological victory for Nasser.[4] Rabin quickly recovered. His temporary absence from his post was covered up as nicotine poisoning—a plausible story for the heavy smoker that he then was. The near breakdown left Rabin's reputation only slightly diminished; the ease and the brilliance of Israel's victory restored him to public esteem.

For other men, being chief of staff of the Israeli Defense Forces would have been more than enough to fulfill a lifetime ambition. Not so Yitzhak Rabin. He had his eye on still bigger things, and he had a keen instinct for where to look for them. After the victory he could easily have gone into politics, taken a seat on the Labor Party's Knesset benches, and waited to be offered a ministerial portfolio. His intelligence and his instinct told him that the future lay in a different direction. The battle for Israel's future, Rabin was persuaded, would take place in Washington; and the key to Israel's security lay in the creation of an ever-closer relationship with the United States. (The idea of a strategic partnership between Israel and the United States, which was to be so energetically promoted by Israel's conservative supporters in the United States in the 1970s and was to become reality in the 1980s, was first articulated by Rabin.) To open America's arsenal to Israel, to assure American backing for Israeli positions on peace and territory, and to develop a strategic partnership between the United States and Israel—these were Rabin's goals. They were not going to be accomplished, he was quite sure, by Israel's tradition-bound diplomacy.

The idea of having the former chief of staff, a national hero, as his ambassador to the United

States did not appeal at all to Foreign Minister Abba Eban. Washington was Israel's key diplomatic post. Eban wanted an able bureaucrat for the job, someone he could control. A figure so powerful as Rabin, one with connections to the Labor Zionist establishment and its leadership that far surpassed Eban's, would be a clear threat to the foreign minister's preeminence. Like Rabin in military matters, Eban enjoyed wide latitude in the conduct of Israeli diplomacy under Eshkol. The prime minister's background was in finance; he was almost as much of a novice in world affairs as he was in questions of arms, so Eshkol tended to seek and to take Eban's advice. The prime minister's confidence gave Eban a relatively free hand. Rabin, Eban feared, would restrict that freedom. He would be less a subordinate than a rival.[5]

There was no disagreement between the two men about the importance of the American alliance. Eban was every bit as keen as Rabin about mobilizing U.S. backing, but they had different concepts of what this meant. Eban's concept was the traditional diplomatic one. He had fought for and largely won America's support in the crucial UN debates of the summer and fall of 1967. Keeping that political and diplomatic support was his main objective. Rabin had the more ambitious objective of extending Israel's diplomatic alliance with the United States into the areas of military supply and military strategy. Eban may not have disagreed with this, but he knew American society far better than Rabin, and he understood the difficulties of an overly ambitious enterprise.

There was also a personal element, a clash of chemistries. Eban and Rabin were both unusually talented and brilliant men, and both had family backgrounds in Tsarist Russia. But beyond this and their dedication to Israel and to Zionism, they were as different as two men could be. Eban's parents came from Lithuania; Rabin's from Russia itself and the Ukraine. Eban grew up studying the classics in the safety and comfort of London, reciting Greek and Latin sonnets and later, at Cambridge, showing off his brilliance by translating articles from the *Times* into classical Greek. His Zionism was of the theoretical variety, and it was absorbed in intensive force-fed weekend lessons from his grandfather. At Rabin's school in Tel Aviv, the boys cooked their own lunches and washed the dishes, kept a garden and studied carpentry. Rabin's education imbued him less with the Zionist ideal than with the love of the land of Israel and its historical connection with the Bible. His teacher, Eleazar Shmueli, took the class on frequent outings punctuated with readings from the Bible that transformed often dreary early twentieth-century landscapes into scenes of ancient drama and heroism. After the study of agriculture at Kadouri, the whole of the rest of Rabin's life was absorbed in the adventure, the machinery, and the comradery of arms. Eban had no idea what it was like to kill, or to live in danger of being killed. For him, the military experience—the central element in the life of Jews born and raised in mandate Palestine and in newly independent Israel—was largely theoretical. Of his four months of basic training in the British army in 1940, his only direct military experience, his main later recollection was of what he called the "gruesome ceremony" of sticking a bayonet into the entrails of a straw dummy.[6]

Eban resisted the proposal to send Rabin to Washington. When Rabin raised it again with Eshkol after the war, the prime minister could only say that the issue was still unresolved, that "Eban has some reservations."[7] But the foreign minister could not hold out against the overpowering array of Rabin's backers. Israel Galili, Eshkol's closest friend and confidant in the cabinet, supported Rabin's appointment to Washington, and so did Yigal Allon and Golda Meir. (Meir was Eban's predecessor as foreign minister and now general secretary of Mapai.) When General Yosef Geva, Israel's military attache in Washington, came home on consultations in the summer of 1967 Eshkol asked whether he thought Rabin would be a good ambassador. Geva

replied unhesitatingly in the affirmative. A new period was opening up in relations between Israel and the United States, and a new man was needed, Geva told Eshkol.[8]

On January 1, 1968, Yitzak Rabin concluded his service as chief of staff of the Israeli Defense Forces. A few weeks later he flew to Washington to take up his new position as Israel's ambassador to the United States.

■ ■ ■

Well before Rabin's arrival in Washington, American officials faced a perplexing problem in their dealings with Israel. The Israelis wanted the latest, most advanced and most powerful aircraft in the American fighter-bomber inventory—the F-4 Phantom. Developed in the 1950s by Me-Donnell-Douglas and put into service in the U.S. Navy in the early 1960s, the Phantom was a magnificent piece of weaponry. It could fly at Mach 2.4, operate at up to 71,000 feet, and carry 7 tons of bombs, rockets, or other weaponry over great distances.[9] The Phantom was both an interceptor and a bomber. The Soviets had nothing to match it in their regular combat inventory. With the Phantoms, the Israelis would not only have an advantage over the MiG-21 fighters that the Russians provided the Egyptians, but they would also be able to strike heavy blows deep inside the territory of all their Arab adversaries.

France was Israel's traditional supplier of military aircraft. With their inventory of French planes—ranging from aging Ouragans and Mysteres to SuperMysteres and Mirages—the Israelis had destroyed the air forces of Egypt, Syria, and Jordan on June 5 and 6, 1967. When the war started, Israel had 200 combat aircraft in its inventory. In six days of fighting, it lost 45 airplanes. The Israeli air force finished the war with a tremendous reputation but with barely more than 150 combat aircraft, and a substantial number of these were obsolete.[10] The General Staff and the Cabinet considered this a dangerously insufficient level. Efforts had to be made urgently to procure additional planes.

Supposedly, more were on the way. In 1965 Israel had signed a contract with the French for another 50 Mirages, with an option for an additional 50. About the same time the Israelis also made a bid for the Phantom. The Mirage was an excellent interceptor aircraft, but it could carry only a very limited load of bombs. The Phantom could do both jobs. The Americans had turned down the request for Phantoms, but in 1966 Lyndon Johnson approved the sale to Israel of 48 Skyhawks—fine tactical battlefield-support aircraft, but no match for the MiG-21 in air combat.

Both the Mirages and the Skyhawks, however, were still on the production line when the war broke out in June 1967. The first shipment of the Mirages was ready for delivery by the summer of 1967, but de Gaulle— angered that Israel had ignored his advice not to fire the first shot—slapped an embargo on them. The first of the Skyhawks would have come off the production line at the end of 1967, but in the crisis that preceded the war the U.S. suspended all military shipments to the Middle East. The Israelis knew they would get the Skyhawks. For some time they also continued to be confident that they would eventually get the Mirages too. But de Gaulle's attitude toward Israel after the war bordered on outright hostility, and this raised doubts about whether France was to be relied on as an arms supplier. Even if France had been the most willing of suppliers, Israel would have been eager to get access to the broader range and higher technology of weaponry in the American arsenal. The prospect of losing the French supply line made it seem vital for them to do so.

Washington, however, for some time after the war hoped to get the Soviets to agree to join in limiting or even in embargoing arms shipments to the countries of the Middle East. Limitation of arms deliveries to the parties to the Arab-Israeli conflict was one of the five points of Lyndon Johnson's June 19 address. Even after the Soviets began their massive resupply of aircraft, tanks,

and other heavy weaponry to Egypt, Washington hoped the USSR would limit itself to restoring the Egyptian army to its prewar level.

Giving the Phantom to Israel, people at the State and Defense Departments argued, would be a clear escalation of the Middle East arms race. It would be an invitation to the Soviets to come in with more on the Arab side. The State and Defense departments also feared further damage to America's already shaky relations with the Arabs. And beyond that they were concerned that once Israel got the Phantom the door to America's arsenal would be wide open to it. The United States would become Israel's major supplier of military hardware as was the Soviet Union the Arabs'. The polarization of the Middle East dispute would be complete.

Neither Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara nor Secretary of State Rusk liked the idea of giving Israel Phantoms, but at the State Department the main opposition came from Assistant Secretary Lucius Battle. Battle was bitterly opposed to letting Israel have the Phantom. He was sure that if they got it they would use it to escalate their war with the Arabs.[11] He also opposed lifting the embargo that the United States had put on arms shipments to the Middle East during the crisis that preceded the war. Ignoring much evidence to the contrary, Battle first argued that the Soviets were not rearming the Arabs. When this thesis became untenable, he argued that before making any decision about arms for Israel the United States should wait to see whether the Soviets rearmed the Arabs beyond their prewar level.

Asking the United States for Phantoms, the Israelis realized, was not something one did by handing in a note to the State Department. It would have to be handled at the highest level. Not long after the 1967 war, the idea of a trip to the United States by Eshkol to present the request in person to President Johnson began to surface in Israel. Eshkol was very ambivalent about it. Going to see Johnson could be very risky. What if the American president turned down his request for more planes and sent him home empty-handed? Or what if he put political conditions on the agreement to provide the planes? Eshkol's position as prime minister was still shaky. He did not want to return from the United States with nothing to show for his visit. And he did not want Dayan or Begin or others accusing him of having forfeited Israel's positions on negotiations, peace, and territories in exchange for airplanes.

The prime minister decided to put off a decision for a while.[12] But the problem would not go away. By the fall of 1967 with Soviet deliveries of MiGs moving the Egyptians and the Syrians close to their prewar levels, it was clear that there was going to be no other way. Eshkol would have to go see Lyndon Johnson. The visit was arranged for the beginning of January, not in Washington but at the president's ranch at Johnson City, Texas. When he departed for the United States on the morning of January 4, 1968, Eshkol was still deeply worried about the outcome. The next day in New York he held a long meeting with the members of his party to discuss tactics. They talked all around the issue. Eshkol, evidently, had still not fully decided whether to press for Phantoms or only for more Skyhawks. He wanted to be sure of returning to Israel with something in hand. It seemed a sure thing that Johnson would agree to more Skyhawks—the Americans had by then signaled that they were ready to move ahead with production and delivery of the original 48 planes signed for in 1966. But Phantoms were obviously going to be harder to get.

Ambassador Avraham Harman counseled trying to get the Skyhawks alone. Harman's deputy, Minister Ephraim Evron, had different advice. Evron was in the highly unusual—and not always comfortable—position of having closer relations with and better access to the American president than his ambassador. Evron knew what Johnson had done for Israel during the June 1967 war—that he had turned the Sixth Fleet east to head off the Soviet fleet before it could get

to Alexandria and that Johnson had used the hot line to tell Moscow to stay out of the war. Evron went around the United States speaking to Jewish audiences. “I can’t tell you anything about the facts,” Evron would say, “but let me tell you, I’m the minister of Israel. I have the strongest interest in the United States helping Israel, and I can tell you that Lyndon Johnson saved Israel.”[13]

Evron also knew how to deal with Lyndon Johnson. “Make no concessions in your talk with Johnson,” Evron advised. “If he doesn’t make a specific commitment, it will all be empty talk. You must ask for 50 Phantoms—and for [more] Skyhawks.”[14]

While Eshkol and his advisers conferred in New York, Johnson met with McNamara, Rusk, General Earl Wheeler of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Battle, and others at the ranch. All were opposed to giving Israel Phantoms. But in the day before Eshkol’s arrival there, the president was deluged by telephone calls from members of Congress, Jewish community leaders, and prominent Democrats, all urging him to agree to the request that Eshkol was expected to make. Clearly, the Israelis had gone all out to mobilize their political backers in the United States. In an aside to Battle, the president exclaimed: “Luke, I’ve never been under so much pressure.” When it came time to look at the anodyne statement that the State Department had drawn up for issuance at the close of the visit, Johnson saw that there was nothing in it about arms for Israel. He turned to Battle and said, “This is not good enough, you have got to give me more.” Battle was prepared for this contingency. He had drawn up language in case Johnson asked for it. It read: “What we do with respect to arms will depend on what others do.” It meant, Battle explained, that if the Soviets didn’t up the ante, neither would the United States.[15]

Johnson approved Battle’s formula, but out of the meetings the president of the United States and the prime minister of Israel held at the ranch in Johnson City, Texas, came two distinctly different versions of what had been agreed. Israeli and American officials found themselves totally at odds when they later compared notes. The Israeli record showed that the president had agreed in principle to provide Israel 50 Phantoms and had promised to make a final determination before the end of the year. The American record showed only that the president had promised Eshkol that the United States would provide Israel Phantoms “if the need is proven.” For the Israelis the policy was “go”; for the Americans it was still “wait and see.”[16]

One of the things that was ultimately to decide the issue in Israel’s favor was a concession Johnson made to Eshkol on production lead times. The lead time for the Phantom, from beginning of production to delivery, could run anywhere from twenty-one to thirty-six months. This meant that if production did not begin until the end of 1968, when the “final” decision was to be made, Israel would not start receiving the aircraft before late 1970. Eshkol argued that Israel needed the planes much earlier. The president, according to the American record, authorized the immediate beginning of procurement on a contingency basis of F-4 components that required long production lead times. According to the Israelis, he authorized immediate beginning of production. In fact, given the practicalities of production, there was very little real difference between the two. Johnson’s order meant that Israel could begin to take delivery of Phantoms before the end of 1969 rather than having to wait an extra year.[17]

Though it could not be foreseen at the time, this decision was to prove of enormous consequence. It was to change the entire course of the war that lay ahead.

Lucius Battle returned to Washington determined to hold the line on the Phantoms. So far as he was concerned, the president’s concession on procurement was just a technical one. The U.S. position was still “wait and see.” In the weeks after Eshkol’s visit, Battle began receiving calls from Capitol Hill in support of Israel’s request for Phantoms. One of the most pressing calls was

from Senator Stuart Symington of Missouri, chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee. Symington was a staunch supporter of Israel, but he had a more immediate reason for wanting to see the Phantom deal go through: the McDonnell-Douglas plant that produced the aircraft was located on the outskirts of St. Louis. Symington pleaded with Battle: “Luke, can’t you release a few?” Battle said he could not. “Well then,” Symington warned, “they’re going to go after you.” Battle understood very well what this meant; the Israeli lobby would be out to get him. Maybe they would, Battle replied defiantly, but he wasn’t going to change his mind.[18]

The assault predicted by Symington never occurred. The fearsome Israeli lobby, in Battle’s case at least, turned out to be a figment of the imagination. Battle held to his opposition to the sale of Phantoms to Israel and never felt his position threatened or felt himself under serious pressure for the rest of his time in office. The issue had nothing to do with his resignation in September 1968. And when he left the State Department, the Phantoms were still theoretically on hold, though not for long.

Eshkol’s fears that Johnson would ask him for commitments that he could not afford to make, on withdrawal, borders, the refugees, or on other issues, turned out to be unfounded. However, the president did press him to cooperate with Jarring and to come forward with peace proposals. Johnson’s position, as before, was that to continue his support for Israel he had to have American public opinion behind him. For this, Israel had to show that it was doing everything it possibly could for peace.

It was Johnson’s urgings and the pressure kept up by the State Department in the months following the meeting at Johnson City that prompted the statement Tekoa made in the Security Council on May 1 on acceptance of Resolution 242—the statement that caused Eban and Eshkol so much trouble in the Cabinet from Begin and Dayan later that month. The pattern was to be repeated in October. The president felt he needed a reiteration of Israel’s aspiration for peace before he could move ahead to give public approval for the Phantoms. Eban came to the fall General Assembly and on October 8 delivered a speech in which he offered a nine-point peace proposal. It was short on details and did not commit Israel to anything of significance that it had not already accepted, but it sounded good and it satisfied the president’s requirement. The next day, on October 9, Johnson announced that he had instructed the State and Defense departments to begin negotiations for signature of a contract for the sale of Phantoms to Israel.

Though Eban’s October 8 speech was an important element in the president’s decision, it earned Eban no gratitude from Israeli right-wingers. Shmuel Tamir, the leader of a small right-wing party, publicly denounced Eban’s speech in a press conference in New York the day after it was made. Begin challenged the speech in the Cabinet, and Eshkol was obliged to put it to a vote, which he and the foreign minister won handily.[19] Eban complained bitterly to his aides that the right-wingers seemed to think that they could defy world opinion and still expect full support from the United States and others.[20]

■ ■ ■

Lucius Battle thought Ambassador Yitzhak Rabin perhaps the most arrogant individual he had ever met. Other reactions to Rabin at the State Department were mixed, but at the Pentagon, among the generals, Israel’s new ambassador was a tremendous hit. America’s top military officers were struggling with a frustrating war in Vietnam that they seemed unable to win. The success that eluded them Rabin had known in abundance. He was the man who—wonder of wonders—in six days had struck down three enemy armies. American generals were agape to meet him, as though some of the magic of his success might rub off on them through his company. Professionally he was one of them, and he shared their outlook on the world. When

Rabin and the American generals talked about world problems, they came to the same conclusions. The only language the Soviets understood was the language of force. One had to be strong and deal with one's adversary only from a position of strength. Rabin subscribed wholeheartedly to this view, and at every opportunity he made clear that it applied not just to Washington's dealings with Moscow but to Israel's with the Arabs.

To his Washington embassy Rabin brought not only the discipline of a military mind but also actual military methods of planning and execution. Objectives were first to be defined in clear terms; resources were then to be marshalled and tactics set out for the assault and capture. An Israeli visitor to Washington some years later was to write that the embassy was "like nothing so much as a fighting unit that has long been stationed on the front lines." He added, "Rabin came to Washington with a single goal in mind—to make the United States Israel's principal supplier of arms."[21]

Making sure Israel got its 50 Phantoms was Rabin's first critical objective. He quickly saw that the 1968 presidential election year offered unparalleled tactical opportunities. He was delighted by the Republican party's nomination of Richard Nixon. Rabin had met Nixon in Israel in 1966. Those were the former vice president's wilderness days. In Israel, as in America, it was thought that after his defeat at the hands of John Kennedy in 1960 and his unsuccessful run for governor of California two years later Richard Nixon was finished. As chief of staff, Rabin found himself the ranking Israeli guest at a dinner for Nixon at the U.S. embassy in Tel Aviv; no Cabinet officer had thought it worthwhile to take the time to come and meet an apparently down-and-out American politician. Rabin invited Nixon to tour Israeli military installations and gave him the red-carpet treatment.[22]

Nixon, who had the defect of never forgetting a slight, had the quality of remembering and rewarding a favor. Rabin got a warm welcome when he went to call on candidate Nixon in August 1968. Nixon sympathized with the Israeli ambassador's complaints about the Johnson administration's suspension of arms shipments. Rabin joined Nixon in lamenting the self-doubt and loss of direction that both men felt had invaded American society. Rabin noted with satisfaction that Nixon saw Israel destined to play an important role in American policy. As Rabin listened to Nixon's review of world problems, he saw too that they shared a common outlook. "The Soviets understand only the language of force," Nixon told Rabin, "and you can reach agreement with them only from a position of strength." This same concept, he agreed, applied also to Israel's relations with the Arabs. The meeting ended with a statement by the Republican candidate that could only have gladdened the heart of any Israeli ambassador: "I can assure you of one thing. You will always find in me full understanding in the matter of assuring Israel's military strength, including its request to receive Phantoms." Rabin left persuaded that if Nixon were elected, Israel would get its 50 Phantoms.[23]

Hubert Humphrey, the Democratic presidential candidate, had a long history of warm and unstinting support for Israel. On the matter of the Phantoms, however, Vice President Humphrey could not match Nixon's easy assurances when he and Rabin met in August. Though American Jews voted overwhelmingly for the Democratic party, and though Humphrey was a proven and unquestioned friend of Israel, Rabin concluded that Nixon would be the better president from Israel's point of view. Nixon was unequivocal about supplying Israel arms, and he was strong. Humphrey seemed wracked with uncertainty. Rabin doubted whether the vice president had the inner strength needed to deal with America's problems and with its adversaries.[24]

Humphrey's reserve on the matter of the Phantoms was not to last long. After Lucius Battle left the State Department he briefly did some work for the Democratic candidate. Still hoping to

avoid a commitment on the Phantoms, he drafted a statement for Humphrey that promised that a Democratic administration would "not permit an imbalance in arms" to occur in the Middle East.[25] The Nixon campaign went the Democrats one better. It countered with a promise to assure military superiority to Israel. After Johnson's October 9 speech, Battle's ambiguous language about avoiding an imbalance was discarded. As election day drew near he watched regretfully as Democrats joined Republicans in promising Israel all the arms it wanted.

But it was still too early for the Israelis to celebrate. Neither Johnson's October 9 announcement nor the two parties' campaign rhetoric brought them automatically to their goal. The Defense and State department officials who held the keys to the strongbox were demonstrably in no hurry to unlock it. Rabin shuttled back and forth between Foggy Bottom and the Pentagon. From Parker Hart, newly appointed assistant secretary for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, he got no satisfaction. At each meeting Rabin held with Paul Warnke, assistant secretary of defense for International Security Affairs, there were new requests for information, for more details, for further justification of Israel's need for the aircraft. Rabin protested that the president had already made the decision to sell Israel the 50 Phantoms it had requested; what was the need for more information? Warnke produced a request that outraged Rabin. As a condition for U.S. agreement to provide the Phantoms, Israel was to agree to American inspection of all Israeli military and scientific research facilities. For Rabin, this was the last straw. He pointedly let it be known to Israel's Democratic party supporters that if the outgoing Democratic administration did not release the Phantoms the new Republican administration would do so soon after taking office and the credit would go to the Republicans.

On December 26, the State Department announced that agreement had been reached for sale to Israel of 50 Phantoms. The announcement specified that delivery would begin before the end of 1969. It was a signal achievement for Rabin. Back home it confirmed him as a successful ambassador, and it strengthened his influence in the councils of the Cabinet. Less than a year later, not long after the Phantoms began arriving, Rabin would draw on that influence to help push his government to a momentous decision on their use.

■ ■ ■

But if Israel and the United States were coming closer together on the matter of arms supply, it was to become clear well before the end of 1968 that their positions on another critical issue—the shape of a territorial settlement—were moving further apart.

Already by the fall of 1967 the Cabinet's secret June 19 decision to offer withdrawal to the prewar borders with Egypt and Syria in the framework of peace treaties had begun to go by the board. The initial impetus for Israeli ambitions for territorial revision came from the conference of Arab heads of state that convened at Khartoum at the end of August. The declaration issued at the close of this gathering seemed to rule out any hope for peace (Appendix B). It called for no peace with Israel (according to some translations, no truce or no peace treaty), no recognition of it, and no negotiations with it. To these "three noes of Khartoum," as they came to be known, was added a fourth that to Israelis sounded even more ominous: "adherence to the rights of the Palestinian people in their country."[26] In plain language this meant not just Israeli withdrawal back to the 1949 armistice lines, but back to the 1947 UN partition plan—if not the removal of the Jewish state altogether. The three noes made many of those Israelis who were ready to give up Sinai, Golan, and the West Bank think twice; and it gave a big boost to the position of the small but increasingly vocal minority that wanted to make the cease-fire lines, or something very near to them, Israel's permanent borders.

The big debate in Israel following the war was about what to do with the West Bank. Judea

and Samaria, as the right-wing immediately began to call the southern and northern wings of the formerly Jordanian-held territory, were the historic home of the Jewish people. They were also, much to Israel's distress, heavily populated by Arabs. For this problem, everyone had a solution. The right wing favored either declared or defacto annexation. Israeli leaders more in the mainstream of old line labor Zionism looked with suspicion on any scheme that would add large numbers of Arabs to their country's population. Late in 1967 Yigal Allon began circulating a map of the West Bank with ingeniously gerrymandered lines. Israel would keep the largely uninhabited lowlands along the Jordan River valley—except for a narrow neck at Jericho—and would add some territory in the west to widen its narrow coastal waist and in the south to give it direct access to Hebron. All the rest—the heavily Arab-inhabited areas of the crest of the ridge overlooking the Mediterranean coast to the west and the Jordan Valley and the Dead Sea to the east—would be returned to Jordan in a peace agreement.

When George Ball and Joseph Sisco visited Israel in July of 1968, Allon invited them to Kibbutz Ginnosar and spread his map out in front of them. The American UN ambassador and the assistant secretary of state for International Organization Affairs listened politely as Allon explained his concept. For politeness sake, they said only that they doubted King Hussein would be able to agree to Allon's proposal. In fact, Ball and Sisco and other American officials felt that Allon's plan had not the slightest chance of interesting the Jordanians. They considered it useless even as a bargaining position.[27]

Israelis also began to take a second look at their June 1967 offer to withdraw from all of Sinai. In part, this too was the result of the Khartoum noes and of the fiery statement made by Nasser on November 23, 1967, just a day after the Security Council passed Resolution 242, that "what was taken by force shall be regained by force."[28] The territorial rethinking, however, also reflected a latent desire to round out Israel's holdings in ways thought to offer a greater margin of security. Dayan began to talk about the need to keep Sharm el-Sheikh and to connect it to Israel. At the beginning of October 1968, the Cabinet approved a secret resolution that declared that Israel would not return to the June 4, 1967, lines and would work for changes in all the borders; it specifically stated that Israel would not withdraw from Gaza or from Sharm el-Sheikh and that it would keep a strip of eastern Sinai connecting Sharm el-Sheikh to Israel proper.[29]

About that same time, however, Israel's ambassador in Washington and Israel's government got a blunt reminder that the twist Arthur Goldberg had given to American policy in November 1967 and to Resolution 242's language on withdrawal was really no more than a momentary deviation. In September 1968, the Johnson administration in its waning days bestirred itself to address the issue of a settlement between Israel and the Arabs. Secretary of State Dean Rusk did not want to leave office without having made a try at bringing the parties together. The Soviets had come forward that month with a three-point plan that called for Israel to withdraw in stages from Sinai and for a UN force to be deployed there. This was to be capped by a document, to be signed jointly by Egypt and Israel, in which each promised to respect the provisions of Resolution 242. The Americans considered the Soviet proposal unacceptable, but it could not simply be filed away and ignored; if nothing else, America's relations with the Arab states prohibited that. It had to be answered. In his gruff manner, Rusk called Rabin in and said he wanted Eban to come to the UN General Assembly that was scheduled to open in New York later that month with clear and specific proposals for a settlement. In the same conversation Rusk told Rabin that the United States did not consider that changes in the prewar borders should be substantial.[30]

What the secretary of state meant by this was made clear some weeks later when Rusk gave

Egyptian Foreign Minister Mahmoud Riad a seven-point plan that called for Israel to withdraw from all Egyptian territory. The plan called for an end to the state of war, the opening of the Suez Canal to Israeli vessels, a solution to the refugee problem, an international presence at Sharm el-Sheikh to guarantee navigation through the Straits of Tiran, and an agreement on the level of arms to be maintained by the two sides. These points were to be incorporated into a "document"—not a peace treaty—that Egypt and Israel would sign.[31]

Rusk's proposal left Rabin furious. The Israeli ambassador might have been a bit less concerned had he known that Rusk's "initiative" was really no more than just that—the secretary of state's own idea. After the break in diplomatic relations in June 1967, the Americans and the Egyptians kept in touch not only through their respective interest sections but at the UN as well. Rusk was in New York periodically during the fall of 1968 to confer with foreign ministers attending the General Assembly. A meeting was set for him with Riad for the late afternoon of November 2. The Egyptians had been told that Rusk, a southerner, liked a drink of bourbon at the end of the day, so when the secretary and Richard Parker, the State Department's office director for Egyptian Affairs, arrived at Riad's suite their hosts brought out a bottle. In the rather more than usual relaxed exchange that ensued, Rusk dug into his pocket and pulled out the seven-point paper. Riad took the paper with him, and two months later the Egyptians sent back a long, querulous answer that the Americans took for a rejection, though Ashraf Ghorbal contended that it was not.[32]

Parker had no idea where Rusk's seven-point paper had come from; he had heard of it only the moment Rusk gave it to Riad. After he left the meeting between Rusk and Riad, Parker tried to find out where the paper had originated. He drew a blank; nobody in the Bureau of Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs or elsewhere in the State Department that Parker could find knew anything about it. Years later Rusk told Parker that the plan was his own idea, that he had thought it up himself and had not consulted anybody about it, either in the State Department or at the White House.[33]

Rabin got the satisfaction of hearing from Sisco that the Egyptians had rejected Rusk's proposal. In mid-January he had more good news to report to Jerusalem: The Americans had rejected the Soviet plan of September and another presented by Moscow at the end of December. But none of this could obscure the fact that American and Israeli positions diverged sharply both on the territorial issue and on what was meant by the word peace—in the Israeli lexicon peace treaties and normal relations, in the American book a jointly signed document and the absence of war. On the former the gap was growing. A few days before the Johnson administration expired Under Secretary of State Nicholas Katzenbach told Rabin that the United States interpreted Resolution 242's language on "withdrawal from territories" to mean only very minor border changes; and any changes that did take place were not to reflect the weight of conquest.[34]

The Israeli ambassador was soon to learn that, on both these very important issues, there was to be no difference between the Democratic administration and its Republican successor.

5

Nasser Goes to War Again

As Nolte, Nes, Parker, and Bauer sat down to their filet mignon and champagne farewell dinner at the U.S. ambassador's residence in Cairo on June 9, they turned on the television to watch the speech Nasser was to make that evening. It was announced for 7:30, but Nasser did not come on screen until almost 7:45. When he did appear, his features were drawn, he was unshaven, and he spoke in a hesitant, stammering voice. None of this, however, prepared the Americans or his other listeners for the surprise that was to come at the end of the speech. Nasser announced that he was resigning and was appointing Second Vice President Zakariya Muhieddin in his place. "I am ready to bear the whole responsibility," Nasser declared. "I have taken a decision in which I want you all to help me. I have decided to give up completely and finally every official role, to return to the ranks of the masses and do my duty with them like every other citizen."[1]

French journalist Eric Rouleau, who was in Cairo that week, recorded what happened next:

> From the twelfth story of the house in which we were at the time, we heard a swelling tumult, muffled and menacing—like an approaching storm, yet the weather was perfect. We went out onto the balcony and from all sides we saw people coming out of their houses like ants, and heads leaning out of the windows.… It was an extraordinary spectacle to see all these people hurrying from all sides, shouting, weeping, some wearing pyjamas, some barefoot, women in nightdresses, children, all tormented by a suffering beyond endurance and imploring "Nasser we need you."… Women fell to the ground, men burst into tears.[2]

What neither the Egyptians who poured into the streets nor the foreign diplomats and journalists who watched them knew was that earlier that same day President Gamal Abdel Nasser had been called to a meeting with Field Marshal Abdul Hakim Amer, his oldest and closest friend, with War Minister Shams Badran, and with most of Egypt's senior generals. Speaking for Amer and the generals, Badran demanded Nasser's resignation. As president, the war minister said, Nasser bore direct responsibility for the defeat. The discussion continued long enough for Nasser to see that he faced a solid front. He wound it up by saying that he had been planning a speech for the end of the week but would move it up to that evening. There he would announce his decision.

After the speech that evening, and on the next day, hundreds of thousands of people swarmed into the streets, blocking the road from downtown Cairo to Nasser's residence in Heliopolis, chanting "Nasser, Nasser," and carrying banners and shouting slogans "Nasser is our president, we want no one but Nasser." Mohamed Heikal, editor of *Al Ahram* and Nasser's publicist and confidant, tried to make his way through the crowd but found his car blocked. So did Mahmoud Riad, Nasser's foreign minister, one of those in the Cabinet closest to the president. So did many other senior officials.

On the morning of June 10, in a scene of incredible tumult, Anwar Sadat, president of the

National Assembly, read aloud a letter from Nasser. “The voice of the masses of our people concerning me is something that cannot remain unheeded. … This is why I have decided to remain in my place and stay where the people want me to stay.” Nasser withdrew his resignation. He would stay on, he said, until all the “traces of aggression” had been removed.[3]

Not in its modern history had Egypt or the Arab world known a figure with the overpowering stature and the personal magnetism of Gamal Abdel Nasser. He was the first ruler of modern Egypt to rise from the ranks of the people, and he was the first who was genuinely of Egyptian origin. By overturning the corrupt and unpopular regime of King Farouk, by throwing the British out of their colonial holdings in Egypt, and by defying the Americans over the Baghdad pact and the High Dam, Nasser restored pride and a sense of dignity to Egyptians. By challenging the West, by taking arms from the Soviet bloc, and by defying the French and British in their attempt to seize the Suez Canal in 1956, he stirred Arabs everywhere. At his apogee, he inspired fanatic devotion among Arabs from Morocco to the Persian Gulf, most frequently to the discomfort of their own governments. He had a messianic appeal and shared a chemistry with the masses. For Gamal Abdel Nasser a public rally and a speech were not a chore but something to which he looked forward with a particular eagerness.[4] He and the crowd spoke to one another not only in words and in shouts and applause but also in an unseen and unheard language that bound them together. Nasser drew nourishment from the shouting, chanting unwashed masses, and they idolized him and called him “the beloved of God.” Poets penned odes to him. “You are the one we loved,” Lebanese poet Nizar Kabbani wrote years after Nasser’s death. “You intoxicated us as the Sufi is intoxicated by the deity. … For us you are the Mahdi, you are the liberator.”[5]

Nasser also had a sure and very practical sense of publicity. He knew how to manipulate the masses and make them identify with him. The enormous outpouring of public grief on the evening of June 9, 1967, and the pleas for him to stay were unquestionably spontaneous and genuine. There were also reports, however, that even before Nasser began his speech cadres of the Arab Socialist Union, the sole political party and his main organized base of support outside the military, were on the streets passing out tracts calling on him to withdraw his resignation. Tawfiq al-Hakim, one of Egypt’s leading writers, later observed that the Egyptian people clung to Nasser “because he had made us feel by all available means that there existed in Egypt and the whole Arab world only one intelligence, one power, one personality.” Now, in the moment of defeat, Hakim said, Egyptians made his personal existence “a substitute for victory or a synonym for it.”[6]

For almost a decade after the Free Officers’ coup in 1952, Gamal Abdel Nasser did indeed seem to enjoy divine protection. He went from success to success. But, as the decade of the 1960s dawned, Nasser’s baraka—his divine charm—seemed to desert him. In February 1961, Syria, which had literally thrown itself into his arms three years earlier, broke away and resumed its independent existence. The military coup that erupted in Yemen in 1962 seemed to offer Nasser the perfect opportunity to reassert his leadership. Yemen’s Imam al-Badr was one of the world’s most backward and obscurantist rulers. Nasser sent in his army to save the fledgling republican government established by Colonel Abdullah al-Sallal. It was meant to be a brief and heroic gesture. It turned out to be an inconclusive, seemingly interminable, and financially ruinous military adventure.

At home, Nasser launched Egypt on the path of socialism. Banks and industrial enterprises were taken over, and the vast and sclerotic public sector economy that by the 1980s was to prove the bane of Egypt’s existence and the main obstacle to its economic progress was established. Large land holdings were broken up and divided among the landless peasantry, but there was

simply not enough land to go around. Only about one-third of the estimated one million landless peasant families benefited from the agrarian reform measures.[7] The rest remained landless, and their number and the ranks of the urban unemployed swelled as Egypt's population continued to grow unabated and unhindered by governmental effort—a growth rate of some 2.5 percent per annum.

In any event, the regime's interest in agriculture stopped at land reform. Like other Third World radicals of their time, Nasser and his associates looked to the Soviet model of development. They saw heavy industry as the road to national wealth and state power. Agriculture was associated with backwardness, and it was therefore disdained and neglected. It took only neglect to make Egypt—with its large population and small inhabitable and cultivable land mass—into a country of chronic and dangerously growing dependency on food imports.

That Nasser had lost his magic touch was one way to look at it. The reality behind this was that Egypt's charismatic president had simply overreached himself. In trying to bring the Arabs together under his sole leadership and remake the Arab world according to his own vision, Nasser ran up against the determined opposition of other Arab governments and exposed the fallacies behind his theory of Arab unity. The Arab conservatives—Faisal of Saudi Arabia and Hussein of Jordan—were ready to fight to preserve their thrones, and even the radicals—Syria and Iraq— did not hesitate to quarrel openly with Nasser when they felt he threatened them. The Arabs shared a common lingusitic, cultural, and religious background, but geography, history, politics, and ethnicity also made them different. To unite them under one political roof would have taken an event far more cataclysmic than the sudden appearance among them of a charismatic leader.

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The weeks that followed the June 1967 defeat were the worst of Gamal Abdel Nasser's life. They were, he later told British writer Anthony Nutting, one continuous nightmare. Nutting, a frequent visitor to Egypt, found Nasser a changed man, his self-assurance gone and his health undermined.[8] Neither Nasser nor anyone around him had conceived that a catastrophe of such enormous proportions could occur. A stalemate in Sinai—Egyptian troops fighting the Israelis to a standstill somewhere in the desert—was the worst he had thought possible. That Israel would destroy an entire Egyptian army and in less than one hundred hours arrive at the banks of the Suez Canal had seemed unimaginable. It caused Nasser not only an emotional but a physical shock. He lost thirty pounds. Though he soon regained weight and an outward appearance of well-being, the diabetes from which he had suffered for years worsened seriously. He developed heart and circulatory problems, and these affected his limbs, caused him severe pain, and left him with a limp. From June 1967 on, Nasser was wracked by illness and pain.

Throughout the summer of 1967, as Nasser struggled to revive his wounded regime and his crippled army, he also had to deal with the problem of what to do about Abdul Hakim Amer, Shams Badran, and the generals who had joined them in demanding his resignation on June 9. Badran and Amer were arrested, then quickly released. Amer returned to his village in the delta. On June 11, Amer's and Badran's resignations were announced. That same day, Nasser appointed Mohammed Fawzi, a protégé of his aide Sami Sharaf and the only full general who had not taken part in the meeting two days earlier, to command the army, and Lt. General Abdul Munim Riad to be its chief of staff. Dozens of senior officers were discharged or arrested, and, as they fell, officers on their immediate staffs and others identified with them were dragged down. Hundreds were purged, and this, together with the defeat, threw the army into a state of disarray. Some lost their bearings. One of those thus affected was a certain Major Ahmad Abu Nar, an

officer on Amer's staff. On June 11, he commandeered a platoon of armored cars and drove them to army headquarters, evidently intent on imposing his chief's return. The gates were locked, so he shouted "no commander but Amer" and turned around and drove back without firing a shot.[9]

What to do about Amer remained a serious problem for Nasser. Others were to be put on trial, but Amer and Nasser had been so close and so identified with one another that this was practically impossible in Amer's case. Amer was Nasser's first vice president and the deputy supreme commander (under Nasser) of Egypt's armed forces. Over the years, he had built the army into a fiefdom of his own, and he commanded a devoted following among the officer corps. Publicly Nasser and Amer were the truest of friends, but behind this facade of harmony lurked an intense rivalry known to only a few Egyptians and unsuspected by foreigners. Nasser had tried to remove Amer from the military command after the defeat of Egyptian forces in Sinai in 1956, and he tried again after Syria broke away from its union with Egypt in 1961. The outcome in both instances was that Amer consolidated his power. He took exclusive control of the armed forces and their budgets and even dictated such matters as the number of soldiers to be assigned to the presidential guard.[10]

Some two weeks after the disastrous defeat of June 1967, Nasser sent an emissary to Amer with an offer of return to the vice presidency, on condition, however, that he would no longer have authority in military matters. Amer refused. He demanded to be given back his command of the army with full authority and asked for an end to the purges of officers loyal to him. After that (according to the version of events later put out by *Al Ahram* and by the court that tried Badran), Amer, Badran, and the purged officers began to stock great quantities of arms in Amer's house, which they made over into a fortress and a headquarters for a vast conspiracy to overthrow the government. Arms were smuggled in from military bases and even handed over by troops the government had sent to stand guard around the house.

Not until the end of August did Nasser move. On August 25, he invited Amer to his residence on pretext of discussing ways to reach an understanding. There Nasser informed Amer that he was being put under house arrest. While this was going on, a military police unit was sent to arrest the former military officers and civilian officials at Amer's house and to take possession of its contents. Amer was not further troubled until September 13 when Generals Fawzi and Riad were sent to ask him to come for questioning. According to the official version published later, after speaking with the two generals, Amer left the room briefly. When he returned, Fawzi and Riad noticed that he was behaving strangely. They asked what was wrong, and Amer said he had taken poison so as to "put an end to it all." An ambulance was urgently called, and Amer was taken to a hospital where he was put under intensive care. He revived but died the next day.[11]

Whether Abdul Hakim Amer committed suicide of his own volition as the official version had it, or was driven to suicide or murdered, as many believed, it was convenient for Nasser to have him out of the way. No one knew better than Amer the degree of Nasser's own responsibility for the war and the defeat. And there was no better scapegoat for the defeat than a dead Amer. At Badran's trial in January 1968, Amer was blamed for having assured Nasser that the Egyptian army and air force were ready for battle and were superior to Israeli forces. He was accused of having ordered the Egyptian army to withdraw across the canal after the destruction of Egypt's air force and the initial Israeli armored breakthrough rather than to stand and fight at the Mitla and Giddi passes.

Nasser postponed his move against Amer until the very last minute. If there indeed was a conspiracy, even one less serious than claimed, Nasser had to crush it before he left Cairo for the Arab summit conference that was to open in Khartoum on August 29.

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The trip to Khartoum was to be Nasser's first outside Egypt since the defeat and was a key element in his strategy. Getting the Soviet Union to extend unconditional and unstinting backing was one leg on which Nasser based his plans; the other was his old dream, uniting the Arab world behind him—this time for the purpose of winning back lost Arab land. In his moment of defeat Nasser would accomplish what had eluded him even in his days of glory. Even his most hardened adversaries, Hussein and Faisal, had been obliged to rally behind him when he threw down the gauntlet to Israel, sent his army into Sinai, and closed the Straits of Tiran. They could not afford to be seen deserting him now. Nasser wanted the Arabs, no less than the Soviets, to see his country's defeat as their own, to mobilize every possible resource to rescue both Egypt and him from it.

Winning the support of Faisal and the leaders of the other Arab oil-producing countries was particularly important. Egypt was in dire straits both financially and militarily. The closure of the Suez Canal, the loss of the Sinai oil fields, and the abrupt end of tourism left the Egyptian government desperately short of revenue. The shattering of Egypt's army in Sinai made it imperative for Nasser to bring his troops home from Yemen. This too could be done only with Faisal's cooperation.

Nonetheless, the decision to go to Khartoum was not an easy one for Nasser, and the idea of the summit conference was originally not even his own. It came first from King Hussein, who flew to Cairo shortly after the defeat to propound it. President Mohamed Ahmed Mahgoub of Sudan quickly began promoting the conference, and he offered his capital as its venue. However, there were problems. One was ideological. Nasser had continued his crusade against the Arab "reactionaries" right up to the time of the war. Among the ideologues of Nasser's Arab socialism, there was considerable opposition to rushing to embrace them now. There was also a matter of principle to be considered. Nasser had invented the idea of Arab summits as a means to project his own power, to force other Arab heads of state to rally behind him. For a while the device worked, but as his ideological and political battles with Faisal, Hussein, and other Arab leaders deepened, it became a source of frustration. In February 1967, he declared that "the summit conferences have come to an end. … The alternative is unity of revolutionary action and revolutionary forces"[12]—meaning that rather than meeting and talking with his opponents, Nasser would work to overthrow them. Could he now simply ignore his recent stand and go humbly begging for the support of his enemies of hardly more than a few months earlier?

And besides all this, there was a practical matter: How would Nasser be greeted abroad? Would he not be scorned as the man who had led the Arab world to the most humiliating defeat of its modern history? And beyond this, the internal situation in Egypt was still uncertain in the aftermath of the defeat. Was it prudent for him to leave the country? The person who was perhaps the most influential in helping Nasser resolve his doubts about going to Khartoum was Mohamed Hassanein Heikal, editor of *Al Ahram.*

Every leader needs a publicist, but the relationship between Nasser and Heikal was unique. They first met in 1948 at a town in Israel's Negev desert. Heikal was a young reporter covering Egypt's war against the nascent Jewish state. He had heard of a certain Major Nasser who had just led a successful action against an Israeli settlement, so he went to track him down and interview him. Heikal discovered Nasser in the basement of a house, rolling a blanket out on the concrete floor to nap. But to his astonishment, Nasser would not talk with him or even allow his photograph to be taken. He was angry over the sensational reporting of the war by the Cairo press and the false stories of Egyptian victories. He sent Heikal away without so much as a word.

They did not meet again until 1951 in Cairo. Heikal had written a book about the Mossadegh uprising in Iran. Though it sold for a pittance, Nasser did not have the money to buy it. He came to Heikal's office at *Akhbar al-Yom* together with other officers to ask to borrow a copy.

From that meeting a friendship bloomed that was not only to give Nasser's rule its particular stamp but to influence its direction as well. Heikal was a genius at putting Nasser's thoughts into words. He would sit with Nasser and Mohamed Fayek, minister of national guidance, and they would talk over ideas. Heikal would go out. Two hours later he would come back with the text of a speech—full blown. After the defeat and Amer's death, Heikal became closer than ever to Nasser, closer than anyone else. They met two or three times a week, often for hours on end, and spoke on the phone as many times a day. They talked about everything—politics, philosophy, life, and even death. After each meeting or telephone conversation, Heikal sat down and made detailed notes. This was a practice that Nasser knew and approved of; apparently he hoped to use Heikal's records in the writing of his own memoirs, a project the Egyptian president entertained for the days of his retirement that were never to come.

Unlike others, who would boast of their access to Nasser and try to use it to puff themselves up and advance their particular interests, Heikal never spoke of their talks or of their friendship. He never claimed that his famous weekly editorials reflected Nasser's views, though they usually did. Other men—Sami Sharaf at the presidency and Saraawi Gomaa at the Arab Socialist Union—had great institutional power. Heikal could not offer anyone a job in government or order anyone's arrest. But no one was closer to Nasser than he, or ultimately had more influence with him. The others resented Heikal's position and tried ineffectively to undermine it; in 1968 Hamdi Fuad and a group of other journalists associated with Heikal were arrested and briefly held. But no matter how powerful his rivals, they could not touch Heikal himself.

The rivalry was political as well as personal. Heikal's powerful opponents were leftists and socialist ideologues. Heikal himself was an Arab nationalist, hostile to the United States and the West in his writings, yet imbued with Western values and very much a bourgeois. The smelly masses were not for him. Nasser often chided Heikal for not coming to his rallies. "You should get out and be in touch with the people," he would admonish. Finally Heikal gave in and went along with Nasser's entourage to a rally in the delta. The party arrived by train and was immediately besieged by a wildly enthusiastic populace. In the melee, Heikal's watch was snatched from his wrist, his tie twisted, and his jacket torn. That was enough. He did not even wait for Nasser to make his speech. He rushed to commandeer the nearest taxi and have himself driven straight back to the safety of his office at *Al Ahram*, and he never again went to one of Nasser's rallies.

Though Heikal admired Nasser's asceticism, his modest residence, his plain-cuffed shirts, and his one suit—the trousers shiny from too many pressings—he himself was a bit of a dandy. Nasser regularly gave him the expensive silk ties that Lebanese politicians brought when they came to make their obeisance in Cairo and the fine Havana cigars that Castro sent each year.[13]

In all that concerned the conflict between the Arabs and Israel, Heikal's views were wholly conventional and conformist. Here his writings served simply to reinforce the already dearly held convictions and prejudices of educated Arabs of his time. Israel, he told his readers, was an alien implant in the Arab world's midst and a barrier between its western and eastern wings. Sooner or later it would either be extirpated by the Arabs themselves or simply collapse under combined Arab pressure.[14] Another of Heikal's themes was that of the conspiracy between the United States and Israel. The Americans, he repeatedly wrote, were totally on Israel's side and gave it their full backing. For Arabs of Heikal's day, this assertion did not really require an explanation;

it was accepted as dogma. Paradoxically, Heikal offered one taken straight from the lexicon of his leftist critics: Israel was the instrument that the United States had chosen to crush the progressive, anticolonialist governments that arose in the Arab world in the 1950s and 1960s.[15]

On other issues, however, Heikal was an original and innovative thinker, one who made a real contribution to the enlightenment of Egyptian and Arab society. He believed in free speech and freedom of the press, and he spoke out courageously for these values in his editorials. At a time when Marxist-Leninist doctrine and the Soviet example held intellectuals in Africa and Asia in thrall, Heikal argued prophetically that the technological revolution of the last third of the twentieth century had overtaken both; Marxism was not the wave of the future but a relic of the past.[16] In the wake of the defeat, Heikal dared even make the case for democracy in Egypt,[17] and he was roundly attacked for it by his leftist opponents. Heikal offered his readers both new and refreshing ideas and—where Israel was concerned—confirmation of existing dogma and prejudice. For this, and because his friendship with Nasser was widely known and his articles were believed to reflect the regime's views, his columns were read avidly in Egypt and the Arab world—and by all those elsewhere who hoped to keep abreast of developments there.

Heikal understood immediately that the defeat made it imperative for Egypt to rebuild its bridges to the rest of the Arab world, to the conservatives even more than to the radicals, for it was the conservatives who held the purse strings. The lesson that Ali Sabri and Saraawi Gomaa and the leftists at the rival newspaper *Al Gumhurriya* drew from the defeat was that Egypt should turn more leftward and inward, that "drastic and comprehensive changes" were needed in Egyptian society. "Revolutionary consciousness" should be deepened and military training should be introduced into education "and into all areas of culture."[18] Heikal's view was that political and social differences should not be allowed to stand in the way of an effort to mobilize Arab forces. In editorials in *Al Ahram* in the first half of July, he made the case for a summit meeting. The Arabs, he wrote on July 7, should set aside their differences "and make a pact even with the devil." On July 14 he returned to the theme with a further argument. "It is possible," he wrote as though to answer the critics' objections, "that an Arab summit will explode and break up without reaching any agreement whatsoever … but at least we will have made the effort, and everyone's position will be clear."

On July 23, in his annual Revolution Day speech, Nasser announced that he would attend the conference of Arab kings and presidents that would be held in Khartoum at the end of the next month. But before this could happen arrangements had to be made and assurances obtained. Already at the Arab foreign ministers conference held in Cairo on July 17 and 18, the Saudis had conditioned their attendance at a summit conference on Egypt's agreement to withdraw its forces from Yemen. A little over a year earlier, in March 1966, Nasser had declared bombastically: "Do we surrender to Faisal or do we stay in Yemen for ten years? I say we will stay in Yemen for twenty years."[19] Now Nasser was not only ready but eager to extract himself from his Yemen adventure. The only issue was on what terms.

The proposal that Egypt presented at the Arab foreign ministers conference that convened in Khartoum at the beginning of August was almost identical to an agreement Nasser and Faisal had signed two years earlier but that was never carried out: cease-fire, withdrawal of Egyptian forces, and cessation of Saudi assistance to the royalists. Now, however, the Saudis insisted that Egypt withdraw its troops first; only after that was done would Saudi Arabia terminate its aid to the royalists. Egypt was in no position to object. It acceded guiltily and in secret to the Saudi demand; not until August 31, with the summit in its third day, did Nasser tell President Abdullah al-Sallal, for so long his ward and client, of the deal he had made with the Saudis. Al-Sallal

stalked out of the summit in protest.[20]

A further condition laid down by the Saudis and their oil-producing partners in Kuwait and Libya was that the summit should release them from their commitment to cut off oil deliveries to the United States and its Western allies. This step, taken by the Arab oil-producing states as a gesture of solidarity with Egypt, Jordan, and Syria in the emotional heat of the defeat, quickly boomeranged. The first Arab oil boycott had virtually no impact on the United States, for in the late 1960s America still produced almost all of the oil it consumed. Europe and Japan were easily able to supply themselves from Latin America's abundant production. The only serious damage done by the boycott was to the treasuries of the Arab oil-producing states themselves. Unless the summit authorized them to resume pumping, the Saudis made clear, they and the Kuwaitis and Libyans would be in no position to offer Egypt, Jordan, and Syria the financial support they sought. Here again, the Egyptians readily gave in. Their reward was a pledge by Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Libya of an annual subsidy of 95 million pounds sterling. It was a good bit less than Egypt's estimate of its losses—110 million from the closure of the Suez Canal, 40 million from tourism, and 20 million from the loss of the Sinai oil fields.[21] But without it Egypt would not have been able to carry on.

Nasser counted Khartoum a great success. A chanting, applauding crowd was there to greet him on his arrival. Whatever fears he had had of being reviled for the defeat were dissolved in the tumultuous hero's welcome given him. He was followed and cheered all the way into the city, and he had the satisfaction of knowing that Faisal, who came in just after him, arrived to find the streets empty—with no welcome other than the official one accorded him by the government of Sudan. At the conference itself, the Arab heads of state took upon themselves, as a collectivity, the responsibility for the "elimination of the effects of the aggression." The conservative oil-producing states, whose governments Nasser had so mercilessly savaged only recently, were obliged to pledge him an annual payment. The agreement on Yemen made possible the speedy return home of his forces and their redeployment on the Suez Canal line. The concession made to Faisal was rationalized as a step to strengthen the unity of Arab ranks.

Egypt, however, was soon to learn that Arab backing had its price too, a price in some ways higher even than that extracted by the Soviets for their aid. This had already become evident in New York in July at the Special General Assembly when Algerian and Syrian objections blocked passage of the Latin American resolution and stymied Soviet and American efforts to reach agreement on a similar text. Both resolutions would have put the world body on record as calling unambiguously for full Israeli withdrawal. The Algerians and Syrians opposed them because they also required an end to the state of war with Israel, and so the Egyptians and the entire Arab bloc were obliged to sustain their objection. For the satisfaction accorded Algeria and Spia in this matter, Egypt ended up in the very uncomfortable position in November of having to choose between accepting Resolution 242—with its much more ambiguous language on withdrawal and more far-reaching language on peace—or having no resolution at all.

The Khartoum summit further closed off Egypt's freedom of diplomatic maneuver. The language in the final statement proclaiming a program of "no peace with Israel, no recognition of it, and no negotiation with it" was not Egypt's. It was variously attributed to the Algerians, the Iraqis, or to Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) Chief Ahmed Shukheiry whom the Egyptians quietly but unsuccessfully tried to exclude from the summit. The Egyptians in no way could afford to be seen to be opposing the statement. The best that Egyptian diplomats could do was try to work around Khartoum's three noes. They argued, then and later, but with little persuasive effect, that the statement's call for the Arab states to unite their diplomatic efforts to

eliminate the effects of the aggression was all the mandate that was needed for the pursuit of a political solution.

But the damage was done. The Khartoum declaration reverberated like thunder in Israel. It made the government and the public all the more determined to hold onto the cease-fire lines and to give them up only in exchange for peace treaties. It implanted the idea that any settlement would have to include substantial border changes in Israel's favor, not just on the West Bank but in Sinai and Golan as well. It also gave enormous encouragement to those Israelis, small in number at the time, who wanted no withdrawal at all. Beyond this, it locked Egypt's diplomacy into a straitjacket. Nasser was bound by it. Khartoum was not the run-of-the-mill Arab summit resolution that could be ignored at one's whim or convenience. It was the basis for Nasser's claim to the political, financial, and military backing he so desperately needed from the rest of the Arab world. If he disavowed it or openly violated its terms, Faisal, who despite the reconciliation at Khartoum had remained his enemy, could with every apparent justification cut off his subsidy.

The only way out of this dilemma was to get new terms. On November 23, the day after the Security Council put its stamp of approval on Resolution 242, Nasser called for a second Arab summit. "The Security Council resolution," he declared, "is a development that we should discuss and examine together."[22] Egypt was going to have to deal with the UN Secretary General's special representative, Gunnar Jarring, and it wanted to do so from a position that had the backing of the Arab world. On November 25, the Egyptian Foreign Ministry asked the Arab League Secretariat to take steps to convene a summit conference at the earliest possible date. King Hassan of Morocco offered to host the conference in Rabat. January 17, 1968, was set, in principle, as the date for its convening.

That was as far as it went. Syria objected vociferously and issued a call for the "progressive Arab states" to join in boycotting the proposed summit. Nasser could afford to ignore Syria but not Saudi Arabia. The Saudis did not oppose another summit but they were dead set against discussing Resolution 242 or giving it any recognition. When it came to Israel, Faisal, the conservative and the friend of the United States and the West, yielded to no one in the Arab camp in extremism. The Saudi ruler had his own very original way of reconciling what to others seemed the outright contradiction between these two positions. Senior American officials would come away from meetings with the Saudi king agape and struggling to regain touch with reality after hearing his strange tales of a Moscow-Tel Aviv axis and a Zionist-Communist plot to dominate the Middle East.[23]

The Egyptians quietly abandoned their call for an early second summit. Egypt proceeded to deal with Jarring on the basis of Riad's own arbitrary interpretation of Resolution 242, in other words, that it required full Israeli withdrawal and called for no negotiations, only "implementation." Nasser, who desperately wanted to act from an Arab consensus, found himself facing disarray and contradiction in Arab ranks, and this left him no alternative but to walk the most narrow of paths. Syria and Iraq and the other Arab radicals were neither ready to negotiate nor—as it later turned out—to fight. Saudi Arabia, which was not itself able to fight, demanded of Egypt that it do battle and not negotiate. King Hussein of Jordan was eager to negotiate but could do so only following Egypt's lead, and he was unable to fight.

For Egypt none of these positions was tenable. Nasser surely had not the slightest intention of asking the other Arabs to authorize him to sit down and negotiate peace with Israel. Well before November 1967 he had concluded that he was going to have to fight again. In the same speech in which he called for another Arab summit to coordinate positions on Resolution 242, he

proclaimed defiantly that “what was taken by force shall be regained by force.” This quickly became his slogan, almost his motto. He also needed some flexibility to negotiate, however, and it seems that he hoped to gain it from the summit that he proposed to convene in January 1968. The Saudi and the Syrian refusals left Egypt with nothing beyond Khartoum’s three noes—hardly a persuasive program for a political settlement.

Syria and Saudi Arabia could afford the luxury of rejecting Resolution 242, turning their backs on the secretary general’s special representative, and simply refusing to negotiate at all. Not Egypt. It was the great power of the Arab world, and its leaders knew that it had to meet certain minimally acceptable standards of international comportment. Even to fight, Egypt had to be ready, or at least make a show of being ready, also to talk, if not directly with Israel, then through the United Nations or the Soviet Union, or conceivably—though not at that stage—through the United States. The Soviets were rebuilding Nasser’s army for him, but they were also pressing him to seek a political solution. For Egypt to declare itself opposed to a political settlement, or uninterested in one, would simply not do; the international community would not consider it responsible behavior. In the second half of the twentieth century, no state that did not want to cut itself off from the rest of the world could afford to make war and not at the same time be willing to talk about making peace. Heikal remarked on this in one of his editorials late in 1967; even those who recognize the legitimacy of the Arab cause, he wrote, would not agree to their “making war like an irresponsible game of cards.”[24] To flout world opinion in this matter would be to assure a very large measure of sympathy and support for one’s adversary.

Nasser also had his own self-imposed limitations on how far he could go in seeking what he called a political solution. The June 1967 defeat put in question his legitimacy as a ruler. From June 1967 on, Nasser was there on sufferance, and no one knew it better than he himself. He was both the symbol of the Egyptian people’s denial of defeat and the instrument they had chosen to redeem their nation from the defeat they denied. But he now had very little latitude in deciding how to go about finding a solution. At an earlier time and in other circumstances he might have been able to impose his own more or less freely chosen course. In his first years in power he had secretly toyed with—and eventually rejected— the idea of making a deal with Israel. Now a deal was clearly not possible. The officer corps insisted that the army must redeem its honor; if Nasser would not lead it into battle, someone else would be found who would. The Egyptian public was mute, but Nasser understood better than anyone what it felt and thought. He was not to be allowed anything that suggested acceptance of defeat or surrender. For him, for those around him, and for most Egyptians of the time, this not only meant not giving up any territory, it also meant not sitting down at the same table with the Israelis to negotiate, and it meant not signing a peace treaty.

It also meant no separate agreement. Nasser had led the Arabs into the worst defeat of their modern history. He could not now simply be content with winning back Egypt’s losses and walking away, leaving others to their own devices. And if he wished to maintain any claim to pan-Arab leadership he could not foresake the Palestinians.

All this left Nasser with precious little with which to bargain for the political solution that he and his foreign minister professed to seek and that the Soviets kept pressing him to pursue. About all he had to offer Israel to entice it to disgorge the conquered territories was a promise of termination of the state of war. No wonder he repeatedly told his aides that he had little faith in a political solution. “We will cooperate with Jarring…. We will listen to the United States…. We will work with the devil himself,” Nasser told a Cabinet meeting in February 1968. But “we know from the start that we are the ones to liberate our land by the force of arms.” Then he

explained: “We have not been defeated in war as long as we have not negotiated with Israel, not signed a peace treaty with her, and not accepted the eradication of the Palestinian issue.”[25]

Riad, as much or even more than Nasser, felt diplomacy held no hope. It was at best, the Egyptian foreign minister thought, simply a means for gaining time. The only solution was to rebuild the army and proceed to take back by force what had been lost. The alternative was surrender.[26]

■ ■ ■

Rebuilding Egypt’s armed forces was a formidable task. Most of the senior military officers had been jailed or obliged to retire; the air force had lost almost all of its fighter planes and the army some 80 percent of its equipment; and some 20,000 soldiers had been killed, captured, or had deserted. So desperate was the need for equipment that, a few days after the cease-fire, the staff officers who remained at general headquarters almost danced for joy when they learned that a single mobile artillery piece had been rescued from Sinai by its crew and driven to their village in Upper Egypt.[27]

It was not just a matter of putting broken units back together and rearming them. Profound changes had to be made in the organization, training, and mode of operation of the Egyptian military. First of all the shattered morale of the troops had to be restored. In the weeks that followed the debacle, Egyptian soldiers found themselves spat upon, cursed, and jeered at by an angry population, and humiliating jokes were told about the army. Though the Egyptian army was in no position to resist a major Israeli thrust, it was desperate to show that it could fight.

An opportunity presented itself at the beginning of July when an Israeli force tried to advance northward up the only stretch of the canal’s east bank that remained in Egyptian hands—a finger of land running a dozen or so kilometers south from Port Fuad. This area was important for the Egyptians, for holding it would keep the Israelis from the immediate vicinity of Port Said, located just across from Port Fuad at the gateway to the canal’s northern entrance. For the Israelis it was not especially attractive, for it was blocked on the west by the waters of the canal itself and on the east by a vast swamp. It would be hard to hold and was in no way needed for the defense of other Israeli positions in Sinai. Dayan told Rabin, who at the time was still chief of staff, that he had no objection to leaving it in Egyptian hands. But the decision was a military one, and there the chief of staff’s authority prevailed, at least in theory. Rabin, who preferred straight lines, decided that it should be taken.[28]

What happened next became, for the Egyptians, “the battle of Ras el-’Ush,” a major engagement and a heroic feat of Egyptian arms: a platoon of some 30 Egyptian rangers holding off, with only light weapons, the assault of a column of Israeli tanks and inflicting heavy losses —a kind of Egyptian Thermopylae, albeit successful.[29] For the Israelis it was recorded as a minor encounter in which the difficulty came not from the small Egyptian detachment on the canal’s east bank but from tank and artillery fire that the Egyptians directed at the IDF force from the west bank.[30] Whether or not it was the victory it was claimed to be, Ras el-’Ush gave Egyptian morale a badly needed boost. Another came late in October when the Egyptians sank the Israeli destroyer *Eilat* off Port Said. After the June war, the *Eilat* patrolled regularly and provocatively off Port Said. It was an easy kill for Egypt’s new Soviet-supplied missile boats.

The Ras el-’Ush engagement and the sinking of the *Eilat* helped Egyptian officers deal with a very serious psychological problem among their troops: the belief, born of Israel’s lightning victory, that the Israeli soldier was possessed of superhuman powers and was therefore invincible. The Egyptian officer corps, in its large majority, was persuaded that the outcome of the war did not reflect the true value of the contending forces: “We had defeated ourselves and

yielded to the enemy an easy victory that he did not rightfully deserve," two Egyptian generals later wrote.[31] Below the officer ranks, however, most of the Egyptian army was of peasant or working-class stock and was illiterate or practically so and deeply superstitious. The common soldiery came back from the brief war with fantastic tales of Israeli soldiers destroying tanks with shafts of fire shot from their eyes. Bullets bounced off them, it was said, and they flew through the air and performed other miraculous feats. To dispel these beliefs, the Egyptian high command organized night crossings to the east bank of the canal through the thinly manned Israeli line. At first, the purpose was only to gather information and show that the Israelis were not all-knowing and all-seeing. Later, however, the Egyptian crossing parties were sent with the specific mission of setting ambushes to take and bring back prisoners. The taking of Israeli prisoners became a major aim. Egyptian commanders wanted to put in front of the eyes of their troops palpable proof that Israeli soldiers possessed no extraordinary or magical powers, that they were only human beings, in many cases rather ordinary ones.

This was only the first step in a much more ambitious program. Only some 30 percent of the Egyptian army's enlisted men had even an elementary school education. Officers came from the middle or upper classes and were generally university educated. This left an enormous gap between officers and soldiers; they had no common background and hardly even spoke the same language. The high command set out to close that gap. An ambitious program of education was launched; soldiers were sent to school, and all those who handled machinery were required to have a technical education. More high school graduates were inducted into the enlisted ranks, and even college graduates—who earlier had been exempt—were made subject to the draft. Officers, who in the Egyptian army traditionally stayed aloof from the common soldier, were required to spend time with their units and to get to know their troops.[32]

The Egyptians made other changes. General Fawzi imposed strict discipline on all ranks. Military sports programs were cancelled. An order was issued extending the service of draftees indefinitely—until the occupied lands were liberated. (As a result, many young Egyptians were to spend the next seven or eight years under arms before being allowed to return to civilian life.) This last change was essential if the ambitious plans for expansion of Egypt's military forces—from the roughly 180,000 before the war to almost 700,000 by late 1970—were to be implemented. Egypt had a population of over thirty million and a very high birth rate, but fewer than half of the young men who came of draft age each year met the army's minimum health and educational standards. Each year the number of recruits fell short by several tens of thousands.[33]

Egyptians also diligently began to study the Israeli army. Until the June 1967 war, Egypt had disdained serious attention to its opponent across the eastern border. Israel's victory in 1948 was ascribed to the corruption and incompetence of the Farouk regime; that of 1956 to the collusion of the French and British. It took the cataclysm of June 1967 to persuade Egypt's military establishment that the Israeli Defense Forces were worth serious study. Once this was realized, however, the Egyptians threw themselves into the task with great energy and ingenuity. They compiled copious intelligence on Israeli training methods, military organization and mode of operation, and on individual units and bases.

At the same time, the Egyptians began to imitate Israeli methods. Officers were taught to lead their men into battle, not to send them there. Once firing started along the Suez line, the Egyptians watched what the Israelis did and often followed their example. When the Israelis put up a high sand barrier along the canal waterline to protect their troops from direct fire, the Egyptians did likewise in certain places. The Egyptians began by putting their artillery spotters in trees and on the tops of buildings, but when they saw that the Israelis were using helicopters

and that this method was much more effective, they too switched to helicopters. For the first time, Egyptians were ready to acknowledge the superiority of their Israeli enemies and to learn from them.

Reorganization of the Egyptian army proceeded apace. At the end of 1967, it was decided to add another three divisions to the ground forces. In February 1968, a new defense organization law was promulgated. Before that time the war minister and the commander of the armed forces had been two separate functions, filled until June 1967 by Shams Badran and Abdul Hakim Amer, respectively. Now the two offices were united in the person of General Fawzi, who was to become the chief architect of Nasser's military effort. Fawzi, a loyal and diligent officer, if not a particularly imaginative one, ordered that training be started for the crossing of the canal—first by small units, later by units of company and battalion size; to simulate canal conditions, branches of the Nile Delta were used for practice. In the fall of 1968, Fawzi held what was to become the first in a series of strategic exercises designed to prepare the army for all-out war. The 1968 exercises were largely theoretical, but they meant that the Egyptian army was beginning to approach the point where—its leaders believed—it could at least fight on the defensive. After 1968 the exercises were held each year in the fall, until by 1973 they had become such a regular feature of Egyptian training that they no longer aroused special concern on the part of Israel's military intelligence directorate.[34]

The February 1968 defense organization law made one major change in the structure of the armed forces. It created an air defense command, separate from and of equal status to the air force, army, and navy. Enormous resources were poured into the air defense and air force commands in the years ahead. Even before the canal line defenses were fully completed, priority was shifted to protecting Egypt's air force from another surprise attack; some 500 aircraft shelters were built at 20 airfields around the country, and underground operations rooms, pilots quarters, and maintenance facilities were added. Sections of the highways between Cairo and the canal were widened and arranged so that they could serve as emergency landing strips. All this entailed a mammoth construction effort that consumed thousands upon thousands of tons of cement and the labor of many tens of thousands of Egyptian workers.[35]

The rebuilding of Egypt's air defenses was to prove a particularly difficult and frustrating enterprise. For a year or more after the defeat, Nasser and Fawzi placed their hopes primarily on the fighter-interceptor arms. The Soviets resupplied the Egyptians with hundreds of MiGs and Sukhois, but the problem was pilots. Hundreds of young Egyptians were sent to the Soviet Union for pilot training, but the numbers who came back qualified were much smaller. Egyptian planners soon began to calculate that, given their country's level of social, economic, and intellectual development, they could expect to produce no more than one qualified combat pilot per million inhabitants per year—or about 30 pilots.[36] This number was much less than that needed if Egypt were to build an air arm that could compete with that of Israel; and even these 30 could rarely be expected to be up to the level of Israeli pilots who had far more experience and enjoyed the support of a much better air control system.

It was not long before Egyptian leaders realized that they were not going to be able to build a fighter-interceptor arm that could protect their skies from Israeli intrusion and their troops from Israeli attack. They were going to have to look elsewhere, to a new technology that had only recently begun to come into use—antiaircraft missilery. Even there, however, the solution was not to come quickly or easily.

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Late in 1967, Nasser instructed his officers to press forward with plans for the liberation of

Sinai. He set three years as the minimum time for readying the army to achieve this goal and fixed eight years as the outside limit.[37] Soon, however, his impatience made him race ahead of these deadlines. By the spring of 1968, Nasser was speaking and Heikal was writing of the stages through which Egypt's battle with Israel would pass: from steadfastness (sumud), through confrontation (muajaha), to victory (nasr).

Early in June, in Washington, Ashraf Ghorbal asked to see Assistant Secretary Lucius Battle. A year had now passed since the war, Ghorbal complained, but no progress had been made toward getting Israel out of the conquered territories. How long, Ghorbal asked impatiently, was the United States going to allow this to go on?[38] Some days later, on June 14, the Suez Canal line —until then quiet—erupted into shelling. A week later there was another round of shelling, this time clearly initiated by the Egyptians.

After that the canal line fell silent, but only briefly. At the beginning of September 1968, General Fawzi declared that Egypt had entered the phase of "active defense." What this meant was made clear on September 8 when Egyptian artillery opened fire all along the northern sector of the canal, from Port Said to Kantara. Ten Israeli soldiers were killed and 18 wounded, a heavy loss by Israeli standards. Six weeks later, on Saturday October 26, the Egyptians unleashed a massive artillery barrage all along the canal line and kept firing for nine hours straight. The shelling took Israeli troops by surprise; one unit was in the midst of a game of soccer when the first shells landed. When the shelling was over, the Israelis counted 15 dead and 34 wounded.[39]

That same day Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs Parker T. Hart, Battle's successor, and Richard Parker, the office director for Egypt, met with Foreign Minister Riad in New York. The two Americans noted that Riad showed little interest in talking about diplomatic solutions. Hart was worried about the firing along the canal. He cautioned the Egyptians against heating up the cease-fire line.

Riad's answer jolted his American visitors. If they thought September was bad, he said, they should wait awhile. "You haven't seen anything yet," the foreign minister warned.[40]

6

To Hold the Canal Line

On October 27, the day after Egypt's nine-hour shelling, Defense Minister Moshe Dayan flew to the Suez Canal line. His first stop was at a position along the northern sector that the Israelis called Cobra. It had taken a frightful pounding. "The place looked like it had been hit by a typhoon," Dayan later observed. More worrisome still: A shell with a delayed action fuse had broken through the reinforced concrete ceiling of the shelter and had exploded inside, wounding the 10 soldiers there.[1] In the artillery exchanges of September 8 and October 26, Israel had lost 25 soldiers killed and over 50 wounded. It was a grievous toll, one that could not be sustained without serious damage to public morale. Something had to be done.

For over a year after the June 1967 cease-fire the canal line had been mostly quiet. That was the way Moshe Dayan wanted it. Dayan had had his reservations about taking the Suez Canal line. He did not think it wise to put the Israeli army face-to-face with the Egyptians across the narrow waterway.[2] But the pace of events from June 5 to 8 and his own field commanders' rapid advance forced his hand. Now that it was a fait accompli and Israeli troops sat on the canal waterline he wanted quiet and as little provocation as possible. Still, when the Egyptians sent their patrol boats out on the canal waters a few weeks after the cease-fire, Dayan insisted Israel should have that same right. The Egyptians claimed that the cease-fire line began at the water's edge on the canal's east bank. If this were so, Egypt would—theoretically at least—be entitled to send patrol boats right up alongside Israeli positions. To the Egyptian claim, Dayan replied that the cease-fire line ran down the middle of the canal. Accordingly, Egypt had the right to run vessels on the west side of that line and Israel on the east side.

The Egyptians had no intention of allowing Israel to navigate anywhere in what they defiantly insisted was their canal. When the Israelis sent a patrol boat out to assert their claim, the Egyptians sank it. The Israelis replied by sinking Egyptian boats. After that, a compromise was reached through the good offices of the commander of the United Nations Truce Supervisory Organization (UNTSO), a Norwegian with the picturesque name of Odd Bull: Neither Egypt nor Israel would navigate in the Suez Canal.[3]

In the years after it opened on November 17, 1869, the Suez Canal almost went bankrupt. The British rescued it from that fate, took it over, and used it to clamp their control over the rest of Egypt. But the canal did not actually prosper until the next century, and then it was oil that accounted for its success. It became the vital passageway for oil from the Middle East—from Iran, Iraq, and the Arabian Peninsula—to Europe. Between the two world wars, and particularly after the Second World War, traffic through the Suez Canal soared, and the canal itself attracted industry and population. By the mid-1960s, a million Egyptians lived in cities and towns scattered along the canal's west bank—from Port Said at its northern entrance on to Kantara and Ismailiya, where the Canal Company kept its neatly groomed headquarters, and then to Suez city itself at the southern entrance. A big petrochemical complex grew up at Suez with refineries and

storage tanks for oil that arrived from the Persian Gulf and from Egypt's own newly opened oil fields along the Sinai coast. Suez was a grimy, ugly industrial city, but by the time of the June 1967 war it alone held a population of over a quarter of a million.

The east bank of the canal remained practically uninhabited. It was the barren, bleak introduction to the Sinai Peninsula, itself a vast desolate waste.

After the June 1967 war, the Egyptian government did not know quite what to do about the cities of the Suez Canal. They now sat hostage to Israeli guns. With the canal closed, the main source of livelihood of Port Said and Ismailiya was gone; the two cities had some light industry, but most of it depended on the canal. Suez city was different; Egypt still needed the gasoline and petrochemical products produced at its refineries. Some 100,000 people fled the canal zone of their own volition right after the war. Another wave of departures followed in July after the firing that accompanied the dispute over navigation. But most of Suez' population stayed, and through the rest of the summer the authorities in Cairo vacillated between encouraging people to stay or to leave.

At the end of September, Nasser appointed Ali Sabri resident minister for the Canal Zone. Sabri was an important figure in Nasser's regime. He was a member of the Free Officers group that overthrew Farouk in 1952. From the late 1950s to the early 1960s he was minister for Presidential Affairs, then prime minister in 1964 and 1965, and after that a vice president. Sabri's appointment as minister for the Canal Zone marked the launching of an official policy of relocation. In press interviews, he announced that his task was to transfer the Canal Zone inhabitants from the line of fire.[4] After that, evacuation began in earnest. October 31 was set as the deadline for completion of the evacuation. By that time some 350,000 people had been removed from Ismailiya and Suez.[5]

Israeli soldiers looking westward across the Suez Canal before the beginning of the War of Attrition (courtesy of IDF Spokesman's Office)

The import of all this could hardly have been missed: Nasser was clearing the decks for war, and in that war he was ready to sacrifice the cities of the Suez Canal. Still, it was the Egyptian government's intention to continue operating the Suez refineries as long as possible. Essential personnel were kept on and given a raise in wages.[6] The Suez installations, however, were an easy and inviting target for the Israelis. After Egyptian missile boats sunk the *Eilat* on October 21, 1967, Dayan set aside his scruples about keeping the canal line quiet. On October 24 and 25, the Israelis pounded the Suez installations for several hours with tank and artillery fire and air bombardment.

But a day later, when Dayan went to the Israeli position on the pier opposite Suez to have a look at his forces' handiwork, he ordered the area commander not to fire unless fired upon and to avoid escalation.[7] He wanted calm to return to the Suez line, and, in fact, it did. Israeli soldiers swam in the canal and played soccer along its banks. Tourists even came from Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, Haifa, and from Europe and America, to ogle it in its strange new condition.

For the next ten months, the Suez front almost seemed to be the least of Israel's security concerns. The General Staff did not consider Egypt much of a threat, even with Soviet arms pouring into it. The prevailing view at IDF headquarters was that it would be years, perhaps a decade or longer, before the Egyptians would be in a position to challenge Israel. Nasser's fiery declarations about regaining by force what was taken by force, about steadfastness and

confrontation, were written off as so much bombast; a reflection of intent, no doubt, but with no real muscle behind it.[8]

The massive Egyptian shellings of September and October 1968 did not at first alter this assessment, but they did draw the Israeli General Staff's attention once again to the Suez front.

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On the night of October 31, 1968, Israeli helicopters took off from a base in Sinai, flew low above the darkened waters of the Gulf of Suez to escape radar detection and then about 200 kilometers across the Egyptian desert to a town called Nag Hammadi. There paratroopers blew up an electric transformer and switching station that supplied power to Cairo. Fighter-bomber aircraft that accompanied them struck a small Nile River dam and bridge nearby.

It was a daring operation, but also one that said much about the precariousness of Israel's position on the east bank of the Suez Canal. By the fall of 1968, Israel no longer had the luxury of being able to deter Egypt simply by shelling targets on the canal's west bank. The IDF's deployment along the canal's east bank had not changed measurably since the previous year: A single tank brigade, a few hundred infantry and engineering troops, and exactly 8 mobile artillery pieces, altogether a force of perhaps a little over 2,000 men, held the entire 150-kilometer front.[9] The lineup facing this Israeli force had in the meantime been dramatically altered. By the fall of 1968, Egypt had assembled there two armies and several hundred big guns. The northern sector of the canal was held by Egypt's Second Army and the southern sector by the Third Army. Within a few months each army was to reach the strength of three divisions, some 100,000 soldiers altogether, dug in along three lines of fortifications. For Israel's tiny force to seek retaliation for the September 8 and October 26 shellings by striking against an enemy of this size made no sense.

How then to deter the two Egyptian armies that sat on the canal's west bank from exploiting their enormous advantage in numbers and guns to make life impossible for the thin line of Israelis deployed opposite them? The message the Nag Hammadi raid was meant to send was that Egypt too had weak points. If it persisted in heating up the Suez Canal line, Israel could and would hit them.

The Israeli General Staff hoped that the attack on Nag Hammadi would "teach Nasser his lesson" and that he would henceforth remain quiet. Israel's generals continued to hold a low opinion of the Egyptian army's capabilities, despite the massive infusion of arms Egypt had received from the USSR. But they realized now that something had to be done urgently to protect their units deployed along the canal waterline. On the night of October 31, as the helicopters took off from Sinai, Chief of Staff Haim Bar Lev, who had succeeded Rabin at the beginning of 1968, called to his office Major General Avraham Adan, the second in command of the IDF's armored forces and a comrade in arms from Palmach days. Bar Lev ordered Adan, a short, handsome, keenly intelligent man who went by the nickname of Bren, to make a survey of the canal front and to come up with a plan for its defense. Bar Lev and Adan had been together in the Negev in 1947 and 1948. Adan had been responsible for fortifying Jewish settlements there against Egyptian attack, and Bar Lev had admired his work. He was sure that Adan, better than anyone else, could devise means for holding the Sinai cease-fire line.

Adan quickly put together a team of officers from the armor, artillery, infantry, communications, engineering, and sanitation branches and set out the next day for the canal line.[10] What he found there was a deployment built up by circumstance over the previous sixteen months. Early in July 1967, soon after the engagement at Ras el-'Ush, Colonel Shmuel Gonen's Seventh Armored Brigade—a regular army unit—was sent to the canal front to replace a reserve

unit kept there since the cease-fire of a few weeks earlier. Gonen's unit had only barely set up camp when he was informed that officers of the United Nations Truce Supervisory Organization would be coming to look over the canal front; Israel and Egypt had just agreed to the establishment of UNTSO observer posts on their respective sides of the waterway. The UN observers would set up their own lookout posts and they would chart Israel's and Egypt's deployments. Gonen decided it would be prudent to establish a few facts before the UN team got there. On July 14, the day before the UN observers' arrival, he sent units to take up positions at eighteen strategic points along the canal's waterline—from near Ras el-'Ush in the north, to the pier that looked over into Suez City from Port Tawfiq in the south, and in between at junctions where roads led into Sinai, where the canal joined the Great Bitter Lake, ran through Little Bitter Lake, and then resumed its landward course toward the Gulf of Suez.[11]

Southern Command headquarters ratified Gonen's move. Over the months ahead some fortifications were dug but no overall effort was made. For the most part, Israeli forces along the canal remained unprotected from anything more serious than rifle or machine-gun fire. After the two Egyptian shellings in June 1968, the southern front commander, General Yeshayhu Gavish, ordered his engineers to devise a plan for fortifications. More bunkers were built, but the overall plan never reached the stage of implementation.

What Gavish's engineers had proposed was a series of fortifications to be manned by units of company size. Each was designed to enclose and protect a gigantic vehicle park some two kilometers in size for tanks, armored personnel carriers, and other vehicles. This meant either putting a lot of troops up front or leaving great gaps on the Suez line.

Neither was desirable. One of the main principles with which Adan had to work was economy. The Suez line had to be held without the mobilization of reserves; the daily life and work of Israel's civilian society was not to be disrupted. Not long after the June 1967 war, the government extended military service to three years, but there was no intention of going beyond that. The country was not to be put on a war footing, even a partial one, in order to hold the Suez line. More than that, even the regular army was not to be distracted from what General Bar Lev considered his top priority—the maintenance of a schedule of regular training exercises and the reshaping and strengthening of the armored forces. The holding of the Suez line was not to disrupt the army's preparations to meet the eventuality—considered to lie well in the future—of full-scale war.[12]

Another principle Adan set for himself was that it was not a defensive line but a warning line that was to be built. Israel could not afford—and did not wish—to keep on the Suez Canal waterline forces sufficient to repel a full-scale Egyptian crossing. What Bren envisaged was a series of little forts—much smaller than Gavish's—that would be the Israeli Defense Forces' eyes and ears on the canal line, observe the enemy, gather information on him, and maintain contact with him. The forts would be small enough not seriously to drain manpower or other resources but large enough to defend themselves and hold out until reinforcement could be brought up from the rear and to repel attack by small units. Though there would of necessity be wide gaps, the forts were not to be so dispersed as to leave enormous stretches of empty territory between them. And they had to be built to withstand pounding by the heaviest artillery the Egyptians could bring to bear against them.

For the design of the forts, Adan thought back to his Negev days. He was persuaded that the reason his kibbutz, Nerim, had been able to hold out against Egyptian attack in 1948 was the particular design of its defenses. The kibbutz had built a fortification that its members called a maoz, or stronghold, in the shape of a squared circle with four protruding edges that could

deliver covering fire for one another. Adjoining each of the four firing positions was a bunker in which the defenders could take shelter from artillery fire. This was the model Adan had in mind as he began to sketch out the canal line positions. Each fort would hold a unit of 15 to 20 soldiers, though some might be larger. Each would enclose a courtyard where tanks and other vehicles could be parked. The approaches would be protected by mine fields and barbed wire. Adan gave the forts the name maoz—or maozim in the plural—after the original model from his kibbutz.[13]

The plan Adan presented to the General Staff a week after his meeting with Bar Lev proposed that the maozim be strung out from Ras el-'Ush in the north to the Port Tawfiq pier in the south at intervals of approximately one each 10 kilometers. Small armored units would patrol between them, mechanized artillery would be positioned a few kilometers back, and still further back there would be armored forces at the ready, able to reach the canal waterline in twenty to thirty minutes. A north-south road would be built just behind the canal waterline to connect the maozim to one another, and sand was to be piled up along the bank of the canal to a height of several meters to protect both the forts and the road from fire by flat-trajectory weapons. An electronic beam projected between the maozim would warn of Egyptian crossing parties.

To Adan's proposal, Gavish added a thickening. At the northern and southern ends of the canal and at potential crossing points—opposite Kantara and at the roads running to the Mitla and Giddi passes—three or four maozim would be set within a kilometer or so of one another.[14] These extra maozim raised the total to thirty-five. They also accentuated the defensive characteristic that Adan had already unwittingly given the line. Although he had started out with the idea that what he was building was a warning and listening line and not a defensive line, what he had ended up with was a cross between the two. Over time the listening and warning function was to become subordinate to that of defense.

Adan's proposal—he blandly called it "the maoz plan," but the press and the Egyptians eventually pinned Bar Lev's name to it—aroused little immediate controversy. It was discussed at meetings at General Staff Headquarters in early November and quickly approved by Bar Lev, who in his practical, pragmatic way simply considered it the surest and most economical means of holding the Suez waterline. But it was not to the liking of everyone. The idea that Israel's soldiers should sit in bunkers and fight ran contrary to basic precepts of doctrine. Israel's wars had been wars of movement, won through the elan of Israeli troops and the tactical genius of their commanders. General Israel Tal, commander of the Armored Forces, a short, intense man and a wizard of the mechanics of tanks, objected strongly over the months to come, and he was joined in his objections by Generals Ariel Sharon and Rafael Eytan.[15]

Israeli fort south of Suez (author's photo)

Tal and Bar Lev had taken different roads to their military careers, and there was a personal as well as a professional rivalry between them. Bar Lev emigrated to Israel from Yugoslavia in 1939, joined the Haganah in 1942 at the age of eighteen, and then transferred to the Palmach. There it quickly became clear that young Haim Brotzlovsky, the son of generations of East European Jews who had suffered persecution without ever taking up arms, was a born warrior. On the battlefield Bar Lev was in his element. Solidly built, slow spoken, with a steady, piercing gaze, Bar Lev was as cool under fire as they came, and he had an uncanny sense of tactics and of what the enemy would do. By 1946 he was a Palmach company commander. In 1948, when Israel got its first tanks, Bar Lev was put in command of an armored battalion, and his unit was thrown into battle against the Egyptians in the Negev. He defeated an Egyptian armored force, broke through to Abu Ageila in Sinai, and went on to the outskirts of El Arish. In 1956, Bar Lev was back again in Sinai; this time in command of an armored brigade. He burst through Egyptian lines in Gaza, took Rafiah and El Arish, and rolled on almost to the waterline of the Suez Canal. From 1964 to 1966, Bar Lev was chief of operations of the General Staff. In May 1967, when the crisis erupted, he was made deputy chief of staff, a title that had not existed until that time. It opened the way for his appointment as chief of staff on January 1, 1968.

IDF Chief of Staff Haim Bar Lev and Prime Minister Golda Meir visiting troops in Sinai (courtesy of IDF Spokesman's Office)

Tal was a native Israeli Sabra, but his background was the Jewish Brigade of the British army. He joined it in 1942, the same year Bar Lev went to the Haganah and the Palmach. Tal fought in Italy in the last year of World War II, and when the war was over he helped to rescue survivors of the holocaust and bring them to Palestine. It was only after that that he signed up with the Haganah. From there on his and Bar Lev's careers were on the same track but also in competition with one another. In 1956, Tal commanded the infantry brigade that took Abu Ageila. In 1967, he led one of the armored divisions that broke through Egyptian defenses and pushed on to the canal.[16]

The concept that Tal and Sharon developed and later promoted was also one for holding the canal waterline, but without fixed positions. Putting up fortifications on the waterline, Tal argued, amounted to an invitation to the Egyptians to start shooting. In fact, it made it difficult for them not to shoot. More serious still, it made Israeli troops sitting ducks, and it played right into Egyptian hands by emphasizing their advantage in artillery. Tal's plan was to hold armored forces 10 kilometers or so back from the canal line, out of sight of the Egyptians on the west bank and out of range of most of their artillery. If the Egyptians crossed the canal, Israeli armor would go in and destroy them. His plan, Tal argued, would emphasize Israel's advantage in mobile warfare and deprive the enemy of its advantage in artillery and numbers of soldiers. It would insure a low profile, no deliberate escalation, and a lesser rate of attrition.[17]

Tal's ideas, and like ones advanced by Sharon, did not persuade Bar Lev or Adan. If Israel did

not plant its foot firmly on the canal waterline, Bar Lev argued, the Egyptians would inevitably come there. The tank force that Tal proposed to put in back of the canal would have to move in constantly to dislodge enemy forces to prevent them from setting themselves up on the canal's eastern shore. The tank force would find its path strewn with mines and with Egyptian units waiting in ambush. It would require more forces—a second or perhaps even a third armored brigade would have to be sent to the front—and the continual moving about of tanks would put a heavy burden on maintenance facilities because tank motors had to be taken out and overhauled after every fifty running hours. Moreover, how would the armored forces sitting in back of the canal protect themselves from night attacks by Egyptian commandos? Tal's critics argued that his plan amounted to "tankomania," that it sounded fine in theory but was wholly impractical, that it would be more costly in forces, in equipment, and in casualties.[18]

To these objections, Bar Lev added another—one more of a political than a military nature. If Israeli forces did not sit right on the canal waterline, the Egyptians could come across and set up a bridgehead. Before Israel could do anything about it, the Soviets would have called the Security Council into session and pushed through a cease-fire resolution. Egypt would then be on the canal's east bank by right. It was not a very plausible scenario. Both the Egyptians and the Soviets would have to move extremely fast, and they would have to be sure there would be no American veto or foot-dragging in the Security Council. Bar Lev and many members of the Israeli Cabinet, however, took it quite seriously and even made of it a kind of bugaboo.

Bar Lev's decision to go ahead with the establishment of a static defense line on the Suez led Tal to leave his command of the armored forces in March 1969. He went to the Defense Ministry and for the next three years worked on tank technology (a decade later Tal was to develop the Merkava, Israel's own homegrown tank that many experts thought the world's best). Only after Bar Lev retired, in January 1972, did Tal return to the army to be chief of operations of the General Staff and deputy chief of staff.

This debate went on entirely behind the closed doors of the General Staff Headquarters. The Israeli public was wholly unaware of it. Senior Cabinet officers did know about it, and Dayan may even have favored Tal's ideas, on grounds that deployment behind the canal waterline would be less provocative to the Egyptians.[19] But he considered it Bar Lev's call and he was not going to interfere. It occured to no one at the time—not to Dayan, to Bar Lev, to Tal, or to any of the others—even to question the assumption that the line to be held was the canal waterline. Tal's plan, as much as Adan's, was presented as one which called for standing on the waterline, although embedded in it also lay a concept of disengagement that Dayan was later to propound.

It was simply accepted doctrine that the waterline should be held. The Cabinet and the Knesset, in the summer of 1967, had decided that the cease-fire lines were to be held until peace was achieved. This decision was supported by a national consensus. The canal waterline was the cease-fire line, ergo it had to be held. Bar Lev never thought twice about it. "The mission assigned us," he was later to say, "was to defend the canal waterline."[20] That was all there was to it.

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If Adan's plan was to work, the first thing that had to be done was to find a way to protect the soldiers in the maozim from the worst of the shelling that the Egyptians could throw at them. The Suez Canal may have been—as Israeli generals ecstatically exclaimed after the June vie-tory—the world's best antitank ditch, but as a disengagement-of-forces line it had singularly little to recommend it. It was no more than about 60 meters wide in many places, and only 110 meters at maximum width.[21] Soldiers on opposite sides could see one another quite clearly. Epithets could

be exchanged as easily as bullets, and in fact they were; through most of 1969 and 1970 the good reputation of Golda Meir and of Nasser's mother were defamed daily from the opposite banks, in the most colorful of terms. The distance offered even less protection from shelling, even by light mortars. And the October 26 Egyptian barrage showed that even reinforced concrete could not be relied on to protect bunkers from heavy rounds. Artillery shells could break through it, and when they did the losses were fearsome.

The task of solving this problem was assigned to the engineers. Colonel David Laskow, head of the research branch, came up with an answer so simple that it was genial. Laskow, an architect by profession and a man known for his wealth of ideas, had several dozen heavy steel rails pried loose from the bed of the railway built across Sinai in Ottoman times. A hole was bulldozed in the ground, a corrugated iron bunker was put down, and 1 ½ to 2 meters of dirt and sand were piled on top of it. Atop that the rails, one tightly fitted next to another, were laid in two layers running in opposite directions. On top of that another $1^1/_2$ to 2 meters of sand and gravel were added. Israeli gunners blasted it with a captured Soviet 130-mm gun—the biggest artillery piece in the Egyptian inventory—and found that it held.

An Israeli bunker fortified with rocks in wire-mesh baskets (author's photo)

Israeli army engineers and civilian contractors stripped bare the railbed of the Sinai railways, and Israeli purchasing agents scoured the junkyards of Europe for old rails. The rails were a marvelous contrivance; they offered almost unbreachable shelter from gunfire or bombs. The weakest part of the design was the top bed of sand and gravel; shells often penetrated it and

struck the rails before they blew up. Later Laskow found a solution for that problem too: Gigantic heavy wire-mesh baskets filled with large chunks of stone quarried not far from Tel Aviv were put atop the rails. As shells hit the baskets they tore the wire mesh at the place of impact but exploded there. Even heavy shells did little more than make the stones move around in their cages.

By the beginning of December, a budget of some $50 million had been approved, and a thousand men—military engineers and civilian contractors—were at work around-the-clock under Adan's direction. Bulldozers pushed up a wall of sand and gravel along the bank of the canal. Tractors dug enormous holes for the emplacement of the maozim; work crews installed bunkers, and army engineers put down mine fields and concertina fencing. A new landscape of fortifications and communications began to emerge on the canal's east bank. And—amazingly—the Egyptians on the other side of the canal watched and did nothing.

In part, this was because the raid on the Nag Hammadi transformer station had had the effect desired by Israel. It brought home to the Egyptians just how vulnerable their economic infrastructure was. After the Nag Hammadi attack, Nasser ordered the army to keep the cease-fire along the canal. At the same time a decree was issued setting up a "popular militia" to protect power stations, bridges, and other vital installations.

Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser and his generals (reprinted from Dar al-Mustaqbal al-Araby)

What the Israelis were up to, however, simply did not immediately register in the minds of the Egyptian generals. They had seen fortification work on the Israeli side before, and at first they took this to be more of the same. It was not until January that the General Staff fully realized

what was going on, and then they were uncertain as to what to do about it. Some senior commanders argued that the army should move immediately to prevent the Israelis from completing their work of fortification. But there was much concern about how Israel might respond. The popular militia was still in the early stages of organization and training, and the army was still awaiting vital shipments of Soviet equipment. General Fawzi, a determined but cautious and prudent officer, was unsure whether his forces were fully ready for a confrontation with the Israelis.[22]

Despite his hesitations, at the beginning of February Fawzi authorized the troops on the front line to use small-arms fire against the Israeli construction crews. That same month Nasser visited the frontline troops. There he heard the repeated pleas of junior- and middle-grade officers eager to go to war, confident of their strength, and warning that every day of delay would make the liberation of Sinai more costly. And there Nasser was able to see for himself what the Israelis were doing on the east bank of the canal. In his eyes and in those of other Egyptians, the Israeli fortifications took on immense significance. Adan's maozim were not just a means for defending a particular line. They were to Nasser glaring confirmation of what he was already firmly persuaded: that Israel meant to hold all of Sinai, that it had no intention of ever getting out, and that the only way to prevent it from staying forever was to pry it loose by force. Late in February, Nasser issued orders to the General Staff to prepare for battle.[23]

On the morning of March 8, Egyptian artillery opened up with a massive barrage all along the canal front. The Israelis responded with tank and artillery fire, but they were heavily outgunned. UN observers arranged a cease-fire late that afternoon, but after only half an hour or so of quiet the Egyptians started shooting again. The next day, March 9, Egyptian artillery opened up again and the shelling was even heavier. Despite the intense fire, General Abdul Munim Riad, the Egyptian chief of staff, set out for the front lines of the northern sector to get a firsthand look at the battle and to show the troops that he was there with them. As they approached the front lines north of Ismailiya, Riad and his party were caught in the Israeli shelling. They raced toward a bunker, and as they were about to enter it an Israeli round landed directly on it. Riad was mortally wounded; he died on the way to the field hospital.

Abdul Munim Riad was an outstanding officer, young, energetic, intelligent, and courageous. For the previous twenty-one months, since his appointment on June 11, 1967, he had labored incessantly to rebuild Egypt's armed forces, and much of the credit for the great strides made during that time was justly ascribed to him.[24] His death was a grievous loss for Egypt, and it caused a momentary setback in plans for pursuing the battle that began on March 8. For the rest of the month the Suez front was mostly quiet. The Israelis, who diligently compiled statistics on the number of "incidents" initiated by the Egyptian side, counted only 84 for all of March.[25] Even this limited number, however, left 7 Israeli soldiers dead and 29 wounded, in itself not a large toll but a painful one for Israel.

A steady bloodletting of this sort—though much larger—was just what the Egyptians had in mind. Nasser, Fawzi, and the generals had no thought, in the early months of 1969, of trying to cross the canal and retake all or even part of Sinai. They were still too uncertain of the readiness of their own ground forces for such a difficult and complex undertaking, and they were very mindful of the power of Israel's armor and its air force. If the June 1967 war taught any lesson it was that an army caught in the desert without air cover was exposed to mortal peril. By early 1969 Egypt was back to and beyond its prewar strength in combat aircraft. It had more planes than Israel, but its pilots were still no match for Israel's. A frontal assault across the canal would have to be postponed until this problem could be solved.

There was, however, another way. Through the fall of 1968, after Fawzi declared in September that the stage of "active deterrence" had been reached, the Cairo press began speaking of a concept of attrition, of a long war to wear down and finally exhaust Israel. For the Arabs it was hardly a new idea, but it seemed particularly apt to the circumstances. Israel had not delivered a knockout blow to the Arabs in June 1967. It had only—as Nasser never ceased to proclaim through the rest of that year and into 1968—won a battle, not the war itself. Two and one-half million Jews could not ultimately defeat and subjugate one hundred million Arabs; it was a simple matter of numbers and of geography. The Arabs could afford to sacrifice great numbers of soldiers in battle without threat to their national survival; Israel could not. The Egyptians were keenly aware, from their reading of the Israeli press, that even small losses were exceedingly painful to the Israeli public.

Heikal made himself the chief public interpreter of the idea of attrition, as he did for almost every issue. "If the enemy succeeds in inflicting on us 50,000 casualties in this campaign," he wrote in *Al Ahram* on March 7, "we can go on fighting nevertheless, because we have manpower reserves. If we succeed in inflicting 10,000 casualties, he will unavoidably find himself compelled to stop fighting, because he has no manpower resources at his disposal." The figures were exaggerated, but that did not invalidate the central thesis. Bloodletting could gradually wear the Israelis down without Egypt even having to risk defeat. Israel could marshall several hundred thousand men for a short period, but its economy could not withstand the strain of a protracted war. Egypt could afford both blood losses and prolonged mobilization.

The war became known to both Egyptians and Israelis as the War of Attrition. Nasser himself gave it this name in his annual Revolution Day speech in July 1969. Egypt, he declared, was now in a position "to fight the battle of liberation." It would, he said, be a war of attrition, "a long battle to exhaust the enemy."

Attrition was a ready-made strategy for Nasser for the Suez front where his forces outnumbered the Israelis by fifty to one both in troops and in big guns. The little Israeli forts along the canal front were to prove tough nuts to crack—practically impregnable short of a massive Egyptian invasion of Sinai—but they were easy targets for Egyptian artillery. There was plenty of undefended space between them. It was no problem at all for Egyptian units to cross the canal by night or even in the daytime to lay mines and set up ambushes. (Adan's electronic warning beam, a key element of his plan, turned out to be unworkable and was never installed along most of the canal line. The frequent fogs that arose along the banks of the canal and the glitter of moonlight on the water on a clear night made it ineffective.)

At the end of March, Fawzi and the new chief of staff, General Ahmad Ismail, began again to step up the pressure on the Bar Lev line.

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Sergeant Yaacov Sarei of the Israeli army engineers learned a lot more about the Sinai and the east bank of the Suez canal than he could ever have imagined as a child in Casablanca. Sarei came clandestinely out of Morocco to Israel with his parents in the big aliya of Moroccan Jewry in 1954. By the time he was called to military service in October 1966, he was as thoroughly Israeli as any Sabra. When the war broke out the following June, he fought in Sinai, and in the spring of 1968 he was reassigned to Sinai in an engineering unit, where for the next year and one-half the peninsula's stark glaring landscape was to be his home. When the big construction work began on Adan's plan late in November, Sarei was in the midst of it, directing crews of fresh recruits sent down from Israel to do the heavy labor.

The pace was exhausting, but for the first two months at least there was little real danger. The

Egyptians sat quietly on the west bank. Sometimes Sarei exchanged shouts with them across the narrow waterway in his Moroccan Arabic. Then early in February, the sniping began and he could feel the tension mount. Much of the time the sand wall offered protection. But there was no way his crews could lay the rails on top of the bunkers without exposing themselves to enemy fire. The rails were enormously heavy. It took eight men to lift one. Sergeant Sarei would call out "one, two, three," and his crew would heave a rail onto the platform and fit it into place. Each time a sniper's bullet hit a rail while it was being carried, two or three recruits—young soldiers eighteen years old and most no more than a few days or weeks in the army—fell wounded or dead from the ricochet.[26]

The three months of quiet that the Egyptians gave Adan, from the time of the raid on Nag Hammadi to the beginning of February, saved the Bar Lev line and changed the whole course of the war. Had the Egyptians started shooting much earlier, had they brought their artillery to bear even in February, the canal fortifications line could never have been completed; the undertaking would simply have cost too many lives. Bar Lev would have been forced to fall back to Tal's strategy, or something very like it.

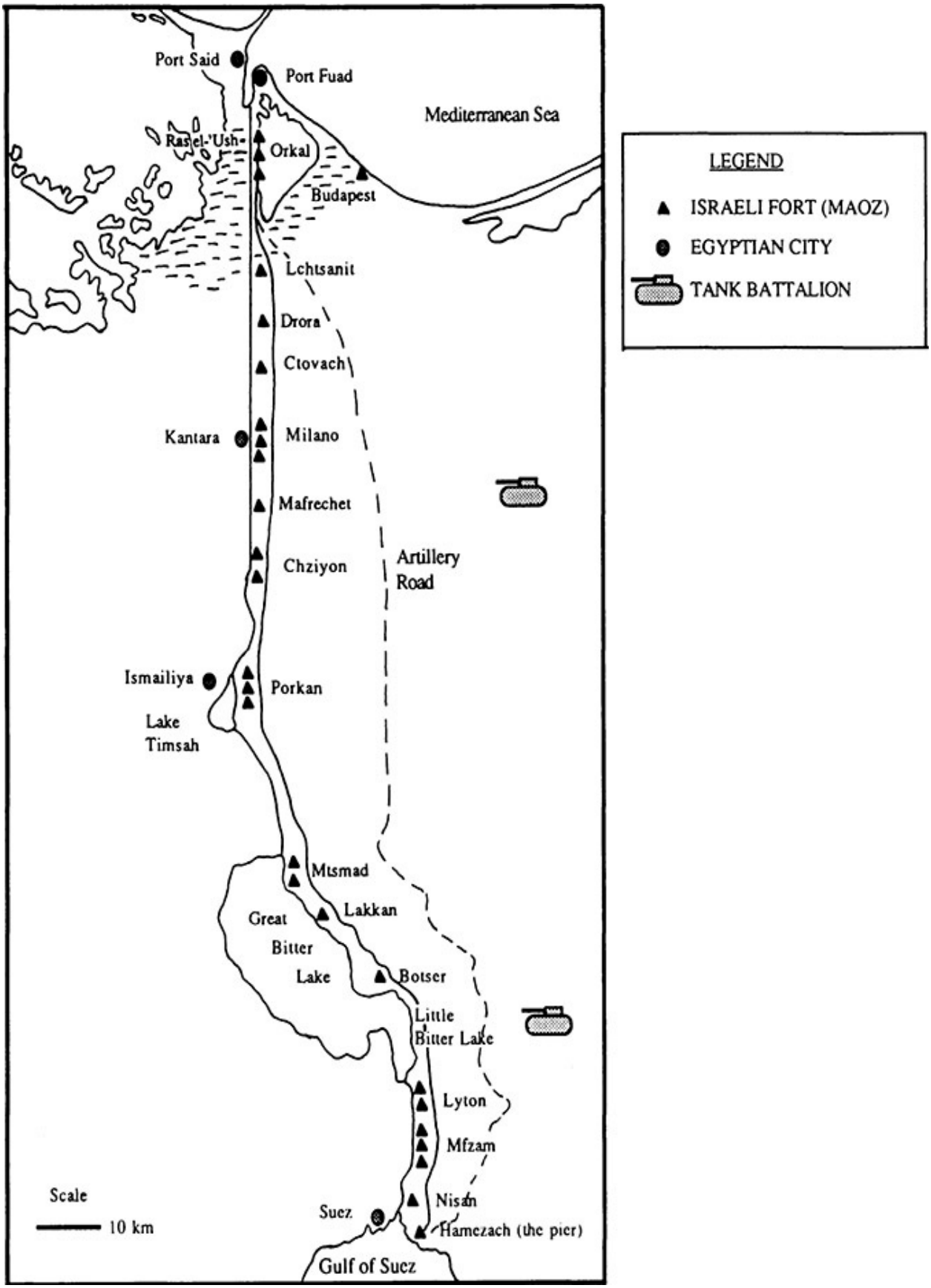
By the time the Egyptians had begun their shelling in March, most of the work in the northern sector had been completed, but south of Kantara there was still a lot left to do. Many of the maozim were still not finished, and there were gaps in the sand wall that left Israeli vehicles exposed to rifle and machine-gun fire as they sped along the road just back of the canal. Work on two maozim south of Ismailiya, along the eastern shore of the Great Bitter Lake, had to be abandoned altogether because of particularly aggressive mortar and artillery fire from the opposite bank. This left a gap of 30 kilometers undefended. In fact, major construction work on the Bar Lev line was not finished until the fall of 1969, and many of the casualties the Israelis suffered during that time were associated with it.

Even when the forts were finished the job was not done. After every shelling there were extensive repairs to be made. The sand and gravel blast bedding atop the rails had to be replenished, unexploded shells had to be removed, and trenches and firing positions had to be rebuilt. Much of this work could only be done at night—not until the summer of 1970 were the Egyptians to get night-vision devices—and even then very quietly, for if the Egyptians heard noise they would send up flares and begin firing. You could never stand up straight in the maozim unless you were in the courtyard; you had to move bent double in the trenches, and even the bunkers were too low to stand straight in unless you were very short.

Worse than the physical hardship, however, was the tension born of uncertainty. In the first year of the war, a day or two or even three might go by without anything happening, but you never knew when a shell might fall or a sniper might catch you in his sights. Egyptian snipers sat in the trees in Kantara and Ismailiya, where there were trees, and atop buildings, and they could sometimes see over the sand wall. To warn for shelling, every Israeli soldier had a whistle, and usually a soldier was posted as a "listener" to sound the alarm when a shell was coming over. If you were in the courtyard when you heard the whistle, or the first shriek of the shell, you knew you had to make a mad dash for the bunker—and that you had only seconds to get there. Sometimes there was no warning at all. Corporal Yaacov Revah stepped out of the outdoor shower in the courtyard of his maoz in the central sector one morning and headed back to the bunker. As he reached its entrance, he heard a mortar shell coming in. An instant later the shower was gone; where it had stood there was only a small hole in the ground.[27]

Inside the bunker, in a shelling, the earth shook and the roar was deafening and sand streamed down through the cracks. It seemed like the end of the world, but in fact there you were safe. It

was the only place in or around the maoz that you could count yourself at all safe. Most dangerous of all was getting in and out of the maoz, and this was where most of the casualties occurred. The Egyptians could not see into


Port Said
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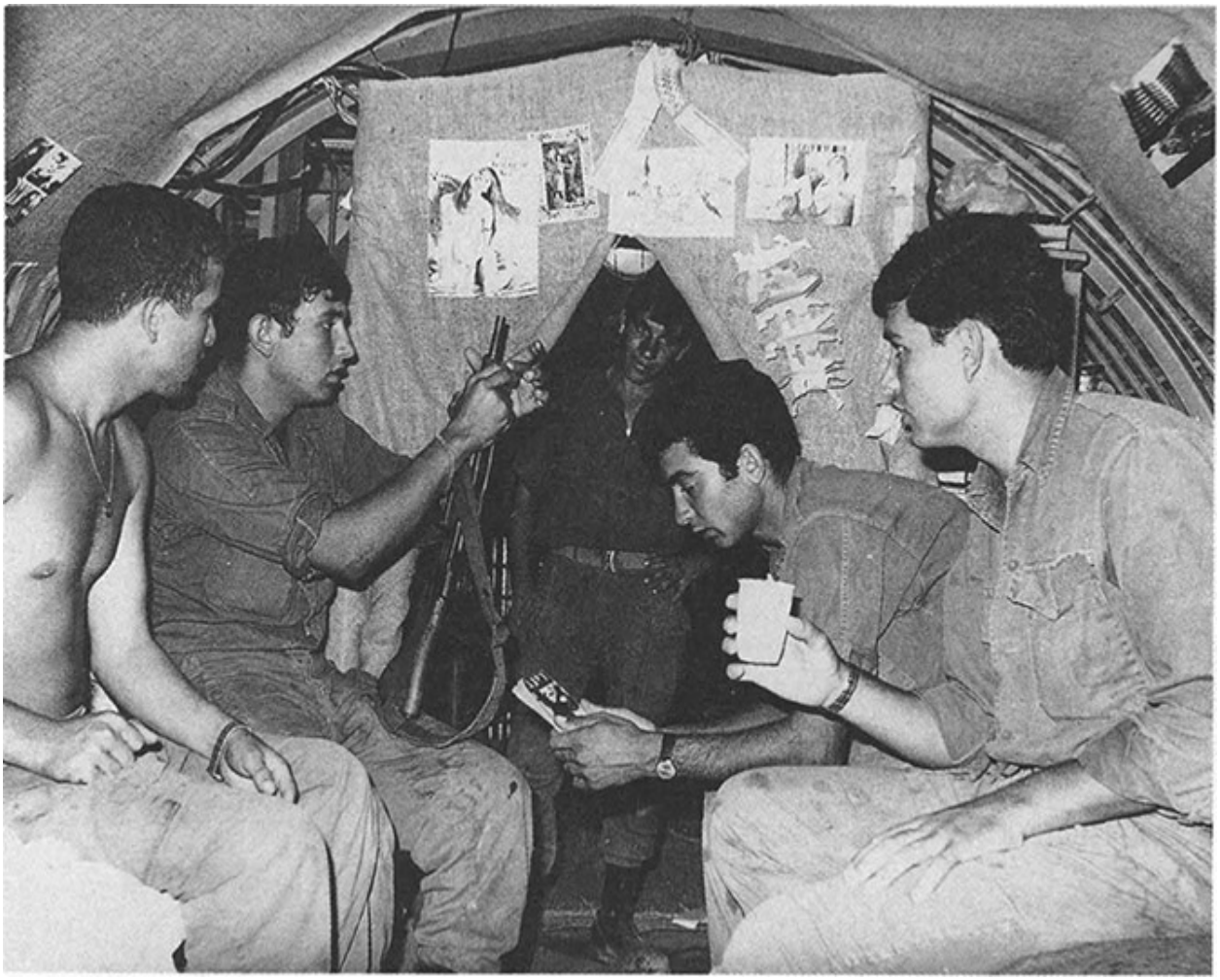
Ctovach
Kantara
Milano
Mafrechet
Chziyon
Artillery
Road
Ismailiya
Porkan
Lake
Timsah
Mtsmad
Lakkan
Great
Bitter
Lake
Botser
Little
Bitter Lake
Lyton
Mfzam
Nisan
Hamezach (the pier)
Suez
Gulf of Suez
Scale
10 km
LEGEND
ISRAELI FORT (MAOZ)
EGYPTIAN CITY
TANK BATTALION

Israel's deployment along the Suez Canal (Bar Lev line) 1968–1969. Names of the maozim are those from October 1973. (*Source:* Office of the IDF Historian)



Israeli soldiers inside a Bar Lev line bunker (courtesy of IDF Spokesman's Office)

the courtyard of the Maoz, but they could hear the motor of a vehicle entering or leaving it and could see the dust that its wheels or tracks kicked up, and they knew where the road was. As soon as they heard noise or saw dust they began lobbing mortar shells over. Lt. Colonel Yehuda Cohen, commander of the engineering battalion that was responsible for the southern sector of the canal line, had to drive in and out of maozim several times a week. He quickly became an expert at it. The way to do it, he found, was to approach very slowly, making as little noise and dust as possible, and then gun his jeep's motor, roar inside the courtyard at top speed and leap out to the safety of the bunker. This worked for Lt. Colonel Cohen, but not always for his jeeps. Egyptian mortar shells reduced two of them to mangled smoking wreckage seconds after he left them.[28]

The army did what it could to make service on the Bar Lev line bearable. Little-by-little the bunkers were made more liveable. Refrigerators were provided and eventually air conditioning was installed. Mail was delivered regularly, along with newspapers, magazines, and books. Musicians, singers, and lecturers arrived in the maozim from time to time to entertain and enlighten the troops, often running the gauntlet of Egyptian mortar and artillery fire to get there.

But all this looked better on paper than it did in reality. The troops in the maozim and in the armored units that guarded them and patrolled the canal line road often had the feeling that they were forgotten and abandoned. One of them observed twenty years later: “The army really didn’t pay attention to this war, it ignored it. Machines and men fell into catastrophic condition, to the point where they didn’t function at all, and they [the army] didn’t take them out. Death haunted you there. … There was fear in everyone’s eyes.”[29]

Each soldier serving on the line was supposed to get a long weekend leave to go home once a month. Often, however, it simply did not happen. Sometimes soldiers went for months on end with no leave. This naturally reinforced the feeling of abandonment: “The biggest crisis of confidence I had was when they told me that Bar Lev had gone on television and said that soldiers get leave once a month. It made me feel they were selling fables to the public.”[30]

There was also a rule that soldiers were to be rotated at regular intervals—three months on the canal line and three months at a rear base in Sinai. It too was honored as much in the breach as in the observance.

The truth was that it was a soldier’s war, not an officer’s. There was no glory to be gained along the canal, no enemy lines to breach in lightning battle. There was only heat, dust, unending discomfort, and constant tension and uncertainty—the uncertainty of never knowing when one might be hit, of sitting in a fixed position for months on end, of bombardment that grew heavier and more prolonged as the war dragged on, and of the often fearsome sense of isolation imposed by the bleak Sinai landscape. The June 1967 war had made every Israeli soldier a hero. It gave the young recruits who served on the Bar Lev line a national self-image to uphold. This carried them along for a while, but the prolonged strain of static warfare inevitably left its mark. “The morale of the troops was pretty bad,” Major Dan Avidan later testified. “They wanted to go home.”[31] Avidan, a member of Ayn HaShofet kibbutz, was one of those who answered Moshe Dayan’s appeal in the fall of 1969 when he asked reserve officers to volunteer for service in the maozim. Young officers living at close quarters with their troops were having trouble making their orders obeyed. Older, more experienced officers, it was reasoned, would not have this problem; their age, their earlier combat service, and their dedication would make a big difference.

Dayan called the volunteers Tigers. But there were not enough Tigers and they did not stay long enough. Troops serving on the canal line very rarely saw an officer above the rank of major or lieutenant colonel. One of the first things Brigadier General Shlomo Lahat did when he took over the Sinai command in April 1969 was to order staff officers at his headquarters to spend one night a week in a maoz. Compliance soon lagged. Not only was the Bar Lev line a place where there was no glory to be gained; it was also a place where one could easily get killed. Staff officers contrived to find their services more urgently needed at headquarters. Lahat repeatedly reissued the order, but even then it was never fully obeyed.[32]

Senior officers did no better. Almost all claimed they made frequent visits to the canal line. Dayan later wrote: “Many days (and nights) I spent in that time visiting the maozim, talking with the soldiers. …”[33] Others too prided themselves on going to the canal line. Lahat maintained that he followed his own rule and spent a night a week in a maoz.[34] The soldiers themselves remembered it quite differently: “There was a very serious gap between officers and men. We never saw the division commander. There was a feeling of abandonment, of being a very small screw in a very large machine. …”[35] Some had no recollection of ever having been visited by a senior officer—not once during the entire seventeen months that the fighting lasted—not even by

the front commander, Brigadier General Shlomo Lahat.[36]

When leave was finally granted, going home often only accentuated a soldier's feeling of abandonment. In all of Israel's earlier wars—in the War of Independence, and in the much shorter 1956 and 1967 wars—the entire nation was mobilized to support the fighting front. Civilians shared at least vicariously in the perils of the front line; they dug trenches, built bomb shelters, taped windows, and observed blackouts. The home front was a front too. Everybody pulled together, and politicians set aside their bickering. Now, however, the young soldier who left the canal line for a brief visit home found a wholly different scene.

In Tel Aviv, Haifa, Jerusalem, and in Israel's smaller cities and towns life and business went on as though there was no war at all. Tel Aviv was only a forty-five-minute flight from the airfield at Bir Gifgafa, but it might as well have been 10,000 miles away. People strolled the streets, and the cafes and nightclubs overflowed with customers. On summer weekends the beaches were packed, and traffic was bumper-to-bumper getting out of the city on Friday afternoon and back to it the next evening. Israelis were even getting rich, for the June 1967 victory had sent an enormous charge of energy surging through the country's economy.

On the war front, soldiers were getting killed, and those who came back from the front line—and the pilots who later shouldered the main burden of the war—had to grapple with the shock of discovering that this war was being fought by them alone; it was their war, not the nation's. Most resolved the emotional turmoil that this realization churned up simply by deciding that they were fighting for the right of their fellow citizens not to be at war, to be able to lead normal lives.

This was the conventional, socially approved answer. For some the starkness of the contrast between the home and the war fronts was simply too much for any resolution. Rarely did a soldier fail to return to a unit on the canal line, but some simply retreated into cynicism and to a condition that came to be known to the commanders and the army psychologists as "bedouism." It denoted soldiers who took proper care neither of their persons nor of their weapons, who were overcome by apathy, and who simply withdrew into themselves. Local unit commanders and the army's educational branch fought this syndrome, but it was more widespread than they would recognize at the time or later.[37]

In a war where luck as much as anything else seemed to determine whether one lived or died, a sense of fatalism was almost certain to develop. For soldiers who were nearing the end of their term of military service and who had behind them three or four tours of duty in the maozim or of patrolling the roads between the maozim waiting in ambush for Egyptian raiding parties, it became common to ask not to be sent back again. Luck came in limited supply; those who had spent nine months on the canal line had used up more than they cared to think about. They didn't know how much they had left.

Indeed, fate did seem to play a role. One day in the fall of 1969, a young sergeant who had just completed engineering training came to see Lt. Colonel Yehuda Cohen with an unusual request. The young man explained that he was an only child and that his father had died and his mother was alone. He asked not to be sent to the front line. He did not fear for himself, he said, but for his mother if anything should happen to him. Cohen checked with the mother and found the story to be true, so he gave the soldier duties around rear-echelon headquarters. This went on for two or three months until one day, when Cohen was away, there was an urgent call for troops for one of the maozim in the southern sector where soldiers on leave were late in returning. The sergeant was sent forward. He had been in the maoz no more than two or three minutes when a shell landed next to him and killed him.[38]

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For April of 1969 the record keepers at IDF headquarters counted a whopping 475 “incidents” initiated by the Egyptians along the Suez line.[39] It was more than eight times the total for March. It meant that the cease-fire of June 8, 1967, was dead. Ever since early March, in fact, the Egyptians had been declaring it so.

On March 12, Dr. Muhammad Hassan al-Zayyat, the Egyptian government spokesman, told the Egyptian and foreign press that if Israel did not withdraw from the occupied territories “there would be no wisdom in implementing the cease-fire. …” A reporter asked al-Zayyat if he thought escalation of fighting along the canal could be prevented. “No,” al-Zayyat bluntly replied. He really did not believe this possible.[40] On April 1 Nasser himself announced unilateral abrogation of the cease-fire, and on April 25 Egyptian Deputy Foreign Minister Salah Gohar officially informed General Odd Bull that the Egyptian government no longer recognized the cease-fire.[41]

Washington sent Bergus to convey U.S. concern. From his first demarche, made to Hassan Sabri al-Khouly at the Presidency, Bergus came away with the impression that his urgings of restraint had found a receptive hearing. But when he was sent back later with the same message, it was made clear to him that American advice to stop shooting was not welcome.[42]

The question for Israel was: Would Adan’s line hold? Adan himself left the Suez front at the end of March, his work mostly completed, to take over command of the armored forces from Tal. Brigadier General Shlomo Lahat, the energetic, resourceful, and inventive officer that Bar Lev chose to replace Bren, faced a difficult situation from the moment he assumed his command.

Lahat was confronted with enormous Egyptian pressure. His thin line of forts strung out over the canal front was manned by no more than 600 to 800 soldiers. Even with the addition of the tank brigade there were no more than 2,000 Israeli soldiers along a 150-kilometer front. The Egyptians pounded the Israeli line from one end to the other with artillery and mortar fire and sent commando units across to attack it. From April 19 to 26, Egyptian commandos attacked across the canal every night. On the night of the 19th, they almost succeeded in taking one of the forts south of Ismailiya. They penetrated its outer defenses, put smoke canisters through the firing slits, captured the Israeli flag and took a machine gun from one of the firing positions. They were driven off by Israeli tanks, but they carried the flag and the machine gun back to Cairo and put them on display amidst a great victory celebration.[43] Twenty-one Israeli soldiers were killed on the Bar Lev line during April.

The Egyptian actions seriously threatened the integrity of the Israeli line. The chief of staff and the Cabinet decided again to try the remedy of the previous fall. On April 29, Israeli paratroopers were ferried across the Gulf of Suez to Nag Hammadi to hit once more at the power installations there. But if the operation was successful—the Egyptians claimed it was not and brought foreign reporters to look at the apparently undamaged transformer station[44]—it did not have the same effect as its predecessor. The number of Egyptian artillery and commando attacks dipped in May, but the war was not off. Israel’s casualties for the month were 15 dead and 30 wounded.

Dayan made a visit to the maozim at the northern tip of the line in May and was caught there in a heavy shelling. As he came away he told Lahat that he didn’t see how the IDF could continue to hold these positions. For Lahat, the thought of retreating was almost heresy. “Moshe,” he shot back with emphasis, “we can stay there just as long as we want.”[45] The defense minister nonetheless proposed to evacuate the maozim at the exposed northern and southern ends of the line, but he yielded when Bar Lev, Gavish, and Lahat all argued against it.

A note of perplexity crept even into Dayan’s public remarks as he reviewed the outlook in

mid-May. During the previous two and one-half months, he reported, the IDF had lost 29 dead and 58 wounded along the canal. The problem, he said, was "how are we to hold on steadfastly to the present lines, to withstand the heavy pressure of the war … a pressure that is liable to continue for years?" The defense minister had no answer to offer the public. All he could say was that he expected the pressure on the borders would continue to mount in the period ahead.[46] Bar Lev sent more raiding parties to hit at Egypt's soft underbelly; Israeli paratroopers attacked an Egyptian army outpost at Ras el-Adabiya on the western shore of the Gulf of Suez, blew up a power line on the Upper Nile, and ambushed an Egyptian patrol along the Gulf of Suez road. But these were pinpricks. Stories of the soldiers' daring may have helped raise the Israeli public's morale, but the raids were patently not the deterrent for which the IDF was looking.

Proof of this was furnished by the Egyptians themselves on July 12. That afternoon, Egyptian artillery brought heavy, concentrated fire to bear on the maoz at the pier at the southern end of the Bar Lev line. Even more so than the maozim far to the north, the pier was perilously exposed, perched on a narrow jut of land with the southern mouth of the canal and the Gulf of Suez to its west and a saltwater swamp to its east. Getting into it and out of it unscathed was a true accomplishment. Because of its exposure, it was larger than the other forts; 30 to 40 soldiers were regularly stationed there, and a platoon of tanks was assigned to its defense. In only six months of fighting, 77 Israeli soldiers were to die at the pier, more than at any other maoz.[47]

While their artillery pounded the pier and the dazzling mid-summer sun setting in the west covered their approach, Egyptian commandos crossed the canal and scaled the sand wall. Their objective was not the maoz itself but the tank platoon. The Egyptians knew that during shellings the Israeli tank crews closed themselves inside their vehicles. There they felt safe, because the tank's armor could withstand even a direct hit by an ordinary artillery shell. But they were not safe from the armor-piercing bazooka shells fired at them that afternoon by the Egyptian commandos. Before the Israeli crews knew what was happening, the Egyptians had scored direct hits on three tanks and killed or wounded many of their crew. The soldiers in the maoz had not been on the lookout to warn of the Egyptian unit's crossing, and they made no move to help their comrades in the tanks.[48]

Brigadier General Shlomo Lahat erupted in fury at the commander of the maoz. Lahat had adopted the practice of issuing a "Battle Bulletin" after every major encounter; he found it an effective means of spurring the troops on. He now put out his Battle Bulletin Number Four, and he entitled it "Yona and His Soldiers." Lt. Yona, the general proclaimed for all to read, was a coward, and so were his troops. They were frightened by the Egyptian artillery. They sat safely in their bunkers while the men in the tanks were under attack. They failed in the most fundamental duty of an Israeli soldier—to come to the aid of his fellow soldiers. Lieutenant Yona was dismissed that day from his command.[49]

The death toll on the canal line for July reached a high of 25. The engagement at the pier that month merely confirmed what had by then already become clear to Dayan and to the General Staff: that Adan's thin line was, by itself, not going to be able to hold against the concerted pressure that the Egyptians with their overwhelming superiority in numbers and in guns could bring to bear against it. The cost in lives was simply unacceptable. Another solution would have to be found.

7

Political Wars

Wednesday, February 26, 1969, dawned clear and sunny in Israel.[1] By mid-morning, temperatures along the coastal plain were rising toward the seventy degree mark. On Tel Aviv's beaches, the winter swimmers were testing the chilly surf. At 9:45, Kol Israel without explanation broke off its broadcast of lively popular tunes, and the deep sad notes of a work of classical music filled the airwaves. Fifteen minutes later, a newscaster announced that Prime Minister Levy Eshkol had died that morning of a heart attack at his Jerusalem residence.

Eshkol had been intermittently ill since the previous November when, according to his aides, he came down with pneumonia. In fact, he had suffered a heart attack. His condition obliged him to cancel plans for trips to the United States and Latin America that had been scheduled for December. The prime minister was absent from his office much of the last two months of 1968, but by January he was back on the job, though friends and callers remarked that he still seemed pale and weak. On February 3, he lost consciousness briefly while working in his office. His physicians and assistants wanted to have him taken from the building in a wheelchair but, characteristically, he refused. After resting a while he felt stronger and insisted on walking to the elevator and from there to his car.

Like the November heart attack, this incident was kept secret from all but Eshkol's wife, Miriam, his closest aides, and a few top Labor Party leaders. The prime minister stayed at home. His aides told persistently inquiring reporters that he had the flu, but they outdid themselves in inventing excuses other than illness for cancelling appointments and public appearances. Eshkol soon regained strength, but he refused to listen to his doctors' and his wife's pleas that he set aside all work and rest for an indefinite time. It was finally decided that moderate work might serve as a tonic. By mid-February, callers found him looking better and in good spirits. Though still at home, on February 25 he turned in a full day's work and was said to have been in fine form. Those who saw him that day recognized the "old Eshkol" and thought his illness, whatever it may have been, was past. Even after being stricken the next morning, Eshkol did not lose courage. He looked up from his bed at his wife, glanced at his doctors, and quipped: "Don't worry, Miriam, I'll bury them all."[2]

What was it that made Levy Eshkol so desperately want to keep the truth of his heart attack from the public, and why did he so stubbornly ignore the advice and warnings of his doctors? Ever since the ordeal of May 1967 when he was forced by the public's and his own party's lack of confidence to give up the defense portfolio to Moshe Dayan and take Menachem Begin into his cabinet as well, Eshkol had been seized by an almost compulsive need to prove to himself and to the world that he was capable, in all respects, of leading Israel. He aspired to continue in office beyond the elections scheduled for the fall of 1969, possibly for another full four-year Knesset term. At the moment he died, his prospects for achieving this goal seemed better than at any time since the 1967 war.

During most of 1968, Eshkol's future was in doubt as a struggle for power raged inside Israel's governing party. At stake was control of the Israeli Labor Party and through it the apparatus of government. The battle between the leaders of the rival factions of the large center-left party, as much as anything else, was to shape the Israeli government's and the public's views on peace and territories, and to affect profoundly Israel's diplomacy all through these years.

The Labor Party came into being in January 1968, the result of the merger of Mapai—the party that had governed Israel since independence—with two smaller parties that had once been part of Mapai, Achdut Haavodah and Rafi.[3] Now led by, among others, Yigal Allon, commander of the Palmach in Israel's War of Independence and one of the heroes of that war, Achdut Haavodah had broken away from Mapai more than twenty years earlier. Rafi was the splinter faction that David Ben-Gurion, ever more angry as he advanced into old age, led out of Mapai before the 1965 Knesset elections. The two parties had similar but distinct reasons for wanting to return to the fold.

To the ambitious young people who left Mapai to follow Ben-Gurion, Rafi turned out to be a bitter disappointment. Israel's legendary first prime minister stalked out of Mapai because of his grudge over his party's failure to support him in the crisis that broke out in 1961 and 1962 over the Lavon affair, the dispute over the alleged responsibility of Pinhas Lavon, Israel's defense minister in 1954 and 1955, for an undercover action in Egypt involving an attack on the American cultural center in Cairo. For his younger followers, Moshe Dayan, Shimon Peres, and others, the Lavon affair was by 1965 an irrelevant issue; it belonged more appropriately to the history books than to current politics. They saw in Rafi a chance to bring rejuvenation to Israeli political life and, in doing so, to advance their own political careers. What they found instead was a party with too few seats in the Knesset to wield appreciable influence. They were men of action, and they craved power. Now they were confined to the sterile activity of the opposition benches, and they were deeply frustrated.

The first breach in Rafi's isolation came in May 1967 when, under the impact of the crisis, Mapai's leadership was obliged by public pressure to take Dayan into the Cabinet as defense minister. Peres, with his keen eye for opportunity, saw a chance to capitalize on Dayan's popularity with the Mapai rank and file and on the enthusiasm that the May crisis and the June war engendered for the idea of unity. Peres's plan was simple: Rafi would rejoin Mapai and conquer it from within, thus accomplishing the replacement of the party's old guard leadership by a younger generation—to wit, himself and Dayan and their associates—which it had been unable to achieve from without.

The scheme was transparent enough to the consummate politicians who controlled Mapai. Golda Meir, foreign minister from 1956 to 1965, was now secretary general of Mapai. In the heat of the crisis that preceded the war, Meir had tried to persuade Eshkol to give the defense portfolio, which Eshkol held concurrently with that of prime minister as Ben-Gurion had, to Yigal Allon. Though he was from Achdut Haavodah, Allon was Meir's favorite. The aging first lady of Israeli politics, now nearly seventy and believed to be chronically ill, saw him as a potential successor to Eshkol not only as defense minister but at some later date also as prime minister.

For a brief moment late in May 1967, it seemed as though the Defense Ministry would in fact be Allon's. Then Eshkol clung to it stubbornly and, stung by the party's and the public's lack of faith in him, would not give it up. A few days later, a near revolt within Mapai's ranks forced him to hand the defense portfolio over to Dayan. The humiliation of it was to remain with Eshkol to the end of his days. But for Allon and Dayan, the two leading figures among Israel's younger

generation of politicians, it was also a fateful turn of events. The glory of victory in the June war would go to whomever held the office of defense minister. It had seemed within Allon's grasp, only to be snatched from him at the last minute and given to his arch rival.

Suspicious as they must have been when Peres came to them a few days after the 1967 war with a proposal for a merger between Rafi and Mapai, Eshkol, Golda Meir, and Finance Minister Pinhas Sapir—the leading figures of Mapai's old guard—realized they could not turn it down. "Unity of Labor" was a sacrosanct slogan for Mapai. The Mapai old guard regarded Rafi more as a gang of conceited young technocrats than a party of honest working people. But they knew that the idea of a merger would generate irresistible pressure from the ranks of their party.

Negotiations between Mapai and Rafi began late in June. Peres, the wonder boy of Israeli politics, had made his name as Israel's arms procurement wizard under David Ben-Gurion. He had done the deals that won Israel the Mirage and copious other supplies of French arms both before and after the 1956 war, and he played a major role in the launching of Israel's domestic arms industry. The Mapai old guard thought Peres too clever by half, and they deeply distrusted him. Golda Meir had no love for him at all. In the late 1950s and 1960s, Peres had time and again used his position as Ben-Gurion's deputy at the Defense Ministry to overrule or outmaneuver her when she was foreign minister.

The unity talks soon ran into trouble. Peres had ambitious demands. He wanted to make the choice of the leadership of the new united party an issue for negotiation; and he called for a direct vote by the new party's rank-and-file membership before the 1969 Knesset elections. This was too blatant for Mapai's leaders. Golda Meir refused to make significant concessions to any of Peres's demands. Mapai's leaders were in no mood to hand their heads on a platter to Peres and Dayan, and theirs was by far the stronger position. If there was going to be a merger, it would be on their terms. Though disappointed and angry over Mapai's inflexibility, Peres and Dayan were no longer able to backtrack. The merger negotiations had taken all of the momentum out of Rafi's existence as a separate, independent party. Unless they wanted to return to the opposition benches—which they decidedly did not—there was no alternative but to go forward, even at the price of agreeing entirely to Meir's terms.

Rafi delegates convened in Jerusalem on December 12 to debate and finally give grudging endorsement—by a majority of only 57 percent— to the merger. Dayan, who for the past six months had been minister of defense, declared that he would vote for merger but would enter the Labor Party only in order to work for the replacement of Prime Minister Eshkol and Finance Minister Sapir. Even for the roughhouse of Israeli politics this was just a little too outrageous. Eshkol had the Cabinet issue a public statement censuring the defense minister for his remarks. For a moment the merger seemed to be in question. But on December 18, Peres sent Meir a letter informing her officially of Rafi's agreement to the "establishment of a United Labor Party." At the end of January 1968, hundreds of delegates from Mapai, Achdut Haavodah, and Rafi gathered to declare the new party formally in existence.

A few weeks after the January 1968 merger, the Mapai old guard moved to put up another barrier to Dayan's ambitions. They began negotiations with Mapam (Migleget Hapoalim Hameuchedet, or United Workers Party), the small noncommunist party that stood to the left of the Labor Party. Mapam had once been a movement of substance, but by the mid-1960s, badly hurt by its earlier identification with the Soviet Union, it had shrunk to a shadow of its earlier self. It emerged from the 1965 Knesset elections with only seven seats.

At the time the Labor Party came into being, no one yet knew how many of Mapai's delegates Dayan might be able to carry in its new Central Committee. But there was no danger of Mapam's

being seduced by the general's siren calls. Between Mapam and Dayan there was a long and bitter history of enmity. Mapam's leaders quickly made clear that they were not interested in a merger with the Labor Party, but they did want an electoral alliance, an "alignment" in Israeli political terminology. This was entirely satisfactory to Golda Meir and Levy Eshkol, but Shimon Peres objected. Mapai's reasons for wanting a tie with Mapam were quite transparent to Peres. He countered by proposing the thing he wanted least but that he knew would be unacceptable to Mapam. Peres declared that there should be a full merger or nothing at all.

For Golda Meir, Mapam's main attraction was that it could help frustrate Dayan's and Peres's ambitions. For Levy Eshkol, Pinhas Sapir, the finance minister, Eban, and other Mapai stalwarts, however, there was another reason that was hardly less compelling. Mapam was a sure ally in the struggle that was rapidly developing and that was soon to become confounded with the power struggle itself—the struggle over what to do with the newly acquired territories and how much of them to return in exchange for peace.

Mapai had been Israel's governing party since the state came into existence. Its leaders understood and appreciated the limits imposed by international politics. Their ambition was solely to build a Jewish state. Though not precisely happy with the tortured borders that emerged from the War of Independence, they were ready to live with them if peace could be had. What they did not want, however, was to bring more Arabs under Israel's sovereignty. Israel's Arab minority, though unthreatening, was growing and would one day be substantial. The moral consequences of a bigger Arab population looked even more ominous to old-time idealistic Zionists than the practical political ones. The danger they saw was that the Arabs would, in the words of the Bible, become the hewers of wood and the drawers of water in the reborn land of Israel. The Jews would lose their intimate connection with the land, the bond upon which the whole Zionist enterprise was founded.

Mapam believed deeply in these values. After the war it continued to be the most dovish of all the parties in the mainstream of Israeli political life. In August 1967, Mapam published its own peace plan. It called for the return of all Arab territories taken in the war—except for Gaza, East Jerusalem, and Golan—in exchange for peace agreements. Foreign Minister Abba Eban, the Cabinet's leading dove, regularly found Mapam's leaders to be among his most enthusiastic backers.

It would have been impossible for the Labor Party to draw up a peace plan so specific as that of Mapam, because by the time the party was established, there were simply too many conflicting views on what to keep and what to give back. Yigal Alton's plan for keeping an Israeli security belt along the Jordan River, annexing some land to broaden Israel's thin mid-section, and handing back the heavily settled Arab areas of the West Bank to Jordan in return for a peace treaty won a substantial following in the Cabinet. One of the plan's main attractions was that the areas marked for retention would be largely devoid of Arab population— and thus open to Jewish settlement. Although wholly unrealistic as a basis for peace negotiations, the Allon plan, as it quickly came to be called, was a coup for Allon domestically because it made him seem a bold and imaginative thinker.

In June, Allon was to win another point. At a meeting of the Labor Party Knesset faction that month, Eshkol proposed that Allon be appointed deputy prime minister and be given the new portfolio of Immigrant Absorption Affairs that was about to be created. It looked as though Allon was being groomed for succession to Eshkol, and Golda Meir's hand was generally believed to be behind the move. Was this not the push she had tried but failed to give to Allon in May of 1967 when she backed him for the Defense Ministry? Eshkol, wiser after his May 1967

experience and bitter over what he saw as Dayan's unceasing efforts to steal all credit for the June 1967 victory, went along willingly with the move. The prime minister knew that Allon aspired to succeed him, but there was little danger from that quarter: Allon by himself did not have the political constituency. But bolstered by the new title—the job of deputy prime minister carried no authority except during the prime minister's absence— he would be more of a counterweight to Dayan.

The announcement of Alton's appointment caused an uproar among Dayan's allies in the Labor Party. Peres immediately objected that the move would have "far-reaching implications for the life of the Party," words that were evidently intended to make Eshkol and Meir fear that the Rafi faction might bolt. Menachem Begin's Herut party, a partner in the national unity government, complained that it had not been consulted about the appointment. Heruť's sympathies lay with Dayan. The Alton plan, with its proposal to give up large areas of the West Bank, had won the new deputy prime minister no popularity on the right. Heruť's newspaper, *Hayom*, saw sinister things afoot: The "Eshkol plan" for changes in the Cabinet, the paper said, went "hand-in-hand with the Alton plan for giving up the greater part of the territories of Judea and Samaria."[4] Eshkol, however, did not back down. On June 23, Allon officially became deputy prime minister.

Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Dayan and Chief of Staff Haim Bar Lev (David Rubinger/*Time* magazine; reprinted by permission)

The politicians who controlled the Labor Party had good reason to take their precautions

against Moshe Dayan. After the stunning victory of June 1967, Dayan was immensely popular with the public, and he assiduously cultivated that popularity. He had a personal magnetism that no other Israeli leader of the moment could match, and he made little effort to conceal his ambition or veil his contempt for his own party's leadership. The Dayan the public saw was a hero of legendary stature, a man who had lived with physical danger from his earliest years, as a young soldier in the Haganah and then as an officer in the War of Independence when he repeatedly exposed himself to enemy fire and led his troops into battle. The black patch that covered the wound done to his left eye in an engagement against the French in Syria during World War II might on another man have been merely pitiable. On Dayan it became a badge of mutilation and courage, a symbol of the nation's own suffering. It gave him an extraordinary allure that masked the ravages of middle age, the burgeoning paunch, the leathery skin, and the shiny bald pate.

The private Dayan was a darker and more tortured figure. A man of immense intelligence, he was subject to painful bouts of indecision and brooding and wild swings of mood; he could be gracious and charming at one moment and rude and cutting the next. His World War II wound affected him more than was commonly realized, for the pain of the damaged eye socket never disappeared. The blindness in one eye eventually affected his sight in the other. In later years, he had episodes of blurred vision and found it impossible to gauge moving objects or distances accurately. At times, he had trouble steering clear of obstacles. In 1978, in the Maryland woods of President Carter's Camp David retreat, Dayan one afternoon walked straight into a tree.[5]

In 1968, Dayan was to suffer another major injury, this time owing to his passion for archaeology. He was almost buried alive when a trench caved in on him during a dig in the Negev. The injury that was caused to his back left him with intermittent severe pain throughout the rest of his life.

The accident also exposed a less seemly side of Dayan's personality. Archaeology was a national pastime in Israel, and many archaeology buffs had antiquities that they had dug themselves and kept. But Moshe Dayan went beyond all measure and probably beyond the law in expropriating to himself treasures of Israel's past. Some Israelis regarded his collection of antiquities as theft on a grand scale; most simply preferred to ignore it.

The Israeli public reacted in much the same way to Dayan's amorous escapades. Sensuously handsome as a young man, Dayan remained until his very last years enormously attractive to women and almost addictively drawn to them. A wry collection of tales of Dayan's sexual exploits circulated in Tel Aviv society. But even those who disapproved usually chose to regard Dayan's frequent adventures as the forgivable peccadilloes of a war hero.

Beyond the element of personal rivalry and competition for power, there were real ideological differences between Dayan and Peres and their followers, and the old-time Zionists who controlled the Labor Party and, for the most part, the government. Those who flocked to Raft's banner were no-nonsense technicians who had little use for what they saw as the long-winded discourses and naive idealism of the early Zionists. They were typically in their forties or younger, and they were economists, journalists, university professors, engineers, and scientists. Socialism, capitalism, or statism—it was all the same to them. What they were concerned with was performance, getting the job done. Their critics called them "bitsouists," crass individualists interested only in efficiency, who cared nothing for or had no understanding of the moral consequences of their actions.

The charge was true, but it was also unjust. Dayan, Peres, and the many able people who gathered around them were Zionists of a new type, as ardent in their faith and, in some ways, as

naively idealistic as any who had come before them. As much as the pioneers of the early decades of the century, they had a vision. They saw the Israel of the future as a vital, dynamic state, a modern economy and society based no longer on agriculture and the land but on science and technology. Only in this way, they felt, could the Jewish state assure its survival amidst an Arab world infinitely more populous; and only in this way could it gain a distinguished place for itself among the nations of the world. They were supremely confident of their ability to change their environment for the better, and this confidence gave them a distinctly different view of relations between Israelis and Arabs from that of their older colleagues. They regarded the Arab population of the territories taken in the 1967 war less as a liability than as a challenge.

Not that they thought that this alien population could be made into good citizens of the Jewish state. Nevertheless, they did believe that the occupation offered an opportunity to build bridges to the Arabs under Israel's control and that, ultimately, this could change the nature of Israel's relations with Arabs elsewhere. Israel would teach the West Bank Arabs new techniques of agriculture, commerce, and industry. Joint commercial and manufacturing ventures could be undertaken by Jews and Arabs in partnership. Dayan, Peres, and their followers saw Israel's occupation of the new territories—in particular of the West Bank—as a not-to-be-missed opportunity to prove that Jews and Arabs could live side-by-side and work together peaceably and profitably. The success of Dayan's first daring moves after the war—in tearing down the walls that separated Israeli and Arab Jerusalem and in reopening the bridges across the Jordan River— seemed to bear out their faith.

For all its technological trappings, this vision differed little from the idealism of the early Zionists who thought the Arabs would surely welcome the Jews once they realized what blessings of progress would accrue to them from Jewish settlement. But the technocrats of the late 1960s had a practical goal in mind as well: If peace could not be had with the Arab states in the near future on terms acceptable to Israel, their program would, they hoped, make possible continued occupation without protest by the Arab population of the territories over an extended period—ten, fifteen, or even twenty years, by which time a settlement surely would have been reached. If peace came earlier, the foundations would be laid for fruitful cooperation across new borders.

Just where Dayan and his associates wanted these borders to be was never made clear. On this issue, Dayan was as much a puzzle to Israelis as to others. Much of the time the defense minister spoke in terms close or identical to those of Begin and the other annexationists. At other moments, he seemed ready to give practically everything back in return for peace.

The Allon plan had a catalytic effect on the debate on territory and security. Soon after it became public, Dayan's followers circulated a plan that they attributed to their man. It too called for an Israeli defense line on the Jordan River and Israeli settlements there, but it said nothing about giving back other parts of the West Bank. Eshkol, obviously concerned lest he be left behind in the bidding, also declared that the Jordan River would have to be Israel's security boundary in the east, but he was careful not to go so far as Allon and Dayan. He made clear that what he was talking about was a defense line, not necessarily a political boundary or an area for Jewish settlement.[6]

Dayan then upped the ante and added a whole new dimension to Israel's territorial claims. In a speech to Labor Party Knesset members on June 18, 1968, the defense minister proposed putting Israeli settlements in Sinai. He declared: "I regard Sharm el-Sheikh as an eternal base of the State of Israel. We must be there forever in a suitable place where we can prevent the entry of Egyptian forces from beyond Suez."[7] Dayan proceeded to take issue with the Foreign Ministry's

announcement of acceptance of Resolution 242. The resolution clearly meant, he said, that Israel should withdraw to the lines of June 4, 1967. There was no point in Israel's "playing word games of diplomacy by trying to put forward different interpretations." Under no circumstances should Israel agree to accept the resolution.[8]

Eban was seriously concerned that Israel's diplomatic position would be undermined. On June 19, with the Knesset as his forum, the foreign minister accused the defense minister of giving ammunition to the Soviets and the Arabs in their propaganda war against Israel. Eshkol backed his foreign minister. A few days later, the prime minister told a Kol Israel interviewer that only he and the foreign minister were authorized to set out Israel's foreign policy. On June 23, the Foreign Ministry announced that the government had again confirmed Ambassador Tekoa's May 1 statement to the Security Council affirming Israel's acceptance of Resolution 242.

The timing of this debate over territory and the UN Security Council resolution was hardly accidental. On June 27, the Labor Party convened the first meeting of its 450-member Central Committee, the arena in which Dayan and Peres hoped to press their drive to seize the reins of power. At the top of the agenda was a proposal put forward by Peres during the merger negotiations but shelved at the insistence of Golda Meir. It called for secret-ballot voting in the Central Committee. The old guard leadership saw this as a dangerous challenge to their authority. Party discipline depended on knowing who voted for and against each issue, on the leadership's being able to reward its supporters with patronage and to punish those who had strayed from the approved line. For Dayan and Peres, the secret ballot proposal offered hope for breaking the old guard's grip on the party apparatus.

Golda Meir was in the chair, and she brought speaker after speaker to the podium to argue against the proposal. The proposal, she declared, was an insult to the integrity of the comrades. It should be turned aside for that reason, if for none other. The comrades surely had nothing to hide from one another, and certainly none would be so unprincipled as to change their votes according to whether the ballot was secret or open. The majority, however, was unpersuaded, and the Rafi proposal carried. Dayan's supporters were jubilant. They had won the first vote in the new party's Central Committee, and the road to power now seemed open to them. They believed that by invoking the secrecy rule it would be possible to win the support of Central Committee members who inclined toward Dayan but feared that a vote in his favor would bring down upon them the wrath of the party bosses.

The June 27 vote soon had repercussions. On July 8, Golda Meir announced that she was resigning. She had long talked of retiring from political life, and she had agreed to stay in the job of secretary general of the Labor Party following the merger only on a temporary basis. She was seventy and had suffered from a circulatory ailment for years, and there were rumors that she had cancer. Meir told reporters that she was going to read the books that she had wanted but had not been able to read during all the years of her intense political activity and spend more time with her grandchildren. For now, she would keep her seat in the Knesset but did not expect to be a candidate in the next elections.

The encouragement Dayan, Peres, and their followers got from the June 27 vote and from Golda Meir's resignation was to be short-lived. The old guard leadership threw its strongest and most able figure into the breach. On Meir's recommendation, Finance Minister Pinhas Sapir was named to replace her.

Big, burly, and bursting with energy despite his sixty-three years, Pinhas Sapir was a powerhouse. His capacity for work was legendary. He regularly left young aides exhausted and complaining of his eighteen-hour workday and his frenetic pace. For Sapir, no moment of the

day was to be wasted; he was known to set appointments at street corners along his way to and from the office so that he could conduct business from his car window while waiting for a red light to change. Sapir was practically unknown outside Israel and not widely known inside it, but within the ruling party apparatus no one wielded more power. He came up through the Mapai ranks by sheer dint of hard work and brains. He never had the time, or, until too late, the means, for higher education, but he had a fine natural intelligence. His critics complained that he was uncultivated and uncouth. Even in this society where gracious living was not yet in fashion, Sapir's table manners were a subject of much snickering. An unfortunate lisp made it difficult for him to pronounce the Hebrew letter lamed, and this rendered his speech an object of amusement and sometimes ridicule by the younger generation of Israelis. Dayan and Peres took no pains to conceal their dislike of Sapir.

Sapir's first move as secretary general was to join battle with Dayan and Peres. The issue he chose was their demand, left unresolved in the merger negotiations, for the holding of an elected convention before the October 1969 Knesset elections. If they could win on this, after their victory on secret ballot, the way would be open for them to take over the party, and through it the government. Eshkol evidently had doubts about the wisdom of risking a head-on confrontation with Dayan and Peres, but he bowed to Sapir's judgement. Late in August, the new secretary general set out on a whirlwind tour of the Labor Party's local offices, ostensibly to get acquainted. Sapir made at least one hundred speaking appearances before local party groups and met individually with over three hundred Central Committee members. It was jokingly, but perhaps not inaccurately, said that he promised each a seat in the next Knesset.

His spade work done, Sapir then moved to convene the Labor Party Central Committee. It met on September 19, 1968, in the rundown Ohel Theatre just off Diezengoff Square in the heart of Tel Aviv. The entire membership was there. For more than five hours, speakers mounted the rostrum to present argument and counterargument. Neither side said what was really on its mind or acknowledged that behind the seemingly innocuous matter of early party elections lay the issue of who would be the next prime minister as well as what would be the position the government of Israel would take on peace and territories. Dayan came the nearest to doing so. When it came his turn to speak, he argued that the grass-roots membership must be given an opportunity to have its say before the next elections about the vital issues facing Israel. The party, he added, should give voters positive reasons for casting their ballots in its favor, not merely the negative reason that it was "less bad" than the opposition. Sapir and Meir agreed that elections should be held—the principle, after all, was irreproachable—but they warned that haste would be dangerous. Sapir produced a small coup de theatre by announcing that he was proposing a secret ballot for the evening's vote; he was ready to do battle on enemy terrain. When the count was completed, it showed a whopping victory for the Mapai leadership. Dayan's and Peres's motion for party elections before the 1969 Knesset elections was beaten by 252 to 164.

Peres had counted on Dayan's popularity and on the force of argument in favor of the democratic principle of elections to carry the day. Both of these assumptions were flawed. Dayan was enormously popular with the public, but he was distinctly unpopular with many of the party regulars. He was not a politician or a regular good fellow, and it was not in his nature to make deals. In the course of his relatively short political career, he had managed to make a very large number of enemies. But beyond this, what Dayan and Peres were asking was that the party's Central Committee vote an early term to its existence. This was not something that would easily have won acceptance under even the best of circumstances. To most Mapai and Achdut

delegates, however, the prospect of Dayan taking over the Labor Party did not simply mean replacing one man or set of men by another. It raised fears of a veritable purge, a revolution. Dayan was harshly critical of "the system" as it functioned in Israeli politics. He had proclaimed that he intended to change things drastically. This touched deep. It meant jobs and influence. Many in Mapai had been eager to have the defense portfolio handed over to Dayan in June 1967 when the public saw him as the only hope for the country's survival. Things were very different in September 1968. There were no Arab armies at the gates. There was no reason to commit political suicide.

In the weeks ahead, the contest between Dayan and Sapir sharpened. In mid-September the Cabinet, on Sapir's proposal, had voted to create a ministerial committee to oversee governmental activities in the occupied territories. Until that time—fifteen months after the June 1967 victory— the administration of the occupied territories had been left exclusively in the hands of the Defense Ministry. The move was clearly meant to curtail Dayan's authority. Dayan responded by resigning from the Bureau of the Labor Party. It was a warning that if pressed too hard, he might bolt the party and carry his campaign for the Prime Ministry directly to the people.

At the close of October, Sapir brought the Labor Party leadership's proposal for alignment with Mapam to a vote in the Central Committee and won another easy victory over Dayan and Peres.

All the rounds, so far, had gone to Sapir, and this, no doubt, made him confident that he could beat Dayan not only in party caucuses but in the public arena as well. Early in November, a sharp public debate broke out between Sapir and Dayan over the nature of Israel's ties with the West Bank and Gaza. In one of its meetings from which Sapir was absent, the ministerial committee for the occupied territories, on Dayan's recommendation, had approved measures that opened the way for a tiein between Israeli industry and that of the West Bank. For some time Dayan had been publicly advocating closer links between Israel and the occupied territories. He had made speeches calling for the forging of "common economic bonds such as water systems, electrical grids, and economic projects." He argued that some measure of economic integration of the West Bank and Gaza with Israel was essential.

Sapir deeply believed that this was wrong and that the steps Dayan advocated would eventually put Israel's very existence in jeopardy. Sapir wanted to get rid of the occupied territories just as fast as peace could be had, but in the meantime he wanted them kept as separate as possible from Israel itself. For this he favored the creation of an autonomous Palestinian entity. Challenging Dayan publicly, Sapir charged that disturbances on the West Bank that fall had proven the defense minister's occupation policy a failure; and he accused Dayan of having caused Israel to miss a chance in the first weeks after the June war to come to agreement with West Bank leaders on an entity that would offer them self-government. But Sapir's main argument was a warning: The steps advocated by Dayan would ultimately lead to the integration of large numbers of Arabs into Israel and make the achievement of peace difficult if not impossible.

A round of heated public exchanges ensued. Dayan accused Sapir of wanting to take Israel back to the prewar borders. He spoke sarcastically of "party secretaries who know how to organize elections" but fail to appreciate the Jewish people's attachment to Hebron.[9] This put Sapir squarely on the defensive. Sapir was able to get Eshkol to annul the ministerial committee's resolutions on the territories. In the sanctuaries of power, he could have his way. But Dayan won the public debate. Both Sapir and Dayan made speaking appearances in

Beersheba in November. For Sapir, an audience of fewer than one hundred showed up at an auditorium with a seating capacity of over one thousand. When Dayan spoke there a few days later, the same auditorium was packed, and a crowd of several hundred camped outside to hear his voice broadcast over loudspeakers. Dayan's campaign was made with speeches of powerful emotional appeal about Jewish attachment to the holy shrines of Judea and Samaria and to "the land of our forefathers." He insinuated that those who criticized him wanted to put Israel into danger of annihilation. Sapir's appeal was to reason, but the crowds tended to regard the danger he warned of as remote.

The debate between Sapir and Dayan continued intermittently into the early months of 1969. Sapir gradually ceased his attacks on Dayan, under pressure from Eshkol and later even more from Golda Meir to avoid jeopardizing the party's unity, but also, no doubt, because he realized that it was Dayan who was winning. Sapir's success in getting the ministerial committee resolutions reversed was to be only temporary. Over the longer run, Dayan's views were to prevail. In 1969 and 1970, Gaza was integrated into Israel's electrical power and water networks. Israeli economic and commercial ties with the West Bank multiplied, and thousands of Arab workers streamed daily from the territories into Israel to do the lowly paid, unskilled jobs for which insufficient Jewish labor was to be found. For Sapir and other old-line Zionists, the new ties with the West Bank were deeply disturbing. The technocrats welcomed them as a healthy beginning of a new era in relations between Israel and the Arabs.

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To find Menachem Begin in Israel's Cabinet was at first an odd sight, as much to Begin's own followers as to others. Begin's Herut party was the lineal descendant of Zeev Jabotinsky's "revisionists" who seceded from the Zionist Congress in 1933. Their origins lay in Betar, the Jewish paramilitary organization that had sprung up in Poland and the Baltic republics in the 1920s. Betar was the right-wing counterpoise to the socialist Zionists who drew their inspiration from the Marxist and socialist philosophers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Betar was of fascist inspiration, fashionable in that time when Mussolini's Italy seemed to be setting the standards and themes for Europe's future and before fascism took on its anti-Semitic cast. It was mystical, romantic, nationalistic, and very hierarchical and authoritarian. For the sons and daughters of the petty and middle Jewish bourgeoisie of Poland and Lithuania between the two world wars, it had a powerful appeal. It dressed them up in black uniforms and had them parade and salute, and they loved it.

It was as an officer in Betar in Poland in the 1920s that Begin first became prominent. Betar and Begin's philosophy and politics were abhorrent to Ben-Gurion and the socialist Zionists. The two fought one another from the moment Begin arrived in British mandate Palestine in the early 1940s. At the height of World War II, Begin launched a campaign of terrorism against the British. Ben-Gurion and Mapai, and others on the left, were appalled to see Jews attacking the British before the Nazi threat was eliminated. The Mapai leadership began to track Begin's terrorists down and to hand them over to the British authorities. From then until after Israel became independent, there was intermittent open warfare between the two sides. After independence, Begin and his Herut party remained in methodical opposition to Ben-Gurion and the Mapai governments. Just as methodically, Ben-Gurion shut them out. Ben-Gurion and his followers basically accepted the partition and the armistice lines that emerged from the 1948 war. Begin and his Herut movement did not; they dreamed of a greater Israel, its eastern border on the Jordan River, if not beyond.

Bespectacled, thin, and balding, Begin could easily have been taken for an accountant or a

small-town clerk. These appearances concealed an extraordinary strength of personality. Besides being a talented orator and a fierce debater, Begin ruled his movement with an iron hand. In Herut he was uncontested leader, hero, and sole policy maker. By the mid-1960s, Herut's authoritarianism and its grandiose territorial aspirations were beginning to make it look an anachronism, and it was losing strength at the polls. Some of its ideas may have been changing: In 1965, Begin told an officer of the American embassy in Tel Aviv that he felt Israel could live with the 1949 borders. In that same year, Herut contracted an alliance with the Liberal party. The combination that resulted was called Gahal (Gush Herut-Liberalim, or the Herut Liberal Bloc).

In many ways it was a strange combination. The liberals were a loosely knit group of professionals and business people, conservative in outlook but without any particular ideology. After the Liberals teamed up with Herut, and particularly after the 1967 war, what had been a marriage of convenience began to fuse into one of shared sentiment. The Liberals essentially adopted, though with occasional reservations, Herut's hard line on territories. Herut, for its part, shed the vestiges of its fascist-era nostalgia for state corporatism and embraced the free-enterprise philosophy of the Liberals. The Liberals had no acknowledged single leader; they were a party of peers. Their first-among-equals was Yosef Saphir, a bony, former school teacher and mayor of Petach Tikva. Saphir wore thick-lensed glasses that caused television cameras to magnify his eyes until they seemed to be bulging out of their sockets. When the Liberals joined with Herut in the fall of 1965 to form Gahal, they had 12 members of Knesset to Herut's 14.

Even this alliance might not have saved the two parties—or at least Herut—from gradual decline and eventual extinction, had it not been for the June 1967 war and Israel's seizure of the West Bank. As the first glow of victory began to fade, the justification for Begin's presence in the Cabinet began to be called into question, by his supporters as much as by his opponents. Herut began to feel uncomfortable about being part of the government. Not so the Liberals, for they knew the halls of power. For the aging terrorists of the 1940s, however, there was at first something unnatural about being part of the establishment. Among Mapai and its allies it was soon bruited about that Begin was enjoying the game, that he liked having a car and driver and savored being called "Mr. Minister." If this gossip got back to Begin, it must have stung him. He was not a vain or pretentious man, but he was extremely sensitive to ridicule.

It was in the diplomatic battle that raged in the UN throughout the summer and fall of 1967 that Begin found his justification for staying. He and Yosef Saphir entered the Cabinet in June 1967 at the moment of supreme national danger, but, insofar as Begin was concerned, the danger was still there. If it were not to be deprived of the fruits of the great victory, Israel would have to stand up not only to pressure from Arabs but from the great powers as well. By staying in the government, Gahal would strengthen its will and its ability to resist. Begin would see to it that the mistake of 1957 was not repeated.

Begin's followers delighted in describing him as the Cabinet's watch dog. He was there to guard the sanctity of the principles enunciated by it in the afterglow of victory: peace treaties—nothing less—achieved through direct negotiations only, and until achieved, Israeli forces would stay on the cease-fire lines. Not that Begin agreed that Israeli forces should be withdrawn even if peace was achieved or was achievable at that price. But he and his followers thought it highly unlikely that the Arabs would ever put Israel to the test. They saw the three Khartoum noes as confirmation that it simply would not happen.

The danger, as Begin and his followers saw it, came not mainly from the Arabs. Their fear was that the government of Israel itself would gradually yield to pressure from the United States or to threats from the Soviet Union and foresake its principled positions. Domestically, Begin's

attention focused mainly on Abba Eban. He kept the foreign minister under closest watch, scrutinized his formulations with the maddening eye of a talmudist, and, Begin's followers thought, made Cabinet meetings an agony for Eban. The truth was probably much less dramatic. Eban was no slouch when it came to defending himself; he may have found Begin no more than a mild nuisance. Still, in the matter of Tekoa's May 1, 1968, statement, Begin could claim to have caught Eban and Eshkol red-handed and to have forced them to at least partial retreat.

Early in 1969, Begin was to have another opportunity to prove his diligence in defense of the faith. At the beginning of February, *Newsweek* published an interview with Eshkol in which the prime minister was quoted as saying that he had no interest in keeping the West Bank cities of Nablus and Jenin and other heavily populated Arab centers. Eshkol added that he had let Nasser know that Israel did not intend to hold on to all the territory it had conquered. Heruťs *Hayom* sprung immediately to the attack: "The government has never decided to surrender Judea and Samaria," it trumpeted. "Judea and Samaria are part of the land of Israel, and no imposed settlement—not even one imposed by Mr. Eshkol—will deprive the nation of areas liberated by the blood of its sons."[10]

There were calls for Begin and Saphir to resign in protest over Eshkoľs remarks, and for a short while there seemed a consensus among the Herut rank and file in favor of resignation. Eshkol was in the throes of his last illness, but he was not about to see his government wrecked for the sake of a few words he had carelessly let drop. His office quickly issued a statement explaining that the text put out by *Newsweek* was not the one that had been agreed on between the prime minister and the interviewers and that the agreed text had not included the statement about giving up the West Bank. It was not a denial that Eshkol had said what the American news magazine attributed to him. But it gave Begin what he needed to vote against a no-confidence motion by a splinter right group. And two days after the vote, on February 13, Dayan went before a caucus of Herut and Liberal party leaders to make an ardent appeal for Gahal to stay in the Cabinet.

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An angry "I don't know what you are talking about," by her own account, was Golda Meir's first reaction when a reporter brought her word, only hours after Levy Eshkoľs death, that the party wanted her to be prime minister.[11]

If, as Meir said, she had no idea that she would be chosen, the news would have been even more startling to the Israeli public at that particular moment. The average citizen thought Dayan or Allon would succeed Eshkol. A poll taken by a Tel Aviv public opinion research firm the day after Eshkoľs death showed that those interviewed thought Dayan, Allon, and Sapir had the best chances. Only one percent named Golda Meir as a likely candidate. Since her retirement six months earlier, Meir had come to be regarded as no longer part of the current political scene.

Confusion was sufficiently thick that Alfred Friendly, one of the most distinguished names of American journalism of the time, could be misled into reporting that Yigal Allon would succeed Eshkol. Friendly arrived in Israel only a few days before Eshkol died. Gideon Rafael, director general of the Israeli Foreign Ministry, told Friendly and other foreign reporters that Allon, who had become acting prime minister upon Eshkoľs death, would soon be confirmed in the top job. The others knew enough to be leery of the story, but Friendly was taken in. He cabled it off and it was published in the *Washington Post* and the *International Herald Tribune*, much to his and the two papers' later embarrassment.

Rafael was well enough informed about Labor Party politics to know that Allon had little prospect of becoming prime minister. During her years as foreign minister, Meir had blocked

Rafael's advancement; he had no reason to be eager to see her emerge from retirement to become prime minister. Neither did Eban.

If Rafael (or Eban) was trying to influence the outcome through the foreign press, the effort was to be in vain. Even before Eshkol's death, Sapir had begun to plan for contingencies. His choice fell clearly on Golda Meir, and he was supported in it by other Mapai old guard figures. The reason was not solely—as has so often been said—to avoid a divisive struggle between Dayan and Allon. A fight was certain, but it was almost equally certain that Dayan would overwhelm his rival. That was something Sapir and others desperately wanted to forestall. They judged Golda Meir to be the only figure in the party sure to beat Dayan in a showdown vote, should it come to that.

Within hours of Eshkol's death, Sapir had gone into action, first getting Mrs. Meir's agreement and then rounding up support for her within the Labor Party and among its coalition partners. Dayan's followers urged him to declare his candidacy, but he made no move during the critical first days after February 26. If he was waiting for a popular draft, he was to be disappointed. The public was confused and passive. Not even Dayan's political allies of May 1967, Gahal and the National Religious Party, would come to his aid this time. By now, both had an eye on the elections scheduled for October. Gahal, in particular, was worried that with Dayan as prime minister the Labor Party might draw away a substantial segment of its constituency. On March 17, Golda Meir presented her government to the Knesset and got a massive vote of confidence.

Moshe Dayan had missed his chance, and he was bitter about it. He lost no time in saying so. "These days," he told a student assembly in Haifa on March 19, just forty-eight hours after the Knesset put its seal of approval on Meir's Cabinet, "I feel on the threshold, sometimes even over the threshold, more outside than inside the party. I feel like a foreign transplant there." He gave his endorsement to the "Dayan for prime minister" signature campaign that his supporters had launched some weeks earlier, and he promised to reach a final decision well before the October elections on whether to leave the Labor Party.[12]

Dayan's remarks sent shock waves through the Labor Party leadership. Some would have been delighted to see him break with the party and leave the government, but Meir did not want to start her term of office with a Cabinet crisis—not only for reasons of domestic policy. A new American administration had just come to office, and its first actions looked none too reassuring to Israel. In December, President-elect Richard Nixon had sent former Pennsylvania Governor William Scranton on a swing through the Middle East. At its conclusion, Scranton called for more "even handedness" in American policy, a clear suggestion that the United States should pay more attention to its relations with the Arabs and less to those with Israel. Since Eisenhower's time, the Republicans had been regarded as far less favorable to Israel than the Democrats. Scranton's remark sparked fears of a shift in America's Middle East policy. These fears seemed confirmed when, at the end of February, the new administration announced that it was accepting a proposal by France to convene a four-power conference—France, Britain, the Soviet Union, and the United States—to seek a settlement of the Middle East conflict. It sounded just like a forum for shaping the imposed settlement that de Gaulle had been calling for ever since the June 1967 war.

To face the threat from abroad, the prime minister wanted peace at home. She called Dayan in for a talk together with Israel Galili, who was quickly to become her own confidant and closest adviser. After that, relations between Dayan and Golda Meir improved markedly. In April, during one of her public addresses, Meir went out of her way to give Dayan a pat on the back.

Dayan reciprocated. He stopped talking as though he were planning to bolt the party. He could

not, however, control the momentum that he had already imparted to his followers. Shimon Peres continued throughout the spring of 1969 to give the impression that a split was inevitable. Those in favor of bolting began to agitate for a convention of delegates from the Rafi faction at which they hoped to force Dayan's hand. The convention met on July 7 in the Tel Aviv cinerama, its spacious auditorium packed with some two thousand Rafi faithful. Speaker after speaker mounted the rostrum to call, to the accompaniment of wild applause, for Rafi to leave the Labor Party and to run in the fall Knesset elections under Dayan's leadership. Dayan opened his address by saying that he personally did not want to bolt the Labor Party, did not want the responsibility for organizing a new party, and did not consider a split inevitable. These remarks were greeted by utter silence. Then, in almost the same breath, Dayan raised enthusiastic cheers by adding that it was impossible to split a party that had never been truly united. He complained bitterly of having been excluded from major Cabinet decisions, and he attacked Allon and Minister of Labor Yosef Almogi in scathing terms.

Golda Meir, invited by Dayan to speak to the convention, made an impassioned plea for unity. If Dayan was going to leave the Labor Party, the prime minister wanted to make sure the public understood he did so solely out of personal ambition. A split, she declared, would be a catastrophe for the country and a move that no one could justify for reasons of policy. This was not what the delegates wanted to hear. Meir was interrupted and heckled by shouts from the floor. She and Galili, who had come with her, left in a huff.

The cinerama rally left tempers frayed on both sides. But the issue of Dayan's position in the party and the Cabinet was to be settled once and for all only a few weeks later, behind the scenes at the convention the Labor Party held in August in preparation for the October Knesset eleetions. Moshe Dayan could not see any constructive role for himself as the head of a small opposition party. He was realistic enough not to delude himself about Rafi's electoral prospects if it went to the polls alone; that had been tried already in 1965, and it had not worked. He could not continue to hesitate, Hamlet-like, any longer. On August 11, the deal was cut. Meir promised Dayan that he would remain defense minister so long as she was prime minister. Peres was promised what he sought all along, a ministerial portfolio in the government to be formed after the elections.

At the convention itself, Dayan and Peres insisted that the party platform on foreign and defense issues state that in Sinai Israel would have to keep Sharm el-Sheikh together with a strip of land along the western shore of the Gulf of Aqaba connecting it to Israel. To the east, the Jordan River would have to be Israel's "security border." They pushed for the inclusion in the territories platform of a statement calling for the establishment of new Israeli settlements and for language in support of Dayan's program of economic integration.

Abba Eban argued vigorously against a platform so heavily tainted with annexationism, and Sapir supported Eban. But neither could win the backing of Golda Meir—the influence of both had been on the wane since she became prime minister—and Dayan's program was popular with the party rank and file. Finally, Israel Galili, who for the next four years was to be Meir's fixer within the party and the government, came up with what was called a compromise but that in fact gave Dayan and Peres what they wanted. The party's written platform remained a bland set of general principles; but an oral elaboration—called the "oral torah"— affirmed Israel's right to security arrangements at Sharm el-Sheikh, in eastern Sinai, and along the Jordan River, and gave a vague blessing to the idea of Jewish settlement, though without specifically mentioning the occupied territories.

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The August 1969 Labor Party convention confirmed Golda Meir's position as leader of the party and the government. Well before then it had become clear that she was not simply a compromise choice—as some had at first believed or pretended to believe—who was destined only to stay until October and then hand her office over to another. She evidently never had any intention, even at the start, of filling only an interim mandate. The office of prime minister infused her with tremendous psychic and physical energy. All trace of her supposed illnesses seemed to vanish as though by magic.

Golda Meir had the gift of plain and direct language and of simple, straightforward convictions. She became an immensely popular prime minister, in no small part because she—like Gamal Abdel Nasser in Egypt—knew so well how to articulate the aspirations and the fears of her people. She believed deeply and sincerely what she said, and this made her powerfully persuasive. In that strength lay her main weakness. Her critics joked that Golda Meir had not had a new idea since the 1920s. Though she had lived in the Middle East for more than forty years, her image of the Arabs could hardly have been more stereotyped. She denied absolutely that there existed a Palestinian people. She never tired of saying that she for years had challenged those who claimed peace was attainable to bring her a live Arab who would say publicly that he was ready to accept Israel and make peace with it. No one had been able to do it before, and she did not think anyone ever really would.

After the October elections, Meir moved to consolidate her coalition with the right wing by awarding Gahal another four portfolios, for a total of six, in her new Cabinet. Eban remained foreign minister but became largely a figurehead. The prime minister herself took over the reins of foreign policy, with Yitzhak Rabin in Washington and Galili and Allon in Jerusalem as her main advisers. Even Pinhas Sapir, to whom more than anyone else the prime minister owed her job, was relegated to the outer circle of advisers. Israel Galili, whose grave mien and wild white mane made him look the image of an Old Testament prophet—and who was equally unbending—was confirmed as a member of the inner circle. And once her relationship with Dayan was settled, he too was taken into the innermost councils.

8

The Powers

By the summer of 1968, Gunnar Jarring had found persistence to be no guarantee of success. Still, undaunted by his fruitless talks in New York in May and June with the Israeli, Jordanian, Egyptian, and Lebanese ambassadors to the United Nations, the imperturbable Swede set out in July for another tour through Jerusalem, Amman, and Cairo. In September, Jarring was back in New York again talking with Eban, Riad, and Jordanian Foreign Minister Rifai at the opening of the UN General Assembly. The obstacles were maddeningly the same: The two sides were absolutely at odds, both over the meaning of the withdrawal provision of Resolution 242 and over how the resolution should be carried out.

The Arabs insisted that the resolution called for full Israeli withdrawal back to the lines of before the June war; they made the passage on "the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war" their banner. No less doggedly, the Israelis pointed to the provision in the resolution on the right of every state "to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries." Eban would not say what his government considered secure and recognized boundaries to be, only that they would be different from the June 4, 1967, lines. The Arabs argued that the resolution needed no elaboration or further negotiation, only a timetable for Israeli withdrawal to the June 4, 1967, lines; once that was done, they would end the state of belligerency and everything would be settled. For Israelis, the resolution was a statement of principles only, a basis upon which the parties could negotiate the peace treaties that would set their new borders and define their new relationship.

Jarring decided to make one last try to see if he could find some common ground that would help him break the deadlock. At the beginning of March 1969, he flew off to the Middle East again and left with each of the parties a fourteen-point questionnaire. To his disappointment, but hardly to his surprise, the answers he received a month later were a regurgitation of earlier positions. Both Jarring and U Thant understood that there was nothing more to be done for the moment. Jarring packed his bags and went back to attend to business at his embassy in Moscow.[1]

Jarring was criticized for lacking imagination and initiative. The Egyptians were especially caustic in their comments about him.[2] Wholly unrealistically, they expected Jarring simply to wave a wand and make Israel retreat into its lair, and when that did not happen, they were bitter. The Israelis, for their part, kept the UN special representative under closest watch, continually reminded him that the terms of his mandate were narrowly limited, and warned him against taking initiatives except to bring themselves and the Arabs together for talks.

The truth of it was that Jarring had an impossible task. Even had he been the world's most persuasive mediator, which decidedly he was not, neither reason, cleverness, nor charm could have prevailed by themselves over each side's stubborn refusal to compromise. It remained to be seen whether the powers, with their cornucopia of arms and their treasuries, might be able to make that happen.

■ ■ ■

One of the first visits William P. Rogers made after Richard Nixon announced his appointment as secretary of state was to Joseph J. Sisco, the assistant secretary of state for International Organization Affairs in the outgoing Johnson administration. As he walked through the door of Sisco's office in the west wing of the State Department's sixth floor, the first thing Rogers said was "Joe, I want you on my team. I want you to take over Middle East policy."[3]

Rogers and Sisco had known one another for some years. On Sisco's recommendation, Rogers was appointed in the mid-1960s to serve a term as United States representative on the United Nations committee that dealt with what was, at the time, the obscure issue of South West Africa, the former German colony being held by the government of South Africa in defiance of the UN. In this job Rogers worked closely with Sisco. He was enormously impressed by the extraordinary drive and dynamism and the savvy judgement and resourcefulness of this unusual State Department officer. Rogers himself had no foreign policy experience other than what he had gleaned during that one session in New York. But when he learned that he was to be secretary of state, he immediately thought of Sisco.

Joseph John Sisco was a phenomenon at the State Department. The son of poor immigrants from the Italian mezzogiorno, Sisco grew up in a Chicago tenement with a burning ambition for education. To pay his way through Knox College he worked as a copyboy and reporter on a local newspaper, and he taught high school briefly before going into the army in World War II. After the war, Sisco took his GI Bill and went to the University of Chicago, where he did a doctorate in international relations under two of the most distinguished educators of the day in that field, Hans Morgenthau and Quincy Wright. He first thought to follow them in a career in academia, but Morgenthau—probably realizing that his pupil was ill suited for the reflective life—advised him to get some experience in government before going on to teach. So in 1951, Sisco went to Washington to take a job near the bottom of the ladder in what was then the State Department's United Nations Bureau.

In the early 1950s, the State Department was still largely an Ivy League preserve. It had not seen and was not prepared for anyone quite like Joe Sisco. Much later as president of American University in Washington, he would tell students who came to ask his advice about a career in the Foreign Service to "act from the beginning as if you are secretary of state; get your piece of paper in first." Sisco was always there first. He learned the UN and Washington from top to bottom, knew all their intimate details and figured every angle. And, he rose at what, for the bureaucracy, was astronomical speed, first to deputy director of the State Department's important Office of UN Political Affairs, then director, then deputy assistant secretary in the renamed Bureau of International Organization Affairs, and then, in 1965, to assistant secretary. Along the way, he transferred from the civil service to the Foreign Service but never served abroad. When a panel of senior Foreign Service officers sought to hold up his promotion to one of the service's top two ranks on grounds—or pretext— that he had no overseas experience, Secretary of State Dean Rusk promptly reconvened the recalcitrant panel and issued it new instructions; Sisco got his promotion.

For Sisco, there was nothing like the exhilaration of being in on the making of policy. He called it "psychic income." He was indefatigable and infinitely resourceful, and nothing could keep him from the job. One winter morning when Washington awoke to find itself immobilized under a thick blanket of new snow, Sisco hailed a snowplow and talked the driver into taking him from suburban Maryland all the way to the State Department in Foggy Bottom. Unlike traditional Foreign Service officers who cringed at the thought of taking domestic American

political considerations into account in their recommendations, Sisco understood that this really was the heart of the matter. He knew that secretaries of state wanted and needed someone who could help them figure out how to mesh what was right in foreign policy with what was necessary in politics at home.

Rogers wanted Sisco for the job of assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs. NEA, as the bureau was known, was considered the preserve of the State Department's Arabists, officers who had served in the Arab countries. Many of them had studied Arabic, but even those who did not know the language had lived and worked in the Arab world. This shared experience shaped a common outlook on the Arab-Israeli dispute that was far more understanding of the Arab side of the story than of Israel's. Sisco had never had direct responsibility for the Middle East. But in his job as assistant secretary for International Organization Affairs he had been deeply involved in U.S. diplomacy toward the Arab-lsraeli conflict. In 1967, Sisco had spent almost the entire time of the Middle East debates, from June through November, at the UN. There he had been Arthur Goldberg's right-hand man, and he had given invaluable help to Goldberg in hammering out the texts that led to Resolution 242 and in winning approval for that resolution. His association with Goldberg marked Sisco as pro-Israeli. Even after Sisco was confirmed in his new job, the Arabists in the Bureau of Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs and the Arab governments and their ambassadors in Washington for some time regarded him with suspicion.

U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Joseph J. Sisco in Jerusalem with Israeli Foreign Minister Abba Eban (David Rubinger/Time Magazine; reprinted by permission)

Rogers wanted Sisco for the Middle East job because Nixon had told Rogers that the Middle East was to be his special assignment. The president was worried about the area and wanted the secretary of state to do something about it. Rogers knew that Nixon intended to handle the other big issues himself, in particular Vietnam and East-West relations. Still, Rogers expected to have a say in these matters, or at least to be kept informed.

Bill Rogers' friendship with Richard Nixon went back some twenty years. He had helped Nixon through the Checkers crisis and had been attorney general in the Eisenhower administration. Tall, handsome, and dignified, Rogers looked the part of secretary of state. That he lacked experience in foreign policy did not seem to matter to Nixon. In fact, it may have fitted in with Nixon's plans.

From his time as vice-president, Nixon had come to view the State Department as a bureaucratic maze incapable of quick, decisive response. His trips abroad had brought him too much into contact with the cookie-pusher type of American diplomat. Nixon recognized that Sisco was an entirely different breed, and he quickly acquired a deep respect for and confidence in the assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs. Over the course of Nixon's presidency, Sisco was to meet with him on dozens of occasions, at times even alone. No other assistant secretary, indeed, no other senior official of the State Department except Rogers, enjoyed the direct access to the president that Sisco had.

Nixon's preoccupations, however, went well beyond the Middle East. The success of his presidency, he knew, would hinge on whether he could find an honorable way to extricate the United States from the morass of Vietnam into which Lyndon Johnson had plunged it. To help him accomplish this, and to exploit the opportunities he saw for the transformation of big-power relations, Nixon chose Henry Kissinger, a Harvard professor whose geopolitical views coincided with his own, to be his national security adviser. The sheer contrast between Kissinger, the owlish Austrian Jewish refugee whose speech still bore the imprint of his origins and who had made his mark as a brillant thinker and writer in academia, and Rogers, the Anglo-Saxon elite eastern-establishment lawyer, could hardly have been more striking.

Kissinger moved in to take over an important segment of Rogers' territory even before the secretary of state was sworn in. Rogers appointed Richard Pedersen, the deputy U.S. representative to the UN, to help him organize his transition to the State Department. Pedersen saw that Kissinger was rigging the bureaucratic machinery so as to assure that he, not Rogers, would control it. Pedersen tried to warn Rogers, but the secretary of state did not want to believe that he could be cut out. The key, he said, was not bureaucratic organization but his personal relationship with the president. By the time Rogers realized his error, it was too late to do anything about it.

It was not long before relations between the secretary of state and the national security adviser became strained. Nixon later wrote in his memoirs that Kissinger bridled at his assigning Middle Eastern problems to Rogers.[4] Kissinger did not think Rogers had the skill or the sense of foreign policy strategy to conduct major diplomacy. Rogers thought Kissinger power hungry, deceitful, and arrogant. He came to suspect that behind Kissinger's objections to the Middle East initiatives that were to be developed by the State Department lay a desire to deprive him of any role at all in the making of foreign policy.

For the next two years, Rogers was to put his name on U.S. Middle East diplomacy, but Sisco was to be the powerhouse behind that diplomacy, the man with the ideas and the energy and the bureaucratic skills to put them into practice. When he went to see Rogers to tell him he accepted the job of assistant secretary for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, Sisco already had

thoughts about how to proceed. He felt the time was ripe to move from the passive Middle East diplomacy of the Johnson administration to a more active phase. Jarring, for all his persistence, had no real leverage with the Arabs or the Israelis; as Stalin had remarked of the Pope, he had no divisions. He was completely bogged down.

Richard Nixon came to office both with a good grasp of the fundamentals of the Arab-Israeli conflict and with a predilection for dramatizing its dangers. In a press conference on January 27, just a week after his inauguration, the new president called the Middle East "a powder keg, very explosive." He proposed that the United States and the Soviet Union cooperate to reduce the risk of another war and the consequent danger of confrontation between the two nuclear powers.[5]

In fact, Nixon was worried less about the danger of another Arab-Israeli war—Israel's military preponderance seemed to make that prospect remote—or a U.S.-Soviet confrontation in the Middle East than about the advantage that the diplomatic and military impasse gave the Soviets in the Arab world. In private councils, he spoke freely of his concern in this regard.[6] Ever since the June 1967 war, the Soviets had tried to cast themselves as the one and only big-power friend of the Arabs and the defenders of their cause. America's relations with the Arabs were at the lowest ebb in their history. In the new administration's view, Lyndon Johnson's policy amounted to letting the Arabs stew until they decided to make peace with Israel on its terms or until they found the resources again to make war. Nixon felt that unless the United States became more directly involved in efforts to arrange a settlement, the Soviet Union's position in the Arab world would be progessively strengthened and American influence and interests would be jeopardized.

Even before the American elections of the fall of 1968, the Soviets had begun to show an interest in talking with the United States about the Middle East. In September, they gave the United States a "peace plan" for the area, and, in December, they came forward with a second one. Neither was judged realistic by the Americans, but the December proposal did show that the USSR was ready to put some distance between itself and the maximum Arab positions. Also in December, the Soviets proposed talks with the United States on the Middle East. Sisco had State Department analysts do a study of what the Soviets had been saying publicly and privately about the Middle East over the previous year. Its conclusions were encouraging.[7]

Though the Americans could not know it, these Soviet initiatives grew directly out of the visit Nasser had made to Moscow in July of 1968, his first to the Soviet capital since the defeat. The top item on the Egyptian president's agenda was more Soviet arms with which to liberate the territories Israel had seized in the June 1967 war. The Soviets, who had already done a lot in this area, responded by pressing for more diplomatic efforts. Nasser was persuaded that diplomacy would be of no avail. He made it clear to Leonid Brezhnev that he himself could not negotiate with the Israelis or with the Americans, but he offered to let the USSR try. After all, he calculated, he had nothing to lose. If the Soviets did manage to pry the Israelis loose from their conquests through diplomacy, it would be as much a coup for Egypt as for them; and if they did not, they would see—as he did—that the only solution was war, and they then presumably would be more fully responsive to Egypt's requests for arms. So a deal was done. Nasser authorized the Soviets to negotiate with the Americans on his behalf. The Soviets, for their part, promised that they would not commit themselves to anything to which Egypt did not agree.[8]

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Richard Nixon's aides found him basically skeptical that the Soviets would really see it in their interest to have the Arab-Israeli conflict put to rest other than on terms that would allow them to parade as the Arabs' champions and saviors. But when the Soviets made clear, even before his inauguration, that they wanted to engage the new administration in talks on the Middle

East, he was ready to try.

Nixon admired the Israelis for their toughness. He was fond of saying that they didn't allow themselves to be pushed around. His courtship of the Jewish vote in his run for the presidency fell far short of his hopes, for most American Jews held to their traditional affiliation with the Democrats. This, however, did not change Nixon's views of the power politics of the Middle East. Israel was the client of the United States, and the radical Arab states, Egypt, Syria, and Iraq were the clients of the USSR. The United States would not sell out its side. But Nixon wanted to test the Soviets, and William Rogers was eager for the assignment. At the close of the first National Security Council policy review meeting on February 1, Nixon told Rogers and Sisco that he did not think the Soviets wanted war in the Middle East. What he wanted to find out was whether they wanted peace or merely controlled tension.[9]

The problem was how to go about finding out. De Gaulle was continuing to press for four-power talks. Lyndon Johnson had been undisguisedly disdainful of the French president's pretensions. When first told of the French proposal for a meeting on the Middle East of the "four great powers," he is said to have asked sarcastically, "Who are the other two?"[10] Nixon admired de Gaulle, and Kissinger spoke almost reverently of him. Both thought it important to open a new chapter in relations between the United States and France. Kissinger arranged that Nixon's first trip abroad, made only a few weeks after his inauguration, should be to Paris.

Sisco knew it was inevitable that de Gaulle would bring up his proposal for four-power talks and that Nixon would agree, not because he thought it the right way to proceed, but simply to assuage the French president's considerable ego. In no other respect did the four-power forum have anything to commend it. The French were sure to line up with the Soviets in demanding full Israeli withdrawal without any binding commitment by the Arabs to peace. This was a position the United States could not endorse. The British, given that their overriding interest lay in protecting their commercial ties with the Arabs, were sure to be at least halfway in the Soviet-French camp, and, with their other half, they were not likely to be of much help to the Americans. (When the four-power talks did start in April, they were called in the State Department—more in earnest than in jest—the two and one-half- to one-power talks.) The United States would find itself alone and possibly under pressure even from its allies. And the Israelis would surely dig in their heels fiercely, not only against whatever came out of the four-power deliberations but also against the forum itself. They would be no better disposed toward the idea of the Americans talking alone with the Soviets, for there they would see the danger of a gradual erosion of U.S. support, the beginning of an imposed settlement, and a legitimization of the Soviet Union's presence in the Middle East.

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All these arguments were taken into account, but Rogers and Sisco were nonetheless eager to have a try at the Middle East problem, and they felt they had Nixon's support. Still, de Gaulle's four-power forum was not the place for a serious test of Soviet intentions. After the February 1 National Security Council (NSC) meeting, Sisco hit on an idea. In a memorandum from Rogers to the president, he had the secretary of state recommend two parallel sets of talks, among the four in New York at the UN, and between the United States and the Soviet Union in Washington.[11] The Washington talks would be the serious ones and would set the policy and the pace, and Sisco would represent the United States in them. Ambassador Charles Yost in New York would take his guidelines from the reports Sisco would send on the meetings in Washington, and he would be strictly enjoined not to go beyond what was said there. De Gaulle would get public satisfaction and the United States, it was hoped, would get a serious

opportunity at probing the intentions of the USSR.

Yost made clear that he did not like this arrangement, for it made of him a mere echo of Sisco in Washington.[12] But there was nothing he could do about it. The president approved Rogers' recommendation, and, on March 4, Nixon, Rogers, and Sisco met with Soviet Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin to launch the talks. On March 18, Sisco and Dobrynin held their first session. Their talks were to stretch over a period of more than eight months and to produce a comprehensive and detailed U.S. proposal for a settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Sisco soon found that the Soviet ambassador, for all his legendary sophistication, did not know much about the Middle East.[13] He was a very cautious negotiator, and it became obvious that Moscow was holding him on a tight leash. The first issue was what to talk about. The Soviets wanted everything put on the table in their discussions with the Americans. They wanted to draw up a plan for an overall settlement between Israel, Egypt, Jordan, and Syria. Syria's retreat into a fanatical refusal even to think about the possibility of settling its differences with Israel short of war did not leave the Soviets free to ignore their obstreperous client. A settlement between Egypt and Israel would leave Syria to face Israel alone, powerless both militarily and diplomatically. The Americans wanted to limit their talks with the Soviets to Egypt and Israel only. Until Syria accepted Resolution 242, they argued, its case could not be given serious consideration. As for Jordan, Washington had no need to talk with Moscow about how to provide for its own client, and it had no intention of helping the Soviets plant their foot in the door in Amman.

A compromise of sorts ensued. The bilateral talks, in which the serious business would be done, would address only a settlement between Egypt and Israel. The four-power talks, which both the Americans and the Soviets regarded as essentially for show, would deal with all aspects of the conflict.[14] The Soviets could then assure the Syrians that they were not abandoning them, that they were working for a commitment for Israeli withdrawal from all the Arab territories taken in the war.

As Sisco laid out the American position in the opening meetings, Dobrynin protested repeatedly that what the American side was asking would require concessions from Egypt that the USSR would find very hard to extract. To be acceptable to the United States, Sisco made clear, any agreement would have to provide for direct negotiations between Israel and Egypt at some stage. These talks could be indirect under Jarring's auspices at the beginning, but before the end the two sides would have to come face-to-face. The agreement itself would have to be a binding contractual one, signed by both parties, not the unilateral pledge to the UN that Egypt wanted. Not only would it have to end the state of belligerency, it would also have to include the essential elements of peace. There would have to be free passage for Israeli ships through the Gulf of Aqaba and the Suez Canal; Sinai would have to be demilitarized after the Israeli army withdrew; and there might have to be special security arrangements at Sharm el¯Sheikh. Israel would have to take back Palestinian refugees, but Egypt would have to agree to a limit on the number that were to return.

For the Soviets it was a lot to ask. Dobrynin cautioned that before he himself could table positions, or react to American positions, his government would have to clear everything, step-by-step, with Cairo. The Americans at first thought this an excuse to delay setting out the Soviet position. But, little-by-little, the American team began to see that the Soviets were dealing in earnest. What they learned outside the meetings in Sisco's conference room was even more encouraging than what they heard in the meetings. From intelligence sources, it became known in April and May that the Soviets were exploring with the Egyptians—much to the latter's astonishment and chagrin—the idea of minor border changes in Sinai, as well as an American

proposal that Gaza be turned over to Jordan rather than handed back to Egypt to administer.[15] On border changes the Soviets had no luck, but the United States learned that the Soviets were able to get the Egyptians to abandon their insistence on giving only a unilateral pledge to the United Nations. They conceded to the Soviets that an agreement, if reached, would take the form of a signed document between themselves and Israel. In June, the Americans learned that the Soviets were pressing the Egyptians on other important elements of the American program.

After each of his meetings with Dobrynin, Sisco's staff drafted a detailed report, often working late into the night. To protect these reports from press leaks, Sisco created a special super secret communications channel for them, but he took care to assure that they were sent immediately to Rogers, to the White House, to Yost in New York, to Ambassadors Walworth Barbour in Tel Aviv and Harrison Symmes in Amman, and to Bergus in Cairo.

From the field, Sisco frequently got warm messages of support and encouragement. Not, however, from Henry Kissinger. Though Kissinger quickly came to admire Sisco's initiative and inventiveness, he was not among those who were impressed upon reading the reports of Sisco's meetings with Dobrynin.

Henry Kissinger was the first to admit that, on taking office as national security adviser, he knew very little of the Middle East. He had made three brief private visits to Israel in the 1960s, but he had never been to an Arab country. The first time he heard someone recite the phrase from Resolution 242 about the need for a just and lasting peace within secure and recognized borders he thought it so platitudinous that he did not believe the speaker could be serious.[16] But none of this deterred him from entertaining the most trenchant views about how to deal with the conflict between Arabs and Israelis. What Kissinger found frustrating was that he was not wholly free to express his views.

Nixon never bothered to explain to Kissinger his decision to leave to Rogers the conduct of diplomacy toward the Middle East. Kissinger was fond of saying privately that it was the bone the president had decided to throw to his old friend Bill Rogers.[17] Kissinger also suspected that it had something to do with his being Jewish; Nixon did not trust him to be balanced and objective when it came to dealing with the differences between Israel and the Arabs.[18] He consoled himself with the thought that the gift Nixon had made to Rogers was a poisoned one, so slender were the prospects for success.

Kissinger, nonetheless, initially told senior officials of the State Department that he was not anxious to involve himself in Arab-Israeli issues. On more than one occasion, he assured Sisco that he supported what the State Department was doing. Sisco soon learned not to take Kissinger seriously on either count. As telegrams drafted in the department's Bureau of Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs and approved by Rogers— without Kissinger's clearance—multiplied, the national security adviser began to object and to ask for a say.[19] Sisco found himself caught between the secretary of state and Kissinger. Rogers insisted that the cables did not involve any fundamental change in policy and directed Sisco not to clear them with the national security adviser. Kissinger was equally insistent. State Department cables, he said, were tactical moves without a strategy; they had to be cleared by the White House.

Sisco often felt like a Ping-Pong ball. The experience of being caught in the middle between powerful rival figures was not a new one for him. He had had it before with secretaries of state and strong American ambassadors to the United Nations but never so painfully. When he did send cables to the White House for clearance, he found that they sat forever on Kissinger's desk. Frequently, events had already moved before he could get Kissinger's approval. Both Sisco and Harold Saunders, Kissinger's NSC staff director for the Middle East, realized that something had

to be done. Kissinger had instructed Saunders not even to talk with Sisco. Saunders knew this was no way to run a government. Saunders, Sisco, and Sisco's deputy, Alfred L. Atherton, kept in touch quietly, without telling either of their bosses what they were about. Their informal exchanges helped avoid misunderstandings, though some still did occur. At the same time, Sisco began to cultivate his own relationship with Kissinger.

Rogers and Sisco felt they had no reason to doubt the president's support for the talks with the Soviets and for the way they were being conducted. Nixon frequently called Sisco at his office or at his home to get a first-hand report on the progress of the talks, and he invariably added words of encouragement.[20] Kissinger, evidently, did not know about these conversations, but if he had, it would probably not have made him any less unsympathetic to the State Department's enterprise. In Kissinger's view, the time was simply not ripe for negotiations. The positions of the two sides were too far apart. Kissinger saw every bellicose Arab statement as confirmation of his analysis that negotiations could serve no useful purpose. Though the State Department argued that stalemate worked to the detriment of the United States, Kissinger theorized that lack of progress would make the Arabs realize that the Soviets could not help them and that they needed the United States. When that happened, Soviet standing in the Arab world would deteriorate. Kissinger was sure that a continuing deadlock would serve American interests, that it would eventually make the Arabs come around. Rogers and Sisco and the professional staff at the State Department thought deadlock more likely to drive the Arabs to extreme measures, ultimately to war.[21]

With Nixon, Kissinger used his arguments to undercut Rogers and Sisco whenever and wherever he could and to disparage the State Department's effort.[22] Nixon's frustration with the Soviets over Vietnam also gave Kissinger a potent weapon. He argued repeatedly, and often suecessfully, for linkage—for the United States to put pressure on the Soviets on Vietnam by going slowly in the talks on the Middle East. To justify doing this, Kissinger argued that the Soviets needed the talks more than did the United States.

Kissinger undercut the State Department's effort in another more subtle, yet ultimately more damaging, way. Despite Nixon's injunction that he should not conduct diplomacy on the Middle East, Kissinger left his door wide open to Yitzhak Rabin. From the first days of the new Republican administration, Rabin was a frequent visitor to Kissinger's office. The Israeli ambassador frequently went to Kissinger to complain both about the talks and about Sisco's eagerness to make them show results. State Department officials soon began to hear echoes of Rabin's conversations with Kissinger and with others that made them suspect that Kissinger was telling the Israeli ambassador not to worry about the two- or four-power talks; they were the State Department's initiative. What mattered was the White House position, which Kissinger either implied or said directly was different.[23]

Kissinger's duplicity was to have the most serious consequences over the long term, for it let the Israelis know that they would be free to reject whatever came out of the talks without penalty in their relations with the United States. Over the short term, however, it may have helped steady Rabin's nerves. Throughout his time in Washington, Rabin lived in fear that the Soviets would manage to chip away at the U.S. position to the point where the Americans would agree to most of the Soviet and Arab positions.[24] At no time had he better reason to worry than in the spring of 1969. Yet when his deputy at the embassy, Minister Shlomo Argov, came to him at the end of April to propose that Israel raise a public outcry against the U.S.-Soviet talks, Rabin sought to calm him. Argov wanted to send a cable to Jerusalem recommending a public campaign, even at the risk of causing a crisis in relations between the United States and Israel. Rabin let Argov send

his cable, but he added a paragraph of his own to make clear that he disagreed with Argov's proposal.[25]

After Sisco and Dobrynin's first round of meetings, there was a lull at the end of April and early May. In the second half of May, Sisco gave the Soviets a full-scale proposal for a settlement between Egypt and Israel. In the second week of June, Gromyko went to Cairo for a talk with Nasser, and, on June 17 the Soviets came back to Sisco with a proposal of their own, their first since the beginning of the talks. The paper showed that the Soviets had moved a considerable distance from the positions that they had taken in their proposals of September and December 1968. They were now ready to endorse the idea of a binding agreement between Egypt and Israel—not simply a unilateral pledge by Egypt—and to agree that Egypt must recognize Israel's right to exist.

Rogers and Sisco were encouraged. The Soviets proposed that the talks move to Moscow for the next round. As he prepared for the trip to the Soviet capital, Sisco asked to be authorized to play the trump card that he had been holding in reserve since the talks began in March, the proposal that the United States would endorse full Israeli withdrawal from Sinai if the Soviets would agree to the other American terms—to negotiations between Israel and Egypt pursuant to the 1949 Rhodes formula (in other words, first indirect and later direct), to a contractual agreement establishing the essential elements of peace, and to demilitarization of Sinai.

For despite the formula on withdrawal that Goldberg devised in November 1967, it had remained the prevailing view in Washington that, in a peace settlement, Israel would have to pull all the way back to the international border between British mandate Palestine and Egypt. The principle that Israel should return all of Sinai to Egypt in the framework of an agreement was endorsed in the NSC meetings in February, but held as a fallback position, to be used when it might clinch agreement or help move the talks to a final stage. But now, when it seemed that that moment might be at hand, Kissinger opposed giving Sisco authority to use it. He grudgingly acknowledged that the Soviet paper had some positive elements, but he argued that it was still far too little. Nixon sided with his national security adviser, and Sisco went off to Moscow essentially empty-handed.[26]

Out of Sisco's talks with Gromyko and Deputy Foreign Minister Vinogradov did come a draft that combined the U.S. and Soviet papers, but there were still large gaps between the positions of the two sides. Gromyko assured Sisco that the USSR was seeking common ground with the United States on the Middle East, but he insisted that all elements of a peace agreement should be worked out by the United States and the USSR with as little as possible left for negotiation by the parties. To this, Sisco replied that room had to be left for Israel and Egypt, and the other Arabs, to work out for themselves the nature of their peace and their security arrangements. If the Soviets could not bring Egypt along to make clearcut commitments to peace and to direct negotiations at some stage, the United States could not be expected to exercise influence with Israel on the matter of withdrawal. The Soviets pressed hard for Sisco to commit the United States to full Israeli withdrawal from Sinai, but Sisco's instructions gave him no leeway on this point. He simply repeated the formula that he had used all along with Dobrynin, that Israel's withdrawal from all of Sinai was "not necessarily excluded."[27]

The Moscow meetings were a disappointment. In the cable he sent Rogers and the president before leaving the Soviet capital, Sisco reported that little real progress had been made. His talks with Gromyko left him persuaded that the Soviets were ready to live with the status quo. He saw no evidence that they were willing to press Nasser to take a more conciliatory position. Soviet strategy seemed to be to try to chip away at the American position.[28]

The Soviets, for their part, seem to have been no less disappointed than the Americans. In later conversations, Soviet diplomats told their American colleagues that since they had made important concessions in the June 17 paper, they had expected Sisco to come to Moscow with something to offer. One of them related that Gromyko, in briefing his staff after the talks, said he had probed the Americans hard for encouragement but had found none.

At Nixon's instruction, Sisco went from Moscow to Bucharest, where the president was on a state visit, to brief him. Sisco found that Nixon had read his cables from Moscow and had underlined key passages. Nixon had already drawn his conclusions. "Joe," he said, "the goddam Russians don't seem to want a settlement." We should play it cool, Sisco replied, and let the Soviets come to us. The United States had put forward a sensible proposal and should stick to it. The ball was in the Soviet court. Nixon agreed. It was up to the Russians to make the next move.

By September, however, the proposition that the United States could simply afford to wait for the Soviets to come around was beginning to look increasingly doubtful, at least to the State Department. As the October Israeli elections approached, the Labor Party seemed on the point of making Dayan's demand for retention of Sharm el-Sheikh and eastern Sinai a part of its official platform. Fighting along the Suez Canal, begun in March, was escalating, and Israel was now sending its American-made warplanes to bomb Egyptian positions on the canal's west bank. On September 11, another NSC meeting was held, and Rogers asked for authority to use the fallback position on Israeli withdrawal in the talks he was to have with Gromyko at the UN later that month. To this Kissinger replied with his, by now familiar, argument that deadlock was in the interest of the United States. This time it had a slightly new twist: It was not the United States but the Soviets who faced a predicament. They could get out of it only with American help. If the United States stayed calm, sooner or later the Soviets would come to them. After all, Israel, America's client, was the stronger party, and if the Arabs started another war, they would surely lose. Nixon again sided with Kissinger. Rogers was instructed not to reveal the fallback position.[29]

Sisco, however, was authorized to resume his talks with Dobrynin. In meetings late in September and early October, the Soviet ambassador offered the Americans an important concession: Egypt would accept Rhodes-style talks, a formula that could be interpreted as meaning either direct or indirect negotiations according to one's preference because both types of negotiations took place during the 1949 armistice negotiations on the Greek island. There was more encouraging news as well. The Americans learned from intelligence sources that Gromyko was pressing the Egyptians to accept the formula proposed by the United States for settlement of the Palestinian refugee problem, in other words, repatriation of one hundred thousand refugees over a ten-year period, with Israel having a right of refusal against those it deemed unready to live in peace with their Jewish neighbors.

Armed with these Soviet concessions, Rogers and Sisco once again pressed for authority to present the fallback position. But now there were other reasons as well. The delivery of the first American F-4 Phantom aircraft to Israel in September caused the Arab world to erupt in furious protest. For the Soviets, this offered a ready-made opportunity for propaganda against the United States, and they had no scruples about seizing it. In their broadcasts to the Arab world the Soviets were saying that the United States opposed Israel's withdrawal. Sisco wanted to get Washington's true position on the record.

Kissinger once more objected, but this time Nixon overruled him. The president doubted that Israel could be persuaded to withdraw from all of Sinai, but he thought it important that the United States be on record as favoring it. He was sensitive to the State Department's argument,

and he believed that if Arab leaders knew the United States was taking a fair position it would be easier for them to make moves to improve relations.[30]

By this time, however, a storm of public and congressional criticism was gathering against what Kissinger liked to call "State's initiative." At the end of September, Golda Meir had made her first visit to the United States as prime minister. With her direct and sincere manner, Meir held American audiences in rapture. She bluntly told Nixon and American Jewish community leaders of her objections to the Soviet-American talks. So while giving Rogers and Sisco the go-ahead, in the hope of conciliating the Arabs, Nixon moved surreptitiously to propitiate the Israelis. He had aides put out word to American Jewish community leaders that suggested that he was disassociating himself from the proposal that the State Department was drawing up.[31]

Rogers and Sisco met with Dobrynin on October 28 and gave him the full text of the ten-point American paper developed over the months since the talks began. The paper called for full Israeli withdrawal to the international border established between Egypt and British mandate Palestine after World War II, for negotiations under Jarring's auspices following procedures used in the 1949 negotiations at Rhodes, for a binding contractual agreement officially ending the state of war and prohibiting "acts inconsistent with the state of peace between them," for negotiations between Israel and Egypt for agreement on areas to be demilitarized, for measures to guarantee unimpeded maritime passage through the Straits of Tiran and the Suez Canal and for arrangements in regard to Gaza, and for "a fair settlement" of the Palestinian refugee problem. This last was a reference to the American proposal for closing out the refugee issue through agreement on the return of one hundred thousand refugees to Israel over a period of ten years.[32]

The October 28 meeting was to be the last in the regular series between Sisco and Dobrynin. This time the atmosphere was cooler and more formal, and there was no friendly banter. Dobrynin was noncommittal even when Rogers gave out the fallback position on Israeli withdrawal. The Americans were annoyed about Soviet propaganda that laid responsibility for the impasse in the talks at the Americans' doorstep. Sisco told Dobrynin that "the rubber band has been stretched to the maximum." The United States had gone as far as it could go. It was now up to the Soviets to reciprocate and to bring along their Egyptian client.[33]

After the meeting with Dobrynin, Sisco gave Rabin a copy of the ten-point paper, but this was for information only. The United States did not formally present the plan to Israel or ask Israel to approve it. That would be done only if and when it was accepted by Egypt. Soviet strategy was to bring Egypt along step-by-step, to clear everything with the Egyptians before themselves agreeing to it. American strategy was just the opposite; there was no question of trying to persuade the Israelis to endorse each American move as it was made. The plan required Israel to give up all of Sinai and to settle for less than the full peace for which the Cabinet and Knesset decisions called. In return, it offered the Israelis far more than they had ever before been able to obtain. Sisco firmly believed that if Egypt could be persuaded to accept the plan, Israel would find it too good to pass up.[34] Everything, however, depended on Cairo's reaction.

In November, Gromyko went to see Nasser. This time, however, the Americans did not leave it solely to the Soviets to communicate their proposal to Egypt. On November 8, Bergus handed Under Secretary Salah Gohar a letter from Rogers to Riad covering a copy of the ten points and urging a favorable Egyptian response.

But the credibility of the proposal was in question even before it was transmitted to the Egyptian foreign minister. Ashraf Ghorbal, his ear well attuned to the American political scene, had already made his government aware of reports circulating in Washington that the White House was backing away from Rogers' proposal. Ghorbal himself saw no reason for Egypt to

accept an American plan that didn't have the full support of the U.S. government.[35] Riad, however, decided not to close any doors, at least not in diplomatic correspondence. He recommended to Nasser that Egypt not reject the U.S. plan but stay in touch with Rogers and try to learn more about the American attitude toward other fronts.[36] On November 16, he sent Rogers a reply that said that before defining its own position Egypt would wait to see what the United States proposed for Jordan, Syria, and the Palestinians.[37]

Egyptian public pronouncements, however, sent a wholly different message. Already on November 6, Nasser had made a speech in which he described Egypt's attempts to reach a peaceful solution as "wasted effort." Melodramatically he proclaimed that there was "no longer any way out except to open our path to what we want by force, over a sea of blood and under a horizon of fire." Riad himself was quoted as attacking the new American proposals as "worse than the old ones." On November 14, Heikal called the U.S. plan not an opportunity but a "trap." Then, on November 18, the Egyptian National Assembly passed a resolution categorically rejecting the American proposal.[38]

The Israelis were even more keenly aware than were the Egyptians that the State Department plan did not have the weight of the White House behind it. During November, they built a firestorm of criticism against it in the United States, calling it an imposed settlement and a sellout to the Arabs and the Soviets.

The Soviets too continued to misrepresent the American position, though in a wholly different way. In their propaganda directed at the Arab world, they blamed the United States for the impasse in the negotiations, and they claimed that the Americans were backing Israel's refusal to withdraw. This caused deep worry at the State Department. The Arab summit that Nasser had been trying to organize for so long was scheduled to convene in Rabat on December 20. State Department officials feared that the conference might call for measures that would damage U.S. interests in the Arab world; or that it might declare an end to peace efforts, either by rejecting Resolution 242 or in some other way. At the end of November, Sisco and Atherton went to see Rogers in his large, ornate office on the State Department's seventh floor. Sisco told the secretary that the United States was "taking one hell of a beating" from the Arab countries. Not only were its interests being hurt but also its moderate Arab friends were being put in danger. The Arabs did not understand how far the United States had gone in developing a fair proposal. Sisco recommended that the secretary of state lay out publicly, just as soon as possible, the main points of the plan given to the Soviets and the Egyptians.[39]

Rogers agreed, and Sisco and Atherton immediately began to draft a speech. The State Department set out frantically in search of a forum. The best that could be found on short notice was a conference on adult education that was being held at Washington's Sheraton Park Hotel. Rogers spoke there on December 9. It was to be the most important and the most controversial speech Rogers was to make during his four and one-half years as secretary of state. It was to bequeath, once and for all, his name to the proposals Sisco had worked out in his talks with Dobrynin since March. Rogers did not read out the text of the October 28 document, but he was bluntly specific when it came to the matter of withdrawal:

> We believe that while recognized political boundaries must be established and agreed upon by the parties, any change in the pre-existing lines should not reflect the weight of conquest and should be confined to insubstantial alterations required for mutual security. We do not support expansionism.

A settlement between Israel and Egypt, Rogers said, would require Egypt to "agree to a binding and specific commitment to peace" and Israel to withdraw "to the international border

between Israel and Egypt which has been in existence for over half a century."[40]

In the Arab world, the speech generally accomplished the purpose that Sisco and Atherton had in mind. At first, public reaction in Egypt was critical, though not harshly so. In Jordan and Saudi Arabia, government officials were cautiously noncommittal in their public remarks, but privately the speech drew warm expressions of appreciation. Thoughtful and responsible Arabs saw the American proposals as fair and just and as proof that the United States could be sympathetic to their problems as well as to Israel's. Even the Egyptians were later to find more merit in Rogers' speech.

In Israel, the first reaction was surprisingly mild, perhaps because the proposals were already well known there. On December 10, the Cabinet issued a statement blaming the Arabs for lack of progress and reiterating Israel's insistence on a peace treaty—not merely a contractual agreement — and on direct negotiations. The Cabinet expressed regret that the United States had made detailed reference to the terms of peace between Israel and Egypt, since this, it said, was something for the parties themselves to decide. Foreign Minister Eban, the statement concluded, would explain Israel's position in his upcoming talk with Secretary Rogers.[41]

Less than two weeks later, the Israeli government spoke out with an entirely different voice. On December 22, the Cabinet held a special emergency meeting. The statement issued at its close attacked Rogers' proposals in scorching terms. They were, it said, "an attempt to appease [the Arabs] at the expense of Israel." This time it was flatly declared that "the Cabinet rejects these American proposals."

What happened between December 10 and 22 to cause the Israeli government to move from an on the whole gentle expression of objection to an outraged statement of categorical rejection? On December 18, the United States presented in the four-power forum a proposal for a settlement between Israel and Jordan similar to its October 29 plan for Israel and Egypt. Even before Rogers' speech, King Hussein had pressed the United States to make clear that it would do no less for its friend Jordan than it had for Egypt. He and other Arab leaders had made the point that to have credibility in the Arab world—and at the soon-to-be-convened Rabat conference—the United States would have to show that it favored a comprehensive solution, not just a separate agreement between Egypt and Israel. The plan for Jordan called for the return to the Hashemite kingdom of all of the West Bank, except for mutually agreed "insubstantial changes," and for joint Jordanian-Israeli administration of Jerusalem.

Nixon approved the plan for Jordan, but, as before, he balanced this public step to conciliate the Arabs by another taken surreptitiously to propitiate the Israelis. He instructed Leonard Garment, his White House aide who handled liaison with the Jewish community, to assure Golda Meir privately that the United States would not press them to accept the plan.[42]

Eban was in Washington that same week. He and Rabin spent two and one-half hours with Rogers and Sisco on December 16, and there he set out at length the Cabinet's objections to the October 28 document and to Rogers' December 9 speech. His charge that the Rogers plan represented an erosion in U.S. policy drew a quick and vigorous reply from Sisco. The United States, Sisco said, had been faithful and consistent in its policy. Israel was the one that had changed. On June 19, 1967, the Israeli government had told the United States that it was ready to withdraw from all of Sinai in exchange for peace. Now Israel wanted to hold on to Sharm el-Sheikh and to a strip of land connecting it to Israel. Eban and Rabin objected that the peace the Rogers plan offered was not real peace. To this, Sisco rejoined: "It is the only kind of peace that can be achieved today."[43]

At no point in this conversation, however, did Rogers or Sisco tell Eban that less than forty-

eight hours later the United States would be putting forward a proposal for a settlement between Israel and Jordan. Rogers had seen how effectively Israel could raise objections to U.S. diplomatic moves, and he did not want to give Eban the opportunity to block this one. Eban was on his way back to Israel when he learned of the step the United States had taken. He was mortified; he took it almost as a personal affront.[44] After he returned to Israel, he was taunted by his opponents in the Cabinet with the charge that he had allowed himself to be taken in by the Americans.

The proposal for Jordan had far more serious domestic political implications in Israel than did the one for Egypt. Although a consensus was forming in Israel around Dayan's idea for holding on to Sharm el-Sheikh and a strip of eastern Sinai, this was mainly a matter of security, a problem that conceivably could be dealt with by other means. The Sinai wilderness did not evoke powerful religious or historical memories. But what people in America and Western Europe called the West Bank encompassed most of the ancient kingdoms of Judea and Samaria, the biblical land of Israel. Begin and his followers had already been sufficiently alarmed over Rogers' December 9 speech to stop haggling with the Labor Party over a minor matter of domestic policy—a dispute over compulsory arbitration of strikes—and to accept Prime Minister Meir's offer of six portfolios in the Cabinet she was putting together following the October elections. The American proposal for Jordan gave Begin another chance to prove to himself and to others that his presence in the Cabinet made a difference. Much of the incendiary phraseology of the Cabinet's December 22 statement was his.

The statement became the signal for a massive onslaught by the Israeli government and by Israel's supporters in America against the Rogers plan and against Rogers personally. As soon as Prime Minister Meir learned of the U.S. proposal for Jordan, she insisted that Rabin return for the Cabinet meeting at which it was to be discussed. There, setting aside his earlier scruples, Rabin advocated an all-out public relations campaign in the United States against the Rogers plan. He returned to Washington with approval for his proposal, but, even before he got there, he found that Minister Shlomo Argov had fired the first volley. Argov drafted and had distributed by the Israeli embassy a paper that in blunt language attacked the Rogers plan, calling it "retrogressive to peace" and stating that "Israel grieves the fact" that the United States had proposed it.[45] The paper was issued in some fifteen thousand copies and was sent to members of Congress, American Jewish leaders, and the press. When Rogers learned of it he was deeply offended.[46]

As soon as he arrived in Washington, on December 26, Rabin went straight to Kissinger's office. He led off by handing Kissinger a tough letter from Golda Meir to Nixon complaining about the State Department documents. He followed up with a long lecture about how the United States had undermined Israel's negotiating position. He noted that Kissinger didn't contradict any of this; the NSC adviser simply pointed out that U.S. policy had not changed since the Johnson administration. Rabin then asked if he could speak alone with Kissinger, and Harold Saunders, the NSC staff director for the Middle East who sat in as notetaker, got up and left the room. According to Rabin's later account, Kissinger smiled and thanked Rabin: "It was good you did that. You understand it is not easy for me to ask that we be left alone." Kissinger then pleaded with Rabin not to attack Nixon. "What you say about Rogers or against him is for you to decide. But I advise you again: Don't attack the President."[47]

Then, to Rabin's surprise, the NSC adviser led the Israeli ambassador to the president's private office. There Nixon greeted Rabin warmly and told him, to his even greater surprise: "I agree that the government of Israel is entitled to express its views and its positions. I regard that as

completely understandable."[48] Rogers stood totally disavowed.

■ ■ ■

But it was the Soviets and the Egyptians who dealt the Rogers' proposals their death blow. On December 23, Dobrynin came to see Rogers and Sisco to deliver a note that described the U.S. plan as "one sided" and "pro-Israeli." The Soviets flatly refused to associate themselves with it, and Dobrynin told Rogers and Sisco that Nasser too had turned down the American proposals. The Egyptian leader, he said, would not negotiate with Israel about anything, about demilitarization, free maritime passage, or security arrangements. And he would not agree to the language on peace that the United States had made a condition for its endorsement of total Israeli withdrawal from Sinai. The USSR, Dobrynin made clear, would not separate itself from Egypt, and if Nasser would not accept the American proposals, neither could Moscow.[49]

Rogers and Sisco felt that the Soviets had let the United States down. The Americans had been ready to take a position at odds with their client, Israel, but the Soviets had been unwilling to do the same with theirs, Egypt. Nasser, the Americans concluded, was not ready to settle his differences with Israel peacefully, and the Soviets were not disposed to try to oblige him to do so.[50]

But to the Americans' surprise, two weeks later Dobrynin was back again, this time with something to offer. The USSR, the ambassador announced rather proudly, had at last obtained Egypt's agreement to the very important language on peace that the Americans had insisted on. Egypt had even accepted a provision that would require it to prevent its territory from being used by Palestinian guerrillas to attack Israel.[51]

What caused this Soviet and Egyptian turnabout the Americans were never able to fathom. Had it come only a few months earlier, it might have changed the course of the talks, perhaps even of history. But, by January 1970, it was too late. Both Sisco and Nixon had become persuaded that the Soviets were not ready to make a deal, that they calculated that a state of controlled tension in the Middle East served their interests better than peace. Later that month, traveling with the president on *Air Force One*, Sisco gave Nixon a memorandum that summed up his conclu¯ sions from the long months of negotiating with the Soviets. In February of the previous year, Sisco wrote, the president had asked him and Rogers to test Soviet intentions. The test had been done and the Soviets had failed it. The USSR did not want a settlement. From here on the U.S. should conduct its Middle East diplomacy without the USSR. No longer should it allow Moscow to be its intermediary for dealing with Cairo. Henceforth, the United States should work directly with Egypt.

Nixon read the memorandum while Sisco sat with him in the presidential cabin. When he finished, the president looked at Sisco and said he agreed. "Joe," he concluded, "this is the way we'll go."[52]

9
Escalation

General Ezer Weizman, chief of operations of the Israeli Defense Forces and nephew of Israel's first president, thought it an ignominious way to die. Weizman lay flat against the 60 degree incline of the sand wall and buried his face in it. It was early July 1969. He had just left a maoz in the central sector, opposite Ismailiya, when "the shelling of my life—a hell of fire" struck around him and his party.[1] He was getting a taste of how it was on the Bar Lev line—and he didn't like it at all.

Weizman came out of it unscathed but not unshaken. He rushed back to IDF headquarters in Tel Aviv, convoked General Mordechai Hod, the air force commander, and screamed at him to get the air force off its duff, to go in and blast the Egyptian artillery on the other side of the canal. Hod dutifully left to draw up a plan.[2]

Putting the air force into action against the Egyptian lines, however, was not something the General Staff could decide on its own, in the heat of the moment. It needed careful consideration, and it required the approval first of the defense minister and then of the Cabinet. Through April and May and into June, Dayan still hoped that the fighting along the canal could be contained, perhaps even brought down to less-threatening levels. He did not want Israel to do anything to make it go up in scope or in intensity. In a speech he made near the end of May, Dayan set out the guidelines for Israeli policy: "Not to intensify the war … through the use of more sophisticated weapons than the required minimum. Not to expand the war by expanding the sectors of engagements or by dragging in additional forces."[3]

One reason for Dayan's caution was the Soviet Union. The defense minister had a healthy—some thought excessive—respect for Soviet power. He considered it quite enough for Israel to fight the Arabs; he saw no reason to take on the USSR as well. Fear of Soviet intervention had made him hesitate to order Israeli troops up the Golan Heights in June 1967 after Sinai and the West Bank had been taken. Now, after the war, the Soviets had redoubled both their political and their military investment in Egypt; they had several thousand military advisers and technicians there; they had their warships at Port Said, at Alexandria, and Mers el-Metruh, and their reconnaissance aircraft at bases west of Cairo. Yigal Allon argued, in speeches and in articles and in his book, *A Curtain of Sand* published in 1968, that Israel did not really have to worry all that much about the Soviets. Allon was a brillant theoretician. To support his theory that Soviet intervention was unlikely, he advanced arguments of seemingly impeccable logic: The Soviets did not want a confrontation with the United States; they had a keen appreciation of Israel's military power; if they were to intervene in the Middle East, the Soviets would have to send an expeditionary force practically of the same size as the one the Americans had sent to Vietnam—something Allon thought "inconceivable"; and, finally and most decisively, the USSR had never intervened anywhere outside the Warsaw pact countries, even to save the communists in Greece

and in Iran.[4]

For Allon, if the Soviets had not in the past sent troops to fight abroad, they should not be expected to do so in the future. For Dayan, the fact that the Soviets had not intervened outside of Eastern Europe meant only that they had not yet decided to do so; when they did, they would, and the technical means for sending forces to the Middle East were easily within their reach.[5]

But fear of running up against the Soviets was not Dayan's only reason, in the spring and early summer of 1969, for not wanting to escalate the war along the Suez Canal. It was simply that the government of Israel had no interest in fighting a war there or elsewhere. With its forces on the Suez Canal in the west, the Jordan River in the east, and the Golan in the north, Israel had stretched itself to the limit of its capacities. Taking the west bank of the canal, or Cairo, Amman, or Damascus would only create problems for Israel, not solve them. Dayan understood this better than almost anyone. What he and the General Staff wanted was not to expand the fighting but to bring it to a halt.

But by July it was becoming clear that restraint was not going to be the answer. The Egyptians' successes in attacking the Bar Lev line were, the Israelis feared, emboldening them to think of more ambitious enterprises—of crossing the canal and seizing a bridgehead on the east bank. Though it may have been only an educated guess, in fact the Israelis were right. In May 1969, the Egyptian General Staff did draw up a plan to send two divisions across the canal to take and hold its southern sector. The operation was scheduled to be carried out in October.[6]

Beyond this, however, the sheer cost of holding the Bar Lev line against the assault the Egyptians were mounting was becoming excessive. The success of the Egyptian attack on the maoz at the pier made the point in a spectacular way. The steady day-to-day toll of casualties brought it home to the military authorities, and even more painfully to the public. In May, June, and July 1969, Israel lost 194 wounded and killed.[7] For other countries this might have been considered a modest rate of casualties. For Israel's small population it was very high.

The problem was how to make the Egyptians stop shooting. Or, failing that, how to hold the Bar Lev line without excessive losses. Bringing in the air force, as Weizman advocated, offered the prospect of a relatively cheap and easy solution. It met the criterion of economy that was one of the guiding principles behind Adan's plan for the defense of the canal line. The air force was the only branch of the Israeli military staffed almost entirely by regular forces. Throwing it into the battle would not entail a call-up of reserves. The air arm was one in which Israel enjoyed unquestioned superiority over Egypt, despite the rearmament and retraining that the Egyptian air force had undergone since 1967.

In June and early July 1969, General Hod set out to demonstrate this superiority. Using his Mirages, and choosing as his battleground the skies over Egypt in the Gulf of Suez region—an area largely empty of air defenses—Hod maneuvered the Egyptians into a series of air battles. In an encounter on June 24, Israeli Mirages downed 1 MiG-21. They came back two days later and downed 4 of their Egyptian challengers. On July 2, Israeli Mirages racked up another 4 kills against Egyptian MiG-21s. To underscore their mastery of Egypt's skies, this time the Israelis stayed, circling the scene of battle, waiting for new challengers to come. None did.[8]

The shooting down of Egyptian MiGs was a relatively safe enterprise, given the superiority of Israel's pilots and the speed and maneuverability of the Mirage. Bombing of Egyptian positions on the west bank of the canal, however, looked like a more dangerous undertaking. Egyptian artillery there was protected by a thick network of antiaircraft guns and by at least 10 batteries of Soviet-supplied SA-2 missiles.[9] Surface-to-air missiles were a relative newcomer to the Middle East scene. The Soviets had supplied the SA-2 to Egypt—and the United States had sold Israel

its version, the Hawk missile—before the June 1967 war. But Israel's air victory was so quick and so complete that no surface-to-air missiles were fired. The Israelis captured dozens of Egyptian SA-2s in their lightning push across Sinai.

The Mirage was not the aircraft to do the job of bombing entrenched positions heavily defended by antiaircraft weapons, but General Mordechai Hod had just the plane he needed: the U.S.-made Skyhawk. Lyndon Johnson's May 1967 order that halted production of the 48 Skyhawks the U.S. had agreed in 1966 to sell to Israel was lifted early in 1968, and the first of the aircraft began to arrive at the end of that year.[10] The Skyhawk was not an interceptor—it was too slow to compete with the MiG-21—but it carried a heavy load of bombs and rockets and was tough, small, and very maneuverable. It was ideal for taking out the Egyptian artillery and air-defense positions that stretched along the west bank of the canal. By June of 1969, Hod had enough Skyhawks, and his pilots had enough practice with them, to try them out on the new mission.[11]

The plan that Hod came up with was to strike against Egyptian positions from Kantara northward. There, the Egyptians sat on a narrow strip of land between the canal waters to the east and marshes to the west, much the same way the Israelis did on the opposite bank. The northern end of the canal was defended by only one SA-2 battery. The rest of the Egyptian northern sector line was only lightly covered by antiaircraft guns, owing to its lack of depth.[12] If the air force was successful in the northern sector, it could extend its attacks southward.

Hod's planes struck on July 20. Their first targets were the SA-2 battery and the antiaircraft guns. Israeli pilots found the SA-2 surface-to-air missile easy to deal with. It was ineffective against low-flying aircraft, and, even at higher altitudes, it was slow and cumbersome, and Israeli pilots had no trouble dodging it. After the SA-2 battery had been smashed, Israeli planes pounded the Egyptian lines for another two hours, striking at artillery and tanks and rupturing the freshwater canal between Port Said and the mainland. Israeli pilots reported that the Egyptians put up fierce resistance at first, but gradually wilted under the bombardment, and finally they began to flee their positions.[13]

General Ezer Weizman pressed hard to follow up on the success of the July 20 operation, and, on July 22, Israeli warplanes struck again, this time against SA-2 missile sites in the central and southern sectors. When the attack was over, Egypt's entire SA-2 missile deployment in back of the Suez Canal had been destroyed.[14]

But then the bombing slowed, almost stopped. Israeli warplanes crossed the canal from time to time to attend to Egyptian artillery batteries that showed themselves particularly stubborn or troublesome. But for the rest of July and through August and into early September, there was no more methodical, concentrated bombing. Dayan was concerned over Soviet and American reaction. He and Bar Lev wanted to see what Egypt would do next. IDF intelligence soon came up with some interesting statistics. Egyptian artillery shelling dropped sharply during August, to 72 incidents from 207 in July and 311 in June. But mortar shelling soared, from only 4 incidents in June, 47 in July, to a whopping 209 in August. And so did Egyptian small-arms fire, from 85 incidents in July, to 225 in August.[15] Israeli casualties for August did drop, to 13 killed and 55 wounded. But this was still a higher level than could be sustained over a prolonged period without damage to public morale.

The August figures meant that the July 20 and 22 bombings, devastating as they were, had made no perceptible dent in Nasser's determination to pursue the war. The Egyptians were not letting up. They were merely shifting tactics, from the use of artillery, which was quite visible and vulnerable to attack from the air, to mortar- and small-arms fire, which was much harder to

locate and hit. In fact, the overall total of incidents initiated by the Egyptians in August rose almost 50 percent above that of July, to 515.[16]

Israel responded by stepping up the pressure. On the night of July 18, some thirty-six hours before the first intensive air attack, Israeli para-troopers had carried out a daring raid on an Egyptian position called Green Island, at the entrance to the Bay of Suez. Green Island was a block of cement 40 meters long and 8 meters wide built by the British during World War II on shoals at the southern approaches to the canal. Presumably it derived its name from the fact that it had no vegetation whatsoever. The Egyptians had put a detachment there with radar and antiaircraft guns. The Israeli raid was meticulously planned, and Major General Rafael Eytan, the commander of the paratroopers, went along with the force. It was a perfectly executed operation, except that in the planning one thing had been overlooked. Egyptian artillery from the mainland opened fire on the island while Egyptian soldiers were still defending it. Six of the Israeli force were killed, and Egyptian flares and artillery fire made the withdrawal of the others difficult.[17] The toll was a high one for Israel. The Egyptians counted it a victory and announced that the Israelis had been driven off.

On August 27, the Israelis mounted another commando operation deep inside Egypt. Israeli Super Frelon helicopters flew a commando unit across the Gulf of Suez to the Nile Valley village of Manqabad, near the city of Asyut some 300 kilometers south of Cairo, where they lobbed shells into the headquarters of the Egyptian southern-front command. There were no casualties this time to mar the Israeli public's thrill or to diminish its sense that its army could strike anywhere in Egypt. But the practical effect of the operation was negligible.

Not so the next one. It was to send a shock through the Egyptian leadership. It was Adan's idea, and for it he trained a force of 6 tanks and 3 armored-personnel carriers intensively for six weeks. At dawn on September 9, Israeli navy landing craft set Adan, his troops, and their vehicles down on the western coast of the Gulf of Suez at Abu Darag, after other Israeli naval units had sunk two Egyptian torpedo boats there the previous evening. From there, the Israeli force headed down the coast road to Ras Zafarana, some 100 kilometers to the south. The thin forces the Egyptians had stationed there were taken wholly by surprise. For the next six hours, the Israeli column shot up everything in its path, and at Zafarana it destroyed a radar station. The Israelis estimated Egyptian casualties at some 200 to 300. One of the Israeli planes that flew air cover for the force was lost to a surface-to-air missile, but Adan and his soldiers reembarked and returned to their base with only one soldier wounded.[18] They took back with them a valuable prize, a T-62 tank, the Soviet Union's latest and most powerful, newly delivered to Egypt.[19]

Egyptian army headquarters did not learn of the Israeli action until well into the day. Major General Abdul Ghani al-Gamassy, deputy chief of military intelligence, was dispatched to inform Nasser and Defense Minister Fawzi, who were on their way from Cairo to review maneuvers that the Egyptian army was to conduct that day in the desert east of the capital. Gamassy saw that his news caused Nasser deep distress; the president's face "filled with anger."[20]

Evidently, Nasser had not even been informed of the sinking of the two Egyptian torpedo boats the previous night. On his return to Cairo later that day, he called Heikal to complain that Egyptians were still behaving in "the 1967 way."[21] This was true in more ways than one. As late as the early evening of September 9, Cairo Radio was proclaiming that Egyptian forces had repulsed the Israeli landing party and caused it heavy casualties. An Egyptian military spokesman called the story of the landing of Israeli tanks on the western shore of the Gulf of Suez "one of Israel's dreams which would never come true."[22] Egypt's president, however, knew

that it was true. An investigation was immediately launched to find out why General Headquarters was so late in learning of the Israeli operation and why no move had been made to intercept and challenge the Israeli force. Soon thereafter, the chief of staff, General Ahmad Ismail, and the commander of the navy, Admiral Fouad Zaki, were dismissed.

The blow was both painful and humiliating to the Egyptians. On September 11, they tried to strike back. Several large formations of Egyptian warplanes—the Israelis estimated as many as 60 craft—attacked Israeli lines on the east bank of the canal. Israeli planes came to meet them, and, in the battle that ensued that day, the Israelis claimed that 11 Egyptian craft were shot down, 7 of them MiG-21s. It was a veritable slaughter in the skies, the largest single number of Egyptian planes downed in any one day since the June 1967 war. The air battle continued the next day, and the Israelis claimed 7 more Egyptian planes shot down, 4 of them MiG-21s. In these two encounters, Israel lost only one plane, downed by Egyptian antiaircraft fire.[23]

The day after the Israeli Gulf of Suez raid Nasser had a heart attack. It was serious enough that Dr. Evgeny Chazov, the Soviet deputy minister of health, was called from Moscow to Cairo for consultation. He ordered a month's rest, but Nasser paid little heed. He was back at work after barely a week off.[24]

September marked the crossing of a threshold in the war. Adan's successful raid, and the downing of 18 Egyptian planes in the air battles that followed, seem to have burst the psychological barrier that held back Israel's air arm. From then on, until the cease-fire eleven months later, the air force was to bomb Egyptian dispositions on the canal's west bank regularly, methodically, and often daily. The war was to become the air force's war as much as that of the ground forces strung out along the Bar Lev line. Israeli pilots were eventually to come to feel its intensity almost as keenly as the soldiers on the ground.

September marked the crossing of a technical threshold as well, one that was to propel the war forward in its own way. On the fifth of that month, Israel's first 4 Phantoms flew in to a joyous welcome at Hazor air base. With the arrival of the Phantoms, Israel gained an advantage in aircraft superiority equal to that it already enjoyed in pilot superiority. The Phantom was equipped with the latest in American avionics technology. It was a first-class bomber and a first-class interceptor, and it had tremendous range. With it, all of Egypt lay open before Israel.

■ ■ ■

Throughout the spring and early summer of 1969, Ambassador Yitzhak Rabin was haunted by one overriding fear: that America's support for Israel was steadily being eroded in the talks that Sisco was holding with Dobrynin. The United States, Rabin believed, was giving Israel's positions away one by one.

As he sat down in May and June to analyze the situation, Rabin thought he understood why. Nasser's War of Attrition against Israel along the Suez Canal, Rabin was persuaded, had a more ambitious aim than simply wearing Israel down. The Egyptians, he was sure, were working hand-in-hand with the Soviets. Their joint objective was to undermine America's position in the Arab world, first to weaken and then to overturn America's conservative Arab friends, King Idriss in Libya, the Saudi monarchy, and Hussein in Jordan. The broader purpose behind this Soviet-Egyptian strategy, however, was to chip away at American support for Israel, to bring the United States to understand that even lukewarm backing for Israel would cost it the Arab world and all its immense oil resources.

Rabin felt that Israel was playing the Soviet-Egyptian game—by the simple fact that it had no sure solution to the War of Attrition, no means of making Nasser stop shooting. The Ambassador was convinced that Israel was disappointing the Americans: They expected Israel to deal Egypt a

blow that would bring Nasser's War of Attrition to an end. The longer it failed to do this, the longer the war continued, the more the United States would be inclined to give ground so as to get an agreement with the Soviets. If Israel wanted to forestall further American pressure for concessions, Rabin imagined, it would have to find a way to bring Nasser's War of Attrition to an end quickly and decisively.[25]

Like Vigal Allon, his mentor of Palmach days and now his ally in the Cabinet in Jerusalem, Rabin was a powerful theoretician. Once he had constructed this particular theory of American behavior, nothing would shake him from it. Rabin went back to Israel at the end of August to brief Prime Minister Meir in preparation for a visit she was to make to Washington the following month. Unlike Eshko's visit in January 1968, arms were not the sole purpose of Meir's trip, but they were an important item on her agenda. The prime minister was planning to request more Phantoms and Skyhawks. There was concern in the government and in the IDF that too aggressive action against Egypt might lead the Americans to reject the Israeli request. Rabin argued vigorously against this view. Israel should hit harder at Egypt, he said, and ask for more American arms so that it could prosecute the war even more energetically.[26]

Back in Washington, Rabin continued to argue this thesis in his telegrams. On September 19, he reported to Jerusalem that the Nixon administration had been looking at the effect of Israeli military operations on the stability of the Nasser regime. The view that was emerging from discussions in the National Security Council, he said, was that continued Israeli blows, particularly Israeli air force attacks, could undermine Nasser and by so doing undercut the position of the USSR in the region. "I have been told by many sources," Rabin concluded, "that the administration regards our military activity as one of the most encouraging things that has happened recently. A man would have to be absolutely blind, deaf, and dumb not to sense how much the administration favors our military operations."[27]

Rabin tried out his thesis—that the United States wanted to see Nasser out of the way—when Eban came to meet with Rogers in Washington that same month. "In my opinion," he interjected to Eban's astonishment, "it would not be bad at all if Nasser were to fall and to disappear from the scene. That would surely be a severe blow to the Soviets. Whoever comes after him would either be more friendly to us and to you or less dangerous. It would offer a chance for improvement in the U.S. position in the Middle East."[28] These remarks were greeted by dead silence from Rogers and from Eban as well. Deputy Assistant Secretary Alfred L. Atherton, who was with Rogers for the meeting, immediately understood that Rabin was not speaking just in the abstract; he was talking about Israel's doing something to get rid of Nasser. The secretary's silence would be taken to mean approval. As the meeting drew to a close, Atherton discretely reminded Rogers that he had not addressed Rabin's remarks about Nasser.

A forceful reply by Rogers at this point might have disabused Rabin of the notion that there was some sort of consensus within the administration in favor of Israel's moving to topple Nasser. But the secretary of state, on most occasions, was not a forceful man. He probably had little idea of precisely what had motivated the Israeli ambassador's outburst. And, in any event, Rogers himself held no brief for the Egyptian president; in an aside to aides at the State Department, he had once remarked that he had "lots of milk of human kindness, but … none at all for Gamal Abdel Nasser."[29] Atherton's prompting produced nothing more than a mild caution by the secretary of state that his failure to comment should not be taken to mean that he agreed.[30]

Rabin's belief in his view that Israel must hit harder at Egypt to force it to stop the War of Attrition grew ever stronger in the weeks ahead. When he learned late in October that Rogers and Sisco had been authorized to give Dobrynin the fallback position—to tell him that the United

States would support full Israeli withdrawal to the prewar borders if Egypt accepted the other points of the American proposal—Rabin fired off a cable to Jerusalem. He proposed "energetic military action to change the reality of the war." The Israeli ambassador explained that this could not be accomplished solely by hitting Egyptian forces along the canal. What was needed was for the Israeli air force to penetrate and strike deep inside Egypt. "Only in this way," he added, "will it be possible to achieve the political goal: to force Egypt to return to the cease-fire."[31]

The idea of sending Israeli planes to hit targets in Egypt beyond the immediate Suez battlefield did not originate with Rabin. It had been under study at IDF headquarters well before the Israeli ambassador sent his cable. But it was the cable that brought it to the fore and won it powerful proponents in the government. Allon, ever Rabin's faithful echo in Jerusalem, supported it enthusiastically, and so did Galili. Both argued that the likelihood of Soviet intervention was small.

It was, in fact, commonplace in Israel in the fall of 1969 to hear that the Soviet Union was a "paper tiger." The Russian bear had growled so many warnings without ever making any direct move that many Israelis no longer took it seriously. In the crisis in May and June 1967, Moscow had threatened fire and brimstone but, in fact, did nothing to prevent Israel's victory. It was not easy to discern from the babble of daily Soviet propaganda when Moscow was serious and when it was not. On the Middle East, the Soviets were uniformly shrill, and their attacks on Israel were at times almost openly anti-Semitic. Many Israelis now argued that so long as Israeli planes stayed clear of Alexandria and other bases where the Soviet navy and air force had set up station, there would be little reason to fear a reaction.[32]

The Cabinet, however, was divided over the wisdom of expanding the bombing. The Mapam ministers were against it and so was the Independent Liberal minister, Moshe Kol. Dayan doubted that bombing deep inside Egypt would achieve the objectives set for it, and he was concerned about Soviet reaction. For once, the defense minister and the foreign minister were on the same side of the fence, for Eban too was unenthusiastic about the proposal. Eban knew Washington well, and he was openly skeptical about Rabin's reports that the American administration would favor more aggressive bombing of Egypt.[33] But the foreign minister no longer enjoyed the influence he did under Eshkol. Since Golda Meir had become prime minister, he had found himself increasingly shunted aside, ignored, and bypassed. At the prime minister's request, Rabin sent many of his most important cables directly to her office.[34] During her visit to Washington in September, she and Nixon set up a channel of communication that ran from Kissinger through Rabin and back again, and that cut out both Eban and Rogers. The initiative for this came from Nixon, but Meir gladly joined it.[35]

Rabin continued to shower Jerusalem with cables advocating extension of the bombing beyond the immediate vicinity of the canal. But as the Cabinet was divided, Meir decided to postpone a decision until after the elections and the formation of her new government toward the end of the year.

Throughout the fall of 1969, Israelis felt they had Egypt and Nasser on the run. Attrition could be a two-edged sword, and the air force—Israel's "flying artillery"—had now turned its other edge back against Egypt. After destroying Egypt's canal line air defenses, Israeli planes bombed Egyptian positions methodically and mercilessly. The Egyptian General Staff's plan for sending two divisions across to the east bank of the canal was now totally unrealistic, and it was shelved; exposed to Israeli air strikes, the Egyptian force would have been devastated.

The tone of Israeli public comment on the war became almost jubilant. Transportation Minister Moshe Carmel told the press that recent Israeli blows had "proven that Israel could

exhaust Egypt's strength."[36] When, early in October, Egyptian Foreign Minister Riad declared that his government was ready for Rhodes-style negotiations, Israeli newspapers interpreted the move as the result of the "intolerable situation" in which Egyptian soldiers at the front found themselves. Dayan made one optimistic statement after another. On November 12, he announced that Egypt had been defeated in the battle of the Suez Canal; he did not foresee a resumption of large-scale fighting in the months ahead.[37] On December 24, the defense minister reported to Labor Party Knesset members that, although there was still a shooting war on the Sinai front, the situation there gave no cause for real concern. The Egyptians had lost out in any attempt at direct confrontation.[38]

The pressure on Israeli forces along the canal line had, in fact, been eased, but the picture was not quite so bright as Dayan's remarks made it seem. Israeli casualties were down, but not that much; 11 Israeli soldiers were killed on the canal line in October, 12 in November, and 13 in December.[39] IDF statisticians reported that small-arms fire now accounted for a larger proportion of the number of incidents initiated by the Egyptians, but the overall total hit its high of the year in October with 642; even when the number fell to 461 in December, it was still well above the average of the previous spring.[40] The Egyptians continued to cross the canal almost every night and to put down mines. The road south of Deversoir was so heavily strewn with mines that the Israelis gave up trying to dig them out and simply stopped patrolling it.[41] On December 14, the Egyptians ambushed an IDF patrol. They killed one Israeli soldier, seriously wounded a second, and took a third prisoner. A few days later, Egyptian commandos attacked several of the maozim along the canal line.[42]

The Egyptians did not give up on their canal line air defenses either. In December, they began to move in new SA-2 batteries to replace those destroyed earlier. On December 25, the Israeli air force launched a massive attack along most of the canal line, from Kantara to Suez, against the missile sites and against Egyptian artillery positions. Israeli planes made hundreds of sorties and bombed for eight hours in the largest air strike in the War of Attrition to that time.[43] So much Egyptian artillery was destroyed that for some weeks afterward artillery superiority remained in Israeli hands.

A few days later, Israeli paratroopers scored a small but extraordinarily spectacular success. Toward the end of 1969, IDF intelligence discovered a small, well-concealed radar installation some 3 kilometers behind the shoreline that identified Israeli planes to Egyptian air force headquarters as soon as they crossed the Gulf of Suez. Israeli experts judged it to be a P-12, a relatively new and highly sophisticated Soviet radar capable of tracking low-flying aircraft. The commander of the paratroopers, General Rafael Eytan, went to Bar Lev and asked for permission to lift the radar from its position and bring it back to Israel. The chief of staff gave his approval. Eytan set a team to work training to dismount from its base a wrecked Soviet P-12 radar captured in Sinai in 1967, and helicopters practiced lifting it. The operation required perfect coordination, for there was an Egyptian armored unit stationed just a few miles distant from the radar. The Israeli force had to be put quietly ashore on the beach and make its way on foot overland so as to take the guard at the radar by surprise before it could call for help. This the Israelis did, but in the attack the captain in charge of the station managed to escape. When he reached the tank force, however, the officer in charge of it refused to believe his story. The Israelis dismounted the radar, their helicopters came in, lifted it, and carried it away without being challenged.[44]

Within a few days of the raid the story was all over the Israeli media, and Israelis were euphoric. The Tel Aviv daily, *Maariv,* called the operation "very rare in military history" and

trumpeted: “The more intensive the Israeli initiative in the Sinai front grows … the more confused the Egyptians become.” Retired General Haim Herzog, a military commentator for Israeli Radio, remarked gleefully that the IDF was making Egypt into a “supply channel” for bringing Soviet equipment to Israel and the United States. The Western press ran cartoons of Israeli helicopters carrying away the pyramids, and a British newspaper described the Israeli army as “dancing rings” around Nasser’s “cumbersome dull-witted forces.” It added that the conflict between Egypt and Israel was “coming more and more to resemble a duel between a hippopotamus and a hornet.”[45]

On the Egyptian side there was quiet fury. Several officers were executed—among them the commander of the tank force who ignored the warning—and many more were sent to jail. But the Egyptian media kept a deep silence until Heikal spoke up in the columns of *Al Ahram* on January 23. “The least we could have done,” he admonished his fellow citizens, “was to admit what happened. We could have said: It is a big mistake or a big crime.” The best way to deal with such things, Heikal added, was to stick to the truth.

To top it all off for the Israelis, on the last day of the year 7 missile boats built in France for Israel but then held at Cherbourg under General de Gaulle’s embargo order sailed into Haifa harbor. Israeli crews had spirited them out of the French port on Christmas morning under the noses of their somnolent French guards.

As 1970 began, Israel seemed to have everything going its way. With its public campaign in the United States, it had frightened the Nixon administration into shelving the Rogers plan. Militarily, Israel had Nasser with his back to the wall. Egypt’s canal line air defenses lay smashed and its hinterland lay exposed to Israeli attack. Prospects for forcing the Egyptian leader to stop shooting—or for getting rid of him altogether—had never seemed better.

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The report on Kol Israel’s evening newscast on January 7, 1970, was perfectly laconic: “At approximately 1400 hours today air force planes attacked Egyptian military targets in the northern and southern sectors of the Suez Canal and Egyptian military bases at Tel el-Kebir, Inshas, and Dahshur in the southeastern delta. All planes returned safely.”[46] Nothing more. That a Rubicon had been crossed and that Israel was now carrying the war to a new level of escalation was left unsaid. A casual listener might have missed the mention of the delta or failed to realize that Tel el-Kebir was some 50 kilometers west of the canal, or that Inshas and Dahshur were not far from Cairo itself.

The decision to play down the announcement of Israel’s first bombings beyond the Suez line—the first of its “deep-penetration” raids, as they came to be called—reflected the hesitation and uncertainty with which the Israeli government embarked upon the enterprise. The hesitation did not come from the military side. From a strictly military point of view, the operation was not only entirely feasible but easy. No serious obstacle lay in the path of the Israeli air force. Egypt’s canal line air defenses had been destroyed, and Israeli pilots had learned how to dodge the cumbersome SA-2s that guarded Cairo and Egyptian military installations around it. The Egyptian air force, its inventory bulging with late-model Soviet fighter aircraft, had been chased from the skies over its own land. And with the Phantom, Israel now had the airplanes to do the job. By the beginning of January 1970, 16 Phantoms had been received from the McDonnell-Douglas plant outside Saint Louis, and another 4 were to come in that month and each month thereafter until the fall. It was the political side that was unclear and that caused the Cabinet to hesitate. What would the Soviets and the Americans do?

These questions were argued long and hard during the last months of 1969, but, in the end, the

issue of Soviet reaction seems to have been dealt with rather summarily. Some seven months later, Israeli writer Amos Elon was to ask Meir if, before approving the deep-penetration raids, the Cabinet had really held a thorough discussion of how the Soviet Union might react to them. "Nobody thought of that then," she said. "When the deep penetration raids were decided on," Elon persisted incredulously, "the possibility that they might bring in the Russians was not weighed at all?" "No," the prime minister replied, "that possibility was not raised at all."[47] Meir's statement caused one of her colleagues to remark that she would do well to refresh her memory with a reading of the Cabinet protocol.[48]

In fact, there was discussion of what the Soviets would do. But no one seriously challenged Allon's theories. The general view was that the Soviets would not do anything rash. They would threaten, as they had in the past, but they would not take any steps that would put Israel seriously in danger. The intelligence estimate that the IDF prepared for the Cabinet supported this view.[49] Dayan remained skeptical, but he went along. There was a strong element of cynicism in his reasoning. Dayan suspected that the Soviets were, in any case, going to react to the beating that the Israeli air force was giving the Egyptians along the canal line. Whatever they decided to do, he thought, would not be much affected by the deep-penetration raids. So why not try the raids and see what they would produce?[50]

More attention was given to the issue of how Washington would react. There was much at stake here. The request for 25 more Phantoms and 100 more Skyhawks that Meir had handed Nixon in September was still under consideration in Washington. The administration had made no commitment. How would the raids affect the U.S. response? Beyond this lay a larger, more ominous question: What would the Americans do if Israel got in trouble with the USSR over the deep-penetration raids?

Contacts between Israeli and American officials were close and frequent, yet when it came to determining how the Americans would react to military operations Israel was considering, communication immediately short-circuited. The question simply could not be asked directly and officially. If Israel sought the advice of the United States, it would have to take the American reply into account, and this it did not want to do. Israeli governments were keenly aware that America's interests were global and that even in the Middle East they were far from being wholly vested in Israel. If required to give an official opinion, the Americans would invariably say no to almost any military action the Israelis might propose. Israel's leaders wanted to preserve their freedom of action in military matters, indeed, they viewed doing so as very nearly a question of national survival.

Therefore, when it came to military operations, the Israelis were reduced to trying to divine American reactions in much the same manner as one would the Kremlin's. It was here that Rabin's military background—which threw him much more in with the officers of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the people of the Pentagon than would normally have been the case for an ambassador—his penchant for building elaborate theories and his lack of diplomatic experience served him poorly. American military officers tended not unnaturally to agree with Rabin's views about the merits of using force, at least so long as they themselves were not required to assume responsibility for the results. It was simply good fellowship to say "hit 'em hard; we're with you." So vast and chaotic is the United States government that, with reasonable diligence, almost any foreign diplomat can be sure of finding someone with connections to high places who would say something susceptible to interpretation in ways he or his government desired. An ambassador more experienced and more cautious than Rabin would have understood this and would have realized that even those in high places may, at certain moments, say things intended

more to please than to be taken seriously. Rabin, however, took what was told him literally, at least when it fit his own theoretical frame of reference. Beyond that, he based his reading of American policy on a tissue of assumptions and on whispered hints, winks, nods, silences, and cocktail party conversation, all filtered through the lens of his own political logic.

But Rabin's views carried great weight with the prime minister and with most of the Cabinet. Rabin was, after all, their man in Washington. He had been at his post for two years and was known to have a wide network of contacts. If Rabin said the Americans would look with favor on Israel's bombing deep inside Egypt, then it must be so. Eban's efforts to challenge Rabin's estimate were half-hearted at best and had little effect.[51] Some second-level officials of the Foreign Ministry argued strongly against it,[52] but Eban was much taken with the thought that a change of regime in Egypt might offer a real opportunity for peace.[53] In the end, most Cabinet officers were ready to settle for the assumption that the United States would support bombing inside Egypt even if it would not say so explicitly.[54]

Perhaps the reason the Cabinet found Rabin's logic so compelling was that one of its main conclusions—that the United States would be happy to see Israel rid the Middle East of Nasser—coincided with its own profound wish. Increasingly, Israelis had come to view Nasser as the main obstacle to peace. And increasingly, the contest between Egypt and Israel seemed to become a personal contest between Nasser and themselves. In the tense days before the June 1967 war, Nasser went to the big Egyptian base at Bir Gifgafa in Sinai and flung down a personal challenge: He was, he said, "waiting for Rabin"—words that would soon earn him mockery in the popular Israeli song, "Nasser's Waiting for Rabin, O Ho Ho!" After the defeat, Nasser had vowed revenge, championed the three Khartoum noes, denounced the cease-fire, declared the War of Attrition, and had the gall to make the preposterous claim in his annual Revolution Day speech in July 1969 that his forces had destroyed 60 percent of the Bar Lev line. Israelis came to have a sense that they were doing battle directly with one man, Gamal Abdel Nasser. They felt that no one who came after him could possibly be worse. He became quite literally an Israeli target, for humiliation if not for physical elimination. Twice in 1969—in June and again in November—Israeli planes were sent to break the sound barrier directly above Nasser's home in Cairo.

Rabin used his brief visit to Israel in the second half of December—when Meir called him back for the Cabinet's meeting on Rogers' plan for a Jordanian-Israeli settlement—to push for bombing deep inside Egypt. This time he succeeded. The elections were past, and the new government was in place. Meir was prime minister in her own right. Her Cabinet had a more hawkish complexion, for to the two without portfolio seats held previously by Gahal had been added four others with portfolio. On January 6, the Cabinet's Ministerial Committee on Defense and Security approved a proposal to begin bombing in depth in Egypt.[55] That not all doubts had been resolved was evident not just from the way the first raids were announced but from the cautious nature of the proposal itself. The bombing was to be targeted exclusively against military installations; the objective was to be solely Egypt's army and air force, not its civilian population. The raids were not to be so intensive as to take place daily, but they would be sufficiently frequent to keep up the pressure. The timing and the targets chosen for each one would have to have the prior approval of both the defense minister and the prime minister.[56] And international reaction was to be carefully monitored.

The government took the plunge and waited anxiously to see what reaction there would be from Washington. At first, none came. After the January 7 raids, Prime Minister Meir waited six days before authorizing another attack. Then, on January 13, Israeli Phantoms struck at the big

Egyptian military base at Tel el-Kebir and at a military camp and air force supply depot at el-Khanka. The first Israeli press reports from Washington seemed to bear out—or perhaps simply reflected—Rabin's assessment that the United States quietly approved of the raids. On January 22 the Washington correspondent of *Davar* reported that "the United States is apparently not so upset and worried by Israeli air force strikes and IDF raids in the heart of Egypt." That same day, Arieh Tsimuki, an Israeli journalist with years of experience and excellent sources at the top levels of the Israeli government, wrote in *Yediot Acharonot* that the Americans were refraining officially from expressing an opinion about the Israeli air force bombings deep inside Egypt. But unofficially, Tsimuki said, Washington did not hide its belief that the Israeli action was likely to have far-reaching consequences, "not necessarily negative ones."

A few days later, however, the first small breach began to appear in Israeli optimism. On January 26, *Haaretz's* Washington correspondent reported that Israel's decision to carry the war deep inside Egypt had elicited no official comment "except the standard remarks about the evil effects of more violence." There was still speculation in Washington, the report continued, that the administration may not be too disturbed about "a strategy producing Egyptian failures which might make Cairo more pliable on the diplomatic level." But, the correspondent concluded, "on the whole, Arab affairs experts at the State Department and abroad feel the Israeli raids have a stiffening effect. …"

Two days later, on January 28, Israeli Phantoms struck at a military camp at Maadi, a fashionable residential suburb just south of Cairo where many Americans lived. The bombs fell near enough to the American school to blow out a window and terrify students and faculty. This prompted the State Department to issue its first public statement about the Israeli raids. It was mild to the point of being anodyne. The United States, the department spokesman said, was concerned about escalation in the Middle East and was appealing to both sides to exercise restraint.[57]

The bombing at Maadi brought a frantic cable from Bergus in Cairo. With bombs falling so close, Bergus was fearful for the morale and the safety of his staff and their families and for other Americans in the Cairo area.[58] After the first of the deep-penetration raids, Bergus had fired off cables to Washington pointing out that Israel's action was a serious escalation that could have incalculable consequences. As the raids proceeded, Bergus urgently sent cable after cable, using every argument he could think of to rouse Washington from its torpor. Bergus was not aware that the Rogers plan had, for all practical purposes, been shelved by the Nixon administration, so he warned that Israel's real aim in the bombings was to kill the U.S. peace proposal. He cautioned that the raids were making Egyptians rally around their government and president rather than the opposite. He urged Washington to tell the Israelis to stop. If the raids continued, he added, the Soviets would surely step up their aid to Egypt. Most of Bergus' cables went unanswered, but this one elicited a reply. The Soviets, Washington cabled back, had no weapon to match the Phantom.[59]

After the bombing at Maadi, Bergus recommended that the United States and the USSR work together to reestablish the cease-fire. That this was a non-starter and that the administration had decided, after Dobrynin's December 23 meeting with Rogers and Sisco, not to work with the Soviets any longer, Bergus did not know. He was simply casting about for whatever means he could find to bring a halt to the bombings.[60]

The only real ally Bergus had at the State Department was Richard Parker, the head of the Egyptian desk. After the deep-penetration raids began, Parker undertook a lonely campaign in the Bureau of Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs to try to get the administration to bring

pressure to bear on the Israelis to stop. He sent memorandum after memorandum up through the system arguing that the Israeli deep-penetration raids would stiffen Egyptian resistance and cause the Soviets to become more directly involved in the fighting. Most of his memoranda ended up in the files with no notation whatsoever, but the one he sent after the January 28 bombing near the American school in Maadi could not be ignored. Parker recommended a "firm message" to the Israelis, a public statement disassociating the United States from the attacks on civilian targets and a probe with the Soviets to see if they were interested in restoring the cease-fire.[61] Out of Parker's recommendation came a cable instructing the U.S. ambassador in Tel Aviv to make a demarche on the deep-penetration raids, for the first time since they began, to the government of Israel.[62]

In all that concerned relations with Israel, Ambassador Walworth Barbour had an intense aversion to rocking the boat. After the June 1967 war, Barbour concluded that Israel's relations with the United States were the wave of the future. Barbour didn't care if the Arabs had all the oil reserves in the world. "Our relationship is going to be with Israel," Barbour told William Dale his deputy chief of mission, "and I am going to promote it."[63] Constant bickering, Barbour felt, was no way to nurture a relationship. Over the years, he had received innumerable cables telling him to go complain about this or that Israeli policy or action that some petty bureaucrat back in Washington did not approve of. He had developed a system of classifying them into one of three categories: (1) those that could safely be ignored, which he put in his hold box and conveniently forgot; (2) those that he reckoned came from an authority in Washington too high or that dealt with a matter too weighty to be ignored but that could be dismissed with no more than perfunctory handling; and (3) those that clearly had to be taken and carried out seriously because they came from the highest levels of the U.S. government.

Because all cables from Washington were sent over the name of the secretary of state, this categorization required a fine sense of judgement, but in nine years at his post Barbour had never erred. Had he thought the cable on the deep-penetration raids worthy of category three, he would have asked for an appointment with the prime minister or the foreign minister. As it was, he consigned it to category two and went to see Moshe Bitan, assistant director general for North American Affairs, the third-ranking official at the Foreign Ministry. At that level, his demarche could not be expected to have any appreciable impact, and evidently it did not. In his report back to Washington, Barbour wrote that he had told Bitan that the deep-penetration raids were "ill-advised" but that Bitan had argued that they were having a positive effect and would contribute to the achievement of peace.[64]

With the raids carried out on January 28, Israeli Phantoms had bombed 12 Egyptian military bases on the desert's edge around Cairo or in the delta. One of the assumptions behind the raids was that Israeli pilots would be able to pick out military targets in this area—one of the world's most thickly populated—and hit them with surgical accuracy while flying at speeds of several hundred miles an hour and dodging antiaircraft fire. When it approved the plan for the deep-penetration raids, the Cabinet simply took it for granted that this could be done, so great was the country's confidence in its pilots.

It was a gamble the government took without even realizing it, and one it was bound to lose. On February 12, a formation of Israeli Phantoms took off to strike again at the Egyptian military camp and air force supply depot at el-Khanka, some 18 kilometers north of Cairo in the heavily populated Nile Delta. At a distance of about 2 kilometers from the target lay the large Abu Zaabel metalworks, an enterprise that employed some 500 workers and that produced steel used in Egypt's military industries. The structure of the plant was similar to that of the Egyptian air

force depot, and the surrounding landscape looked much the same. As one of the Israeli Phantoms nosed down to make its bombing run, SA-2s flamed toward it. The pilot maneuvered to evade them and released his five-ton load of bombs on the structure below. He later reported that it crossed his mind that he may have deviated ever so slightly from the target.[65]

Just before noon that day, a government spokesman in Cairo announced that Israeli planes had bombed the Abu Zaabel metalworks and had killed some 50 workers—the figure was later to be revised to 70. At first, there was disbelief in Israel, but wire service and television photos quickly dispelled it. Late that afternoon, the IDF spokesman read a statement that acknowledged the bombing and said it had been caused by a "technical error." It remained Israeli policy, the spokesman said, to bomb only military targets.[66] Defense Minister Dayan asked the office of the International Committee of the Red Cross in Tel Aviv and UNTSO headquarters in Jerusalem to warn Egyptian authorities that among the bombs mistakenly dropped on Abu Zaabel was one with a delayed action fuse. If not discovered and dismantled within a few hours it would explode. Dayan gave UNTSO detailed instructions for the Egyptians on how to defuse the bomb.[67]

But Dayan's gallant gesture could not compensate for what had been done. The Abu Zaabel bombing made headlines across Western Europe and the United States. An angry wave of world criticism swept down on Israel. In Washington, Under Secretary of State Elliot Richardson urgently convoked Rabin. Six weeks after the deep-penetration raids first began, Richardson and Sisco told the Israeli ambassador that the United States strongly disapproved of them.[68]

■ ■ ■

There was little sympathy in Washington for Gamal Abdel Nasser. He was almost as much a villain there as in Israel. He had brought on the June 1967 war, had falsely accused the United States of taking part in it, had been offered what Americans considered a fair and even generous diplomatic solution but had chosen instead to go to war again. Now if he was getting his nose bloodied by the Israelis—well, did he not have it coming to him?

But from there to conclude, as Rabin did, that the administration would back Israel in a campaign of bombing designed to bring Nasser down was sheer wishful thinking. Despite his mistakes and his defeats, Nasser remained a popular and powerful figure in the Arab world. If only for the sake of protecting its interests there, the United States could not afford to be identified with an effort to overthrow him. Israel's escalation of the war was bound to heighten the threat to American interests everywhere in the Arab world and even to conjure the spectre of global confrontation.

Israeli leaders themselves were careful, in their statements in January and February, to deny that the purpose of the raids was to remove Nasser. At first, however, their comments gave the impression that that was their aim even when they said it was not. In background briefings, Israeli officials told the local and foreign press that the raids would reveal to the Egyptian people the full extent of Nasser's lies about the military situation. No longer would the Egyptian president be able to conceal the truth or compensate for defeats in the field by victories in the headlines. In an interview published five days before the raids began, Eban denied that Israel's military actions were aimed at changing the government in Egypt. Having said this, however, Eban then launched into a lengthy monologue on how much better it would be if Nasser would disappear. "I am," the foreign minister said, "of the opinion that the possibility of peace would be improved if the Egyptian people were blessed with a different regime. … A new regime would be free … to see a way out of the dilemma it is caught in."[69]

Golda Meir was characteristically more direct:

> We shall not go into mourning if Nasser falls, but our air force operations are not intended to achieve this purpose. But if it also brings about a change of government in Egypt, we shan't waste any tears over it. … I don't know if Nasser's successor would be any better than he is, but I don't think he could be much worse.[70]

Dayan was more cautious, but also more dramatic. The Israeli deep-penetration raids, he declared, were not intended to cause the downfall of Nasser's regime but rather: "To bring the truth to the Egyptian people, to speak to them directly, to tell them, 'Listen, people of Egypt, your leaders are not acting for your good. What they say about your chances of destroying Israel is not true.' "[71]

Statements of this sort were both bad politics and bad psychology. Nothing could have been less likely to make Egyptians turn against their leader than urgings broadcast from Israel. As weeks passed and it became clear that Nasser was not going to fall, indeed, that the deep-penetration raids had had the effect of rallying the population around him, Israeli leaders began to realize this and to speak with a different voice. They stopped talking about the happy prospects that would ensue with Nasser's replacement or about the enlightening message the deep-penetration raids were intended to send to the Egyptian people. They emphasized, in an ever more defensive tone, that it was not Israel's purpose to try to change the government in Egypt.

■ ■ ■

Gamal Abdel Nasser understood perfectly well what the deep-penetration raids were about. He did not need to read the Israeli newspapers or listen to the statements of Israeli leaders to learn that they were intended to humiliate him before the people of Egypt and Arabs everywhere; or that they were meant to bring about the collapse of his regime.

The last months of 1969 were agonizing ones for Nasser in every sense. His phlebitis made it painful for him to stand for long periods or to walk for more than a short distance, and his heart attack in September left him under the shadow of death. The ineffectiveness of his air force and his air defenses, and the pounding that the Israeli air force was giving his Suez lines caused him great anxiety.

How to counter Israeli air superiority was Nasser's most difficult problem. Early in December, he sent Anwar Sadat, whom he was soon to name vice president, off to Moscow with Defense Minister Fawzi and Foreign Minister Riad to try to get more arms from the Soviets. They asked for long-range bombers, so that Egypt would be able to retaliate directly against Israel, and for more advanced surface-to-air missiles to defend against low-flying Israeli planes. As they had in the past, the Soviets parried the Egyptian request for bombers. But Brezhnev did make a vague, in principle, promise to give Egypt the SA-3 missile, the best in the Soviet inventory and one designed to deal effectively with both low-flying and high-flying aircraft.[72] The problem was that the SA-3 was a complex piece of machinery, and training Egyptian crews to operate it would take at least six months. So, in fact, Sadat, Fawzi, and Riad returned home without any near-term solution for defending Egypt's skies.

Nasser once again turned to the Arabs. The Arab summit that convened in Khartoum in August 1967 had given him a degree of financial and moral backing in his struggle against Israel. Since then, and particularly since he declared the phase of "active deterrence" in the fall of 1968, he had aspired to line up the entire Arab world to fight alongside Egypt against Israel. To Egyptians it seemed only reasonable that other Arabs should be asked to join in their sacrifices. After all, Egypt was fighting not just for its own territory, for Sinai, but for Jordan's and for Syria's, and for the Palestinians as well. It was fighting for the Arab cause, and it was paying a high price for its dedication to that cause. It had sacrificed its canal cities. It had had to take in—

and resettle in and around Cairo and in the delta—almost a million people who had fled Port Said, Ismailiya, Suez, and the towns between them. All its resources were mobilized in the struggle. Its young men were called up en masse to serve for years on end and to fight a bitter and cruel war, one as costly in life and limb as in national wealth.

After the Saudis and the Syrians balked at a second Arab summit at the beginning of 1968, Nasser began trying to organize an eastern front. Together with the western front—the Suez Canal front—the eastern front (principally Jordan and Syria, but also Lebanon and Saudi Arabia) was to be a jaw in the vise whose tightening would gradually grind Israel to bits. In fact, it turned out to be just another one of those intellectual constructs—like Heika's one hundred million Arabs versus two and one-half million Jews, or the various stages through which Egypt would pass on its road to ineluctable victory over Israel—that looked fine on paper but was not quite so easy to put into practice.

One problem was that Jordan and Syria were both exceedingly vulnerable to Israeli attack. Jordan had no air force or air defense to speak of; both its military forces and its cities lay exposed. Syria received a new infusion of Soviet warplanes, surface-to-air missiles, and other weapons after the June 1967 defeat, but the outskirts of Damascus lay within range of Israeli artillery. Egypt wanted the Syrians to fight, but it had no means of protecting them from the fearful blows that Israel could deal them. Beyond this—and perhaps more important—was the fact that none of the governments that were to join in the eastern front trusted one another. Syria and Jordan entertained the deepest of mutual suspicions. The Baath party that ruled in Damascus was radical and anti-Western and looked with scorn on the moderate pro-Western regime of King Hussein, who in his turn regarded the Syrian Baath rulers as madmen bent upon his destruction. Collaboration of any kind between the two was next to impossible.

Iraq was the third element in the eastern front. It had sent an expeditionary force of 12,000 soldiers to Jordan in June 1967 and had kept them there afterward in earnest of its dedication to the liberation of Palestine. At first, it seemed that Iraq might serve as the bridge between Syria and Jordan. It was ruled by a coalition of Arab nationalists under President Abdul Rahman Aref, a declared admirer and follower of Nasser. The Aref regime had no serious dispute with either Damascus or Amman. In July 1968, however, the Baath party seized power in Iraq. Logically, this should have cemented relations between Baghdad and Damascus. But logic did not prevail in inter-Arab relations; a powerful rivalry drove a breach between the Syrian and Iraqi Baath parties and gradually turned them into sworn enemies. Syria would not allow Iraqi forces on its territory. And because of its fear of Israeli attack, it would not allow Egyptian warplanes to operate from its airbases.[73]

Egyptian mediation and pressure eventually brought about agreement to the entry of a small Iraqi force into southern Syria and a Syrian detachment into northern Jordan. But mutual mistrust continued to pre-elude any serious military coordination between the three states; Egyptian efforts to get Saudi Arabia and Kuwait to join the Eastern Command met with no success at all.

In July 1969, with the War of Attrition in full train along the Suez Canal, Nasser again put out feelers for another Arab summit.[74] When these brought no result, he convened a summit of the Confrontation States—those with forces bordering on Israel—Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Sudan (which kept an expeditionary unit on the Suez Canal), and Syria. This meeting, held in Cairo at the beginning of September, also failed to produce agreement on the opening of an active eastern front in support of Egypt's battle on the Suez Canal line.

What stood in the way of the all-Arab summit that Nasser had so vainly sought since the end of 1967 was the obstinacy of King Faisal of Saudi Arabia. Faisal was a man who not only bore a

grudge but nurtured and cherished one. He never forgot or forgave Nasser's support for the Yemeni republicans or the Egyptian president's efforts, from 1963 until the very eve of the June 1967 war, to overthrow the Saudi monarchy. During all those years, Faisal and the family he headed had been on the defensive, wracked by fears of an Egyptian-sponsored conspiracy or even an Egyptian invasion from Yemen. Even now, Faisal continued to suspect that Nasser was plotting against him. Now, however, the tables were turned, and it was Nasser who needed Faisal.

A wayward event caused Faisal to change his mind about the Arab summit that Nasser wanted so badly. On August 21, a deranged Australian tourist set fire to the Al Aksa Mosque in East Jerusalem, the third most holy site of Islam. The blaze ignited emotions throughout the Moslem world. In the surge of Islamic and Arab solidarity that followed, a kind of trade-off occurred between Nasser and Faisal: Egypt agreed to the Islamic summit that Faisal wanted (and that Nasser had earlier opposed) and Faisal agreed to Nasser's long-sought Arab summit.

The Arab summit convened in Rabat on December 21, 1969, and quickly turned into a major disappointment for Nasser. He could get neither endorsement for pursuit of a political settlement nor more support for his war effort. Faisal played the spoiler role to the hilt, refusing to back anything other than the all-out war against Israel that he knew Nasser to be incapable of launching. Nasser asked for 150 million pounds Sterling to buy military equipment he said the Soviets would not furnish him, but he could not get even that.[75] The Rabat conference broke up on December 23 without issuing a final communique, the first time this had ever happened at an Arab summit. Cairo Radio accused the summit of failing to shoulder its responsibilities,[76] and Nasser was quoted as saying that he left Rabat "feeling that I am alone."[77]

Afterward, Nasser and his aides did their best to hide their disappointment, but there was no gainsaying that Rabat was a serious setback for him. It put an end to his hopes for mobilizing broad and effective Arab support in his battle against Israel. It left him no place to turn but Moscow.

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On January 18, 1970, Israeli Phantoms struck at an Egyptian military base just north of Helwan on the southern outskirts of Cairo. It was the closest they had come to the Egyptian capital so far.

Two days later, Nasser called in Soviet Ambassador Sergei Vinogradov for what Cairo Radio called "a most important meeting." On January 22, the Egyptian president flew off to Moscow in deepest secret in a plane that the Soviets had sent at his urgent request.

10
Soviet Intervention

Gamal Abdel Nasser was desperate, but his desperation sprang as much from within himself as from outside circumstances. Contrary to what Israeli leaders at first imagined, the deep-penetration raids did not cause either the Egyptian public or the generals to clamor for his resignation. If anything, just the opposite occurred. The sight of Israeli planes in the skies around Cairo made Egyptians close ranks around their leader.

It was the humiliation of the Israeli bombings and Nasser's determination not to lose once again to Israel that propelled him to Moscow in January 1970 in the dead of winter, hardly his favorite time for a visit to the Soviet capital.[1] With its air arm, Israel had turned his war of attrition against him. The other Arabs had failed him. Only if he could bring the weight of the Soviet Union to bear in the battle, could he swing the balance back in his favor.

Nasser chose to be accompanied on his trip to Moscow by only two men: Mohamed Heikal and War Minister Fawzi. Heikal held no official position, but he was Nasser's friend, confidant, and chronicler. Fawzi was brought along to arrange the terms of the assistance for which Nasser intended to ask.

Soviet policy toward Egypt following the June 1967 war was a curious mixture of adventurism and prudence. Soviet leaders were ready to rearm Egypt massively, yet they did not want it to fight another full-scale war with Israel. Not that they had strong objections of principle to another war; their main concern was that Egypt not launch itself into one prematurely, before it was fully prepared. Arms were the currency, ever since 1955, with which the Soviets had bought their influence with Egypt and their other Arab friends. After the Arab defeat of 1967, they could refuse them less than ever. But they could, and did, try to use the components they put into their arms pipeline to control Egypt's actions: to provide enough weaponry to satisfy Nasser's requirement to rearm and to begin applying pressure on Israel, but to deny or limit those supplies that he would need most to ignite another full-scale conflagration.

It was, however, not easy to achieve this kind of balance. Far from being the instigators of the War of Attrition along the Suez Canal, as Rabin imagined in the summer of 1969, the Soviets were at first alarmed by it. In May, they urged Nasser to bring it to a halt and warned of the terrible risk he was running.[2] In June, *Pravda* printed an article that set out to show why the war along the Suez Canal was not in Egypt's true interests. The article was a classic piece of Marxist analysis. The fighting, it said, was being encouraged by the propertied classes, the village elites, capitalists, and some bureaucrats and army officers and religious groups, elements who wanted to destroy progressive social change in Egypt. These groups were trying to "fan nationalist and revanchist moods in the people and army calculated to push [Egypt] on an adventurist course." Their motive: They thought this would bring about the collapse of Nasser's regime.[3]

The one thing the Soviets had not wanted was to become directly involved themselves. When Nasser suggested to Podgorny in June 1967 that the USSR take over Egypt's air defense, the

Soviet president brushed aside the idea. Moscow was ready to provide equipment and advisers aplenty. Some of the Soviet advisers might even be caught in combat and killed—the Israelis counted 2 Soviet officers killed in Adan's September 1969 Gulf of Suez raid—but they were not offering to send their own forces to fight in Egypt.

It was this Soviet reluctance to become directly involved that Nasser set out to overcome on his trip to Moscow in January 1970. The USSR had already been shaken by Israel's ferocious air assault on the Egyptian canal line during the fall of 1969. By October, *Pravda* was warning not against Egyptian adventurism but against American arms shipments to Israel and Israeli aggression.[4] At a meeting in Prague at the end of that same month, and again in December in Moscow, the Soviets and their Warsaw-pact allies discussed the need for more military aid for Egypt in its Suez Canal line battle with Israel.[5] And in December, Soviet leaders made an in-principle commitment to Sadat, Fawzi, and Riad for supply of the SA-3, in itself a significant escalation in their backing for Egypt.

But when Nasser arrived in Moscow on January 22, Kremlin leaders still seem to have been thinking of weaponry rather than fighting forces as their contribution to Egypt's war effort. In his meetings with them on January 22 and 23, Nasser found them ready enough to reiterate their offer of SA-3s. The problem was that it would take six months to train Egyptian crews to operate them. Nasser wanted the SA-3 that very moment. But, according to the later testimony of both Heikal and Fawzi, when the Egyptian president asked for Soviet crews to operate them, Brezhnev was taken aback. He objected that fighter aircraft would be required as well, and that all this would entail considerable risk, more than might be justifiable for the USSR to assume. Nasser, a long-time student of Soviet psychology, accused Brezhnev and his associates of being afraid of the Americans. Then he used his ultimate weapon, the threat of his own resignation and replacement by someone who would turn to the United States for salvation.[6] "I shall go back to Egypt," Nasser warned in the dramatic manner of which he was master, "and I shall tell the people the truth. I shall tell them that the time has come for me to step down and hand over to a pro-American president. If I cannot save them, somebody else will have to do it."[7]

Whether or not Nasser really meant this threat seriously, the Soviets evidently took it so. For them, Nasser was the key to the position they had been working to build in Egypt and in the Arab world for a quarter of a century. They had made an enormous investment in him. The loss of a major ally is something political leaders everywhere will do almost anything to avoid, and Brezhnev was no exception to this rule. He hurriedly called the politburo into session, and two days later, on January 25, he read out to the Egyptians what had been approved.

The USSR, Brezhnev announced, had decided to intervene directly in the war between Egypt and Israel. It would provide Nasser the air-defense umbrella that he had sought but been refused two and one-half years earlier. Specifically, it would send to Egypt:

1. A full division of SA-3 missiles, with crews and associated equipment
2. Three flights of MiG-21Js, a total of 95 aircraft, together with pilots, mechanics, air controllers, and radar; and 50 Sukhoi 9s and 10 MiG-21Js for training purposes
3. Four 15-B radars, the most modern and powerful in the Soviet inventory, to strengthen Egypt's own air-defense apparatus[8]

All of this equipment and its personnel were to begin arriving in Egypt within one month. Both the missiles and the aircraft were to be under Egyptian command and were to take part in the in-depth air defense of Egyptian territory.[9] For the first time, Soviet soldiers and pilots were

to be sent to combat duty in a land far removed from their own and in a war to which their country was not formally a party. There was, however, one important caveat to this Soviet intervention: It was to be secret and unacknowledged. Soviet soldiers were to wear Egyptian uniforms, and the planes that Soviet pilots flew were to be painted with Egyptian colors.

Both the SA-3 and the MiG-21J were new to the Middle East scene, and both were potent weapons. The SA-3 had come into service in the Soviet military inventory only six years earlier. It had been deployed outside the Soviet Union only on Soviet war vessels and with Soviet units in Eastern Europe. It was designed to deal with both high- and low-flying aircraft and could hit a plane flying as low as 400 feet or as high as 40,000 feet; and it flew at the almost ballistic speed of Mach 4. Its "slant range" was approximately 33 miles, meaning that it could, at least in theory, knock down aircraft at that distance from its emplacement. The implication for the war along the canal was all too obvious. Not only would Israeli planes be exposed to a deadly new weapon while flying over the Egyptian-held west bank of the canal, they could also be hit well behind the canal's east bank if the SA-3s were moved up close enough to Egypt's front lines. The SA-3 could nullify Israel's air superiority both over the Egyptian-held west bank of the canal and over the Israeli-held east bank. It could make it practical for Egypt to send troops across the canal to seize and hold a bridgehead in Sinai.[10]

The MiG-21J, which came with Soviet pilots and ground crews, was reputed to be a match for the Phantom. It had better radar and more effective fire control than the earlier versions that Egypt had in its inventory, and wing-tip fuel tanks gave it range and flight time that nearly matched those of the Phantom. If their pilots were to confront Israeli ones, the Soviet generals were going to make sure that they had the weapons to do so.[11]

Egypt's side of the deal was to build the emplacements, fortifications, roads, and other installations needed for the surface-to-air missiles and the Soviet troops that would operate them, and for the Soviet warplanes and pilots. Into this effort, the Egyptian Army Corps of Engineers drafted all of Egypt's civilian contractors.[12] Civilian construction in Egypt came to a halt. Several tens of thousands of civilian workers were mobilized. By the end of the summer of 1970, the Corps of Engineers and the civilian contractors had poured some 1.6 million square meters of reinforced concrete for fortifications and 1.4 million square meters of regular concrete for other installations. Several hundred kilometers of paved and unpaved access roads had been built.[13] It was a mammoth undertaking, a kind of second High Dam, as Heikal later called it, and it made cement almost as scarce a commodity in Egypt as gold.[14]

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On January 31, Soviet ambassadors in Washington, London, and Paris delivered nearly identical letters from Prime Minister Alexei Kosygin to President Richard Nixon, Prime Minister Harold Wilson, and President Georges Pompidou. Kosygin warned that "if Israel continues its adventurism" the Soviet Union would "be forced to see to it that the Arab states have the means at their disposal with the help of which a due rebuff to the arrogant aggressor could be made." The Soviet prime minister laid responsibility for the Israeli deep-penetration raids at the doorstep of the United States; the United States, he emphasized, had provided Israel the arms to carry them out. He called for Western action to compel Israel to cease its attacks against Egypt and proposed a return to the two- and four-power talks.[15]

By the end of January, American intelligence had become aware of Nasser's impromptu visit to Moscow, but what had transpired there was still unknown. It was assumed that the Soviets had promised the Egyptians more arms, and Kosygin's letter was read as a threat to add more weaponry to the conflict, nothing more.[16] At both the State Department and at the White House,

it was felt that the United States should send a firm reply.[17] Nixon answered the Soviet warning with one that Washington thought its parallel. “The United States is watching carefully the relative balance in the Middle East,” the president wrote back to Kosygin at the beginning of February, “and we will not hesitate to provide arms to friendly states as the need arises.” This reciprocal threat, it was hoped, would deter the Soviets from upping the ante in the Middle East arms race.[18]

At the time, no one either at the State Department or at the White House thought the Soviet message had any deeper meaning.[19] At the beginning of February, Sisco briefed Rabin on the president’s reply to Kosygin, and said he didn’t think the Soviets would go beyond sending more arms to Egypt.[20] Actual Soviet intervention in the conflict between Israel and Egypt seemed too remote a prospect even to consider. In Washington, as much as in Jerusalem, it was almost universally discounted. In his memoirs published almost a decade later, however, Henry Kissinger claimed that, some days after the president’s reply was sent, it did occur to him that Kosygin’s message might have been intended as a smoke screen for Soviet intervention. Kissinger said he shared his concern with Nixon and called in Dobrynin to warn Moscow against putting combat personnel into the Middle East.[21] But if so, he told no one at the State Department.[22]

Even if the State Department and the White House had been alert to this possibility, it seems unlikely that the course of events would have been changed much. The United States—particularly in the state of cold war relations that prevailed in 1970—would not have simply bowed to a Soviet ultimatum to oblige Israel to cease its deep-penetration raids. And even if the Israelis had stopped bombing inside Egypt the moment Kosygin’s letter was delivered to the White House, it seems improbable that Soviet leaders would have changed their minds about sending their forces to Egypt (they did not withdraw them when Israel did stop its deep-penetration raids some two and one-half months later—in fact, they deepened their intervention). The Soviets had made their decision and were not about to go back on it. Kosygin’s letter was less a warning than a veiled announcement of plans that the USSR was soon to carry out.

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After the deep-penetration raids began, the Israeli government watched closely to see how the Soviets would react. Toward the end of January, Dayan declared that he saw no sign or hint that the Soviets intended to intervene actively against Israel. At the beginning of February, the Foreign Ministry denied a report that the Soviets had given Israel an ultimatum to stop the deep-penetration raids. Even as late as February 20, General Bar Lev, in an interview on Paris Radio, discounted the possibility of direct Soviet intervention.[23]

Early in February, American and Israeli intelligence did detect large new Soviet air shipments of equipment to Egypt,[24] but the first really disquieting news was not received until February 25. That day, senior White House and State Department officials called to the White House situation room for a secret briefing were told that large numbers of Soviet aircraft carrying SA-3 batteries and radar and Soviet military crews had begun to arrive in Egypt. Not long afterward, U.S. intelligence began to identify Soviet MiG-21Js in Egypt.[25]

Almost at the same moment that American officials got news of the dispatch of Soviet equipment and personnel to Egypt, Israeli intelligence officers spotted activity on the ground that worried them. The Egyptians were beginning large-scale construction works along their second defense line, some 15 to 30 kilometers west of the canal. Just what this was about the Israelis could not determine immediately. The fortifications were too far apart to be meant for tanks or

troops. At the beginning of March, Israeli planes were sent to attack the works. When the Egyptians shifted to a night schedule and brought large numbers of workers to the sites, it became evident that something big was underway. The Israeli air force stepped up its attacks and began bombing at night. It soon became clear to the Israelis that what was being built were emplacements for SA-3 and improved SA-2 missiles.[26]

The Soviet move came as a shock to the Israeli government. Its first reaction was to deny that the deep-penetration raids had anything much to do with it. Israeli officials argued—and some Israeli and American scholars continued to argue in years ahead[27]—that the Soviet decision to intervene was made much earlier, as far back as September when the intensive bombings began along the canal, or perhaps at the Warsaw-pact conferences in Prague and Moscow in October and December, or even during Sadat's mission to Moscow.[28] The deep-penetration raids had not changed the basic thrust of Soviet actions, they held; at most the raids had caused the Soviets to move a little faster.

If the Israeli Cabinet was united in seeking to evade responsibility for what had happened, it was nonetheless divided over how to deal with the new situation. Allon still dung to the proposition that there was no danger of large-scale Soviet intervention. The steps taken by the Soviets, Allon argued, were limited and should not oblige Israel to give up the deep-penetration raids. As he usually did, Israel Calili agreed with Allon. Ezer Weizman, who had retired from the military the previous December, joined Gahal and taken one of the four new portfolios offered it in Golda Meir's new cabinet, was even more categorical: The deep-penetration raids should not only be continued but also stepped up.[29] For Dayan, however, the Soviet intervention was the signal for return to his earlier strategy of scaling back, of doing everything possible to limit the scope of the war. Already after the Abu Zaabel bombing in February, the defense minister had cut back on the frequency of the deep-penetration raids and had targeted them exclusively on surface-to-air missile batteries and radar stations.[30]

On March 20, the day Israeli media broke the news of the Soviet deployment, Dayan came on television just after the evening newscast. The defense minister was calculatedly relaxed and smiling; obviously the last thing he wanted to do was give the impression that Israel faced a crisis or that the Soviet move had him deeply worried. What he had to say, however, was deadly serious. For fifteen minutes, Dayan discussed the possibility of Soviet involvement in the air war between Israel and Egypt, the Soviet buildup in Egypt, and the danger of a gradual "sovietization" of the conflict. Already, Dayan had a plan. It was not essential, he said, for Israel to insist on asserting its strategic superiority everywhere in Egypt. But the canal was different. There Israel would spare no means. The defense minister closed with the prediction that "an electronic summer" lay ahead in the battle for the skies. But he assured his Israeli listeners that the electronics would not all be on the Soviet and Egyptian side. "We will electrify something too," Dayan promised.[31]

A little less than three weeks later, on April 9, Dayan elaborated on his plan in a speech to students at Tel Aviv University. There was nothing in it about messages to the Egyptian people or Nasser's disappearance from the scene. His message now was for the USSR, and it was delivered in careful, measured, almost pleading terms:

> We have no pretensions of making ourselves at home in the skies over Cairo. That is not our purpose now. We do not have to assure ourselves of conditions that will make it possible for us to cruise all over the airspace above Cairo, or Alexandria, or Aswan as if it were over our country. However, we must assure our ability to maintain military control of the cease-fire line along the Suez Canal for as long as the fighting continues. … I not only hope, I believe that this distinction between Cairo and Aswan and Alexandria on the one hand and the canal region on the other exists also for the Russians. … But we in turn must

avoid escalation and reduce the scale of fighting as far as possible. Operations that are required to hold the cease-fire line are one thing, but what happens in other parts of Egypt is something else. I hope that with this policy we can make sure that we not only avoid involvement in a formal way with the Russians but that we will also avoid the physical need to cause Soviet casualties, and avoid having Soviet soldiers open fire on our aircraft. I hope that it will be possible to reach such a modus vivendi along the cease-fire lines.[32]

Dayan was offering the Soviets an arrangement, simple and clear-cut. They would stay away from the canal battle zone and Israel would keep out of the Egyptian heartland. In an article in the Israeli army journal a few days later, Dayan elaborated. The Russians, he said, would "be satisfied with defending central and vital places in Egypt and would refrain—not be deterred but refrain—from entering the battle region of the canal and its surroundings."[33] No precise line was drawn, but the Israeli press picked up on Dayan's theme and began to speak of a corridor 30- to 40-kilometers deep from the canal westward in which Israeli planes would continue to operate freely. The Soviets could set up their SA-3s around Cairo, Alexandria, and Aswan and elsewhere inside Egypt as it pleased them, but they should not introduce them into the canal corridor.

Dayan's speech at Tel Aviv University in fact marked the end of the deep-penetration raids. The day before he spoke, however, Israeli planes carried out a raid 30 kilometers west of the canal, just inside the zone in which Dayan had said Israel would consider itself free to operate. The target was a small military installation at a location called Salahiya. The Egyptians said 30 elementary school children were killed and another 36 wounded. They claimed that, in fact, what the Israeli warplanes hit was not a military installation but the Bahr al-Baqar elementary school. A furor arose much like the one that surrounded the bombing at Abu Zaabel two months earlier, but this time it throbbed with pain and disgust over the taking of the lives of children. This time, however, there was no Israeli apology. Dayan came on television to insist that there had been no mistake. The target hit was a military installation. He produced photographs of it before the bombing that showed military trucks and jeeps in the courtyard of the building and trucks protected by dugouts and foxholes in the area nearby. If children were killed and wounded, Dayan said, the only explanation was that the Egyptians had put them inside a military installation, in reckless disregard for their safety.[34]

The Egyptians angrily denied it and called the Israeli photographs a forgery, but they undercut their own denial. They took foreign correspondents to an infirmary and showed them wounded and dead children. But when the reporters asked to see the site of the bombing, the Egyptian authorities refused. They spoke evasively of it being "too far"—though it was only 15 kilometers distant from the infirmary—and the road being "too bad." On April 13, five days after the bombing, Egyptian authorities did take a group of foreign correspondents to what they called the Bahr al-Baqar school. The correspondents saw no evidence of military equipment at the site, but clearly the interval had been used to effect changes. The Israelis gave the press an aerial photo taken on April 14 that showed dugouts flattened and foxholes freshly covered and all military vehicles removed.[35] Everything pointed to the likelihood that Dayan was right: The Egyptians had put a school inside a military installation.

On April 13, Israeli warplanes again bombed on the edge of the 30-to 40-kilometer zone behind the canal, as though to say that the uproar over what had happened at Salahiya was not going to deter Israel from operating in this zone.

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On April 18, Captains Aviahu Ben Nun and Rami Harpaz, piloting 2 Phantoms, were sent out on a photoreconnaissance mission inside Egypt. The Egyptians had been training for a water crossing on a lake south of Cairo. Ben Nun and Harpaz were to get films of the Egyptian

operations. It was an easy mission. The two Israeli flyers encountered no opposition. After they took their photographs and turned back east, Harpaz, who was in the lead, decided to slow down. At a lower speed, they would have enough fuel to fly nonstop back to Ramat David air base in Israel. Otherwise, they would have to stop at the air base at Bir Gifgafa in Sinai to refuel, and Harpaz would not get home in time to be with his children that evening. Israeli air force air controllers assigned to follow the flight did not realize that Harpaz and Ben Nun had cut their speed. They thought the two were well on their way back, so they did not warn of the approach of 8 MiG-21S in hot pursuit. The MiGs were on top of the two Israeli pilots before they realized it. Several thick layers of clouds saved the Israelis from attack and enabled them to get away.

It was in these undramatic, even slightly comic circumstances that the first near encounter between Israeli and Soviet warplanes took place. Communications intercepts showed that the MiGs in pursuit of Harpaz and Ben Nun were flown by Russian speaking pilots.[36] Those Israelis in on the secret of this incident—senior officers and Cabinet members—were stunned. They knew the Soviets were setting up their SA-3s around Cairo, Alexandria, and Aswan. That the Soviets would be operating combat aircraft in the skies over Egypt was something they had feared but had hoped would not happen. It was a quantum leap in Soviet intervention. For a moment, Israel officials did not quite know what to do with the information they had. They told it to the Americans but kept it secret from the public for over a week while Passover festivities were in progress. Then on April 28, at Jerusalem's instruction, Ambassador Rabin leaked the story to the *New York Times*.[37] Moscow immediately denied that its pilots were flying combat patrols in Egypt. The denial meant that the Soviets were leaving a door open through which they might eventually retreat. Israelis found some reassurance there, but not much.

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During the spring and summer of 1970, Soviet soldiers and equipment continued to stream into Egypt. In its survey for 1970, the Institute for Strategic Studies in London was to report that on January 1 of that year there were no Soviet pilots, fighter planes, SA-3s, or missile crews in Egypt. By March 31, however, there were 60 to 80 Soviet pilots and 4,000 missile personnel. By June 30, the numbers had doubled—to between 100 and 150 pilots and 8,000 missile personnel. The figures were to go up even further by September.[38] Never before had the Soviets deployed such forces outside Europe.

Israel had never wanted American troops to fight its wars with the Arabs. Israelis were confident that they could handle their immediate neighbors. But it was a fundamental assumption of all the calculations made by Israeli governments that if the Soviet Union were to intervene in the Middle East, the United States would move vigorously to block it. Now, what Dayan had feared, and what Allon and many others in Israel had predicted could not happen, had happened. The Soviets were intervening. But the assumption about the Americans was not proving out. The United States was barely reacting at all.

What the Israelis wanted was not a parallel dispatch of American forces to Israel, but approval of the 25 additional Phantoms and 100 more Skyhawks that Golda Meir had requested from Nixon when she came to Washington in September 1969. They had not expected an immediate decision from Nixon the moment Mrs. Meir made the request, and they had not pressed for a decision so long as the dispute over the Rogers plan was at center stage. But once that was out of the way, they began to pursue the matter in earnest. On January 31, Nixon announced that he would reach a decision on the Israeli request within thirty days. In Israel, this was almost universally taken to mean that the decision would be positive. It made no sense, Israeli leaders reasoned, for Nixon to say he would reach a decision within thirty days unless he intended that

decision to be positive.[39]

The close of Nixon's thirty-day period coincided roughly with the first confirmed word of the arrival of Soviet combat units in Egypt. For the Israelis, this made a favorable American decision all the more urgent. The planes for which Meir had asked in September of the previous year were now needed not solely—not even primarily—to strengthen Israel's air arm but to demonstrate U.S. backing for Israel. But even before the end of the thirty-day period, Rabin began to get worrisome signals. Joseph Alsop, the paragon of the Washington foreign policy establishment and a warm supporter of Israel, told him late in February that the decision was going to be negative. John Mitchell, the attorney general and the president's chief domestic affairs adviser, had been trying to win approval for the Israeli request. But, Alsop said, the Departments of State and Defense—he called them the "oil lobby"—had won the president over.[40]

In fact, opinion at the State and Defense departments was overwhelmingly against approval of the Israeli request, if not precisely for the reason suggested by Alsop. At both the Departments of State and Defense, the latest Soviet moves were seen as a reaction to Israel's belligerence, to its deep-penetration raids. The Israelis got themselves into trouble. Now they wanted the Americans to pull their chestnuts from the fire. Melvin Laird, the secretary of defense, was in no mood to see the United States take on additional commitments. The war in Vietnam was at a critical stage and was about to spread to neighboring Cambodia. The last thing Laird and the generals wanted to think about was having to fend off the Russians in the Middle East. Even supplying the Israelis more airplanes so that they could do the job themselves was an unwelcome thought, for it could divert resources needed for the war in Southeast Asia.[41]

Officials at the State Department had different reasons for opposing the deal. Rogers still hoped to salvage something from his initiative of the previous December. He was persuaded that another big commitment of arms to Israel would make it impossible to do any serious diplomatic business on the Arab side.[42] Undersecretary of State Elliot Richardson, Rogers' deputy, was also strongly opposed to approving the Israeli request. Richardson, the handsome, youthful-looking Boston Brahmin who was to go on to be secretary of health, education, and welfare, secretary of defense, and attorney general in Nixon's two administrations, and to defy the president in the last of these jobs, was sure that giving more arms to Israel would simply fuel the Middle East arms race and cause violence to spiral upward. What was needed, he felt, was to bring the fighting to a stop.[43] Practically the only one in the administration who unequivocally favored supplying the planes was Henry Kissinger. His view was dictated both by his sympathy for Israel and by his concept of relations between states: The U.S. failure to back Israel in the face of an aggressive Soviet move, Kissinger argued, would be seen by the Soviets as a sign of American weakness and would be exploited by them not only in the Middle East but elsewhere as well.[44]

Nixon was ambivalent. He wanted to help the Israelis, and he was sensitive to their political pressure, but he shared Rogers' concern that approving this latest request for aircraft would shut the door on any hope for diplomacy. While Nixon weighed these competing considerations, President Georges Pompidou arrived in the United States for a state visit at Nixon's invitation. Despite de Gaulle's departure from office, Nixon continued to attach the greatest importance to relations with France. But his invitation to Pompidou raised an outcry in the American Jewish community. Pompidou had retained the embargo that de Gaulle had placed on the 50 Mirage jets for which the Israelis had ordered and paid before the war. The French, along with the Soviets, championed the idea of an imposed settlement that would push Israel back to the prewar borders without requiring from the Arabs much more than a pledge of nonbelligerence. In fact, French Middle East policy seemed hardly to differ at all from that of the USSR.

This by itself would have been enough to assure the president of France a cool reception in New York and other cities with large Jewish populations. But just a few weeks before he set out for the United States, Pompidou had approved a deal to sell more than 100 Mirages to Libya. Muammar Qaddafi had seized power in Tripoli in September of 1969, and the country had passed from the conservative pro-Western camp to that of Nasser and the other Arab radicals. Libya itself had no conceivable need for 100 of the world's most sophisticated jet fighters. It was obviously a backdoor deal to supply Egypt. To American Jews and to Israelis, it was all the more outrageous for being done at a time when the French were refusing to honor their contract to deliver 50 of these same aircraft to Israel. There were noisy demonstrations against Pompidou in New York, and the mayor of the city refused to greet him. In Chicago, there was a nasty incident in which demonstrators jostled the French presidential couple and shouted obscenities at Madame Pompidou. A proud man, Pompidou decided he had had enough. He boarded his plane for New York, and for a moment it looked as though from there he might keep on going straight back to Paris.[45]

Nixon was furious. Though he had not planned to do so, he flew to New York to attend a dinner in honor of the French president and his wife. There he made a warm and praising speech. Before leaving Washington, he called Sisco and ordered that Israel's request for Phantoms and Skyhawks be put on indefinite hold. When Kissinger learned of this, he protested frantically to H. R. Haldeman, the White House chief of staff, but to no effect.[46]

Nixon's anger at American Jewish demonstrators had no more than a momentary impact. The real issues were political: how to avoid undermining the chances for diplomacy, alienating the Arabs, and hurting America's moderate friends in the Arab world while not disappointing the Israelis and making it look as though the president were going back on his many earlier pledges to maintain Israel's military superiority. To find his way out of this dilemma, Nixon once again had to resort to duplicity. He returned to the stratagem he had used twice the previous year, when he gave approval for Rogers' proposals but had aides let the Israelis and American Jewish leaders know he didn't support them.

The solution was to announce publicly that the decision on Israel's request was being held in abeyance, but to tell the Israelis privately that they would get the planes they needed anyway. On March 12, Kissinger summoned Rabin urgently and in secret to the White House. There the national security adviser told the Israeli ambassador that the president's decision on Israel's request for aircraft would have three parts to it. First, the United States would say publicly that it had decided not to decide but would follow Middle East developments closely and would not hesitate to take "appropriate action" if there were changes in the military balance. Second, the United States wanted to put the supply of arms to Israel on a "new basis," to get away from public announcements. Washington would replace Israeli losses quietly, with no publicity, in a way that would maintain the balance of power in the Middle East. And finally, Nixon would send Golda Meir a letter in which he would reaffirm his commitment to Israel's security and assure that the balance would not be permitted to tip against Israel.[47]

The idea that the United States would take the public stance of deciding not to decide on Israel's request for planes, even though privately it would continue to provide them, was not at all what Rabin and the prime minister wanted. It was an enormous disappointment, for it left Israel with no visible show of American support to counter the ever-growing Soviet intervention. Israeli leaders feared it would both undermine public confidence in the government and encourage Soviet adventurism. It was very little consolation to learn that Israel would get planes secretly. In the situation the Israeli leadership faced in the spring of 1970, the public

announcement of the receipt of American arms was more important than the arms themselves.

Meir's answer was to send Rabin back with a plea for Nixon to let it be known publicly that the United States would supply Israel the arms it needed.[48] The prime minister's message did not change Nixon's decision, but it earned Rabin a private meeting with the president on March 18—one of his more memorable ones. Nixon led off with fulsome praise for Israel and with a reiteration of his commitment to supply all the arms needed for its defense. But, he continued, the method used all these years was no good.

> Everytime you ask for arms, particularly aircraft, [Nixon said] the media raise a great hue and cry and everybody waits for the administration's decision. This excessive dramatization is harmful. … Be assured that I will continue to supply arms to Israel, but I will do it by other means, new ones. Above all it is very important to keep this arrangement absolutely secret. We must not make it public.[49]

Rabin responded with an impassioned speech on the need for the United States to say publicly that it intended to supply Israel more planes. His eloquence fell on deaf ears. Nixon reiterated that supply would be done through replacement of losses. With a cynicism that was apparently too much even for Nixon, Kissinger suggested fixing the losses ahead of time. The president brushed this idea aside, but he made clear that Israel would not find itself in want: "You may get more aircraft through this new method than by the old one."[50]

To William Rogers was left the task of conveying the bad news to Israel publicly. On March 23, the secretary of state announced that the administration had decided to hold in abeyance Israel's request for more aircraft. Rogers' announcement came only five days after the first public reports of the movement of Soviet weapons and personnel to Egypt. The secretary of state was sharply criticized for his apparent indifference to that development.

For his part, Rabin heeded Nixon's plea for secrecy only briefly. On April 22, he told Kol Israel's listeners that Phantoms and Skyhawks would be provided to Israel secretly. "I can tell you with certainty that when the United States begins to supply the new planes to Israel, it will not announce it publicly." The Americans, the Israeli ambassador to Washington explained, had decided to conduct their arms sales to Israel in secrecy.[51]

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January 1970 was an easy month for Israeli troops on the Bar Lev line. Only 7 Israeli soldiers were killed, the lowest toll since June of the previous year.[52] The tally of Egyptian firing was down too, to 328 incidents, and the largest single element of that was light-arms fire. But from February on, the Egyptians steadily stepped up their pressure. The number of Egyptian-initiated incidents rose from month to month, and the IDF's statistics showed that an ever-greater proportion of Egyptian firing was from mortars and artillery. Israeli casualties went up too. In February, 18 Israelis were killed on the Bar Lev line, and in April the figure rose to 27, the highest since the previous July.

There were no more brushes between Israeli and Soviet pilots, but the Israelis thought they sensed a deeper Soviet involvement in the ground war—not in the actual fighting, but in the planning and direction of operations. Artillery fire from the west bank of the canal was heavier and more effective; reaction times were faster and the entire pace of combat changed.[53] Late in April, the Egyptians opened up with heavy artillery barrages concentrated against Israeli forts in the north-central sector, between Ismailiya and Kantara, and obviously aimed at destroying them and opening a hole in the Bar Lev line. In the last week of April, Egyptian commandos carried out a half-dozen raids against Israeli positions on the east bank.[54] Shelling increased in intensity in May, and pressure shifted to the northern finger of the Israeli line, the area that in June and

July 1967 Dayan had wanted to leave in Egyptian hands but that Rabin had insisted on taking and holding.

On May 30, the Egyptians scored a striking success. In a daring daylight raid, an Egyptian unit of company size ambushed and decimated an Israeli armored patrol along the northern finger. The survivors made it to the safety of a nearby maoz, but the Egyptians lay in wait and hit the column that came to take out the wounded. In all, 14 Israeli soldiers were killed, 2 were listed as missing, and 6 were wounded. It brought casualties for the month to 34 dead and 63 wounded, the highest since fighting began along the canal line.[55]

This was a challenge the Israeli high command felt it could not ignore. The air force was called in and for three days fiercely pounded Egyptian lines in the northern sector, destroying the bridges connecting Port Said to the mainland and the freshwater canal, cutting the road south, and hitting artillery and tank positions and infantry bunkers with napalm as well as more conventional ordnance. It was the heaviest Israeli bombing of the war; more than 4,000 bombs were dropped.[56]

But this time, unlike the bombing in the same sector a year earlier, the Egyptians did not flee their positions. An Israeli force that crossed to the east bank a few days after the end of the bombing found the Egyptian line heavily defended, and the Israelis suffered casualties.[57]

The heavy losses of May caused Israeli public morale to plummet. Even the drubbing the air force gave the Egyptians in retaliation for the May 30 ambushes did little to mitigate the pain and confusion that had begun to seize Israelis in the spring of 1970. To the steady bloodletting along the canal, the frequent incidents along other fronts, and the repeated terrorist attacks within Israel itself and on Israeli installations abroad, was now added the intervention of the Soviet colossus. Israelis could not quite believe that they were going to have to fight a superpower, but the prospect was ominously present.

Their air force had been obliged to retreat from the deep-penetration raids that only a few months earlier their leaders had told them might bring the war with Egypt to an end and perhaps produce even more far-reaching effects. Now the Egyptians were becoming bolder and the fighting along the Suez Canal was spiraling upward. There seemed to be no end in sight.

11
Behind the Lines

Neither in Israel nor in Egypt did the public have any real appreciation of what was going on along the front lines. The Egyptian media, all in governmental hands since the end of the decade of the 1950s, fed the people an endless diet of victory communiques, most of them unadulterated fantasy.

In the reexamination that followed the June 1967 defeat, this practice of outright lying to the public was one that enlightened Egyptians had promised themselves they would extirpate. On June 5, the press and Cairo Radio had announced that Egypt had destroyed Israel's air force and that its army had broken through and was marching victoriously toward Tel Aviv. In Cairo, crowds came into the streets to celebrate. The stories themselves did not in the slightest change the outcome of the war. They only made defeat more bitter for Egyptians and for Arabs everywhere.

Mohamed Fayek, minister of National Guidance following the June 1967 defeat, vowed that henceforth only the truth would be told.[1] Heikal repeatedly scolded the press and the government for trying to cover up setbacks and for claiming victory where there was none. And yet the practice continued. Neither Fayek nor Heikal was able to put a stop to it, and, in his own reporting, Heikal at times fell short of the accuracy that he preached. All of the information Fayek's department received about the fighting came from the Ministry of War, and it would have been impossible for civilians to ask to verify the Ministry's reports; not only impossible, but simply unthinkable. Nasser himself often played fast and loose with the facts. Any listener to Cairo Radio in 1969 and 1970 was treated to an almost daily menu of tales of slaughter of Israeli soldiers and pilots and wreckage of Israeli aircraft, tanks, artillery pieces, and vehicles of various types. Altogether, Egypt claimed to have shot down 190 Israeli planes during the War of Attrition.[2] Had the count been correct, Israel would no longer have had an air force, for by the summer of 1970 the number of combat aircraft in the Israeli inventory barely exceeded 200.[3] Likewise, the IDF's entire tank inventory was, as it were, eliminated, and several thousand of its soldiers were killed. Had the figures been even approximately correct, Israel would have been forced into submission well before the end of the first year of fighting along the canal.

So blatantly false were the Egyptian reports that Richard Parker, reading them in Washington from his perch at the head of the State Department's Egyptian desk, sardonically suggested a way of dealing with them. Parker proposed that a "mendacity coefficient" be used in the interpretation of all Egyptian war claims. He put it at a factor of ten. Egyptian reports of losses caused to Israeli forces should be reduced by a factor of ten, Parker cabled his colleagues in the field; and Egyptian acknowledgements of their own losses should be multiplied by ten.[4]

When it came to the reporting of losses suffered by their own forces, information put out by the IDF spokesman's office was generally accurate. This was a matter of necessity as much or

more than of principle. Israel was too small a country for denial or fabrication to go unnoticed and unchallenged. When soldiers were killed, everyone knew it. Their photographs were published in the major Tel Aviv newspapers, rimmed by a thick black border. The families expected it. They would not have tolerated denial of this honor to their sons. Ground equipment losses may have been reported with less stringent accuracy, but there too it was not possible to stray very far from the truth. Too many people in the army knew the facts, and society was too open to suppress that knowledge. The loss of credibility that would have resulted from withholding or distorting information would have been far more damaging than the physical losses themselves.

Aircraft losses had to be reported with absolute accuracy, for the pilots and their families knew instantly when a plane had been shot down; failure to acknowledge it would damage the IDF's credibility and hurt morale. Any falsification would quickly be known to Israel's supplier, the Americans. The Israeli air force went to great lengths to achieve the same accuracy in its reporting of kills of Egyptian planes. It feared that exaggeration would undermine the standards of rigor and excellence it had established for its pilots.[5]

What both the IDF spokesman and the press failed to tell the public was the truth of what it was like on the Suez line. Here one encountered a blatant conspiracy of silence. The major papers often sent correspondents along on the commando actions the army carried out inside Egypt or against Egyptian-held islands off Sinai. Eli Landau, a young former paratroop officer, accompanied several of these missions as a reporter for *Maariv*. Landau always came back with glowing stories of dangerous missions executed with great skill and bravery. His reports, and those of others, reflected both what the authorities wanted the public to hear and what the public itself wished to be told. Their accounts nourished and strengthened the image of the Israeli soldier that the government and the public cherished—unfailingly courageous, dedicated, and resourceful.

Strangely, however, journalists rarely visited the canal line. In the entire seventeen months that fighting raged along the canal, no wholly truthful account of conditions there was ever published. Instead, the public was treated to stories of incredible puerility, even by respected journalists like Zeev Schifi, *Haaretz's* military affairs reporter. For Schiff's readers, service on the canal line was truly idyllic, like a gastronomical trip through the kitchens of Europe and the Middle East:

> The best food is sent to the maozim but it is not possible to send a cook to each one. The result is that soldiers discover remarkable culinary abilities and tens of excellent and original chefs come forward. … Once in a while there is a bad day when it is the turn of someone who is terrible at cooking to do the meals. But there are also appetizing days, when a soldier of Polish origin serves as cook together with one of Yemeni origin. In such days dishes that match those of the most famous restaurants are created.[6]

It was not until twenty years later that a candid account, such as this one related by a crew member of a tank company that served on the Bar Lev line, could be committed to print:

> The tank was used for all purposes, even as an ambulance. Rescue sometimes took two or three days. We would arrive in the position with the tank to take out the wounded. [Other] soldiers would hang on to the tank and beg to be taken out also. We had to throw them off the tank. They were like wild animals. They were white with fear, dirty and stinking, and the worst of it was their bulging eyes. This was something I saw often during the War of Attrition. Even among the strong ones that stayed behind you could see the disappointment in their eyes.[7]

Or this account of what happened after the successful Egyptian ambush of an Israeli tank patrol in the northern sector on May 30, 1970: "It was the first time that men in the company broke down. Two men … refused to get in the tank. They were in shock and they began to vomit. They

dug into the ground like mice, and they refused to leave the position."[8]

Conditions could not have been easier on the Egyptian side, but neither at the time nor later was the Egyptian public allowed to hear any realistic account of what was happening on the front line on the west bank of the canal. Egyptian soldiers were required to serve not three years, like their Israeli counterparts, but indefinitely, until the occupied territories were liberated. Soldiers who were drafted for the war in Yemen in the early 1960s were still on duty at the end of the decade. From September 1969 until the cease-fire in August of the following year, Israeli planes bombed the Egyptian lines methodically, sometimes daily, frequently using napalm. Losses were substantial, and rumor circulated in Cairo that soldiers were being buried in mass graves. Parents were told by the authorities that they should "forget" their young men.[9] When he formulated his theory of attrition, Heikal had proudly announced that Egypt was prepared for sacrifices in the tens of thousands.[10] Casualties did not arouse the extreme sensitivity in Egypt that they did in Israel, yet the Egyptian public was by no means indifferent to them. Egyptian battle reports seldom made mention of Egyptian casualties, and Egyptian authorities never issued any casualty figures. Twenty years afterward, this information continued to be treated as secret.[11] Israeli reconnaissance planes flying over Egypt in 1969 and 1970 brought back photographs of vast new military cemeteries. At the war's end, Israeli intelligence estimated Egyptian casualties in the range of 10,000.[12]

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The ease with which its army had defeated the Arabs and the seemingly absolute nature of that defeat lifted the Israeli public almost to a state of euphoria in the summer of 1967. In the aftermath of the victory, Israelis were sure that they had been freed from the danger of war for many years to come, perhaps forever. From the east bank of the Suez Canal a few days after the June 8 cease-fire, Colonel Shmuel Gonen, the officer whose Seventh Armored Brigade broke through at Abu Ageila and led the advance to the canal and who was one of the authentic heroes of the fighting in Sinai, wrote his son: "I hope you will never have to fight. Your father finished with it once and for all."[13] General Ariel Sharon, a division commander in the Sinai fighting, declared that the next war, if there was one, would be fought by his grandchildren.

Many Israelis thought the defeat meant that the Arabs would now see that they had no choice but to accept Israel and make peace with it. Dayan gave voice to this view a few days after the war when he said that he was "waiting for the telephone to ring." It seemed to most Israelis that the Arabs had no other real choice. At the end of June 1967, General Mordechai Hod and General Matti Peled met secretly in East Jerusalem with an Egyptian journalist whom they tried to sound out about the possibilities of an early peace. They were astounded and disbelieving when the Egyptian told them that instead of opening up prospects for peace, the defeat had closed them off—that under conditions then prevailing no Arab leader would be able to stay in power if he sought to make peace with Israel.[14]

The defiant three noes that issued forth from the Arab summit held at Khartoum at the end of August 1967 put an end to Israeli illusions that the Arabs would soon sue for peace. But could they make war? A great many Israelis continued to doubt that they could. Israel's quick and relatively cheap victory fostered among Israelis an attitude of contempt toward Arabs as warriors. The collapse of the Egyptian army in Sinai—with officers deserting their troops, soldiers casting away their weapons and even their boots in their flight—was seen not just as a defect of organization or of leadership, or more simply as something that might happen to any army caught in open desert unprotected against enemy air power. It stemmed—so many Israelis thought—from a fundamental flaw of national character.

This was the view that General Yehoshafat Harkabi, former IDF chief of intelligence, propounded as he set out to analyze the reasons for the Arab defeat. Harkabi concluded that the Arabs lacked societal cohesion. In a book published in 1968, he wrote that the basic cause of the Arab defeat was to be found in the weakness of societal bonds among the Arabs. This, Harkabi said, caused the individual to find himself alone in moments of crisis in battle, inclined to worry first and foremost about his own safety.[15]

The lies broadcast from Cairo Radio after the outbreak of the war, and subsequently during the fighting along the canal, reinforced Israelis' feeling of scorn and derision for their Arab adversaries. After all, could one respect enemies who lied so shamelessly to their own people? Harkabi saw the phenomenon of falsehood as stemming from this same absence of strong societal bonds; if one placed no trust in one's neighbors, one felt free to mislead them in any way considered useful. Harkabi did not state his conclusions with absolute certainty. But the lesson that was clearly to be drawn from them was that the Arabs were not going to constitute a serious military threat. A flaw so fundamental in the social make-up of the Arab nation was obviously not going to be remedied in just a few years. Arabs might be dangerous terrorists, but it would be a very long time before they would be able to challenge Israel on the field of battle.

From contempt for one's opponent it was only a step to fall into the trap of believing in one's own superiority. It was an easy and a tempting step, and it was taken by many Israelis who would have been embarrassed to admit it had they done so consciously. From seeing themselves as a small, vulnerable, and insecure state, Israelis suddenly came to regard their country as a power and their soldiers as almost invincible. Our tanks, they told themselves, can go anywhere, only the ocean can stop them. Our pilots can knock anybody's planes out of the sky and can strike against any enemy, anywhere.[16] The books about the war, packed with tales of heroism, reinforced the superman image of the Israeli soldier. The impressive tallies racked up by the Israeli air force in battles with Egyptian and Syrian pilots in 1969 and 1970 served to confirm this image. Zeev Schiff's book, *Phantom Over the Nile*, which came out in the fall of 1970 and which uncritically sung the praises of the Israeli air force, without any evaluation of its vulnerabilities, reinforced the public's belief in an inherent Israeli superiority. So did the glowing press accounts of daring Israeli commando raids inside Egypt after the fighting started along the Suez front.

This intoxication affected the senior echelons of the army as much or more than it did the public. A clearer notion of what was happening on the Suez front line in 1969 and 1970 might have served as an antidote to it. This, however, was a story that the press did not want to tell and very likely would not have been allowed to tell, even if it had tried, which it did not. It was one that many senior Israeli officers themselves evidently either did not know or want to know.[17]

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The defeat of June 1967 dealt a serious blow to the Egyptian economy. In the year and one-half that followed it, the country's gross national product declined by 2.5 percent.[18] The closure of the Suez Canal, the loss of the Sinai oil fields, the destruction of the cities along the canal line and the relocation of their populations, the abrupt fall in tourism—all this took a heavy toll on the Egyptian treasury. Contributions by Arab oil-producing states only partially offset the impact, and they were all but nullified by the all-out mobilization for war that followed the defeat. The gigantic military construction effort undertaken in the second half of 1967 and in 1968—the building of fortifications along the Suez line, the construction of new roads and airstrips, of bunkers, and of shelters for aircraft—brought civilian construction practically to a halt. Development expenditures declined to 12 percent of GNP.[19] In the three years that followed

the June 1967 defeat, military expenditures almost doubled, rising from $718 billion in 1967 to $1263 billion in 1970.[20]

Luxury goods disappeared from Cairo's stores. Medicines were in short supply. Imports of new passenger cars were prohibited, and automobile parts became almost impossible to obtain; this had the happy effect of eliminating traffic jams, but it also created much hardship. The construction of civilian housing came practically to a halt, and buildings began to crumble from lack of maintenance. Heikal was later to call it a time of disintegration and decay.[21] The authorities were careful, however, to keep the shops stocked with basic foodstuffs. Nasser himself took a direct interest in this. One of the first questions he asked at Cabinet meetings was whether there was enough food in the markets.[22] The standard of living of the well-to-do and the middle class plummeted, but the poor—by far the largest segment of the population—suffered only slight additional hardship. The government's policy of subsidizing basic foodstuffs—bread, flour, cooking oil, and sugar—put them within reach of the most deprived. A loaf of bread could be had for the equivalent of a penny or two.

In Israel, the post-June 1967 war period was a time of unprecedented prosperity. The Israeli economy had dipped into a recession in the winter of 1966–1967, but the war revived it like an electric shock. A surge of confidence in the country's future caused both investment and consumption to shoot upward, and the pool of unemployed left by the recession made it possible for this to happen with no more than modest inflation. Immigration soared; fifty thousand arrived in the first two years after the June 1967 war, the most at any time since the early 1950s. And for the first time, most of those coming were from the United States and other developed countries. Defense industries expanded rapidly under governmental pressure to make Israel self-sufficient in all but the most sophisticated weaponry. Military spending rose exponentially. Between 1967 and 1970, it more than doubled, from $562 million to $1278 million.[23] But rather than being a burden on an economy under stress, as in Egypt, in Israel the rise in military spending fueled the boom and added to the general prosperity.

Large donations by diaspora Jewry during and after the war boosted Israel's foreign currency reserves to an all-time high, and this made it possible for the government to loosen restrictions on imports. Almost everybody in Israel, it seemed, was buying a car after the war. At peak hours, Tel Aviv, Haifa, and Jerusalem had traffic jams to match those anywhere, and the highways were infested with drivers who were obviously still sensing their first thrills of power behind a steering wheel. Washing machines, refrigerators, and television sets were snapped off the market by a hungry consuming public. Israel was almost the last country in the Middle East to get television. The Israeli Television Service began regular broadcasts in the spring of 1969. By mid-1970, statistics showed that, on a national average, there was one television set for every household in Israel.

People had money and were eager to spend it. The coffeehouses, cinemas, theaters, and nightclubs of Tel Aviv did a thriving business. The crowds promenading down Dizengoff Street and around the circle on Saturday evenings were so thickly packed that it was impossible to make one's way at a pace faster than a leisurely collective shuffle. Friday nights, the beginning of the Sabbath, saw many more people out than before the war, particularly the young. The Sabbath blue laws were still strictly enforced, but here and there the cafe, bar, or nightclub that managed to stay open would be packed. Friday evening entertainment programs at the big hotels, the Hilton, the Sheraton, and the Dan, brought out a public of affluent and joyful pleasure-seekers. And by ten o'clock on a summer Saturday morning, the beaches would be full and the highways leading to them jammed with vehicles of all sorts.

With the arrival of war on the Suez front, the existence of so much prosperity came to be viewed by some as an embarrassing incongruity. Young men were suffering and dying on the front lines, yet the nightclubs and discotheques of Tel Aviv were full. Was there not something morally wrong in this? The prime minister, Dayan, and other Cabinet officers warned repeatedly that the country was living above its means. Israelis would have to tighten their belts and make a return to austerity. Yet the government did not match words with action. It talked a great deal about reducing living standards but did little to achieve this or to bring down the level of consumer spending. The truth was that prosperity made it infinitely easier for the population to bear the burden of the war that so unexpectedly followed the great victory. Reserve duty call-ups were much more frequent now than before 1967. Everyone did his yearly thirty days, and most did more. But now, being called up involved no worry about one's business collapsing or one's job evaporating, or about the folks at home going short. The young soldier finishing a three-year stint of compulsory service was sure to find work immediately upon discharge. In due course, a rationale was found that made the good living and the prosperity not only acceptable but also absolutely virtuous. Every day that Israel lived a normal, undisturbed life, so the argument ran, was a victory over Nasser and the terrorists who wanted to force the country to mobilize.

And, for a time, terrorism was Israel's biggest security problem. The first big wave of Arab terrorist action came in February and March of 1968. In those two months there were over thirty terrorist attacks of one sort or another. Most were on the West Bank, but, on March 18, a bus full of Israel schoolchildren from the Tel Aviv area ran over a mine while on a spring vacation outing near Eilat. The driver and the tour guide were killed, and many of the children were wounded. On July 23, an El Al Boeing 707 airliner was hijacked shortly after taking off from Rome and flown to Algiers. In August, a series of grenade blasts rocked Jerusalem on a single night. In October, a grenade was thrown into a crowd of Jewish pilgrims at the tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron, wounding 39 persons.

In November, the largest and bloodiest Arab terrorist action of the post-June 1967 war period took place. An automobile packed with explosives was set off in the Machane Yehuda area of West Jerusalem. Ten were killed and 18 wounded, and among the victims were women who were doing their shopping in preparation for the Sabbath. This last action, in particular, caused emotions to run hot. There were public calls for reprisal, but the government stayed its hand, presumably to avoid upsetting prospects for a successful conclusion to the negotiations with Washington for purchase of Phantom jet fighter-bombers. The agreement was signed on December 27. A day earlier, Arab terrorists shot up an El Al jet standing on the tarmac at Athens airport, killing an Israeli engineer. On December 28, the Israeli government threw caution to the winds. With Mirage jets flying fighter cover, IDF helicopters ferried a commando unit up the Mediterranean coast to Beirut's busy international airport, then the hub of Middle Eastern civil air transportation. The Israeli force held the airfield for over two hours while demolition teams cleared passengers and blew up planes bearing the markings of Arab airlines. In all, 13 craft, most of them late-model passenger jets, were left smashed and burning on the tarmac.

International opinion reacted with outrage over what it viewed as a vindictive strike at Israel's weakest, least hostile, and most pro-Western neighbor. In Israel too there was criticism of the raid, but the outpouring of foreign censure quieted the domestic critics and fueled a Massada complex that was to grow as the fighting along the canal and the pressure on Israel's other borders escalated. Israeli editorialists complained bitterly of world opinion's readiness to shed tears over "burnt metal"—the wrecked airplanes on the tarmac in Beirut—while remaining indifferent to the spilling of Jewish blood.

In June 1968, Israelis celebrated the first anniversary of the victory—the greatest military victory in five thousand years of Jewish history, so the enthusiasts called it—in high spirits. The issue of whether the victory was the fruit of divine or exclusively human action was debated with some seriousness. Many orthodox Israeli Jews viewed it as quite definitely another in the series of miracles that the Lord had performed for the Jewish people. Secularists saw it differently, but even the most hardened agnostic was ready to agree with a popular comedian who summed it up in this way: "There were no miracles in the Six-Day War—but what marvels."

A year afterward, Israelis remained transfixed by what had happened in June 1967. They had not, they proudly told themselves and foreign visitors, marched passively to the gas ovens; they had fought, and they had won. They celebrated their victory in print, in film, and in song. Shabtai Teveth's best-selling book, *The Tanks of Tammuz*, told of the exploits and the heroism of the men of the armored corps in breakthroughs in Gaza, Sinai, and Golan. Other books by Israeli authors and the press carried glorification even further. In their Friday supplements, *Maariv* and *Yediot Acharonot*, Israel's two mass-circulation newspapers, each week brought their readers new accounts of heroism. Stories of feats of arms by individual officers or soldiers were recounted over and over again in the press and on the radio. In the week of the first anniversary of the war, soldiers, housewives, schoolchildren, and citizens of all ages were interviewed about what they did and how they felt before, during, and after the war. They told their stories with relish and enthusiasm.

A number of films on the Six-Day War appeared about the time of the first anniversary. Two were documentaries produced under governmental auspices. One of them, entitled *Three Hours in June*, dealt with the air war. The second, *Six Days*, gave an overall view of the fighting. They drew massive crowds and held Israeli audiences enthralled. A commercial film entitled *Target Tiran* came on the market in the fall of 1968. It recounted the adventures of a commando unit assigned to blow up an Egyptian radar station on Tiran Island, a wholly fictitious event. It was a cheap imitation of American and British war films and the critics panned it, but it was popular with the public.

Israel's songsters were among the first to celebrate the victory. "Jerusalem of Gold" had been written just before the war. Afterward, it became almost a national anthem. The songs that came out of the war were both sentimental and raucous. The titles gave the flavor: "My Soldier Will Come Back" and "We Return Once Again to Tiran" were popular tunes. So were "Nasser's Waiting for Rabin, O Ho Ho!"—a cheerful mockery of the sarcastic "welcome" thrown out by the Egyptian president to the Israeli chief of staff in the days preceding the war—and "Ammunition Hill." This last was an account, set to music, of the battle for Ammunition Hill in Jerusalem, one of the most hotly contested positions in that sector. The song was punctuated with explosions and machine-gun fire. Both the subject matter and the sound effects made it seem an unlikely candidate for the hit parade, but it held top spot for some weeks.

Commemoration of the second anniversary of the victory, in June 1969, took place on an entirely different note. All the old tunes were brought out and aired again. The songsters charged anew up Ammunition Hill, though the place was now being readied as the site for an Israeli housing development in East Jerusalem. They ran the Straits of Tiran and mock-ingly reminded Nasser of his disastrous challenge to Rabin, and they crooned of Jerusalem of Gold, Steel, and Lead. But now, the accent was on the sad side of the victory, its ever-darker aftermath, and the sacrifices that the future seemed certain to demand. The heroes of the war's second anniversary were its young widows. Nava Kaplan, widow of Major Sami Kaplan whose exploits Shabtai Teveth exalted in *The Tanks of Tammuz*, wondered out loud in a press interview whether the

victory had been worth the sacrifice. *Haaretz* ran as the main feature article in its Friday magazine on June 6 a heart-rending first-person story of the crumbling world of an anonymous young war widow.

A few months later, a song came out that told more about Israel's collective state of mind than the most eloquent of essays. Its title and its theme were: "The Whole World Is Against Us." It ended with a defiant: "Who cares!"

A great deal had happened since June 1967. The victory that was supposed to bring peace had, in fact, brought more war. There was not only Nasser's War of Attrition along the Suez Canal, in full swing by the summer of 1969; there was also—in addition to terrorism within Israel—the Palestinian guerrilla war against Israeli settlements in the upper Jordan Valley and along the Lebanese border. By the end of 1968, the IDF had effectively sealed off the Jordan River itself. An electrified fence, mine fields, night sensory equipment, and a complex of bunkers and patrol roads made it next to impossible for Palestinian guerrilla bands to penetrate via that route. But it was easy for them to use the sanctuary of Lebanon and Jordan to shell settlements in Israel's northeastern corner. These were lush agricultural areas, dotted with kibbutzim set up by Eastern European Jews in the 1930s and 1940s and moshavim settled by immigrants from Arab and other eastern lands who came to Israel in the first decade after independence. Bet Shean, a town of some six thousand people, mostly oriental Jews, became a frequent target for rocket attacks in 1969 and 1970, and the agricultural settlements near the Jordanian and Lebanese borders came under shelling and sniping for extended periods.

What pained the Israeli public most were the casualties. In the ten and one-half years between the 1956 and 1967 wars, 64 Israeli soldiers and 71 civilians had been killed by Arab regular or guerrilla forces.[24] This amounted to a death toll of 13 a year, or a little over one a month. But from the spring of 1969 on, losses on the Suez front alone averaged over 13 killed a month, and there were casualties on other fronts as well. In May of 1970, the total number of Israeli military and civilians killed in military and terrorist actions on all fronts rose to 60.

Casualties of this order were bound to sap the public's morale. Their effect was often seen in small ways. People at times sat at parties in mournful silence. When asked what was the matter, they would reply that things are so awful these days with so many soldiers being killed. Civilians were not the only ones affected. Jonathan Netanyahu, an exemplary officer who served in the IDF's elite commando units from 1969 to 1973 and was to be killed leading the raid at Entebbe in 1976 that freed Jews held hostage after the hijacking of an Air France jet, wrote his parents in America in August 1969 that it was really appalling to listen to the news on Kol Israel: "Every day brings its toll of dead and wounded, acts of murder and mine laying, exchanges of fire along the front lines and shelling of settlements. … I don't think we have ever been under such pressure—even the pre-state riots didn't occur with such frequency."[25]

And Israelis did listen to the news. They had, in fact, become a people with one ear glued to their radios. Kol Israel had sixteen newscasts in its eighteen hours on the air each day. There were many who, fearful of missing the latest battlefront report or announcement of casualties, made a point of catching all of them. People complained that the newscaster should be instructed to begin the account by saying whether there had been casualties. The tension of waiting through a twenty- or thirty-word description of the action itself to hear this most important of all news was too much.

When the annual paratroop-day ceremony came around in November 1969, it was noted that there was no space left on the memorial monument's marble face. Death's chisel had filled it with the names of the fallen. "See you on the war memorial" became a sardonic goodbye said by

graduating high school students in June 1969 as they prepared for military service.

Some were ready to explain away the toll by pointing out that more people were killed on the highways in Israel than on the front lines. This was a rejoinder that was especially popular with the right wing. One newspaper delved into the files of the Israeli Government Statistics Office and came up with figures. From June 1967 (following the cease-fires) through May 1969, automobile accidents in Israel took a toll of 800 killed and 30,762 injured. During the same period, 326 Israelis were killed and 1,381 were wounded in military actions on all fronts.[26] So it was true that more people were killed on Israel's highways than on its front lines, but it was irrelevant to the problem. All it proved was that a rationalization could be found for almost anything.

What held Israelis together in support of their government's policies, despite the casualties and the psychological pressure, was not spurious reasoning about the ratio of highway to battle deaths but the belief that Israel had no choice but to stand on the cease-fire lines, that there was no prospect for or possibility of peace, and that Israel would put itself in mortal danger if it returned to the prewar borders. Dayan gave expression to this view in more thoughtful, eloquent, and somber terms than anyone. For him the old borders were "worthless borders that we must not go back to because they are worse than war, they signify permanent war."[27] This same reasoning would later lead him to declare that he would prefer "Sharm el-Sheikh without peace to peace without Sharm el-Sheikh."

The defense minister had for some time been groping toward a philosophy of Israel's existence in the midst of a hostile Arab world. His views came to crystalization in a speech he entitled "We and the Arabs" that he delivered in August 1968 to a graduating class of Israeli officer trainees. To make his point, Dayan traced the evolution of the thinking of Dr. Arthur Rupin, one of the Zionist pioneers. Rupin began in the early 1920s as an advocate of Jewish-Arab integration but later, under pressure of events, came to view that idea as futile. Dayan quoted a passage that Rupin wrote in 1936, a time of Arab riots against the small but growing Jewish community in Palestine: "The Arabs don't agree to our enterprise. If we want to continue our work against their will, there is no escaping blood sacrifices. It is fated that we shall live in a state of permanent warfare with the Arabs. This may be undesirable but it is the reality."[28]

This, the defense minister made clear, was his conclusion as well. Dayan's was as gloomy a view of Israel's relations with the Arabs as any ever set out in public by an Israeli leader, but, until the spring of 1970, most Israelis agreed with it. Then events converged in a way that caused Israel's consensus to begin to crack and made people question where their government was leading them. In the background lay the continuing and growing war along the canal, the failure of the deep-penetration raids, and the intervention of the Soviet Union in the air war. But the sparks came from the government itself.

Early in February 1970, as he prepared to leave for talks with European governments, Eban proposed to his Cabinet colleagues that Israel launch a "peace offensive" to burnish its image abroad and gain the upper hand in the propaganda warfare with the Arabs. Eban's idea was that Israel should declare itself ready to agree to a temporary cease-fire, to be followed by peace negotiations under the auspices of the UN Secretary General. Eban made this proposal without discussing it in advance with the prime minister. This was a serious tactical blunder. Golda Meir reacted angrily. She lashed out at the idea of a temporary cease-fire. It was Nasser who had violated the June 8, 1967, cease-fire, she pointed out, and it was up to him to return to it unconditionally. Besides, a temporary cease-fire would simply give the Egyptians the opportunity to rebuild their canal line and move their artillery and antiaircraft missiles forward.

Other ministers backed the prime minister. Seeing that he had little support, Eban asked to withdraw his proposal. Golda Meir would not allow it. She wanted a formal rejection, and perhaps also a humiliation for Eban. A vote was held, and only the two Mapam ministers, Israel Barzelai and Victor Shemtov, backed Eban's proposal. Eban himself abstained.[29]

All this took place in the secrecy of the Cabinet's deliberations. But it quickly became known to the Israeli and to the foreign press that the foreign minister had proposed a cease-fire and peace negotiations and that the prime minister and other Cabinet officers had rejected his proposal. It was widely thought that the reason for the rejection was simply that the prime minister and the majority of the Cabinet felt that the tide of war was running in Israel's favor. This being the case, there was no sense in settling for anything less than Egyptian agreement to return to a permanent cease-fire. Meir refused to comment publicly on the incident.[30] The impression conveyed to the public was that the prime minister and her Cabinet were not really interested in a cease-fire.

Golda Meir enjoyed enormous popularity during her first year in office. Opinion polls regularly reported that 70 percent or more of the public was satisfied with her handling of the situation.[31] She was practically immune from public or press criticism. One of the things that sustained public confidence in the prime minister was the belief that she and her cabinet were doing all they could, within the limits dictated by the country's security requirements, to seek peace. She herself endlessly repeated that she would do anything and go anywhere for peace, would not pass up the smallest opportunity for peace. Her rejection of Eban's cease-fire proposal made it seem that she didn't really mean what she said. It rent the first small breach in the public's confidence in her.

A much more serious gap was to be opened barely two months later. On April 5, the international news media reported from Paris that Dr. Nahum Goldmann, president of the World Jewish Congress, had been invited to Cairo for talks with President Nasser. This news came only two weeks after Israelis had first learned that Soviet air-defense personnel were being sent to defend Egypt. The accumulated fatigue of the War of Attrition and its casualties made the public eager for an end to the fighting. The prospect of a visit to Cairo by Goldmann raised hopes. The government dashed them the very next day. On April 6, its spokesman announced that the Cabinet had denied approval for Goldmann to go to Cairo.

What had actually happened was that in mid-March an Egyptian intelligence agent had telephoned Goldmann late one evening at his Paris apartment to suggest a meeting. They met that same night, and, according to Goldmann, the Egyptian raised the possibility of his going to Cairo to talk with Nasser.[32]

Nahum Goldmann had been a leading figure in the Zionist movement since the late 1920s. He spoke a half-dozen languages fluently and was a brilliant intellectual and a spellbinding orator. Many Jews regarded him as a kind of latter-day prophet. When the State of Israel came into existence, he was invited to take a ministerial portfolio in its first government. Goldmann declined, citing the needs of diaspora Jewry for leadership. Malicious tongues had it that, in fact, Goldmann could not bear to serve under his long-time rival David Ben-Gurion. Whatever the truth of this, Goldmann disagreed profoundly with Ben-Gurion's dictum that it was the duty of all Jews to come to Israel. He viewed the continued existence of Jewish communities throughout the world as the best guarantee of Israel's survival. He wanted to see the diaspora flourish, and he felt he had an important role to play in providing leadership for it. He also preferred the cosmopolitan life of Europe and North America to the parochialism of the newly born Jewish state. He kept homes and offices in Geneva, Paris, and New York, and he shuttled back and forth

between them. Eventually, he bought an apartment in Jerusalem, but he seldom lived there. Many Israelis resented this. They complained that for all his eminent past services to the Jewish people and to the Zionist cause, Dr. Goldmann did not understand the realities of Israel's day-to-day existence. Golda Meir shared these sentiments. For his part, Goldmann emphatically disagreed with Ben-Gurion's policy of seeking to deter aggression by neighboring Arab states by carrying out reprisal raids. The reprisals, he argued, often exceeded the provocation in violence, and they only widened the breach between Israel and the Arabs.[33] Goldmann doubted that Israel's victory in the June 1967 war would bring peace nearer. He advocated total withdrawal from the territories occupied in that war.[34] In March of 1970, he had just published an article in *Foreign Affairs* reiterating his arguments for withdrawal.

Goldmann was eager to make the trip to Cairo. He proceeded to Jerusalem to seek the Israeli government's clearance, but when he conferred with Golda Meir, he found her wholly unsympathetic. Each was later to give a different version of what transpired in that conversation. Goldmann was to maintain that he had told the prime minister that the Egyptians insisted only that his trip to Cairo take place with the knowledge of the government of Israel, not with its approval, and that he would be going as a private citizen, not to speak for or to represent the Israeli government. He asked only that Meir allow him to go on that basis, without putting the issue to the Cabinet for its approval. Meir later claimed that she was told that the Egyptians required that the trip take place with the authorization of her government.[35] She insisted on bringing it to a vote in the Cabinet. There she pressed for and got a rejection.

There were valid reasons for doubting that Goldmann's trip would have achieved anything. He had no written invitation from the government of Egypt, only a very vague oral one, and, on April 7, Cairo Radio denied that he had ever been invited. Yet the Israeli government's rejection of his request to go to Cairo set off a reaction that the prime minister and most of the members of her Cabinet had not expected. For the first time since she took office in March of the previous year, Golda Meir was subjected to widespread criticism by the press and the public. *Haaretz* did a quick sampling of public opinion and reported on April 7 that 63 percent of those questioned favored Goldmann's going to Cairo. Mapam ministers Barzelai and Shemtov made known publicly their opposition to the Cabinet's decision. Minister of Tourism Moshe Kol, head of the small Independent Liberal party, voiced reservations. Debate stirred the ranks of the Labor Party. Former Minister of Police Eliahu Sasson, a Labor Party elder statesman and long recognized as one of Israel's top experts on Arab affairs, publicly criticized the Cabinet's action.

But the sharpest criticism, and for Golda Meir the most painful, came from the younger generation of Israelis. Yoram Sadeh, son of Palmach commander Yitzhak Sadeh, sent the papers an open letter to Meir questioning the sincerity of the government's professions that it wanted peace. Assaf Dayan, son of the defense minister, and the sons of several other prominent Israeli political figures, publicly denounced the Cabinet's decision. The greatest shock of all, however, was an open letter sent the prime minister by a group of high school seniors in Jerusalem. The government's opposition to Goldmann's trip to Cairo, they said, raised doubts in their minds about their ability to perform their military service in good conscience. For young people in Israel to question their military service was practically unprecedented. They had always gone to it not only willingly but, for the most part, eagerly. Disaffection among the young had been confined to far-left groups whose numbers were inconsequential. The letter was deeply disturbing to the Israeli establishment.

By sheer coincidence, there occurred that same month another event that outraged the Israeli establishment. While the Goldmann affair was being debated, there opened at the Cameri Theatre

in Jerusalem a play by Hanoch Levin entitled *The Queen of the Bathtub*. Levin had been satirizing Israel's militarism since before the June 1967 war, for a time in a relatively good-natured way. The self-satisfaction and self-congratulation that engulfed Israeli society after the war, and the prospect of unending war that unfolded beyond it, turned his satire increasingly caustic. In August 1968 he brought out *You and I and the Next War:*

> When we smile together in the moment of love
> The next war smiles together with us
> When we wait together in the delivery room
> The next war waits together with us. …[36]

The next year came *Ketchup*, a series of satirical sketches. One of them was entitled *I Don't Make Good on Promises God Made to Abraham*, a bitter comment on the growing movement in Israel to keep all the conquered territories:

> Here is the greater Israel, for it I will not give my life,
> What God promises He should make good on his own account;
> Because I am not sand on the shore of the sea,
> And I don't make good on promises that God made to Abraham.[37]

Into *The Queen of the Bathtub* Levin poured all his rage over where he felt Golda Meir and her government were leading the country. It was a ferocious satire of the country's institutions, the army, society, and the government—and, in particular, a satire of the prime minister and her sanctimoniousness:

> Gentlemen [she proclaims to a meeting of the Cabinet] I have tried and I have tried and I cannot find any defect in myself. For seventy-one years I look at myself and I find only perfection such as God should preserve. Every day it amazes me anew. I am right, I am right, I am right, and once again I am right.

And of her domineering manner:

> THE MINISTER OF POSTS: May I say something?
>
> THE PRIME MINISTER: No, you are after all only the Minister of Posts, you are a marginal and unimportant figure and you are here only on sufferance.[38]

And of Dayan's gloomy vision:

> THE PRIME MINISTER: The Minister of Defense, who just now jumped from his helicopter where he had been carrying out his security duties, will conclude the meeting with a speech to the nation.
> THE DEFENSE MINISTER: (sings "The Promise")
> I promise you blood and tears
> And my word is my word
> And if I promise you blood and tears
> Then everyone knows it is blood and tears
> Without speaking of sweat.
>
> Soon things will be very bad
> And my word is my word
> And if I say that things will be very bad
> You can be sure that they will be very bad
> And perhaps even worse than bad.[39]

The audience shouted and screamed that it was a sacrilege. People overturned chairs and broke

windows. The ruckus was too much. The Cameri Theatre's board of directors decided to shut down the production of *The Queen of the Bathtub* well ahead of schedule.

■ ■ ■

Though Egypt was not a rigidly totalitarian state, it would have been impossible for any Egyptian playwright to put before the public a work so openly and savagely critical of the government as Hanoch Levin's was of Israel's. The security police kept a close watch out for dissent, and those who openly dissented could be arrested and tortured, held indefinitely in prison, or even murdered there at the discretion of the authorities. The media were all in governmental hands. Heikal, whose friendship with Nasser permitted him to take liberties denied to others, launched a series of articles in *Al Ahram* in the summer of 1967 calling for greater democracy.[40] But his leftist adversaries used their newspapers to attack him vigorously for this, and he himself retreated to the position that what he was proposing was "controlled democracy."

Otherwise, however, the media were not a vehicle for debate or dissent. The role assigned to the press was that of educating the public in the right way of thinking and of rebutting whatever doubts or signs of deviation came to its notice. The press stayed with that role. Student demonstrations and workers' strikes, which broke out in February 1968, were sparked by dissatisfaction over the light sentences meted out to air force officers considered to have been negligent in June 1967, but they also gave expression to public discontent with Nasser and his regime. More student demonstrations took place in November 1968, sparked in appearance by a new education law, but here again the true motive appears to have been dissatisfaction with the regime and its policies.

From the time Nasser launched his War of Attrition along the Suez Canal, demonstrations or strikes or other mass manifestations of discontent ceased. This, however, did not mean that Egyptians had thrown themselves unreservedly behind the war effort or that dissatisfaction with the regime or its policies had disappeared. Soldiers coming to Cairo on leave from the front were struck by something of the same sense of alienation as were Israeli soldiers on their visits home. Except for shortages and a blackout in the early months of 1970 when Israeli planes raided around Cairo, the citizens of the capital went about their day-to-day lives and business much as always. Soccer games and other popular entertainments were unaffected and became even more sought after.[41]

But the long, hard war—it was, in fact, the longest and probably the hardest of modern Egypt's wars—did produce signs of discouragement and of dissatisfaction, particularly among the young. This was made evident by the plentiful lectures the press delivered to its readers about the need to instill in the young the virtues of patience and a better understanding of Egyptian history and the traditions of Islam. The press also berated the public for putting faith in foreign news broadcasts and for spreading rumors.[42]

It was really only in the very limited framework of the novel and the theater that dissent could be expressed, but even here only indirectly and mainly through the use of allegory. A play by Saad al-Din Wahba produced in Cairo in 1968 showed the dead of the 1948 and 1956 wars being instructed in the lessons of the 1967 defeat by the dead of that war. Another, by a young playwright, Ali Salaam, indirectly criticized Nasser and his regime for allowing itself to be drawn into war with Israel. Naguib Mahfouz's parable "Child of Suffering," published in *Al Ahram* in May of 1970, suggested that the Nasser regime's efforts at renewal of Egyptian society had ended tragically in stillbirth and hemorrhaging.[43] A play by Yusef Idriss that showed the Nasser regime to be arbitrary and dictatorial was, for a time, banned by the censor, as was a movie made from a story by Mahfouz that cast the regime's senior political figures in a negative

light.[44]

But neither in Israel nor in Egypt was dissent sufficient to impede the war effort, much less oblige the government to look for ways to bring the fighting to an end. Nasser was as determined as ever to win this final struggle with Israel, and the Soviet intervention of the spring of 1970 threw the balance back in his favor. The government of Israel was bent on depriving Nasser of the victory he sought. It was still intent on proving to him that he could not accomplish anything by force and that he had no alternative but to talk, and to talk on Israel's terms. And it was determined not to admit, at least not in public, that it was in the least bit deterred by the Soviet Union's intervention.

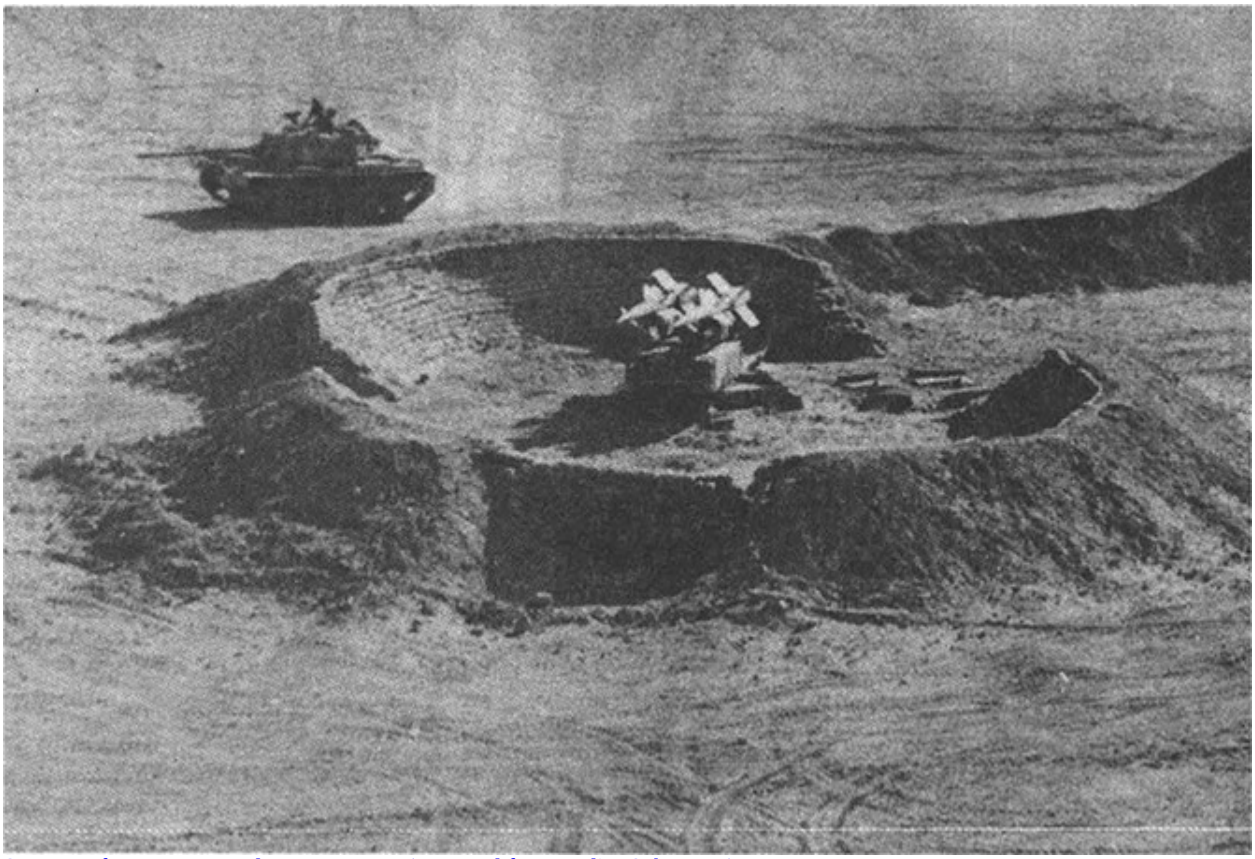
So, as the war along the canal entered its second summer, it seemed headed unavoidably toward escalation.

12
An Electronic Summer

The chase that Soviet pilots gave Ben Nun and Harpaz on April 18 was a first heavy hint that Moscow was not buying Dayan's proposal for separate Soviet and Israeli zones of operation. Within a few weeks, the Soviets were to make clear that they had no interest whatsoever in any such arrangement.

After they began arriving in Egypt at the end of February and early in March 1970, Soviet air-defense units were first put around Alexandria, Cairo, and Aswan. Defense of Egypt's major port, its capital, and its Soviet-built High Dam were the top priorities. This rear-echelon network was completed during April. Already at the end of February and in March, the Egyptians had tried to stretch their surface-to-air missile network eastward toward the canal, but Israeli bombing had foiled the attempt. In May, the Egyptians launched a second massive effort. Thousands of workers were brought from Cairo and the delta to toil frantically around-the-clock in an area some 20 to 40 kilometers behind the canal to build the broken circle and T-shaped sites in which SA-2 and SA-3 missiles were to be emplaced. A thick defense of antiaircraft guns was set up around the work sites. But it was of little use. Israeli planes struck fiercely and unrelentingly at the new sites and at the construction crews, bombing for hours on end and using napalm to incinerate the sites and the people working there. Altogether, in May, Israeli planes carried out attacks on 80 surface-to-air missile sites west of the canal. In June the figure rose to 106.[1] Casualties among the Egyptian workers and the crews of the antiaircraft guns were horrendous. No official figures were ever given, but, in years afterward, Egyptians spoke of 1,000 or 2,000 having been killed in May alone in the building of what came to be known as the "missile wall."[2] Losses were at least as heavy in June.

The Israeli air force's battle to stop the movement of the Egyptian-Soviet missile network toward the canal was, in fact, a battle for the Bar Lev line. If moved up close enough to the canal, these more sophisticated and more effective missile systems could make it extremely costly, even prohibitively so, for Israeli planes to continue bombing Egyptian tank, artillery, and mortar positions on the west bank of the canal. If the Israelis could not bomb, they could not hold the Bar Lev line itself, at least not as it was conceived. Without the aid of the air force, Adan's thin line of less than 1,000 men simply could not stand against the weight of an army of 100,000 on the opposite bank.



Soviet surface-to-air missile site in Egypt (reprinted from *Yediot Acharonot*)

It all went back to the decision the government had made so proudly but also so hastily in the euphoric days following the June 1967 victory, to stay on the cease-fire lines until peace was achieved. No one in Israel had questioned it then. Indeed, even the Americans gave it their blessing. From the government's decision flowed axiomatically, almost reflexively, the order to remain on the canal waterline, even after Egypt began shelling in the fall of 1968. Even Tal and Sharon, who opposed Bren's plan for putting up forts, did not question its goal. Their plan, too, was one for holding Sinai at the Suez waterline, albeit without fixed positions.

Now even more axiomatically and reflexively came the decision to draw a figurative line in the gravelly desert waste separating the Egyptian capital and the canal, a line beyond which the Egyptian and Soviet surface-to-air missiles batteries should not be moved. Even Dayan, who in June of 1967 had hesitated to go to the canal waterline, then had been uncertain whether to stay on it, had been lukewarm about the Bar Lev line—calling it in the privacy of conversations with close associates "a daily provocation to Egypt"[3]—and who had been skeptical of the deep-penetration raids, was now pulled into championing the proposition that holding the canal waterline position was vital to Israel's security. The proposal that Dayan made in his Tel Aviv University speech on April 9 was a plea, but it was also a warning: Israel would fight any attempt—whether by Egypt or by the USSR—to deny it air superiority over the west bank of the canal.

The original rationale for holding the canal waterline was that holding the cease-fire lines was necessary so as to achieve peace. Israel would stay there until the Arabs abandoned their stubborn refusal to make peace and live in good-neighborly relations with it. This had been an easy stance to strike in the summer of 1967 when Arab armies all around lay defeated and

shattered. As the summer of 1970 approached, it was no longer either easy or so persuasive. Something more was needed to justify the expenditure in lives and resources required of Israel if it were to stay on the bank of the Suez Canal.

With the new circumstances came the new rationale. The canal line was not just the line Israel would trade for peace. It now became Israel's survival line, the line on which it was fighting for its very life. After the June 1967 war, Israeli strategists had written enthusiastically of the space that Sinai would give their country. At last, little Israel would have "strategic depth." It would have the luxury of borders far from its population centers that it would not need to rush urgently to defend. The implication was that the new lines, in and of themselves, would not be all that important. They could be abandoned or exchanged for others if need be, for they had no intrinsic value.

These calculations turned out to be all wrong. They ignored important elements of Israeli collective psychology. Once a line was drawn, it became endowed with a symbolism that made it vital that it should not be crossed, that made holding it a matter of the highest national interest. The entire security of the state became invested in it. No matter that hundreds of miles of desert separated it from the nearest centers of Israeli population. Defeat there would still be tantamount to defeat everywhere. In the superheated atmosphere of the spring and summer of 1970, this psychosis enveloped both the government and the nation. The ordinarily rational and skeptical Abba Eban was as much prey to it as any of his colleagues. In an address to the Knesset in July, Eban declared that "the battle on the canal line is the battle to preserve the very existence of the state of Israel."[4]

The General Staff rejected all suggestions that the IDF should abandon or shorten the canal line defenses. These came almost exclusively from middle-grade officers, those closest to the fighting along the canal. They remained in-house. Only in July of 1970 did debate within the IDF over whether to continue to hold the canal line spill into the public domain. That month *Haaretz*, the newspaper of Israel's intellectual elite, published a series of articles by a reserve officer, Colonel Benyamin Amidror. Israel, Amidror said, had to be prepared for the possibility of an attempt by the Soviet Union to push it back from the canal line and to invade Sinai. Amidror proposed that the IDF concentrate on a defensive deployment in Sinai. He envisaged a thick defensive network, taking the best advantage of the terrain and relying on bunkers and artillery as well as on tanks. This, Amidror argued, would be much more likely to deter the Soviets than trying vainly to hold on to the thin line of fortifications along the canal waterline. To break through against heavily fortified Israeli positions in Sinai, the Soviets would have to mass a substantial army in Egypt. Sending pilots and air-defense missile crews to Egypt was one thing, Amidror reasoned; an army was quite another. The Americans might ignore the Soviet air-defense deployment, but a large-scale movement of Soviet ground combat troops across the Mediterranean was something to which the United States could not remain indifferent.[5]

Dayan himself was deeply worried about the Soviet Union's intervention. He feared a collision with the Soviets. To the defense minister, it seemed quite possible that Israel might be obliged to pull back from the canal waterline.[6]

Chief of Staff Haim Bar Lev did not agree. He rejected suggestions that Israel prepare to abandon the canal line. The army's mission, he argued, was to prevent the Egyptians from crossing the canal. The purpose of holding the canal line was to prove to Egypt that it could not accomplish anything by force. If Israel abandoned a position along the Suez Canal—any position—it would show that force did work; thus the decision, in Bar Lev's own words, to "hold strong and not give in."[7]

The battle for the canal line was, nonetheless, a battle that the government did not want to disturb the public tranquility or unduly burden the public treasury to fight. Only if the IDF would have called up reserve units could it have prevented the Egyptians from sending raiding parties across the canal to put down mines or lay ambushes in the large stretches of territory between the maozim. On occasion it did this, but it was not prepared to make it a general practice. There was no general or even partial mobilization. Chief of Staff Bar Lev's first priority remained training the army for all-out war. Putting more troops into the canal line, it was calculated, would simply lead to more losses. It would be a victory for Egyptian strategy.[8]

Service on the canal line during the summer of 1970 became more difficult than ever for Israeli soldiers. The Egyptians now sometimes fired at the maozim all day long and into the night. The Egyptian bombardments often left the maozim cut off for days at a time, unable to bring in supplies or take out wounded personnel. The statistics compiled by IDF intelligence told much of the story: In May, the Egyptians initiated 874 incidents, almost four times the number for the same month a year earlier. In June, Egyptian firing dipped ever so slightly, but in July it hit a high for the war: 952 Egyptian-initiated incidents were counted that month.[9]

Soviet soldiers in Egyptian uniform (reprinted from *Yediot Acharonot*)

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For Colonel Constantin Popov of the Red Army, the Phantom was simply something amazing. "The thing rained down fire like a real-life dragon," he later recounted. "To be able to fight it," Popov added, apparently in all seriousness, "you needed psychological counseling."[10] Popov recalled arriving in Egypt at the end of December 1969. There his unit and the others that were to follow changed their Soviet uniforms for the dust-colored fatigues of the Egyptian army. They were told to keep out of sight. When they had leave in Alexandria they wore civilian clothes and dark glasses and tried to look like tourists.[11]

It was in March of 1970, as Popov recalls it, that the first elements under his command were deployed near the canal. That month he took one of his units to replace an Egyptian battery some

10 kilometers behind the canal that had just been attacked by Israeli planes. The destruction wreaked by the Israeli bombs was fearsome to see. A heavy stench hung over the place, for the bodies of the Egyptian missile crew had not yet been removed. Popov cautioned his soldiers: "If you don't do your job properly, this is what awaits you. …"[12]

Early in June, Rogers and Sisco issued a warning to the Soviets against bringing their antiaircraft missiles up to the canal. The secretary of state gave Dobrynin a paper that said the United States "would not view the introduction of Soviet personnel, by air or on the ground, in the canal combat zone as defensive. …" Entry of Soviet personnel into the combat zone, the paper added, "could lead to serious escalation with unpredictable consequences to which the United States could not remain indifferent."[13] The Soviets ignored Rogers' warning just as they had Dayan's earlier one.

By June, the Egyptian and Soviet air-defense commands had perfected their tactics for battling their way eastward toward the canal line. A much thicker missile network was put in place, and batteries were made part of an interlocking system, set up in such a way that each was covered by several others. This meant that attacking aircraft would be met not just with 2 or 3 missiles but by an entire barrage, coming from different directions. When a battery was moved toward the canal, those behind it would cover it until others were brought up nearby. In this manner, the surface-to-air missile network gradually crawled eastward.

Deception was also an important tactical device. Building fortified positions for the emplacement of SA-3s and SA-2s was a dead giveaway. Israeli planes would destroy them even before they were occupied. So Egyptian and Soviet crews, working together, began bringing up their missile batteries at night, installing them in a hastily dug hole in the ground or camouflaging them amid palm groves or in other ways, making them ready for operation by early the next morning.[14] Another stratagem was to put up dummy missile batteries for the Israelis to attack. The Egyptians and the Soviets made wide and apparently successful use of this ploy. They built enormous numbers of dummy sites. Popov later recounted that Israeli pilots were often fooled by the dummy batteries and attacked them with great determination. Popov found watching the Israeli planes fall into this trap "one of the most amusing things" of his service in Egypt.[15]

These new tactics brought a first success at the beginning of June. An Israeli Phantom on a reconnaissance flight was hit but not brought down. Egyptian and Soviet missile crews tried again at the end of that month. On the night of June 29 to 30, they brought up to the central sector of the canal, in back of Ismailiya, large numbers of improved SA-2s and SA-3s and antiaircraft cannon. When Israeli planes came out the next afternoon, they were met by a hail of rocket and gun fire. Two Phantoms were shot down.[16] It was the most serious loss inflicted on the Israeli air force in a single day in the three years since the June 1967 war. It sent a shock through the Israeli government.

The downing of the 2 Israeli Phantoms on June 30 caused much concern in Washington as well. Nixon and Kissinger considered it vital that the military balance not shift against Israel. Three days later, Nixon ordered that electronic countermeasure equipment be dispatched to Israel for installation on Israeli planes to protect them against the Egyptian and Soviet surface-to-air missiles.[17]

In the meantime, another Phantom was lost to Soviet surface-to-air missiles.

The American electronic countermeasure equipment was flown to Israel immediately and mounted forthwith on the Phantoms. The American technicians who brought the equipment assured Israeli pilots that it would protect them from Soviet missiles.[18] When Phantom squadron

commander Shmuel Chetz and navigator Menachem Ainy took off on July 18 to attack missile bases west of the canal, their orders were to continue their flight path and not to try to dodge incoming missiles; the electronic pods affixed to the plane would shield them. So, when the warning lights on their cockpit instrumentation panel flashed, they paid no heed. Their plane was hit. They turned eastward to return to Sinai. Seconds before they would have crossed the canal, the Phantom went out of control. Chetz gave the order to eject. Ainy was shot from the cockpit and was on the ground almost immediately. Chetz, a short, sinewy, balding man with an warm, engaging smile, went down with his plane and was killed. Ainy spent the next three and one-half years in captivity in Egypt regretting the trust that he and Chetz had placed in the new equipment.[19]

Within less than three weeks, Israel had lost 5 first-line warplanes. It was a pace of attrition that could not long be sustained, but its immediate impact was less material than psychological. The losses shook the air force's morale. Chetz's death was particularly unsettling to Israeli fliers, for he was known as a respected commander and a skilled pilot.

In its twenty-three-year history the Israeli air force had never experienced such intense pressure. For the twenty-some Phantom pilots and navigators who had borne the main burden of the deep-penetration raids and were now the mainstay of the battle against the advancing missiles, it seemed that the war had become theirs almost alone. They found themselves on call and often on combat duty seven days a week, for weeks on end without a break. Between their flights into Egypt, they instructed new pilots in the intricacies of the Phantom. Sometimes they certified them for the plane's various specialties by taking them on combat missions. Pilots and navigators found themselves near exhaustion. Some months before he went on his last fateful flight, Menachem Ainy asked his wife to have an abortion. He had seen a colleague disappear in combat and leave a wife and three small children. He did not want to bring a child into the world in the midst of war.[20]

The morale of the government was shaken as well. The aircraft losses had the Cabinet deeply worried. When the air force commander, General Mordechai Hod, came to brief the government one day in mid-July, Ezer Weizman urged him to say something encouraging. "It smells like May-June 1967 around here," Weizman observed ruefully.[21] For all his own bravado, Weizman too was deeply worried. Israeli aviators could see it in his manner when he went to their debriefings. Dayan's appearance alarmed one of the pilots: "He looked absolutely plucked. When I saw him I understood for the first time the seriousness of the situation."[22]

The situation was made all the more difficult by the heating up of the Golan front late in June. Throughout most of 1969, the Syrians had ignored Nasser's pleas for the opening of an "eastern front" against Israel. But in the early months of 1970, they began cautiously testing the Israelis along the Golan front in sporadic firefights in February, March, and April. In May and early June, the Syrians stepped up their pressure, and then, for a few days late in June, fighting on the Golan reached an intensity that matched that of the Suez front. On June 24, the Syrians opened up with an artillery barrage along the entire length of the Golan front and sent armored forces across the cease-fire line to attack Israeli positions at two points. Israel responded the next day with a heavy artillery barrage of its own, and Israeli planes bombed military bases inside Syria. On June 26, the Israelis sent a tank force across the Syrian line and attacked and took a heavily fortified Syrian position, killing some 100 Syrian soldiers and bringing back several dozen prisoners. The Syrians continued to fire for a day or two afterward, but gradually the Golan line fell quiet. Syrian losses in this three-day confrontation were heavy—the Israelis estimated them at about 350 altogether. But the Israelis suffered too. They announced 10 killed, and an Israeli

Phantom was shot down over Syrian territory and its crew was taken prisoner.[23]

But it was the Soviets in Egypt that really worried the Israelis. In the second half of July, what Dayan feared most began to happen. On July 21, Soviet-piloted MiGs bearing Egyptian markings attempted to engage Israeli planes that had just completed a bombing mission against Egyptian positions on the canal's west bank. The Israeli planes were able to slip away but were pursued by the Soviets right up to the canal line. Four days later, on July 25, it happened again. Two Israeli Skyhawks on a bombing mission over Egyptian lines were approached by Soviet-piloted MiG-21 s. The Israelis broke off and headed for their side of the canal, but the Russians chased them right up to the canal line and over onto the Israeli side. Before turning back, they fired an air-to-air missile that damaged one of the Skyhawks. The Israelis told the Americans of these encounters but kept them secret from their public.[24]

It raised the spectre of a steady Soviet advance that, if not stopped, could drive the Israeli air force from the skies over the canal and make it impossible for the Israeli army to hold the Bar Lev line. For weeks Israeli leaders had been warning that they would not allow this to happen. Early in July, Bar Lev told Western television interviewers that "we do not want to fight the Russians, but if they approach the canal too close, or if they interfere with our missions … we shall fight them."[25] Meir too spoke up. She would, she said, "gladly forego the day when our pilots meet Russians in the air and shoot down one or more of their planes, but if we are pushed against the wall we shall have no choice and we shall not run away."[26]

After the July 25 encounter, Hod told the Cabinet that it was time to draw the line. If the Soviets were not stopped, they would be everywhere. Hod proposed to lure them into an air battle.[27] The Cabinet deliberated at length; it was a risky decision, but the ministers finally approved the air force commander's recommendation. For this engagement, Hod chose his most experienced pilots and his favorite battleground, the Gulf of Suez area. On July 30, 4 Israeli Phantoms accompanied by 4 Mirages were sent out ostensibly to bomb an Egyptian radar station near the western shoreline of the Gulf of Suez. The Soviets took the bait. Sixteen Soviet-piloted MiG-21s came to meet the Israelis. The air battle that ensued lasted all of ninety seconds. The Israelis shot down 4 MiGs and hit a fifth that crashed on its way back to base. The Soviets broke and headed for home. Back at their debriefing, the Israeli pilots reported that the Russians had shown more fighting spirit and determination than Egyptian pilots but were just as green. "Had they stayed longer we would have downed more of them," one pilot remarked laconically.[28]

At IDF headquarters and among the small group of Israeli political leaders who were immediately informed of the air battle, there was great rejoicing. It was decided not to make an official announcement of the engagement, as was usually done, so as not to antagonize the Soviets unnecessarily. But the news spread very fast, and it was reported in the foreign press within hours.

On August 1, two days after the air battle, Marshal Pavel Kutakov, commander of the Soviet air force, hurriedly arrived in Cairo. The shooting down of 5 of their planes with no losses to the Israelis was an embarrassing setback for the Soviets and obviously was not the outcome they had expected. But they were not ready to leave the field in defeat. For their revenge, they turned back to the arm that had already proven itself, their missiles. On August 3, the Soviets laid their own ambush for the Israelis. They had carefully prepared dummy missile sites, and when Israeli planes came over that day and attacked them, Soviet and Egyptian gunners sent a barrage of missiles flaming into the sky to meet them. A Mirage was hit and it exploded, and a Phantom was downed and its crew was captured.[29]

Under other circumstances, the confrontation between Israelis and Soviets would almost

certainly have touched off a dangerous spiral of escalation. As it was, the two engagements were more in the nature of parting shots fired by one side against the other. American diplomacy had intervened several weeks earlier with a proposal for a cease-fire and for negotiations. Nasser accepted the American proposal on July 23. The Israeli government followed suit on July 31, the day after its pilots' air victory over the Soviets.

13

To Stop Shooting and to Start Talking

The idea of a cease-fire hung expectantly in the air in the early months of 1970. After Israel's and Egypt's rejection of Rogers' proposals, and after Israel's deep-penetration raids and Moscow's intervention, it seemed the only way to prevent the battle along the Suez Canal line from careening out of control.

In one way or another, a cease-fire was on everybody's mind. Bergus proposed it in the frantic cable he sent Washington after Israeli Phantoms struck near the American school in Maadi on January 28. Sisco put a proposal for a return to the cease-fire in the reply that the State Department prepared for Nixon to Kosygin's January 31 letter. On the Israeli side as well, the idea of a cease-fire had its proponents. Rabin encouraged Sisco to pursue it. Eban, as we have seen, put the idea before the Cabinet early in February. The Egyptians and the Soviets too were interested in the possibility of a cease-fire.

The problem was what kind of cease-fire? Declared or undeclared? Temporary or permanent? Whose interest the cease-fire would serve would depend on how these questions were answered. An undeclared cease-fire, or a declared one that was of limited duration, would clearly favor the Egyptians. As the prime minister pointed out when Eban made his proposal, if the cease-fire were only for a short time, the Egyptians could be expected to use it to strengthen their lines and bring up more antiaircraft missiles and then start shooting all over again as soon as it expired.[1] The only kind of cease-fire that could serve Israel's interests was a permanent one. But, as Eban observed in counterpoint, even a permanent cease-fire did not offer foolproof guarantees. Egypt had cast aside the June 1967 cease-fire. What was to prevent it from agreeing to a cease-fire of unlimited duration and then denouncing it once again, when it felt ready to do so?[2]

Kissinger was the first to make a try at getting a cease-fire. Early in February, he told Dobrynin that the United States was ready to begin discussion of the Middle East in the "special channel/' his euphemism for dealing directly with the Soviet ambassador and cutting out the State Department.[3] On March 10, Dobrynin came to Kissinger with a cease-fire proposal. The way Kissinger explained it to Rabin when they met two days later was that there would be a forty-five- to sixty-day undeclared cease-fire in which Israel would stop its bombing west of the canal so long as Egypt carried out no air attacks against Israeli positions. If the Egyptians were to open fire with artillery, the Israelis could respond in kind, but only after a few days' restraint.[4] According to Rabin's later account, Kissinger insisted that Rabin carry this proposal back to Jerusalem himself rather than cable it.[5] The terms did not appeal to the Israeli ambassador, and he did not think his government would accept them, but he, nonetheless, made a quick trip to Jerusalem. When he returned to Washington, he gave Kissinger a counterproposal: Israel would accept an undeclared cease-fire but would not agree to its being only for forty-five to sixty days; and it would not commit itself not to use its air power if Egypt were to resume artillery fire.

Furthermore, Israel expected that in recognition of the risk it would take in accepting an undeclared cease-fire the United States would "show readiness in the matter of arms supply."[6]

What this meant was that Israel wanted a public statement that the United States would provide the additional Phantoms and Skyhawks that Meir had asked for the previous September. It was something Kissinger could not give, for Nixon had already decided against publicity for U.S. arms supplies to Israel, and on March 23 Rogers was scheduled to make his announcement that the United States had decided to delay a decision on the Israeli request for more aircraft.

As Kissinger and Rabin continued their talks, news came that Soviet crews had arrived in Egypt with SA-3s and would operate them in defense of Cairo. Rabin told the National Security Council adviser that—with the Soviets in a combat role in Egypt, and given the fact that the United States was not ready to state publicly that it would supply Israel aircraft—a cease-fire would put Israel at serious disadvantage. According to Rabin, Kissinger nonetheless pressed Israel to accept the proposal. Rabin says he ended their exchange by stating emphatically that it would not.[7]

Having himself failed to engineer a cease-fire, Kissinger once again fell back to the position of critic of State Department efforts. He now argued that the introduction of Soviet combat personnel required that the United States match the Soviet escalation by moving publicly and dramatically to shore up Israel's position with more arms.[8] He tried briefly once again to gain control of Middle East policy in April through the establishment of a study group, but this bureaucratic ploy also failed. From then until nearly the end of the summer, he was to snipe from the sidelines but to play no significant role in shaping events. Sisco and Rogers were to grab the ball back from him and run for a score.

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That there was no diplomacy in play in the Middle East as 1970 opened was a matter of deep concern to Joseph Sisco. For Sisco, it was axiomatic that the conflict between Israel and the Arabs could only get worse if nothing were being done to resolve it. The events of the spring of 1970 could hardly have offered more dramatic confirmation for Sisco's view. The failure in December of the U.S. diplomatic effort had been followed in January and February by Israel's attempt, through deep-penetration raids, to impose a solution by force of arms. The latter had triggered Soviet intervention on a scale previously unknown in the Middle East or elsewhere in the Third World. Now the area stood at another of its crossroads. It could barrel onward toward escalation in the fighting between Egypt and Israel, or it could turn back toward de-escalation, cease-fire, and negotiations. If the fighting escalated, the Soviet Union would inevitably be drawn more and more into it, on Egypt's side, and eventually so would the United States, on Israel's side.

A global confrontation over the Middle East was not something that people in Washington in the spring of 1970 judged imminent or worried deeply about; Nixon and the senior officials of his government were much more concerned about the war in Southeast Asia. But the makings of a confrontation were there. More immediately troubling to the administration was the danger that escalation could cause the moderate friends of the United States in the Arab world to be swallowed up by the radicals. The Arab moderates were already under seige. Another explosion of the Arab-Israeli conflict could cause them to be swept away. Sisco was the man responsible for America's relations with the Arab states from Egypt to the Persian Gulf. He was determined that the United States was not going to lose any moderate Arab friends—not on his watch, and not if he could help it.

The key to which direction the conflict would take—heating up toward escalation or cooling

down toward a cease-fire and negotiations—was in America's hands. Both Rogers and Sisco were persuaded of it. Rogers felt strongly that a favorable public decision on more aircraft for Israel, if made at that time, would seriously prejudice any attempt by the United States to bring about a cease-fire and a renewal of negotiations.[9] On this, he truly did have Nixon's backing.[10]

The problem was how to go about moving toward a cease-fire and negotiations. Early in April, Dobrynin came to see Rogers and Sisco. The Soviet ambassador pressed for a renewal of the two- and four-power talks, and (as he had told Kissinger) he said his government would favor a de facto cease-fire. But there was no significant change in the Soviet position on a settlement of the conflict, and Rogers and Sisco were not about to repeat the scenario of 1969. They were ready to talk with the Soviets about the Middle East, and they did agree to a resumption of the four-power consultations. But they were not again going to try negotiating with the Soviets, who, they felt, had had their opportunity and had failed it. From now on they were going to deal directly and unilaterally with Egypt. No longer would the USSR be America's intermediary in Cairo.

But if the Americans were going to work directly with Egypt they had to establish contact on a higher level than that afforded by the small diplomatic offices that each country maintained in the other's capital. Bergus himself rarely had access to Nasser. Preliminary soundings made by Bergus, however, suggested that Nasser would be amenable to receiving Sisco if he came to Cairo.[11] Rogers recommended and Nixon agreed that Sisco should take advantage of a trip he was planning to Tehran in April (to chair a conference of American ambassadors) to make stops along the way in Cairo, Tel Aviv, Beirut, Jidda, and Amman.[12]

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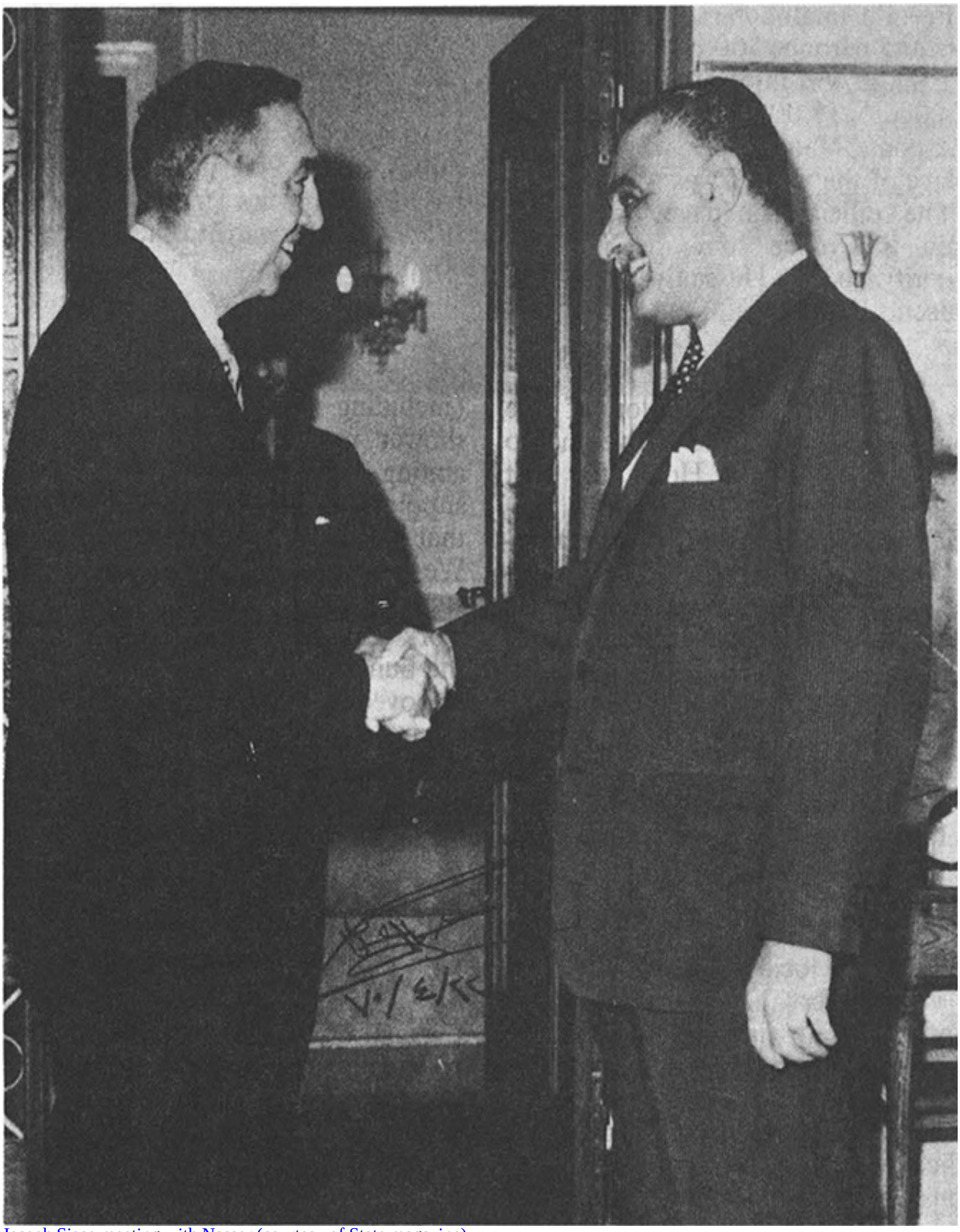
Sisco found the Egyptian capital still darkened by blackout in fear of Israeli air raids. Nasser invited Sisco to meet with him at his home rather than his office. This made the occasion somewhat less official but also more relaxed and informal. Sisco had not met Nasser before. He was surprised to find that the Egyptian leader's voice was thin and had a kind of singsong cadence to it. He noticed that Nasser's left leg shook slightly, but otherwise the Egyptian leader appeared in robust good health.[13]

Sisco came with no specific proposal but with a very precise objective: to persuade Nasser that it was time to put an end to the intermediary role that the USSR had played between the United States and Egypt ever since the June 1967 war. After a few opening pleasantries, Sisco came straight to the point. "We need to talk to each other directly rather than principally through the Soviet Union," he told Nasser.[14] He had not come to sow dissension between Egypt and the USSR, he said, and the United States would continue to talk with the Soviets on Middle East issues. But Washington wanted a direct dialogue with Cairo. Sisco then laid out his most persuasive arguments. The United States, he said, was committed to Israel's existence, but this did not mean it supported all of Israel's policies. To illustrate this point, Sisco reminded Nasser that over the previous fifteen months the United States had put itself at odds with Israel on three major issues. It had entered into talks with the Soviet Union, despite Israel's categorical rejection of big-power efforts to design a Middle East settlement; it had put specific peace proposals on the table in the form of the Rogers plan, despite strong Israeli objections; and, more recently, President Nixon had decided to, withhold a decision on providing more aircraft to Israel. Moreover, despite the absence of formal diplomatic relations, the United States had supported Egypt's request for membership in the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, had backed a World Bank loan for Egypt, was working for an agreement for debt rescheduling, and had a cotton textile agreement under review.[15]



Joseph Sisco meeting with Nasser (courtesy of State magazine)

The United States, Sisco said, continued to think that the Rogers plan met the legitimate concerns of both the Arabs and Israel. Serious talks between Egypt and Israel, he said, could

"provide a fulcrum that would enable the United States to begin using its influence with Israel."[16] But, Sisco warned, peace would not be possible if the two sides held to their maximum positions. There would be no peace if Egypt insisted on total Israeli withdrawal and a refugee settlement that would change the Jewish character of the Israeli state. And there would be no peace if Israel insisted on substantial acquisition of territory.[17]

Nasser replied that just meeting with Sisco had been a big decision. To do so he had had to go both against popular feeling and against the opinion of the majority in the Arab Socialist Union, the official political party. The problem, he said, was that the United States continued to support Israel with arms. Nasser spoke emotionally of continuing U.S. delivery of Phantoms to Israel and of America's declared commitment to maintain Israel's military superiority.[18] He had not been bitter toward the United States before, Nasser said, but he was bitter now, and he had no confidence in the American government. Egypt had to depend for its security on the Soviet Union. Washington was entirely on Israel's side. He therefore had to leave it to the Soviets to talk with the United States. The dialogue had to be through the USSR rather than directly with America. Nasser hammered away at the theme that America's support for Israel and its action in supplying Phantom and Skyhawk aircraft to Israel left him no alternative but to depend completely on the Soviets. "Only the Soviet Union," he said, "can give [Egypt] help against the assistance the United States is giving Israel."[19]

Sisco made one last try. The United States, he said, did not agree with Israel's deep-penetration raids, and Nixon's move to postpone a decision on more airplanes for Israel was meant to keep the way open for peace efforts. If Egypt and the United States were to disagree, their disagreements should be over real issues and not over distortions. "We do not need a third party," Sisco added, "to interpret our intentions to each other." Sisco asked Nasser to give the United States "an iota more of trust," a chance to work for a settlement.[20]

Nasser spoke of peace with Israel, but he was specific only on what peace should not mean. He wanted a peaceful solution, he said, and he could persuade other Arabs. He had confidence in his ability to make peace, he added. But he could not agree to a peace that gave Jerusalem to Israel, or that failed to solve the refugee problem, or that ignored the issue of Israeli occupation of Jordanian and Syrian territory. It was Egypt's destiny, Nasser said, to speak for all the Arabs. It was not enough for Egypt to get back its own territory. It was responsible for Jordanian and Syrian territory as well, and for the Palestinians.[21]

Sisco asked what he could tell Prime Minister Meir when she asked if Nasser wanted peace. The Egyptian president replied vaguely that he was prepared to sign a document with Israel at the UN and to make peace with Israel in accordance with Resolution 242. It would be called capitulation by the Palestinians and many Arab leaders, and he would lose popularity for it. But his concern, he declared, was the interest of the Arab nation and not popularity.[22]

Despite his disappointment, Sisco tried to end the meeting on a friendly and humorous note. He told Nasser of his grandfather who had died at the ripe age of ninety-nine after working forty years for the railway. Each retiree received a railway pass that allowed him and his wife to ride passenger trains free of charge. It was the railway pass that kept his grandfather alive, Sisco said. He felt that every year he stayed alive and used it he was getting compensation for the years of hard work he had put in. Sisco wished Nasser longevity similar to that of his grandfather. Nasser smiled a bit sadly and said: "There is only one problem, Mr. Sisco. I do not have a railway pass."[23]

Sisco was able to find sufficient ambiguity in Nasser's remarks to report to Nixon and Rogers

before he left Cairo that Nasser felt a channel for dialogue between Egypt and the United States should be kept open, even though he wanted talks on a settlement to proceed through the Soviets rather than directly with Washington. Sisco concluded, however, that he could not report any progress and that "events in the area are going to have to continue to germinate."[24]

What Sisco heard in Israel was not much more encouraging. Meir's reaction to his briefing on his meeting with Nasser was standard fare. Nasser was not to be trusted, the prime minister said, and peace with him was not possible. The United States should stand firm vis-à-vis the Soviets and continue to provide Israel with the weapons it needed to defend itself. Sisco urged the prime minister to put on the public record that Israel would be willing to withdraw in exchange for peace. He warned that gestures for peace were needed from Israel to help stop the trend toward radicalization of the area. The spread of Soviet influence, he said, was of deep concern to President Nixon. What troubled the president of the United States could not be entirely ignored by the government of Israel. Prime Minister Meir offered a sop; she promised to set up a high-level committee to examine what might be done.[25]

Sisco's stop in Amman had to be aborted. Since 1967, Palestinian guerrillas had been building up their forces in Jordan. By the spring of 1970, they had established themselves as a state within the state. Little-by-little they were preparing a challenge to King Hussein and his government. When word of Sisco's plan to stop in Jordan became public, there were demonstrations and shooting and threats of even more violence if the visit were to take place. Harrison Symmes, the U.S. ambassador, feared both for Sisco's security and for the security of Americans in Jordan. Sisco took the prudent course of cancelling.

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For Sisco and for others at the State Department, the situation in Jordan underscored the need for an American diplomatic initiative almost as much as did the escalating Soviet involvement in the fighting between Egypt and Israel. Hussein seemed to be hanging on by a mere thread. Although the threat to the Saudis and other Arab conservatives was less immediate, they too were in danger. Yet what Sisco had heard in Cairo seemed to leave little hope that Nasser would be receptive to a proposal that came from the United States alone.

At some point, however, in the two and one-half weeks between April 12, the day of their meeting, and May 1, the ideas that Sisco left with Nasser did begin to germinate. In his annual May Day speech, the Egyptian leader declared: "We address an appeal to U.S. President Richard Nixon. I would say that despite all that has happened we have not closed the door finally with the United States. … A few weeks ago I met with Assistant Secretary of State Sisco. I presented him with the idea that we want our point of view clearly known to the United States." This part of the speech was Nasser's answer to Sisco's appeal to give the United States "an iota more of trust" and a chance to work for peace between Israel and the Arabs. What came next was the Egyptian president's way of covering himself against Egyptian and radical Arab critics who might attack him for extending a hand to the Americans. Nasser demanded that the United States "order Israel to withdraw from the occupied territories" or, at the very least, "refrain from giving any new support to Israel." This he accompanied by a threat. If the United States did neither of these things, there would soon come a "decisive moment" in Arab-American relations. The Arabs and the Americans, Nasser said, could either have "estrangement forever" or a "new, serious and definite start," depending on what the United States decided to do.[26]

To make sure the Americans understood that a hand was being extended in their direction, Nasser had Foreign Minister Riad call Bergus in the next day. As he lumbered up the marble stairway of the ornate old palace that housed the Foreign Ministry, Bergus was surprised and

amused to find himself besieged by a swarm of television cameramen and photo-journalists who shot off a barrage of flashbulbs as he went into Riad's office and came out some fifteen minutes later bearing a letter from Nasser to Nixon. The text of the letter was identical to that of the May 1 speech. It was the show put on for the Americans and for the world that counted.[27]

In Washington, disagreement immediately arose over how to read Nasser's message. Henry Kissinger saw only Nasser's peremptory command that the United States should order Israel to withdraw from the occupied territories and his threat to attack American interests if it failed to do so.[28] But for the State Department, the mere fact that Nasser would address a direct appeal to the United States—after Nasser had told Sisco that he wanted to continue to work through the Soviets—was of the greatest significance. It was the opening that Sisco and Rogers had been hoping and waiting for. They decided to do as President John Kennedy had done at the height of the Cuban missile crisis when he was confronted with two messages from Khrushchev, one bellicose and the other conciliatory. They chose to explore Nasser's appeal and to ignore his peremptory command.

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It was not enough, however, to have a green light from Nasser. The memory of Israel's vehement rejection of the Rogers proposals was still painfully fresh. There was no sense in rushing to launch an initiative only to find it once more turned down by Israel. The Israelis had first to be softened up. The dispute over the airplanes left them in a foul mood, little inclined to hear any talk about cease-fire or negotiations. Golda Meir sent message after message to Nixon urging him to announce approval for the package of 25 Phantoms and 100 Skyhawks for which she had asked the previous September. Rabin never let pass an opportunity to tell Americans that the U.S. failure to give Israel public backing was being interpreted by the Soviets as a sign of weakness and was emboldening them. Also, the Israeli embassy and American Jewish groups lobbied hard on Capitol Hill and in June got seventy-six senators to sign a petition calling on the administration to provide Israel more aircraft.

But if the dispute over the airplanes hardened Israel's position, it also made the Israelis more vulnerable to American pressure. The Americans set out to exploit that vulnerability. When Eban came to Washington in mid-May, Rogers and Sisco impressed upon him the urgent need for Israel to make clear its desire for peace and its readiness to trade territory for peace. They and others let it be known quite openly to Eban and to Rabin that the administration would need a statement from Israel of this type if it were to be able to do what Israel wanted on arms.[29] This was true enough over the long run, but for the short term it was simply a ruse in the service of the initiative that, with Nixon's endorsement, Rogers and Sisco were preparing. They had no intention of acceding anytime soon to Israel's request for public approval of the arms package it sought, no matter how forthcoming Meir might show herself on the the matter of peace and territory. Almost everybody in Washington had agreed that announcement of a big new arms package for Israel would kill any chances that Egypt would agree to an American initiative.

It was not only the Americans who were pressing Golda Meir for conciliatory gestures. The storm of domestic political criticism that broke after the Cabinet turned down Nahum Goldmann's request to go to Cairo showed that an important segment of the Israeli public also needed reassurance that the government was genuinely working for peace. On May 26, the prime minister stepped up to the Knesset rostrum, adjusted her old-fashioned metal-rimmed glasses, and delivered a major foreign-policy address. The speech was clearly designed to impress on world opinion Israel's desire for peace. After reviewing the efforts made by her own and previous Israeli governments, Meir said: "Some claim, among them the Arabs, that we have not

accepted the United Nations Resolution of 22 November 1967, whereas we have." She then read in full the statement made to the Security Council by Ambassador Tekoa on May 1, 1968.[30]

It was the first time a prime minister had ever publicly declared that Israel accepted Resolution 242. Eban had said it often, but neither Levy Eshkol nor, until then, Golda Meir had ever ventured to give public endorsement to the UN resolution.

Meir's speech brought strident protest from Israel's right wing. Begin and his followers were outraged over the endorsement the prime minister gave to Resolution 242.[31] The Cabinet, they protested, had never agreed to give formal approval to the UN resolution; in the discussion it held in May 1968, the Cabinet had merely "noted" Tekoa's statement. Now the prime minister, on her own, was giving it official endorsement. In the Knesset debate that followed Meir's speech, Gahal leaders gave vent to their displeasure, and in the vote held the next day in the Knesset Gahal representatives abstained. Under normal circumstances, a coalition partner's abstention in a vote of confidence on a major governmental policy statement would have entailed resignation. There were calls from some in the Labor Party and Mapam for the prime minister to ask Begin and his colleagues to resign from the government, but she preferred to overlook the incident.

Word spread that Begin had warned the prime minister that if she were again to state that Israel accepted Resolution 242, Gahal would have to leave the government.[32] The UN resolution called for Israeli withdrawal, and Begin made clear that he and his colleagues could not subscribe to any document that used the word withdrawal.

Golda Meir had said many times, in meetings with American officials and even in private talks with Begin and other Gahal leaders, that she recognized that peace would require withdrawal from large parts of the territory taken in the 1967 war. She was persuaded, however, that peace lay far in the future. So long as the Arabs were not knocking at the door to demand it, she saw no reason for a showdown with her Gahal partners. She wanted Gahal in her Cabinet. She felt that the Israeli public derived reassurance from the continued existence of the national unity government that presided over the 1967 victory. Beyond this, Meir's keen domestic political instincts told her it was to her advantage to keep Gahal in the Cabinet. She saw no reason to give Begin and his associates the opportunity to make a display of heroics by resigning over the territorial issue. To do so, short of a case of national necessity, would be incautious. For all her outward appearance of determination and decisiveness, Golda Meir was an exceedingly cautious prime minister.

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With Nasser's speech of May 1 and Meir's of May 26, Sisco and Rogers had in hand the basic elements for the new initiative they were planning. From his conversations with the Egyptians, Bergus was reporting hints that Nasser might accept a limited cease-fire.[33] In an interview broadcast by the American National Educational Television Network on June 14, Nasser declared himself ready to agree to a cease-fire for six months. But he still had conditions: The time, he said, had to be used to arrange for Israel's withdrawal to the pre-June 4, 1967, borders.

The problem was to construct a formula that would bridge the gap between the Egyptian and Israeli positions. Sisco set to work on an initiative that he would call the "Stop Shooting, Start Talking" proposal. The "Stop Shooting" part was to be a cease-fire. The Israelis would want an unlimited and unconditional cease-fire, but Egypt would never accept that. The document Sisco drew up proposed a cease-fire of "at least" ninety days.

The "Start Talking" part was a return to negotiations, but on what basis? Egypt and Israel, each in its own way, had rejected the Rogers plan. Israel's opposition to that document had

hardened with time. To ask Israel to agree to it now would be to invite automatic rejection. So it was necessary to start all over again as though all the effort of 1969 had never been made and to go back to the language of Resolution 242, the only document the two sides agreed upon, even though their interpretations of it were diametrically opposed. As for the job of directing these negotiations, it would have to be put back in Gunnar Jarring's hands. There was widespread disappointment with Jarring, but getting agreement on a replacement could take forever. Sisco still hoped that, with proper coaching, Jarring could be made to be effective.

No one at the State Department thought negotiations could be completed within ninety days, but they could at least get started during that time. Once the shooting had stopped and talks began, Sisco calculated, neither side would want to be seen to be rushing back to war.[34]

The initiative itself was cast as a memorandum from Jarring to UN Secretary General U Thant advising that Egypt, Jordan, and Israel had agreed on these terms:

a. That having accepted and indicated their willingness to carry out Resolution 242 in all its parts, they will designate representatives to discussions to be held under my auspices, according to such procedure and at such places and at times as I may recommend, taking into account as appropriate each side's preference as to method of procedure and previous experience between the parties;
b. That the purpose of the aforementioned discussions is to reach agreement on the establishment of a just and lasting peace between them based on (1) mutual acknowledgement of each other's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and political independence, and (2) Israeli withdrawal from territories occupied in the 1967 conflict, both in accordance with Resolution 242.
c. That, to facilitate my task of promoting agreement as set forth in Resolution 242, the parties will strictly observe, effective July 1 until at least October 1, the cease-fire resolutions of the Security Council.

To take care of Israeli fears that the Egyptians would exploit the cease-fire to advance their surface-to-air missile network eastward, the proposal also called for a standstill, or freeze, on Egyptian and Israeli deployments on both sides of the canal line. It was to be a cease-fire in place.

Rogers and Sisco brought the "Stop Shooting, Start Talking" initiative to a National Security Council meeting on June 10. Though barely three months earlier Kissinger had been ready to sponsor a Soviet cease-fire proposal, he now opposed the State Department initiative. He did not make his case against it in the meeting itself; there he said very little.[35]

But in memoranda to Nixon both before and after the June 10 meeting, he did his best to undercut the Department of State's proposal, arguing that it would satisfy neither Israel nor Egypt. Nasser would interpret it as a "halfway move," and the Soviets would see it as a "weak gesture."[36]

On June 18, ignoring Kissinger's objections, Nixon approved Rogers and Sisco's proposal, but for delivery over Rogers' name, not the president's. As before, Nixon was not ready to put his own prestige on the line.

The moment he had White House approval, Sisco sent off urgent cables to Bergus in Cairo and Barbour in Tel Aviv instructing them to give the proposal to the Egyptians and to the Israelis. Foreign Minister Riad was leaving with Nasser for a visit to Libya, so, on June 19, Bergus called on Under Secretary Salah Gohar. Bergus gave Gohar a letter from Rogers to Riad

that set out the text of the initiative (Appendix C). Gohar said nothing more than that he would pass the U.S. proposal on to higher authority, but to Bergus, Gohar's whole demeanor seemed favorable. He was obviously moved. Bergus saw a tear roll down the Egyptian diplomat's cheek as he read the proposal. Bergus could explain this to himself in only one way: Gohar was a former military officer, and he must know what heavy casualties Egyptian forces were suffering in the war along the canal.[37]

Rogers' letter made no mention of the standstill element of the cease-fire, the provision that would prohibit Egypt from moving its missile network eastward. Bergus separately gave Gohar a draft of a cease-fire agreement that called for the two sides to commit themselves not to change their military deployments in 50-kilometer zones east and west of the canal.[38] He was also instructed to tell the Egyptians that, during the time of the initiative, the United States would limit its deliveries of combat aircraft to Israel to those to which it had committed itself in past contracts; it would not go beyond that level.[39] The implication was that the United States would not exceed the terms of the contract for Phantoms and Skyhawks signed with Israel in December 1968. What this hid was Nixon's private commitment to Rabin and Meir, made in March 1970, to provide replacement aircraft at a rate that could well exceed replacement levels. (But the Egyptians were not fooled. Rabin had spoken publicly in April of Nixon's assurance concerning the secret provision of replacement aircraft, and Heikal had called attention to Rabin's remarks in an editorial in *Al Ahram* on June 11.)

Sisco had another Machiavellian card up his sleeve as well. He knew it was going to be harder to sell the new proposal to the Israelis than to the Egyptians. Because of this, he returned to the tactic he had used in the fall of 1969 of seeking Egyptian approval first before asking the Israelis to make a decision. His calculation, as before, was that the government of Israel would find it very difficult to refuse steps toward peace that had been accepted by Egypt. In the instruction he sent Barbour, Sisco directed the ambassador to tell Prime Minister Meir that the proposal was being transmitted to Israel for its information only. The United States was not asking Israel's agreement at this stage and, indeed, urged the government of Israel not to react immediately but to wait to see what Egypt and Jordan would do. Rogers and Sisco called Rabin in on the morning of June 19, and Rogers told the Israeli ambassador that the United States was doubtful that Egypt and Jordan would agree to the proposal. He emphatically warned Israel against taking upon itself the onus of being the first to turn down an American peace initiative.[40]

It was an astute move, for Golda Meir's first inclination was to reject the U.S. proposal out of hand. There were a great many things she could find wrong with it. First among them was that it came bearing the name of the secretary of state. The two Rogers plans of the fall of 1969—the one for a settlement with Egypt and the other for Jordan—were anathema to the prime minister. Though the June 19 initiative bore no trace of the detailed proposals set out in these two earlier documents, the fact that it, like them, came over Rogers' signature automatically made it suspect in her eyes. Second was that the proposal took Meir by surprise. The Israelis knew that something was brewing in Washington. Nixon had told Eban and Rabin when they met with him in mid-May that the United States would have to make moves on the political side.[41] Various rumors reached Israel late in May and early in June, but Sisco deliberately kept the Israelis unaware of the proposal until it was sprung on them (and Rabin and Eban then quarreled over who was responsible for the failure to learn of it in advance, each accusing the other). The prime minister was incensed that the Americans had not consulted Israel before launching an initiative of this importance. Meir, moreover, was still upset over the administration's refusal to approve the aircraft package she had requested from Nixon during her visit to Washington the previous

September. Furthermore, the proposal itself was not at all to the prime minister's liking. It did not call for a peace treaty; it spoke only of a "just and lasting peace." It made no mention of direct negotiations; in fact, by calling for talks under Jarring's auspices, it seemed to sanction the idea of indirect negotiations. It provided for a limited cease-fire rather than the return to a permanent one that Israel wanted. And, not only did the operative paragraph make specific mention of Resolution 242, it also actually used the word withdrawal. To accept it would mean the end of Meir's national unity cabinet, for she could have had no doubt that Begin was sincere in his threat to leave the government over the issue of Resolution 242 and withdrawal.

Where, Prime Minister Meir asked, was the Arab desire for peace that would justify such a sacrifice? So far as she could see, it simply was not there. Nasser's June 14 interview with American Educational Television left Meir unimpressed. Had the Egyptian leader not qualified his remarks about a settlement by again—as was his custom—stressing the rights of the Palestinian people? And had he not made a cease-fire conditional on full Israeli withdrawal?[42]

The prime minister acceded to Barbour's request not to reject the U.S. proposal out of hand—but only barely. She told the ambassador he should inform Washington that she would bring the American proposal before the Cabinet, but that her own view of it was decidedly negative, and she was sure the Cabinet would agree with her.[43]

It was at this point that Sisco's long cultivation of Rabin, in off-the-record lunches held almost weekly over the previous year and one-half, paid off. Sisco telephoned the Israeli ambassador and urged him to warn his government of the damage that would be done to relations between the United States and Israel and to Israel's image as a peace-loving country if it were peremptorily to turn down the American proposal. Sisco made clear that a rejection would make it extremely difficult for the administration to justify to Congress and to the public additional arms for Israel.[44] Rabin promptly sent off a cable to Jerusalem recommending in blunt terms against hasty action.[45]

Yigal Allon, Rabin's ordinarily hawkish ally in the Cabinet, supported his recommendation. Allon did not see how Israel could turn down the American proposal.[46] But the prime minister was in high dudgeon. She would not be mollified. She sent Rabin a letter for Nixon categorically rejecting the U.S. initiative. She did, however, make one concession to her ambassador's views: Rabin was authorized to regard her letter as a draft. If he still strongly disagreed, he was to let her know immediately.[47]

Rabin did disagree most emphatically. He sent an urgent cable asking to be authorized to come back to Jerusalem to explain his objections. Relations between Rabin and Eban had by this time become so frayed that the foreign minister, who should have welcomed support from any quarter against a move that he himself opposed and that he knew would be very damaging to Israel's relations with Washington, recommended against Rabin's return.[48] But the prime minister overrode Eban, and Rabin came back and made his case before the Cabinet. He did not succeed in dissuading Meir from writing to Nixon, but he was able to tone down her letter and to delete the passage specifically rejecting Rogers' proposal. When he returned to Washington on June 30, Rabin carried with him a new letter from the prime minister to Nixon, milder in tone and in content but by no means an acceptance.[49]

On June 29, the prime minister, in a speech to the Knesset, set out her government's objections to a temporary cease-fire. She cast her remarks as a reply to Nasser's June 14 American Educational Television interview rather than to Rogers' initiative, but it was clear that they applied equally to both. The proposal for a temporary cease-fire, she said, was a trick

designed to give Nasser the time he needed to prepare for the renewal of war in more intense form and under more advantageous conditions. Then, in remarks obviously drafted for her at military headquarters, the prime minister set out her government's specific objections:

> From the military point of view Nasser needs such an interval in order to strengthen his fortifications all along the line, to rehabilitate his bases and installations which have been damaged by the Israeli air force and, above all, to facilitate the installation of Soviet missiles for the purpose of achieving an air umbrella, trying to prevent our air force from silencing the Egyptian artillery aimed at our positions, and enabling them to make an attempt to cross the canal. If Nasser's proposal for a cease-fire for a specific period is accepted, the renewal of the shooting at the end of the period will be legitimized in his eyes.[50]

Israel, Meir added, "will not be misled by any cunning device designed to facilitate the setting up of missile batteries." The prime minister's statement was very nearly—but not explicitly—a rejection of the American proposal.

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Gamal Abdel Nasser was on his way to Tripoli to confer with his young admirer Muammar Qaddafi when Rogers' letter arrived. Under Secretary Salah Gohar sent it on to Nasser's party there by special messenger. Nasser asked his senior advisers to study it and give him their opinions. Foreign Minister Riad took a negative view of the American proposal; he recommended that Nasser turn it down. General Fawzi straddled the fence.[51] Nasser kept his own views to himself.

On June 25, just before returning to Cairo, Nasser made a speech in Benghazi in which he castigated the United States for its deliveries of Phantoms and Skyhawks to Israel. His concern was the reverse of Meir's. "The Israelis," he declared, "are concentrating air raids on the canal area so as to prevent the Egyptian army from mobilizing its forces for an attack across the canal. Once Egypt secures the opportunity of parity in the air, then no power on earth can prevent it from crossing the canal."[52] The thrust of Nasser's thinking was clear: As soon as the obstacle of Israeli air superiority could be overcome, he would throw his army across the canal.

Though he attacked the Americans in his speech in Benghazi, Nasser made no reference to their initiative. He returned briefly to Cairo. Then, on June 29 he flew off to Moscow, taking along Heikal (whom he had recently appointed minister of information) and Riad and Fawzi. He stayed in the Soviet capital for twenty days, his consultations with Soviet leaders and the outcome of his decision shrouded in mystery.

In Israel, Nasser's reply was awaited with keen interest. Curiosity grew as his visit to Moscow extended well beyond the date originally announced for it. But the view that the Israeli media conveyed to the public was that the Egyptians and the Soviets would come up with some sort of conditional acceptance of the American proposal. It would be a nice cosmetic job, but it would not be a green light for an immediate cease-fire and negotiations. In all likelihood, another round of contacts would be required before agreement could be reached on the U.S. proposal. It was expected that Nasser would try to whittle away further at the foundations of U.S. support for Israel, and many feared that he would succeed. Few, however, anticipated dramatic developments. Most Israelis were sure that "Nasser won't let us down." As so often in the past, the Arabs would say no and thereby spare Israel the embarrassment of a difficult decision.

If Nasser's attitude could have been inferred from the Soviets' first reaction, it would have had to be presumed negative. On June 23, Dobrynin went to see Kissinger and professed to be outraged that the United States had acted unilaterally.[53] In Moscow a few days later, Gromyko commented to Ambassador Jacob Beam that the proposal had all the failings of Washington's

previous efforts.[54] Yet, when State Department officials briefed the Soviets on the proposal, they found them generally understanding and supportive of it.[55]

On the face of it, the American document had much to cause Nasser hesitation. It was as little consonant with Egyptian policies as with those of Israel. The text of the letter that Jarring was to send to Thant spoke of the parties' "willingness to carry out Resolution 242 in all its parts." Ever since the Security Council resolution was passed, the Arabs had opposed the view that it should be taken as a whole. For them, its main meaning lay in the requirement for Israeli withdrawal. To accept the Jarring letter would also require Egypt to acknowledge that the purpose of discussions between it and Israel would be "to reach agreement on the establishment of a just and lasting peace." Publicly to subscribe to this statement would be no small step, the more so as the phraseology on withdrawal used in Jarring's proposed letter followed the English text of Resolution 242—"Israeli withdrawal from territories …" The American proposal's provisions concerning the cease-fire were also no more than half a loaf for Egypt. It was for a limited time, but it was not made conditional in any way on Israel's withdrawal.

These, however, were textual issues, and none of them was to turn out to be important to Nasser. Though he kept his views to himself (and evidently did not share them even with Heikal) until his second meeting with the Soviet leaders on July 11, it appears that from the beginning Nasser had decided to accept the American initiative.[56] Aside from getting medical treatment in the Soviet capital—his phlebitis was worsening and he spent some two weeks in a hospital there—he seems to have had two purposes in mind in making the trip. One was to get a commitment from the Soviets for more arms. The other was to get their amicable concurrence in his decision to go with the American proposal.

He seems to have obtained both without much difficulty. In their meeting on July 11, Brezhnev announced the USSR's agreement to most of General Fawzi's arms requests.[57] Then, according to Riad, Nasser broached the subject of the U.S. initiative and, almost by indirection, told the Soviet leaders he intended to accept it. He argued that the United States expected Egypt to reject its proposal and would use an Egyptian rejection to justify sending more arms to Israel.[58]

But according to accounts published later by both Riad and Heikal, Nasser let the Soviets know that his main reason for accepting the U.S. proposal was that he hoped to use the respite afforded by the cease-fire to move the Soviet-Egyptian surface-to-air missile network up to the banks of the canal. Riad says Brezhnev immediately seized this point. "In other words," the Soviet Communist party chief remarked, "we exploit [the cease-fire] period to reinforce our positions." To which Nasser replied: "That is true. …"[59] Twenty years later, speaking in the baroque living room of his spacious, high-ceilinged apartment in the fashionable Zamalek quarter of Cairo, Riad elaborated in these terms:

> To cross the canal we had to be able to move the SAMs up to the canal. We had a very strong air defense, but it had to reach across the canal to stop the Israelis from hitting our troops. Nasser and the military thought we might lose 20,000 men crossing the canal. We had lost 2,000 civilian workers building the missile wall. Nasser insisted that when our troops cross we must give them full air-defense protection. … Nasser saw the U.S. proposal as a situation in which we could not lose. On the one hand, we give the Americans the chance to try for a diplomatic solution. If that doesn't work, we will have improved our military position.[60]

Heika's much briefer account of Nasser's July 1970 visit to Moscow confirms Riad's:

> Nasser himself took a look at the [U.S.] plan and decided that it fitted in with his overall strategy. By now the army was ready and the Soviet Union was actively engaged in the defense of our civil population against air attacks. The most important thing

> in Nasser's view was to finish building the missile wall. When completed this would not only protect our armed forces on the western bank of the Suez Canal but would give protection over a strip 15–20 kilometers wide on the east bank, and so give cover for our troops crossing the canal when the time came.[61]

The Soviets appear to have accepted Nasser's decision with only some mild grumbling about Egypt's buying into a proposal with an American flag on it. Brezhnev lamented that Nasser's decision would allow the United States to "reap the fruits of our efforts."[62] Nasser sought to reassure Brezhnev: He (Nasser) was sure the U.S. initiative would have no serious results.[63]

In fact, the Soviets seem to have been favorably inclined toward the U.S. proposal even before Riad says Nasser let them know he was planning to accept it. On July 10, the Soviet political journal *Novoe Vremia* gave the American initiative a qualified endorsement. The main defects the Soviet journal found in the U.S. proposal were that it did not mention the four-power framework and did not call for Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights.[64] The Soviets always had an eye out for the interests of their Syrian client.

Nasser returned to Cairo quite pleased with the results of his trip, according to Riad. On July 22, the foreign minister called Bergus in and gave him a three-page letter to Rogers. It was, for the most part, simply a polemic against Israel, which the foreign minister accused of having refused to accept Resolution 242 and of having blocked its implementation. But the letter concluded:

> We are prepared to reemphasize to Ambassador Jarring our preparedness to implement all provisions of the Security Council resolution and to appoint a representative to discuss with him implementation of this resolution. In this respect we are prepared to accept a cease-fire for a limited period of three months in accordance with your proposal, though we believe the correct procedure to start in this case is to begin drawing up a timetable for withdrawal of the Israeli forces from the occupied territories.[65]

These were not the terms of the Jarring memorandum that was the centerpiece of the U.S. proposal. In fact, they were quite different, and nowhere in his letter to Rogers did Riad specifically say that Egypt subscribed to the memorandum. After reading Riad's letter through, Bergus was still not quite sure where matters stood. He felt obliged to ask whether the letter meant that Egypt accepted the American proposal. The foreign minister replied that it did. He added that the decision was solely Egypt's, not the Soviet Union's.[66]

Nasser announced his decision the next day, on July 23, in his annual Revolution Day anniversary speech. In that address, Nasser said the reason that Egypt accepted the American initiative was that it contained nothing new. It was the same as Resolution 242, which, Nasser claimed, Egypt had accepted the day after it was voted by the Security Council. "We have accepted the U.S. proposal submitted to us by Secretary of State Rogers," Nasser declared, "because we believe these proposals include nothing new and we have accepted them before."[67]

But speaking a day later, on July 24, to an assembly of delegates of his official political party, the Arab Socialist Union, Nasser had other explanations. "A rejection," he said, "would have been exploited throughout the world and would have been taken to mean that we want war and do not want peace in any form, even if Israel is willing to give us back all the territories occupied on June 5, 1967, and that it is Israel who wants peace." One of the delegates asked why Egypt had answered first, before the Israelis. Nasser replied: "In my opinion, the Israelis did not answer because they were waiting for us to reject it so they could blame us and go shedding tears in every country, saying Egypt has turned down the U.S. peace initiative and Egypt wants war, so give us arms and money." A negative Egyptian answer, Nasser added, would have given the Americans an excuse to supply Israel with more Phantoms, Skyhawks, and electronic equipment.

"Now that our answer has been positive, Israel's position will be difficult."[68] The delegates were curious to know what would happen during and after the cease-fire. Amr Banati asked what would happen if Israel refused to withdraw. "If at the end of the three months Israel has refused to withdraw we will have the right to continue the battle to liberate our lands," Nasser replied. Then the Egyptian leader began with a rhetorical question: "Will the cease-fire enable us to install a network?" Nasser interrupted himself and then resumed: "This we will answer in the closed session."[69] It was no more than a hint, very likely a slip of the tongue. At the time it passed wholly unnoticed outside Egypt.

Nasser's decision to accept the U.S. initiative stunned the Arab world. An immediate outcry arose from the radical Arab states, in particular from Syria, Iraq, and Algeria, and from the PLO. All called Egypt's decision a betrayal. But the move caused no split between the Soviets and Nasser. This was made immediately clear. In its July 23 issue, published hours before Nasser began his speech, *Pravda* ran an article praising Egypt for accepting the cease-fire. "It bears testimony to the high sense of responsibility of Egyptian leaders for the fate of peace in the Middle East," the Soviet paper proclaimed. *Pravda* aimed an anticipatory slap at what it called "extremist sentiments" in the Arab world and lauded Nasser for showing "great political courage." The Soviets were, once again, backing Nasser all the way.

■ ■ ■

For Rogers and Sisco, Nasser's move meant that the success that had eluded them over the previous year and one-half was now within reach. They were determined not to let it slip from their grasp. The problem, as they saw it, was to give Golda Meir the assurances she would need to feel comfortable recommending unreserved acceptance of the U.S. proposal to her government. Sisco drafted a letter to Meir from the president. This time, he took the precaution of showing his draft to Rabin and asking Rabin's advice. Sisco's draft assured the prime minister that the United States would not press Israel to agree to Nasser's demands for full Israeli withdrawal from the territories occupied in the 1967 war and for an unrestricted right of return for Palestinian refugees. Rabin told Sisco it would not be enough. The prime minister would need more explicit assurances on both points.[70]

Sisco took the draft back and worked it over further. It was approved by the president on July 23 and cabled off to Barbour that evening for delivery to Prime Minister Meir the following day. Israelis were later to call it the most far-reaching commitment ever made by the United States to Israel, a kind of second Balfour Declaration. Nixon wrote:

> Our position on withdrawal is that the final borders must be agreed upon by the parties by means of negotiations under the auspices of Ambassador Jarring. Moreover, we will not press Israel to accept a solution to the refugee problem that will alter fundamentally the Jewish character of the State of Israel or jeopardize your security. We shall adhere strictly and firmly to the fundamental principle that there must be a peace agreement in which each of the parties undertakes reciprocal obligations to the other.

Then came an assurance that the Israelis considered of surpassing importance and that Sisco and Rogers would, within a few months, regret having offered: "No Israeli soldier should be withdrawn from the present lines until a binding contractual peace agreement satisfactory to you has been achieved."[71] Sisco showed the letter to Rabin, and Rabin cabled Jerusalem to urge that under no circumstances should the government reject the American proposal.[72]

But rather than satisfying the prime minister the letter opened up a whole new series of demands. She wanted agreement for Israel to purchase the Shrike air-to-surface missile as well as more Phantoms. She wanted a formal withdrawal of the Rogers plan. And she wanted a

commitment that the United States would veto anti-Israeli resolutions in the UN. She got her way on the commitment on Shrikes and Phantoms (despite Bergus' assurance to the Egyptians that the United States would not make new arms commitments to Israel), but that was as far as Washington was prepared to go. Though the plan that bore his name had long been shelved, Rogers was not about to humiliate himself—or to put his cease-fire initiative at risk—by formally renouncing his proposals of the previous year. Neither was the administration ready to harness itself to Israeli policy to the extent of renouncing its freedom of action in the United Nations.[73]

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Had Washington given closer attention to the situation in Israel itself, it would have realized that the July 24 letter was a higher price than it needed pay for Meir's agreement to its initiative.

Debate over whether to accept the American initiative began in Israel well before Nasser loosed his bombshell. Allon—in tune, as always, with Rabin—pressed for acceptance from the very first. How, the deputy prime minister argued, could Israel afford to refuse, without doing irreparable harm to its image abroad, an American appeal to stop shooting and start talking? Indeed, would the Israeli public itself understand? Allon was still keenly mindful of the eruption of criticism that followed the government's refusal in April to authorize Goldmann to go to Cairo.[74] Dayan's first reaction was the exact opposite. The defense minister told Yosef Kharif, one of Israel's star journalists, that he felt Israel must unequivocally reject the U.S. proposal and must do so immediately. If it were accepted he would have to leave the government.[75] Eban joined Allon and Rabin in arguing against rejection of the U.S. proposal. Begin was for rejection, the sooner the better. But a split was already developing in Gaha's ranks. Arieh Dulczin, one of Gaha's three Liberal Party ministers, favored giving Meir a free hand in dealing with the American proposal. When he told Begin so, a heated exchange took place between the two men.

What tipped the scales in favor of the U.S. initiative, more than anything else, was the success the Egyptians and the Soviets had had in shooting down 2 Phantoms on June 30 and downing more Phantoms on July 5 and July 18. By the second half of July, the limited cease-fire to which Meir had objected so vehemently in June was beginning to look downright attractive. The loss of 5 of Israel's first-line fighter-bomber aircraft in less than three weeks and the steadily expanding scope of Israel's confrontation with the Soviet Union shook the confidence of the Labor Party leadership. Dayan and Golda Meir were deeply worried. Until that time, it had been assumed that Israel could hold the canal line even without immediate additional U.S. assistance. Now, it seemed that American help might be needed very quickly. Once Nasser had agreed to the U.S. proposal, the government of Israel could not reject it without appearing, both at home and abroad, as warmongers and risking the loss of U.S. support. Fear that Israel would become isolated and lose American support should it reject the U.S. initiative became a major public concern and a recurrent theme in the Israeli press in the days after Nasser's July 23 speech.[76]

Golda Meir knew what had to be done, but she was not to be hurried. She very deliberately wanted to avoid creating an impression of panic. It was a Thursday evening when Nasser delivered his speech. Only one day was left before the Sabbath. Meir decided to let the matter ride until the regular Sunday Cabinet meeting. When the Cabinet convened on Sunday July 26, everyone knew that it faced a momentous decision. The week of July 26 through 31 was to be the busiest the Israeli government would know since the May-June 1967 crisis. The Cabinet was in session every day but one, and, when not in council, the ministers were plunged into consultations and party caucuses that often lasted until the early hours of the morning. Still, there was none of the oppressive atmosphere that characterized the last weeks of May 1967. Israelis

generally assumed that the Cabinet in the end would agree to the American proposal, and this was the outcome favored by the great majority. What tension there was focused on the issue of whether Gahal would stay in the government or resign.

The prime minister was determined to make a try at saving her national unity cabinet. She sent her political fixer, Pinhas Sapir, now minister of finance again, to do the job. Sapir sat with Begin and other Gahal leaders throughout the week of July 26 to 31. Why, he argued, should they make a hasty decision? Who knew where the latest American initiative would lead? If it should produce serious negotiations and if the stage were to be reached at which a decision on withdrawal were to be required, there would still be plenty of time for Gahal to resign then. But if not, what reason was there to break up the national unity cabinet? Sapir offered Begin a compromise: Gahal could vote against the American initiative in the Cabinet and abstain when it came to a ballot in the Knesset, as they had after the prime minister's May 26 speech. The offer elicited no interest from Begin. So, the prime minister authorized Sapir to go a big step further: The Labor Party would agree to Gaha's voting against acceptance of the American initiative in the Knesset as well as in the Cabinet. It would be unprecedented in Israel's parliamentary history. Never had a coalition partner been allowed to vote in the Knesset against a major Cabinet decision and still retain its membership in the government.

Begin made a counterproposal: The government would accept the American proposal for a cease-fire but reject negotiations based on Resolution 242. Labor Party leaders—and probably Begin himself—knew this to be wholly unrealistic. The American proposal was a package deal. Neither the Americans nor the Egyptians would agree to allow Israel to select those elements that suited it and discard others.

Israel Galili joined Sapir in his effort to persuade Begin to stay, but nothing availed. Compromise had never been a pretty word in Begin's vocabulary. He felt both his honor and his political leadership at stake. The American proposal's provisions regarding withdrawal were clearly in conflict with all that he stood for. Even if Gahal voted against it in the Knesset, to remain in the government after its adoption would be to give it implicit approval. This could seriously weaken Begin's position of leadership on the right. Everyone knew that after Meir's May 26 speech he had threatened to resign. If he compromised now, he would have little credibility left.

There may have been another reason as well. According to some in Herut, their leader believed that Israel's hour of decision was, in fact, approaching if not actually at hand. He suspected that the United States and the Soviet Union had secretly reached agreement on a Middle East settlement and that, in the negotiations that would follow the cease-fire, Israel would be faced with an ultimatum from the two great powers to withdraw from the territories taken in the June 1967 war. He wanted no responsibility for putting the country in such a situation.[77]

The Cabinet convened in Jerusalem on Friday, July 31, to close the week's deliberations with a formal decision on the American proposal. A vote was taken first on the cease-fire provision. All ministers—Gahal as well as Labor—voted for it. Then the provisions dealing with negotiations, peace, and withdrawal were put to ballot. The six Gahal ministers opposed, while the rest of the Cabinet voted in favor. Shortly before five o'clock that afternoon, the Cabinet spokesman announced:

> After consideration of the requests of the U.S. president, and in adherence to the government's basic policy program and authoritative statements, the government resolves to reply affirmatively to the latest peace proposal of the United States.[78]

In Washington, the Israeli government's decision was greeted with almost delirious

enthusiasm. Not only was it the first success in the Middle East; it was also the first diplomatic success the Nixon administration could claim in any area. It was hailed as a major achievement for Rogers and the State Department. In the jockeying for influence between Rogers and Kissinger, Rogers' credit soared. Momentarily, at least, he seemed even to eclipse the NSC adviser.

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Three days after the Cabinet spokesman's announcement, Herut and Liberal party leaders met to decide whether to stay in the government or to leave it. Liberal Party ministers wanted to stay, but Begin threw all his weight behind the battle for resignation. He won by a mere five votes, 117 to 112. By now, however, the Liberals had gone too far with Herut to break up. They accepted the majority decision. Gaha's six ministers resigned from the Cabinet that same day.

14

Cease-fire and Breakdown

Officials in Washington read the Cabinet spokesman's July 31 statement as unqualified acceptance of Rogers' June 19 proposal. Had they looked at it a bit more closely, they might have felt less like celebrating. The statement did not say that the government of Israel accepted the U.S. proposal, only that it had resolved to "reply affirmatively" to it. The difference was to turn out to be more than a matter of a casual choice of words. As though to warn of this, the spokesman had added that a committee of ministers would prepare a draft of the exact formulation of the Israeli government's reply.

Golda Meir had been maneuvered by the Americans into a position in which she could hardly afford to turn down their initiative. That, however, did not mean that she intended simply to sign on to the American text. She was going to have her own formulation. To the extent that this was understood in Washington at the time, it was taken to mean that Israel, like Egypt, would put whatever it wanted into its reply to the United States but that the Cabinet's July 31 decision meant that it endorsed the language of the three-point memorandum from Jarring to UN Secretary General U Thant set out in Rogers' June 19 letter to Riad.

That, however, was not the case. Meir meant to send her own text to the UN Secretary General. The Prime Minister wanted to make clear to the Americans that they could not expect to extract further concessions from Israel, that in deciding to say yes to the U.S. proposal the government of Israel had not abandoned any of its positions. It still insisted on peace treaties, negotiated directly between itself and its Arab neighbors, and it stood firm in its refusal to return to the pre-1967 war borders. Meir also now had to think about protecting her flank from Gahal, which, despite her own and Dayan's entreaties, was moving back into the opposition. She wanted a document that she could use to defend her Labor government from right-wing charges that it had put Israel's security in danger.

Dayan played the major role in drafting the Israeli reply. At first, he may even have seen it as a means for persuading Begin and his associates to stay in the government. According to some reports, Dayan began by proposing a text that made no reference either to Resolution 242 or to withdrawal. Eban and others argued that the United States would never accept this, and Dayan soon relented on this point.[1] By August 2, the Ministerial Committee had agreed on a text, but there was considerable uncertainty as to whether it would pass muster in Washington. Meir asked Ambassador Walworth Barbour to come to see her in Jerusalem that evening. Barbour brought along his deputy chief of mission, Owen Zurhellen. An East Asian expert fluent in Japanese, Zurhellen was brash and sometimes impulsive, but he had a keen and very quick intelligence. He immediately grasped that Meir had called the meeting so that she and Eban, who was with her, could test American reaction to the committee's draft before she put the final seal of approval on it. As Eban read out the text, Zurhellen realized that it went well beyond the Jarring letter and, in fact, hedged Israel's acceptance with conditions that could scuttle

negotiations before they ever got started. He was appalled that Barbour did not speak up. Finally, he broke in to object. Barbour brushed Zurhellen's objections aside and sharply ordered him to silence.[2]

The day after her meeting with Barbour, Meir gave the text to the Cabinet for final approval and told the ministers that it had been sympathetically received by the American ambassador.[3] She then incorporated it in a speech she delivered to the Knesset on August 4. That same day, Rabin put it in a letter he addressed to Rogers and took the letter and handed it over to Sisco (Appendix D).

Rabin's letter caused dismay at the State Department, less because of its contents than because the Israeli ambassador said that his government intended that it should be given to Jarring. As Zurhellen had well understood, everything hinged on Egypt and Israel agreeing to the precise wording of the memorandum from Jarring to U Thant set out in the June 19 American proposal. Riad's letter to Rogers had also stated positions at variance with the text of the U.S. proposal, but Riad had not asked that his letter be sent to Jarring; he had concurred in the American text. The Israelis were, in effect, saying that their text should be substituted for the one in the June 19 U.S. proposal. If that were done, the Egyptians would surely object that they had agreed only to the American text, not the Israeli one, and that, therefore, there was no basis for negotiations. Or, they could insist that Riad's letter be given to Jarring as the basis for their acceptance of his mediation, in which case the Israelis would object. The two sides had to agree to the three points in the Jarring memorandum; otherwise there would be no common basis for Jarring's renewed mission.

Washington launched an urgent round of consultations with Israeli officials. These failed to produce anything other than a reiteration by Meir that the August 4 letter from Rabin to Rogers was the only official document adopted by the Israeli government in regard to the American initiative. This was just the sort of situation that Nixon's July 24 letter with its far-reaching assurances of American support for Israel had been intended to prevent. Rogers and Sisco wanted to move quickly to get Jarring launched, but the Swedish ambassador demurred. He insisted that he could begin talks with Egypt and Israel only after he had been notified of their agreement to the text that was to be the basis of his new mission. In despair, Sisco decided that the United States would have to take matters into its own hands. On August 5, at Sisco's instruction, the U.S. Mission to the UN informed Secretary General Thant that Israel, Egypt, and Jordan had given their agreement to the text of the memorandum from Ambassador Jarring to him. The next day, Thant sent a note to the Security Council conveying Jarring's memorandum and stating that he had been informed that the three parties had agreed to it.

Golda Meir exploded in anger. Israel, she declared, was not some kind of banana republic that the Americans could treat as they wished. Rabin's letter to Rogers was an official Israeli government document. She had read it out to the Knesset. Now the Americans were simply casting it aside and substituting their own text. The prime minister telephoned Rabin in Washington and told him she wanted to talk with Sisco, who she knew was calling the shots at the State Department. Rabin asked Sisco to put a call through to Meir in Jerusalem. Sisco played innocent. He was, he objected to Rabin, only a mere assistant secretary. How would it look for him to be calling the prime minister of Israel? It would get him into trouble with the secretary of state and with the White House.[4]

Rabin persisted, so Sisco spoke with Rogers and got approval to go ahead. But the call had to be made by the prime minister, and Rabin had to be on the line with Sisco. When Meir came on the phone, she was furious. She accused the United States of having forged Israel's signature on

the Jarring memorandum. She shouted at Sisco. “I reached an agreement with Barbour and the United States now denies that agreement. You can’t formulate answers on our behalf. We have our reservations about the text of Jarring’s memorandum.” Sisco was not intimidated. The secretaries in his outer office heard him shout back. Israel, Sisco replied, had received the text of the U.S. initiative weeks earlier. It was a single page. Did Israel accept it or didn’t it? “Do we have to accept your formulation?” Meir shot back. “We have a formulation of our own.” The conversation ended in stalemate. Sisco wondered whether he was going to be fired.[5]

The prime minister shot off a blistering letter to Rogers and dispatched Rabin to protest to Kissinger and to ask Kissinger to speak to Nixon. This time, at least, the NSC adviser loyally backed Rogers and Sisco. Kissinger dismissed Rabin with sarcasm. “How long does it take the government of Israel to make up its mind?… Have you accepted [the Rogers initiative] or not? Please give us a clear answer.”[6] But the prime minister’s letter to Rogers caused something very near to panic at the State Department. So angry was its tone that it made Rogers and Sisco fear that the Israelis might back out of the initiative altogether.[7] The Israelis, moreover, were in a state of high agitation over the situation along the canal line. The Egyptians had begun rushing their surface-to-air missiles eastward to beat the cease-fire deadline. On August 5, Rabin told Kissinger that up to 14 missile batteries had been moved up to the 50-kilometer limit and 3 missile ambush sites had been set up 10 to 20 kilometers west of the canal. Kissinger thought the Israelis might launch a preemptive ground attack across the canal before the cease-fire entered into effect.[8]

Fearful that everything that had been achieved so far might be wiped out, Sisco threw himself into a race against the clock to get agreement between Israel and Egypt on terms for the cease-fire. Sisco frantically worked the telephone lines to Cairo and to Tel Aviv. Often he was connected simultaneously to Egyptian and Israeli officials by a phone in each hand. Israel’s agreement came through first. On the morning of August 7 (Washington time), the Egyptians followed suit and gave their approval (Appendix E). What Sisco had negotiated was a six-point text. Its central element was the standstill provision, paragraph C:

> Both sides will refrain from changing the military status quo within zones extending 50 kilometers to the east and the west of the cease-fire line. Neither side will introduce or construct any new military installations in these zones. Activities within these zones will be limited to the maintenance of existing installations at their present sites and positions and to the rotation and supply of forces presently within the zones.[9]

Sisco phoned Dayan to let the Israeli defense minister know he had the Egyptians on board. Barbour was with Dayan in his office at the Ministry. Dayan was anxious to have the cease-fire put into effect. He was still talking with Sisco about a more detailed understanding that would tighten up the standstill and explicitly prohibit the introduction, forward movement, or emplacement of missiles or construction or improvement of missile sites. But the standstill was part of the cease-fire agreement accepted by Egypt, so, Dayan reasoned, the longer the cease-fire was delayed the more missiles would be moved eastward. It was four o’clock in the afternoon, Israel’s time. “Let’s start the cease-fire at midnight,” Dayan said. Sisco got Bergus on the line. The Egyptians agreed. The cease-fire would go into effect at midnight August 7, Israel’s time, which because of a one hour difference was 1:00 a.m. August 8, Egypt’s time.[10]

Dayan and Sisco continued their telephonic exchanges about the paper that Dayan wanted so as to create an ironclad prohibition on new missiles or missile sites in the standstill zone. Because Dayan kept changing his own draft of the document, however, it did not reach final form until sometime on August 8. Bergus did not receive the cable transmitting it until mid-

morning August 9, more than thirty hours after the start of the cease-fire. Bergus' instructions called for him to present the paper as an American definition of the standstill provision of the August 7 cease-fire agreement but also as an integral part of that agreement.[11] Since it dealt solely with missiles and their bases and not with other types of fortifications, the document in fact applied only to Egypt.[12] When Bergus went to the Foreign Ministry early that afternoon to give the paper to Mohammed Riad, the foreign minister's chief aide, Riad commented coldly that it would have been good if Egypt had been told of it earlier, when the United States originally made the cease-fire proposal. In his cable to Washington reporting this meeting, Bergus questioned whether the United States could legitimately ask Egypt to accept as an integral part of the cease-fire agreement a paper drawn up by the United States and Israel and handed over to Egypt two days after the cease-fire took effect. His temerity in raising the issue earned him a rebuke from Washington.[13]

At 8:00 p.m. on August 7, Golda Meir came on Israeli radio and television to announce that the cease-fire would take effect at midnight. In Tel Aviv, a crowd turned out along Diezengoff Street to celebrate. Nobody knew whether it was the end of Israel's longest and most unusual war or just an intermission, but the sense of relief was palpable.

Along the canal, there was firing right up to midnight, but at twelve, give or take a few minutes, the guns fell silent on both banks. Captain Yossi Kaanan, commander of the tank company assigned to give support to the maoz at the pier and others nearby, found it a little hard to believe. He had been on the front line almost continuously since the shooting started back in March of the previous year. The next morning, he decided to see for himself. Kaanan scrambled up the sand wall and cautiously put his head over the top. When no shots greeted him, he took a few more steps and stood unfamiliarly erect atop the wall. On the Egyptian side too, soldiers were walking about or lolling in the open.[14]

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The shooting had truly stopped, but the talking—the negotiations under Jarring's auspices—was not to start. Within hours, the success that Sisco and Rogers had worked so hard to achieve and in which Rogers found the vindication he needed to redeem his humiliation at the hands of Henry Kissinger began to turn to bitter disappointment.

Israeli aviators patrolling along the canal line near midnight on August 7 were the first to see it. "We flew along the [canal] waterline," Brigadier General Oded Erez recounted nineteen years later, "and at exactly five minutes before midnight we saw lights go on [on the Egyptian side] and convoys of vehicles beginning to move in the direction of the canal. There was no doubt about it. The Egyptians were moving missiles toward the canal. We asked for permission to attack … but it was denied."[15]

On the morning of August 8, Israeli reconnaissance planes flew parallel to the canal, their cameras trained westward on the 50-kilometer standstill zone on the Egyptian side of the cease-fire line. The films they took showed that work on several new missile sites had been started, and new missile batteries had been moved into the standstill zone in the hours since the last reconnaissance mission before dark the previous evening. This was not conclusive proof that Egypt had violated the standstill. The cease-fire's entry into effect at midnight made it difficult to verify Egypt's surface-to-air missile deployment during the five hours of darkness that preceded midnight. But, by the morning of August 9, Israeli photo-intelligence analysts reported further evidence that the Egyptians were continuing to build missile sites in the standstill zone and to move in missiles and radar. The Israelis rushed to tell the Americans. To their dismay and chagrin, the Americans at first refused to believe them.

The United States had no means of its own to confirm Israel's information, and it would have none until August 10. Verification flights by American U-2 aircraft were part of the State Department's planning. Agreement had been reached between the United States and Israel that the U-2s would fly along the Israeli side of the cease-fire line and film Egyptian deployments to the west. But a day or so before the cease-fire, when officials in Washington approached Brigadier General Eli Zeira, the Israeli defense attache, to ask for permission for a U-2 flight to fix a baseline for verification of the standstill, they were turned down. Zeira was acting on instructions received directly from Dayan, and the cable he got from the defense minister included an almost unbelieveable threat: If U.S. planes tried to carry out photoreconnaissance missions without Israeli permission, Israeli warplanes would intercept them.[16]

Once the U-2 flights got started, they confirmed what the Israelis were saying. The Egyptians were building more SAM sites in the standstill zone and moving in missiles. The photo-intelligence was incontrovertible, but William Rogers simply did not want to believe that the Egyptians were violating the standstill. Rogers was still basking in the happy afterglow of the success of the cease-fire initiative when the Israeli reports began coming in. It simply did not make sense to him that Nasser would sign an agreement and then promptly violate it. The secretary of state initially appeared to see some kind of Israeli conspiracy in the allegations of Egyptian violations of the standstill. He refused to credit the Israeli reports even after American intelligence confirmed them. He would not allow the State Department spokesman to comment on them in any way.[17]

Sisco recognized that this was an explosive issue, one that would not go away and that the United States could not afford to ignore. Even before the U-2 flights began, American intelligence was able to confirm, evidently through communications intercepts, that the Egyptians were violating the standstill.[18] Photographs from the U-2 flights corroborated this intelligence. Sisco waited until he was sure that the American findings were beyond reasonable question; then he went to Rogers and told him there was no doubt that the Egyptians were violating the standstill agreement. The United States had to take a clear stand, Sisco said; if it did not, it would lose its credibility. The secretary of state would not listen. He still found it incomprehensible that the Egyptians would violate the standstill, and he continued to refuse to believe it. An argument ensued, the only real one Sisco ever had with Rogers during the four years they worked together. Sisco arranged for an intelligence briefing for the secretary of state, and the two of them rode together in Rogers' limousine to National Security Agency headquarters. There they were taken to a room that had huge aerial photographs mounted all along its walls. The briefer showed Rogers and Sisco exactly what the Egyptian positions looked like before and after. The photographs made clear beyond any doubt that the Egyptians were bringing new surface-to-air missiles into the standstill zone. Sisco saw that Rogers was shaken, but the secretary of state still resisted authorizing a public statement that would confirm the Israeli charges.[19]

Rogers was to hold out a short while longer, but his resistance only made the Israelis more frantic. They considered it essential that the United States issue a statement that Egypt had moved missiles into the standstill zone, and they continued relentlessly to press for one. They wanted more airplanes, Shrike missiles, and other equipment and ordnance with which to counter the air-defense system that the Egyptians and the Soviets were moving eastward toward the canal. Prime Minister Meir declared herself deeply aggrieved. She had sacrificed her national unity cabinet. Begin, now back on the opposition benches, was violently attacking her decision to accept the U.S. initiative and accusing her of having allowed herself to be duped—

conveniently forgetting that he himself had voted for the cease-fire. From Tel Aviv, the American embassy was reporting that the Israelis were threatening to boycott the talks that were to be held under Jarring's auspices. There were rumors that Dayan was pressing for an attack on the missile sites.

The rumors were true, but there was no general agreement within the Israeli military establishment about what to do. Dayan wanted a limited strike, but Bar Lev contended that limited action would be of no use. If Israel were going to go to war again, the chief of staff argued, the only thing that made sense was an all-out offensive against the Egyptian line.[20]

Golda Meir sent Simcha Dinitz, her chief aide, to Washington to make her case there. On August 15, Rabin and Dinitz went to see Kissinger to hand over more evidence of Egyptian violations. They told Kissinger that the prime minister wanted to come straight away to Washington to talk with the president. This was not at all what the administration had in mind. Golda Meir, mad as a hornet, addressing members of Congress and American Jewish organizations, would be a tremendous embarrassment. Nixon, however, agreed to see the Israeli ambassador, as he had in the past when the Israelis needed soothing. The president and Alexander Haig, Kissinger's deputy, sat through a long and agitated lecture by Rabin on the Egyptian violations and their pernicious consequences. The president then cautioned against hasty reactions. He promised more U.S. arms for Israel but also made clear that he expected the Israelis to take part in talks to be convened by Jarring.[21]

On August 19, ten days after Israel's initial notification, the State Department issued its first hesitant public words on the Egyptian violations:

> We have concluded that there was forward deployment of surface-to-air missiles into and within the zone west of the Suez Canal around the time the cease-fire went into effect. There is some evidence that this was continued beyond the cease-fire deadline, although our evidence on this is not con-elusive.[22]

That same day, Bergus was instructed to raise the issue with the Egyptians. To help Bergus make his case, the State Department gave him map coordinates of SAM sites that it said had been constructed in violation of the standstill. To Bergus' annoyance and embarrassment, the coordinates made no sense; they even had two of the sites located out at sea.[23] (Confusion over map coordinates complicated the Americans' discussions with the Israelis as well. The coordinates that the United States had for the Egyptian SAM sites never matched either Israeli or Egyptian maps. The problem, it was realized later, stemmed from the fact that the American maps were new. They had been drawn up on the basis of data assembled from the U-2's sophisticated stellar navigational system. The Israelis and the Egyptians were operating from older maps prepared by less accurate means.[24]) On August 22, the State Department sent Bergus back once more to talk to the Egyptians, this time with what it called "incontrovertible evidence" that Egypt had violated the standstill.[25]

The Egyptians denied everything. The new missile bases, Foreign Minister Mahmoud Riad told Bergus, had been completed in the evening hours of August 7 before the cease-fire took effect. The operation had been carried out so quickly and efficiently, Riad said, that the Israelis were no doubt surprised. Any new missiles beyond those introduced on the evening of August 7 were simply the result of rotations in and out of the standstill zone.[26]

By early September, the United States had identified 24 SAM sites constructed in violation of the standstill.[27] (Only two of these were thought to be entirely new sites; the others were sites begun before the cease-fire but brought to completion afterward.[28]) The Israelis claimed more.

They said there were 40 new missile positions in the standstill zone, one as near as 10 kilometers from the canal itself. On September 3, the State Department for the first time confirmed—publicly and unreservedly—that Egypt had violated the provisions of the cease-fire agreement by constructing surface-to-air missile sites and moving missiles into the standstill zone. Bergus was sent in again to protest to the Egyptians. This time he was told to ask that they withdraw the offending missiles.

The Egyptians refused to remove the missiles. The Israelis responded by refusing to name a representative to talks under Jarring's auspices. The Soviets declined to help. Earlier, in talks with the Americans, they had given the U.S. initiative their blessing.[29] But on September 6, when Ambassador Jacob Beam sought Soviet assistance in persuading the Egyptians to remove the missiles, Deputy Foreign Minister Vinogradov replied abruptly that the USSR had concluded no cease-fire agreement with the United States. It could not be held responsible for any violations.[30]

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A day or two after the American U-2 flights began, Defense Minister Moshe Dayan's secretary called Owen Zurhellen at his office on the fourth floor of the American embassy in Tel Aviv on HaYarkon Street overlooking the beach. The defense minister wanted to see Zurhellen right away, she said, without delay. Ordinarily, a Cabinet officer with business to conduct with a foreign embassy would convoke the ambassador, not the deputy chief of mission. But it was common knowledge that Ambassador Walworth Barbour spent his afternoons at his residence in Herzliya Pituach, a thirty-minute drive from downtown Tel Aviv. Zurhellen grabbed a notebook and ordered his driver to proceed posthaste to the Kiriya, the sprawling walled compound in downtown Tel Aviv that houses the Israeli Defense Ministry. There he found a furious Dayan. His voice raised almost to a shout and his one eye red and glaring, the defense minister said that for the second time the U-2 had deviated from the 5-kilometer flight corridor that the Ministry had assigned it. The agreement between Israel and the United States called for the U-2 to look only at dispositions on the Egyptian side of the canal, Dayan said. Then the defense minister issued a warning: If the deviation happened again Israel would shoot down the U-2.[31]

Zurhellen was stunned. He could hardly believe that the threat to shoot down the U-2 was meant seriously, but he replied soothingly that he would report Dayan's concern to Washington, and he assured that any deviations from the flight corridor were unintentional. The flights had just begun and the pilots no doubt did not understand the importance of staying precisely within the corridor. But Zurhellen was not easily intimidated. He added a warning of his own: If Israel were to shoot down an American aircraft engaged on a mission to assist Israel in verifying the cease-fire, there would be "one hell of a ruckus" in Washington. Besides, Zurhellen asked, his curiosity overcoming him, how would you do it? Israel, he knew, had no planes or surface-to-air missiles that could reach the altitude of the U-2. That, Dayan replied curtly, had occurred to him. He would send up an Israeli Phantom under the flight path of the U-2. At the moment the American reconnaissance plane passed overhead, the Israeli Phantom would turn its nose up and fire an air-to-air missile. Maybe we won't get the U-2, Dayan said, but we will try.

The 5-kilometer corridor dictated by the Israelis for the U-2 flights was intended to assure that the Americans could look only at the Egyptian side of the cease-fire line, not at the Israeli side. Dayan knew that if the American spy plane strayed a bit from the corridor on its flight south from its Cyprus base or on its return northward, the cameras installed on its fuselage could photograph Israel's deployment as well as Egypt's. That is what made him so angry.

The cease-fire could be exploited not just by Egypt but by Israel as well. From the very

beginning, the Israelis had plans to use it to repair and improve their road network and their fortifications along the Bar Lev line. On August 15, Heikal, wearing his minister of information hat, charged that the Israelis were building new roads and fortifications in the standstill zone.[32] At the end of August, Egypt complained to UNTSO about "large-scale military movements involving large forces, the erection of new military positions, and the building of new roads for military purposes."[33] At the end of October, just a week before the cease-fire was due to reach its ninety-day term, the pro-Egyptian Beirut newspaper *Al Anwar* published photographs taken from the Egyptian side of the canal that showed an assembly of bulldozers and trucks and workers industriously engaged in building new fortifications on the Israeli side.[34]

In fact, both sides were making ready for war again. Nasser continued to build up his armed forces. He aimed to have a million men under arms by the beginning of 1971.[35] At the end of August, General Fawzi assured Nasser that the army was ready to begin the campaign to liberate the occupied territories as soon as the ninety-day cease-fire period ended.[36] Fawzi assiduously readied plans for crossing the canal. One plan called for seizing and holding a bridgehead there; other more ambitious ones described how Egypt would destroy Israeli forces in Sinai and push on to the border between Egypt and British mandate Palestine.[37] The key lay in neutralizing Israeli air power. By Israeli estimates, by the end of October the Egyptians had in place in the standstill zone some 100 missile positions and between 40 and 50 operational missile batteries, one-third of them SA-3s (an SA-3 battery had 6 missile launchers, an SA-2 battery, 7). General Aharon Yariv, Israel's chief of military intelligence, called it "one of the most advanced [air-defense systems] in the world." Even in Vietnam, Yariv said, there was nothing like it. Moreover, Yariv said, Egypt had taken advantage of the cease-fire to move another 300 artillery pieces into the standstill zone to add to the approximately 700 big guns already there before the cease-fire.[38]

Having used the cease-fire to move his missiles close enough to the canal to provide his forces an umbrella against Israeli air strikes, Nasser was determined to go to war again, unless—which no one expected—Israel in the meantime agreed to his demands. Riad and Heikal, the two men closest to Nasser, were both sure of this. So were Nasser's generals.[39]

Then, in September, a crisis broke out in Jordan that thrust the prospect of renewed fighting between Israel and its Arab neighbors into the background. The long-brewing confrontation between the Palestinian guerrilla organizations and the Hashemite monarchy exploded into civil war.

It was the cease-fire itself that brought on the confrontation. The U.S. stop shooting, start talking proposal was put to Jordan at the same time as to Egypt and Israel, but Jordan was in no position to be the first to endorse it. Nasser's decision to accept the U.S. initiative caught King Hussein by surprise. When Nasser sent Hassan Sabri al-Khouly to Amman to urge Jordan to follow suit, several of Hussein's ministers at first objected.[40] The Palestinian guerrilla organizations had raised an enraged outcry against Nasser's decision. Against Nasser and Egypt they could do nothing, but in Jordan they were a dangerous force. Nonetheless, Hussein could not refuse the joint entreaties of Nasser and the United States. A week after Egypt, Jordan announced that it too accepted the American proposal.

All through August, there were ominous rumblings in Jordan. Then, early in September, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), a radical offshoot of Yasser Arafat's Fatah, pulled a spectacular coup. The PFLP simultaneously hijacked three Western commercial airliners and flew them to a desert landing strip some 40 kilometers northeast of Amman. There the PFLP

and the Jordanian army confronted one another in an uneasy standoff. The Palestinian guerrillas soon backed away from their threat to kill the passengers, but they proceeded to blow up all three airliners. For a week Hussein hesitated. Then, on September 17, he launched the full force of his army against the Palestinians. Syria sent tanks into Jordan to try to save the Palestinians, but the Syrians were frightened off by a determined Jordanian stand and by a threatening movement of Israeli troops toward Golan.

Though vilified by Palestinian leaders and by the Algerians, Syrians, and Iraqis for accepting the cease-fire, Nasser was still the leader of the Arab world. He could not stand aside while Arabs took up arms against one another. At the first news of the fighting, he cut short a seaside rest, returned to Cairo, and threw himself into the thick of things. Arab leaders flocked to the Egyptian capital. Nasser brought Hussein and Arafat together there and hammered out a peace plan that, on the face of it, was favorable to the Palestinians but, in fact, gave Hussein the victory his army was already winning in Amman.

The Cairo conference closed on September 28. Nasser worked in his suite at the Hilton Hotel overlooking the Nile to the west and Tahrir Square to the east until 3 o'clock that morning. To Ambassador Tahsin Bashir, the Egyptian government's spokesman, the president seemed in fine form. Despite the late hour, Nasser showed no sign at all of fatigue. Just before he left the hotel to return home, he very carefully reviewed and made small changes in a cable that Bashir had prepared for his signature. Bashir rode down in the elevator with the president and a group of aides, and he watched with embarrassment as Nasser vigorously upbraided Hassan Sabri al-Khouly in front of all for some minor misstep.[41]

Nasser and Sadat went to the airport that afternoon to see off the last of the visitors, King Faisal of Saudi Arabia and the Emir of Kuwait. Sadat saw that Nasser seemed very tired, so tired he could hardly walk. By the time the Emir boarded his plane, Sadat noticed that Nasser was perspiring and very pale.[42]

That evening, Tahsin Bashir received a telephone call from Heikal who, without any explanation, instructed him to have Koranic readings played on radio and television. Bashir had last seen Nasser strong and vigorous some fifteen hours earlier. His first thought was that Mrs. Nasser or some very senior official of the government other than Nasser himself had died. He could not imagine that he was being told to prepare the nation to mourn its president.[43]

Gamal Abdel Nasser, charismatic leader, hero of Arabs everywhere, the man who lost two wars to Israel but was determined to win the third by means fair or foul, died late on the afternoon of September 28, 1970, stricken by a massive heart attack.

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Though he had been appointed secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare only a few months earlier, Elliot Richardson's predilection for foreign affairs led him readily to agree when the White House called and asked if he would head the U.S. delegation to Nasser's funeral. Richardson flew to Cairo in *Air Force Two* along with elder statesman John J. McCloy, Donald Rumsfeld, Robert Murphy, and Michael Sterner, the State Department director for Egyptian Affairs. On the morning of the funeral, Richardson and the other members of the American delegation found themselves herded into a tent with a crowd of dignitaries from other nations. All the Arab kings and presidents were there and so were the famous names of East and West and of the Third World: Soviet Premier Kosygin, Chinese Premier Chou En-Lai, Chaban-Delmas of France, Aldo Moro of Italy, Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, Idi Amin of Uganda, Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia, and many others.

The funeral procession was supposed to move on foot to the burial ground, but it had halted

without explanation in front of the Arab Socialist Union headquarters building in Zamalek. There the dignitaries waited in the tent while the public milled about impatiently in the hot autumn sun, more and more fretful as hours passed with no movement. A caisson to which six horses were hitched stood outside the tent, ready to bear Nasser's coffin to his grave. The mood of the crowd infected the horses and they began to snort and buck in their harness.

Richardson was called away from this scene to the party headquarters building. There he was taken to a room in the basement, to meet Anwar Sadat. To Richardson's surprise, he found Nasser's vice president and heir presumptive lying on a cot. Sadat extended his hand, and from the coldness of the Egyptian's skin and his pallor Richardson could tell that he had been stricken by heat exhaustion. Sadat said he would be well enough to proceed in a moment. He had called Richardson to him simply to say how happy he was that the United States had sent a high-level delegation to Nasser's funeral. Richardson noted that this greeting was reserved for him alone. None of the other delegates was brought to meet Sadat.

The next day, the Egyptian leader—he was not yet officially president—received Richardson in private audience before meeting with all of the members of the U.S. delegation. He spoke warmly of a visit he had made to the United States in 1966. He regretted that Egypt's relations with the United States had been so poor in recent years, but he wanted to change all that. Sadat asked Richardson to tell President Nixon that he wanted to build an entirely new, friendly and cooperative relationship with the United States.[44]

Richardson returned to Washington, briefed Nixon and Kissinger on his trip, and gave them Sadat's message. He returned to his duties at the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare with the impression that what he had said had not really been heard.[45]

Epilogue

At the beginning of November, Anwar Sadat prudently shelved the plans to throw the Egyptian army across the canal that General Fawzi had drawn up for Nasser's approval. Sadat was to spend the next two years trying vainly to make the Americans and the Israelis understand that, unlike Nasser, for whom peace lurked only as a remote prospect in some recess of his complex and troubled psyche, he genuinely wanted to negotiate a way out of his country's and the Arab world's dispute with Israel.

The War of Attrition cost Egypt the lives of thousands of its young soldiers, the destruction of its cities along the Suez Canal, and an effort of national mobilization greater than any it had ever before known. Egypt fought this war alone, or practically so. Other Arab states sent nominal contingents to the Suez front; Saudi Arabia and other oil-producing states gave modest financial backing, and Syria briefly opened a second front against Israel in the summer of 1970, after the tide had already turned in Egypt's favor. But, for the most part, other Arabs found it convenient to stand on the sidelines and cheer Egypt on to greater sacrifice. It was largely because of this, because Egypt had fought alone in 1969 and 1970, that Sadat was able to break with Nasser's policies. Egyptians were bitter over the failure of other Arabs to share the burden of confronting Israel. They had had enough of paying the price of other Arabs' intransigence. They were ready to follow a leader who could get for their nation an honorable accomodation with their Israeli foe.

In February 1971, Gunnar Jarring tried to break the deadlock in his resumed talks with Egypt and Israel by asking Israel whether it would withdraw from all occupied Egyptian territory and Egypt whether it would commit itself to enter into a peace agreement with Israel. Egypt replied with a qualified yes; Israel with an unqualified and angry no.[1] Jarring's initiative made the Israelis furious—he had deviated from the messenger role that they had assigned him—and they let it be known that they would no longer deal with him. Gunnar Jarring withdrew from the scene, now for the last time, and with his withdrawal the United Nations Middle East peacemaking efforts came to an end as well.

Sadat, however, did not give up. He tried for an interim agreement with Israel, one under which Israel's forces would withdraw from the Suez Canal line, the waterway would be reopened, and the cities along it rebuilt. Negotiations dragged on for over a year and one-half. Only after they had unmistakably failed did Sadat abandon diplomacy and turn toward war.

The Soviets too came forward with a diplomatic initiative. In November 1971, Brezhnev proposed secretly to Nixon a great-power agreement to settle the Arab-Israeli conflict once and for all. The Soviet leader proposed to make the Rogers plan—the plan the USSR had rejected (or the Americans thought it had rejected) two years earlier—the basis for the settlement.[2] Kissinger and Nixon paid the Soviet proposal no serious heed.[3]

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The cease-fire that was brought into being by the June 19, 1970, U.S. initiative was to turn out to be one of the great missed opportunities for peace in the Middle East. In the three years and

one month (minus one day) that it lasted, agreements might have been reached that could have forestalled another war between Egypt and Israel. The war that erupted in October 1973 might never have been. Just how the opportunities were missed is a story for another book. But much of the answer to the question why is embedded in the history of the three years that preceded the August 1970 cease-fire.

One reason Israel failed to take advantage of the opportunities that presented themselves after Nasser's death is that its political and military establishment misjudged the outcome of the War of Attrition. It was, in fact, a war without victor or vanquished, but Israel's General Staff and its government persuaded themselves that their side had won. Israel had never yet lost a war. Acknowledging that it might have come out second best, or even tied, in the one over which he presided as chief of staff appears to have been more than Haim Bar Lev could bring himself to do. Bar Lev developed a rationale of computer-like logic to sustain his claim of victory. Egypt, he argued both at the time and twenty years later, had failed in its objective, but Israel had achieved its goal. Egypt had wanted to blast Israel off the Suez Canal; Israel wanted to make Egypt bring the shooting to a halt. Egypt was the one that asked for the cease-fire, Bar Lev maintained, and in the clash between their two armies along the Suez Canal and in the air over it Egypt "broke first."[4] Egypt, therefore, had lost and Israel had won.

Perhaps the best that can be said of this analysis is that it is too simplistic. The Egyptian army did unquestionably suffer heavy casualties during the War of Attrition, particularly in its final months, but by no stretch of the imagination can it be said to have "broken." Casualties affected neither its will nor its ability to fight. As the War of Attrition drew to a close, the Egyptian army was, in fact, firing away more vigorously than ever. Israel's own statistics attest to this: In May, June, and July of 1970, by the Israeli army's own count the number of incidents initiated by Egypt along the canal line rose to double that of the year before.[5] Moscow's decision in the spring of 1970 to send air-defense missile crews and pilots tipped the balance in Egypt's favor. Israel was obliged to beat an embarrassed retreat from its deep-penetration raids. In the last six weeks of the war, it began losing warplanes at a rate it would have found difficult to sustain had fighting continued much longer, and its mastery of the skies over the Suez Canal was called into question.

Nasser agreed to the American cease-fire proposal not because he had concluded that war would not solve his problem. He did so because he saw in the U.S. initiative an opportunity to move his missile network up to the canal and thereby nullify Israel's air supremacy and restore to Egypt the advantage of the preponderance of numbers. Having exploited that opportunity, he fully intended to go back to war if, as he expected, the U.S.-sponsored negotiations did not produce early Israeli agreement to withdraw from the territories seized in the June 1967 war.

For that small number of Israeli soldiers and pilots who actually fought it—along the banks of the Suez Canal and in the air over Egypt's missile wall—the War of Attrition was the worst, the most difficult and exhausting of all Israel's wars. In bloodletting, it equalled the June 1967 war: From June 11, 1967, to August 7, 1970, casualties on all fronts totaled approximately 3,500—of whom some 750 were killed. (The June 1967 war counted a figure of 3,363 casualties—of whom 778 were killed.) But the Israeli public could not grasp the seriousness of the War of Attrition, for the ordinary citizen was largely shielded from the knowledge of what was happening at the front. Casualties caused Israelis much pain, but otherwise the War of Attrition was a time of normalcy and prosperity. It was not the nation's war—only the war of those who held the front lines and the skies over them.

The Israeli General Staff deluded itself as much as it did the government or the public. Israel's

military leadership paid little real attention to the War of Attrition. Perhaps this was because it was a limited war, not the kind Israeli generals were used to fighting or liked to fight. It was a soldiers war. Commanders could gain little glory in it. The generals did not really regard it as a war, and so they did not bother to learn its lessons.

Militarily, the first and most important lesson of the War of Attrition was that the canal line could not be held unless the Israeli air force had free run of the skies over Egyptian lines. The second was that Israel, at the time, did not have electronic devices that could counter advanced Soviet air-defense missiles, and neither did the United States; Yitzhak Rabin warned repeatedly of this from Washington.[6] In the battle between airplanes and missiles, missiles were likely to have the upper hand. Had Nasser lived and resumed the war at the end of 1970 or early in 1971, Israel would have faced a choice between abandoning the Bar Lev line or escalating to all-out war—a war from which the Soviet Union, with 15,000 combat troops and advisers in Egypt at the time, would have found it very difficult to escape involvement.

But the most fateful consequence of Israel's mistaken judgment of the outcome of the War of Attrition was political. The Israeli establishment told itself and the public that Israel had won the War of Attrition. The public was only too happy to believe it so. The import was enormous. If Israel had, in fact, held the Egyptian army off with the small force it deployed along the Bar Lev line and, with its air force, had indeed forced Nasser to sue for a cease-fire, then there was really very little to worry about. There was no urgency in the matter of seeking peace, no need to make concessions or take chances, no need to give up plans for extending Israel's border into Sinai and adding a strip all the way down to Sharm el-Sheikh to the territory of the state. If Israel had won the War of Attrition with, so to speak, its right hand employed in other occupations, then its military superiority was assuredly such that it could indeed afford to wait on the cease-fire lines until the Arabs came to sue for peace on its terms. The Israeli Cabinet quickly forgot its anxieties of July 1970, and it and the public settled into self-satisfied complacency.

Only one among Israel's political leaders had the foresight to realize that standing fast was neither wise nor, in the long run tenable. Moshe Dayan began by opposing Israel's and America's peace efforts. He opposed accepting Resolution 242, and, at first, he even argued against the American June 19, 1970 cease-fire initiative. But his inquiring mind and his keen intelligence told him that opportunities to create a more stable relationship between Israel and Egypt existed and should not be passed up. These same qualities perhaps warned him that Israel's military superiority was not so absolute as others imagined. In December 1970, Dayan pushed Israel back into the Jarring talks, declaring that it had to "jump into the icy waters" of negotiation. In January 1971, he launched the idea of an agreement under which Israel would pull back from the Suez Canal line and Egypt would reopen the canal and rebuild its cities there. After Sadat made a similar proposal, Dayan tried his best to bring his Cabinet colleagues along with him in support of this idea. The personal and political rivalries that afflicted Israel's political and military leadership frustrated his effort. Eban should have helped him but would not. Allon, Dayan's perennial competitor, and Galili, Allon's ally, opposed him, and they were the men closest to Golda Meir. So did Haim Bar Lev, for whom the idea of leaving the canal line was tantamount to heresy.

Moshe Dayan was a loner and an iconoclast, but he was also a man of the establishment. When he found himself stymied, he was not one to crusade for his views. He came to terms with their rejection and settled into his own brand of complacency.

Ultimate responsibility for the missed opportunity, however, lay with Golda Meir whose certainty in her beliefs instilled in her the conviction that by refusing any compromise she was

saving Israel from great peril.

Personal rivalries also played a major role in preventing the United States from seizing the opportunities offered by the three-year cease-fire. As in 1969 and 1970, Henry Kissinger could not find any merit in any diplomatic initiative for the Middle East that eminated from William Rogers' State Department. Kissinger was later to acknowledge quite candidly that his strategy was "to produce a stalemate until Moscow urged compromise or until, even better, some moderate Arab regime decided that the route to progress was through Washington."[7] So long as he himself was not in charge of policy for the Middle East, Kissinger was unable to see that the moderate Arab leader for whom he was waiting was already on the scene and pleading for recognition. Even after he took the direction of Middle East policy away from William Rogers from the fall of 1971 onward, he saw no need to hurry. He was every bit as confident in Israel's military power as were the Israelis themselves, and he firmly believed that it would deter the Arabs from going to war.

One of the main reasons the Nixon administration failed in its early efforts to build a structure of peace in the Middle East was that the president could not decide whether to support the views of his secretary of state or those of his national security adviser. Nixon's instincts inclined him toward the confrontational approach advocated by Kissinger. His intellect, which told him that the Middle East had to be dealt with on its own terms, not those of the cold war, led him to side with Rogers and Sisco. But he was never able to bring himself to give them the unreserved support that they thought he had pledged them and that they needed to make their efforts successful.

America's Middle East diplomacy of the year 1969 was a pioneering, ground-breaking enterprise. Nothing of equal scope had been done before or would be done afterward for almost a decade. Whether it might have succeeded had it had the wholehearted backing of the White House can only be a matter of speculation. Kissinger's hostility and Nixon's ambivalence and his duplicity doomed it to failure. The feeble support that Nixon gave Rogers and Sisco in 1971 and 1972 as they struggled to bring about an interim agreement between Egypt and Israel assured that that effort too would fail.

Stalemate ensued. On October 6, 1973, Egypt and Syria went to war to break it.

Appendix A:
United Nations Security Council Resolution 242

approved November 22, 1967

The Security Council,

1. Expressing its continuing concern with the grave situation in the Middle East,
2. Emphasizing the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war and the need to work for a just and lasting peace in which every state in the area can live in security,
3. Emphasizing further that all member states in their acceptance of the charter of the United Nations have undertaken a commitment to act in accordance with Article 2 of the charter,

    1. Affirms that the fulfillment of charter principles requires the establishment of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East which should include the application of both the following principles:

        I. Withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict;
        II. Termination of all claims or states of belligerency and respect for and acknowledgement of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every state in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force;

    2. Affirms further the necessity

        A. For guaranteeing freedom of navigation through international waterways in the area;
        B. For achieving a just settlement of the refugee problem;
        C. For guaranteeing the territorial inviolability and political independence of every state in the area, through measures including the establishment of demilitarized zones;

    3. Requests the Secretary General to designate a special representative to proceed to the Middle East to establish and maintain contacts with the states concerned in order to promote agreement and assist efforts to achieve a peaceful and accepted settlement in accordance with the provisions and principles in this resolution;
    4. Requests the Secretary General to report to the Security Council on the progress of the efforts of the special representative as soon as possible.

Appendix B:
Resolutions of the Arab Summit in Khartoum

1. The Conference has affirmed the unity of Arab ranks, the unity of joint action and the need for coordination and the elimination of all differences. The Kings, Presidents and the representatives of the other Arab states at the conference have affirmed their countries' adherence to and implementation of the Arab Solidarity Charter which was signed at the Third Arab Summit Conference in Casablanca.

2. The Conference has agreed on the need to consolidate all efforts to eliminate the effects of the aggression on the basis that the occupied lands are Arab lands and that the burden of regaining these lands falls on all the Arab states.

3. The Arab Heads of State have agreed to unite their political efforts on the international and diplomatic level to eliminate the effects of the aggression and to ensure the withdrawal of the aggressive Israeli forces from the Arab lands, which have been occupied since the 5 June aggression. This will be done within the framework of the main principles to which the Arab states adhere, namely, no truce with Israel, no recognition of Israel, no negotiation with it and adherence to the rights of the Palestinian People within their country.[1]

4. The conference of Arab Finance, Economy and Oil Ministers recommended that suspension of oil pumping be used as a weapon in the battle. However, after thoroughly studying the matter, the summit conference has come to the conclusion that the pumping of oil itself can be used as a positive weapon, since oil is an Arab resource which can be used to strengthen the economy of the Arab states directly affected by the aggression, so that these states will be able to stand firm in the battle.

Therefore the Conference has decided to resume the pumping of oil since it is a positive Arab resource that can be used in the service of Arab goals. It can contribute to the efforts to enable those Arab states which were exposed to the aggression and thereby lost economic resources to stand firmly and eliminate the effects of the aggression.

The oil-producing states have in fact participated in the effort to enable the states affected by the aggression to stand firm before any economic pressure.

5. The participants at the Conference have approved the plan proposed by Kuwait to set up an Arab Economic and Social Development Fund on the basis of the recommendation of the Conference of Arab Finance, Economy and Oil Ministers in Baghdad.

6. The Conference participants have agreed on the need to adopt the necessary measures to strengthen military preparation to face all eventualities.

7. The Conference has decided to expedite the elimination of foreign bases in the Arab states.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the State of Kuwait, and the Kingdom of Libya have each agreed to pay the following annual amounts, which will be in advance every three months beginning from mid-October until the effects of the aggression are eliminated: Saudi Arabia, 50 million pounds sterling; Kuwait, 55 million pounds sterling; Libya, 30 million pounds sterling.

In this way, the Arab nation ensures that it will be able to carry on this battle, without any weakening until the effects of the aggression are eliminated.

Note

This document is an FBIS translation of the Cairo Radio Domestic Service broadcast, in Arabic (1534 GMT), September 1, 1967, of the Arab Summit resolutions read live by Sudanese Premier Mahjub at the closing session.

Appendix C:
Letter from U.S. Secretary of State William P. Rogers to Egyptian Foreign Minister Mahmoud Riad

June 19, 1970

Dear Mr. Foreign Minister:

I have read carefully President Nasser's statement of May 1 and your subsequent remarks to Mr. Bergus. Mr. Sisco has also reported fully on his conversations with President Nasser and you, and we have been giving serious thought to what can be done about the situation in the Near East. I agree that the situation is at a critical point and I think it is in our joint interest that the United States retain and strengthen friendly ties with all the peoples and states of the area. We hope this will prove possible and are prepared to do our part. We look to others concerned, and in particular to your government, which has so important a role to play, to move with us to seize this opportunity. If it is lost, we shall all suffer the consequences and we would regret such an outcome very much indeed. In this spirit, I urge that your government give the most careful consideration to the thoughts which I set forth below.

We are strongly interested in a lasting peace, and we would like to help the parties achieve it. We have made serious and practical proposals to that end, and we have counseled all parties on the need for compromise, and on the need to create an atmosphere in which peace is possible. By the latter we mean a reduction of tensions as well as clarifications of positions to give both Arabs and Israelis some confidence that the outcome will preserve their essential interests. In our view, the most effective way to agree on a settlement would be for the parties to begin to work out under Ambassador Jarring's auspices the detailed steps necessary to carry out S.C. Resolution 242. Foreign Minister Eban of Israel has recently said that Israel would be prepared to make important concessions once talks got started. At the same time, Egyptian participation in such talks would go far towards overcoming Israeli doubts that your government does in fact seek to make peace with it. I understand the problems that direct negotiations pose for you, and we have made it clear from the beginning that we were not proposing that such an arrangement be put into effect at the outset, although, depending on the progress of discussions, we believe the parties will find it necessary to meet together at some point if peace is to be established between them.

With the above thoughts in mind, the United States puts forward the following proposal for consideration of the UAR: A. That both Israel and the UAR subscribe to a restoration of the ceasefire for at least a limited period; B. that Israel and the UAR (as well as Israel and Jordan) subscribe to the following statement which would be in the form of a report from Ambassador

Jarring to the Secretary General, U Thant:

[begin statement text]
The UAR (Jordan) and Israel advise me that they agree:
a. That having accepted and indicated their willingness to carry out Resolution 242 in all its parts, they will designate representatives to discussions to be held under my auspices, according to such procedure and at such places and times as I may recommend, taking into account as appropriate each side's preference as to method of procedure and previous experience between the parties;
b. That the purpose of the aforementioned discussions is to reach agreement on the establishment of a just and lasting peace between them based on (1) mutual acknowledgment by the UAR (Jordan) and Israel of each other's sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence, and (2) Israeli withdrawal from territories occupied in the 1967 conflict, both in accordance with Resolution 242;
c. That, to facilitate my task of promoting agreement as set forth in Resolution 242, the parties will strictly observe, effective July 1 until at least October 1, the cease-fire resolutions of the Security Council.
[end statement text]

We hope the UAR will find this proposal acceptable; we are also seeking Israeli acceptance. In the meantime, I am sure you will share my conviction that everything be done to hold these proposals in confidence so as not to prejudice the prospects for their acceptance.

I am sending a similar message to Foreign Minister Rifai.

I look forward to your early reply.

With all best wishes.

Sincerely,
illiam R Rogers[1]

Appendix D:
Letter from Ambassador Yitzhak Rabin to Secretary of State William P. Rogers

August 4, 1970

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I have the honor to inform you that my Government's position on the latest United States peace initiative is as follows: Having considered President Nasser's message of 24 July 1970, basing itself on its contents and in strict adherence to its policy principles and authoritative statements, the Government of Israel has decided to reply affirmatively to the latest United States peace initiative, and to convey to Ambassador Jarring that:

1. Israel is prepared in due time to designate a representative to discussions to be held under Ambassador Jarring's auspices with the UAR (Jordan), according to such procedure and at such places and times as he may recommend, taking into account each side's attitude as to method of procedure and previous experience of discussions between the parties.
2. Israel's position in favor of a cease-fire on a basis of reciprocity on all fronts, including the Egyptian front, in accordance with the Security Council's cease-fire resolution, remains unchanged. On the basis of clarifications given the United States Government, Israel is prepared to reply affirmatively to the United States proposal for a cease-fire (for at least three months) on the Egyptian front.
3. The discussions under Ambassador Jarring's auspices shall be held within the framework of the Security Council Resolution 242 on the basis of the expression of readiness by the parties to carry out the Security Council Resolution 242 in all its parts in order to achieve an agreed and binding contractual peace agreement between the parties which will insure:

    a. Termination by Egypt (Jordan) of all claims of belligerence and respect and acknowledgement of the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and political independence of each other and their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force; each of the parties will be responsible within its territory for the prevention all hostile acts by regular military or para-military forces, including irregular forces, against the armed forces or against civilians living in the territory of the other party.
    b. Withdrawal of Israel's armed forces from territories occupied in the 1967 conflict to secure, recognized and agreed boundaries to be determined in the peace agreement.

4. Israel will participate in these discussions without any prior conditions. Israel will not claim

the prior acceptance by the other party of her positions, as Israel does not accept in advance the positions of the other party as communicated publicly or otherwise. Each party will be free to present its proposals on the matters under discussion.[1]

Appendix E:
Cease-fire Agreement

August 7, 1970

A. Israel and the UAR will observe cease-fire effective at 2200 GMT Friday, August 7.
B. Both sides will stop all incursions and all firing, on the ground and in the air, across the cease-fire line(s).
C. Both sides will refrain from changing the military status quo within zones extending 50 kilometers to the east and the west of the cease-fire line. Neither side will introduce or construct any new military installations in these zones. Activities within the zones will be limited to the maintenance of existing installations at their present sites and positions and to the rotation and supply of forces presently within the zones.
D. For purposes of verifying observance of the cease-fire, each side will rely on its own national means, including reconnaissance aircraft which will be free to operate without interference up to 10 kilometers from the cease-fire line on its own side of that line.
E. Each side may avail itself as appropriate of all UN machinery in reporting alleged violations to each other of the cease-fire and of the military standstill.
F. Both sides will abide by the Geneva Convention of 1949 relative to the treatment of prisoners of war and will accept the assistance of the ICRC (International Committee of the Red Cross) in carrying out their obligations under that convention.[1]

Notes

All interviews were conducted by the author unless otherwise sourced. “Author’s notes” refers to notes made by the author during his sojourn in Israel from 1967 to 1971 or to his unpublished manuscript compiled soon thereafter.

Chapter 1

1. *Al Ahram*, May 17, 1967, carried the text of General Fawzi's letter.
2. *Al Ahram*, May 19, 1967.
3. Anwar Sadat, in his memoir *In Search of Identity*, p. 172, says Nasser knew that closing the Straits of Tiran meant war with Israel. On July 23, 1967, Nasser told associates that he had estimated the chances of war as a result of the closure of the straits at not less than 50 percent. Cf. *Al Ahram*, July 24, cited in Safran, *From War to War*, p. 289.
4. Eban, *An Autobiography*, pp. 342–344.
5. Ibid., p. 369. Also Dishon, ed., *Middle East Record 1967*, p. 197.
6. Eban, *Pirkeh Chaim*, vol. 2, p. 423.
7. Ibid., p. 427.
8. Interview with a former U.S. official.
9. The June 19, 1967, Israeli peace proposal is mentioned in the memoirs of several leading Israeli figures of the time, but the fullest account of it is to be found in the Hebrew-language version of Moshe Dayan's autobiography, *Aveneh Derech*, pp. 490–492.
10. Ibid., p. 491.
11. Rabin, *Pinkas Sherut*, p. 227.
12. Eban, *Pirkeh Chaim*, p. 430.
13. Interviews with former U.S. and Israeli diplomats.
14. Oral history interview with Harry McPherson, January 16, 1969, p. 33, Lyndon Johnson Presidential Library.
15. Oral history interview September 18, 1989, with William Dale, deputy chief of mission, U.S. embassy, Tel Aviv, 1964–1968. Foreign Affairs Oral History Program, Lauinger Library, Georgetown University, Washington, D.C.
16. Eban, *An Autobiography*, p. 237.
17. Remarks by former Under Secretary of State Eugene Rostow at U.S. Institute of Peace Seminar, Washington, D.C., April 3, 1991.
18. Eban, *An Autobiography*, p. 241.
19. Interviews with a former senior U.S. official.
20. Author's notes; and interviews with former senior U.S. officials.
21. Author's notes.
22. Author's notes; and interviews with former senior U.S. officials.
23. See, notably, Green, *Taking Sides*, pp. 189–204.
24. See, among others, Eban, *An Autobiography*, p. 358, and Green, *Taking Sides*, p. 198–199.
25. Interview with Harold Saunders, National Security Council staff officer for the Near East and South Asia during the Johnson administration.
26. Ibid.
27. Interview with a former senior U.S. official.
28. Halberstam, *The Best and the Brightest*, pp. 715–716.
29. Interview with a former senior U.S. official.
30. Interview with Joseph J. Sisco, October 1988.
31. Eban, *An Autobiography*, p. 417.
32. Interview with Lucius D. Battle, October 1988.
33. Oral history interview with Richard B. Parker, political counselor, American embassy Cairo 1964–1967, Foreign Affairs Oral History Program, Lauinger Library, Georgetown University, Washington, D.C.
34. Safran, *From War to War*, p. 279.
35. Parker, oral history interview, p. 39.
36. Interviews with former U.S. officials. The reason the Egyptians chose Birdsall was never explained. Perhaps they thought him to be a CIA agent, though evidently he had no connection with the agency.
37. Interview with Lucius D. Battle, October 1988.
38. Ibid.
39. *U.S. News and World Report*, April 17, 1967, cited in Dishon, ed., *Middle East Record 1967*, p. 164.
40. Interviews with former Israeli military intelligence officers.
41. Sadat, *In Search of Identity*, p. 175.
42. Eban, *An Autobiography*, p. 420.
43. Heikal, *The Sphinx and the Commissar*, p. 190.
44. According to Stephen Green, *Taking Sides*, pp. 204–211, a U.S. air force photoreconnaissance unit was positioned in Israel on the night of June 4, 1967, and conducted battlefield photoreconnaissance missions for Israel from the beginning of the war on June 5 through its end on June 11. Green's account is detailed and would be persuasive were corroboration possible. Green says his source was a person who claimed to have been a participant in the operation; but he acknowledges that efforts to confirm the

story through others who might have participated, or through senior Pentagon, White House, or State Department officials of the time had “not been successful.” Similar efforts undertaken by this writer, and by others known to him, with senior officials of the Johnson administration who should have been aware of an operation of this sort met an identical fate: No one could be found who would acknowledge knowing anything about it. That former high officials would refuse to break silence on such a matter more than twenty years later seems unlikely. Green’s story is either an elaborate fabrication perpetrated upon him by his informant or Washington’s best-kept secret ever.

45. Interviews with Lucius D. Battle and other former senior U.S. officials.
46. Lall, *The UN and the Middle East Crisis*, p. 107.
47. Ibid., p. 116.
48. Ibid., p. 126.
49. Ibid., p. 128.
50. Ibid., p. 129.
51. *New York Times*, June 20, 1967.
52. Eban, *An Autobiography*, pp. 430–431; also Eban, *Pirkeh Chaim*, p. 425.
53. Lall, *UN and the Middle East Crisis*, pp. 322–323.
54. Ibid., p. 176.
55. Ibid., p. 186.
56. Ibid.
57. Interviews with former U.S. officials; and Lall, *UN and the Middle East Crisis*, app. 25.
58. U.S. Mission to the UN (USUN) telegram number 305 to the Secretary of State dated July 21, 1967, unclassified.
59. Eban, *An Autobiography*, pp. 442–444.
60. Ibid., pp. 442–444. Also interview with a former senior U.S. official.
61. Interview with Mahmoud Riad, February 1990.
62. Interview with a former senior Egyptian diplomat.
63. Eban, *An Autobiography*, p. 445.

Chapter 2

1. Interview with a former Israeli diplomat.
2. Lall, *UN and the Middle East Crisis*, pp. 228–232.
3. Interview with Mahmoud Riad, February 1990.
4. Eban, *An Autobiography*, p. 419; and interview with a former U.S. official.
5. Interview with a former U.S. official.
6. Interviews with former U.S. officials.
7. Lall, *UN and the Middle East Crisis*, annex 21.
8. Interviews with former U.S. officials.
9. Lall, *UN and the Middle East Crisis*, p. 246.
10. Ibid., app. 20.
11. Ibid., p. 250.
12. Institute for the Study of Diplomacy, "UNSC Resolution 242, A Case Study in Diplomatic Ambiguity"; and interview with a former senior U.S. official.
13. Interview with a former senior U.S. official.
14. Institute for the Study of Diplomacy, "UNSC Resolution 242, A Case Study."
15. Eban, *An Autobiography*, p. 451.
16. Interview with Mahmoud Riad, February 1990.
17. Lall, *UN and the Middle East Crisis*, p. 255.
18. Interview with Mahmoud Riad, February 1990. Also see Riad, *The Struggle for Peace in the Middle East*, p. 68.
19. Interviews with former U.S. officials.
20. Ibid.
21. Ibid.
22. Lall, *UN and the Middle East Crisis*, p. 255; and interviews with former U.S. officials.
23. Institute for the Study of Diplomacy, "UNSC Resolution 242, A Case Study," Lord Caradon's testimony.
24. Ibid.
25. Lall, *UN and the Middle East Crisis*, p. 260.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid., p. 262.
28. Ibid., p. 261.
29. Ibid., p. 262.
30. Lall, *UN and the Middle East Crisis*, p. 262.
31. Institute for the Study of Diplomacy, "UNSC Resolution 242," Lord Caradon's testimony.
32. Interviews with former Egyptian diplomats.
33. *Al Ahram*, February 2, 1968.
34. Eban, *An Autobiography*, p. 451.
35. Interview with Joseph J. Sisco.
36. This account of Jarring's first meeting with Eban in Jerusalem was constructed from interviews with former American and Israeli diplomats. Jarring regularly briefed the Americans on his talks with the Israelis and the Egyptians, and cables on these briefings were sent to the U.S. ambassador to the UN and to major American diplomatic missions in the Near East. For the official account of the Jarring mission, see UNSYG Document S/10070.
37. Riad, *The Struggle for Peace*, p. 79; and UNSYG S/10070.
38. UNSYG S/10070.
39. Interview with Mahmoud Riad, February 1990; and UNSYG S/10070.
40. *Yediot Acharonot*, November 24, 1967.
41. Interview with a former Israeli diplomat.
42. *Haaretz*, and *Jerusalem Post*, December 2, 1967.
43. Interview with a former senior U.S. official.
44. UNSYG S/10070.
45. Ibid.
46. Ibid.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid.
49. The account of the Israeli Cabinet's debate over Ambassador Tekoa's May 1, 1968, statement is drawn from notes made by the author. Dayan's statement to Ball was made in the author's presence.

Chapter 3

1. Oral history interview with Richard B. Parker, Foreign Affairs History Program.
2. Interviews with former U.S. and Egyptian officials. For Heika's description of Nasser's interpretation of the U.S. position, see *The Sphinx and the Commissar*, pp. 192–193.
3. Interview with Lucius Battle, October 1988.
4. Ibid.
5. Interview with Donald Bergus, October 1988.
6. Interview with Lucius Battle, October 1988.
7. Interview with Ashraf Ghorbal, February 1990.
8. Quoted in Dishon, ed., *Middle East Record 1967*, p. 242.
9. Interview with Donald Bergus, October 1988.
10. Interview with Abdou Mobashir, *Al Ahram* military correspondent at the time, February 1990.
11. *Al Ahram*, August 25, 1967.
12. See Chapter 1.
13. Interview with Mohamed Heikal, February 1990.
14. Ibid. For Heika's published version of the Podgorny visit, see *The Road to Ramadan*, p. 48, and *The Sphinx and the Commissar*, p. 190. My account also draws on Nadav Safran's *From War to War*, p. 411.
15. Rubenstein, *Red Star on the Nile*, p. 46; and Schifi, *Canafaim Me Al Suez*, p. 120.
16. "Unsatisfactory," in *Sphinx and the Commissar*, p. 190; and "disastrous," in an interview with the author, February 1990.
17. Heikal, *Sphinx and the Commissar*, p. 191.
18. Fawzi, *Harb al-Thalath Sanawaat*, pp. 161–170.
19. Rubenstein, *Red Star on the Nile*, p. 30.
20. Ibid., p. 29.
21. Interview with Mohamed Heikal, February 1990.
22. Ibid.; and *Road to Ramadan*, p. 50.

Chapter 4

1. Rabin, *Pinkas Sherut*, vol. 1, p. 213. General Rabin's autobiography was published in one volume in English under the title *The Rabin Memoirs*, but the English version is greatly abbreviated and leaves out much information that is essential to the understanding of the period. All references herein, unless otherwise stated, are to the Hebrew version, *Pinkas Sherut*, vol. 1.
2. Ibid., p. 213.
3. Ibid.
4. Weizman's account of Rabin's near breakdown and offer to resign was first given in the Israeli press in the spring of 1974—when Rabin sought the Labor Party's endorsement for his candidacy for prime minister. Weizman repeated it in *Lecha Shemaim, Lecha Aretz*, pp. 258–259. In his own memoirs, Rabin called Weizman's account "exaggerated" but did not deny it outright. Cf. *Pinkas Sherut*, p. 420.
5. Interviews with former Israeli diplomats.
6. Eban, *An Autobiography*, p. 33.
7. Rabin, *Pinkas Sherut*, p. 213.
8. Interview with retired Major General Yosef Geva, March 1990.
9. *Lexicon LeBitachon Israel*, pp. 429–430.
10. Interview with former Israeli air force commander Mordechai Hod, March 1990.
11. Interview with Lucius Battle, October 1988.
12. For a discussion of Eshko's qualms about going to ask Johnson for Phantoms, see Haber, *HaYom Tifrotz Milchama*, pp. 227, 298–299.
13. Oral history interview, Harry McPherson, January 16, 1969, p. 34.
14. Haber, *HaYom Tifrotz Milchama*, p. 304.
15. Interview with Lucius Battle, October 1988.
16. Ibid.; and interview with Yosef Geva, March 1990.
17. Interview with Yosef Geva, March 1990.
18. Interview with Lucius Battle, October 1988.
19. Eban, *An Autobiography*, p. 457.
20. Interviews with former Israeli officials.
21. Article by Shlomo Shamir, *Haaretz*, June 12, 1972.
22. Rabin, *Pinkas Sherut*, p. 221.
23. Ibid., p. 223.
24. Ibid.
25. Interview with Lucius Battle, October 1988.
26. Cairo Domestic Service broadcast in Arabic (1534 GMT) September 1, 1967, as reported and translated by U.S. Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS).
27. Author's notes on Ball/Sisco visit to Israel.
28. November 23, 1967, speech by President Gamal Abdel Nasser, quoted in Dishon, ed., *Middle East Report 1967*, p. 269.
29. Yaacobi, *Kechut HaSeaara*, pp. 10, 160.
30. Rabin, *Pinkas Sherut*, pp. 231–232.
31. Ibid., pp. 233–234. Rabin mistakenly says Rusk gave the proposal to "Egyptian Foreign Minister Fawzi."
32. Parker, "Essays in Miscalculation, pt. 2, The War of Attrition," draft manuscript, pp. 14–16.
33. Ibid.
34. Rabin, *Pinkas Sherut*, p. 235; and interviews with former U.S. government officials.

Chapter 5

1. June 9, 1967, speech, quoted in Dishon, ed., *Middle East Record 1967*, p. 553.
2. Rouleau, *Israel et les Arabes, le 3eme Combat*, Paris, 1967, quoted in Dishon, ed., *Middle East Record 1967*, p. 554.
3. Dishon, ed., *Middle East Record 1967*, p. 556.
4. Interview with Mohamed Heikal, February 1990.
5. Cited in Shamir, ed., *Yeridat HaNasserism*, in an article by Professor Shamir, p. 11.
6. Cited in Hopwood, *Egypt, Politics, and Society*, p. 77.
7. Shamir, *Yeridat HaNasserism*, p. 81.
8. Nutting, *Nasser*, pp. 430–432.
9. Dishon, ed., *Middle East Record 1967*, p. 557.
10. Parker, "The June War: Origins and Mysteries," paper and oral presentation delivered at the Woodrow Wilson Center, Washington, D.C., May 29, 1990.
11. This account of Amer's arrest and death is based mainly on the author's interviews with former Egyptian officials and journalists. An excellent summary of "the Amer affair" is to be found in Shamir, *Yeridat HaNasserism*, in an article by Hanoch Manor, "The Amer Affair," pp. 176–186.
12. Press conference, February 5, 1967, carried over Cairo Radio; Transcript of broadcast, BBC, February 7, 1967.
13. Information for this sketch of the relationship between Nasser and Heikal was gleaned from conversations with former Egptian officials and journalists in a series of interviews conducted in Cairo in February 1990.
14. A particularly detailed exposition of Heika's views in this sense may be found in his weekly editorial in *Al Ahram* of September 29, 1967.
15. Among others, see Heika's November 10, 1967 editorial in *Al Ahram.*
16. For Heika's views on freedom of speech and Marxism see his editorial in *Al Ahram* of August 25, 1967.
17. In a series of articles in *Al Ahram* in July and August 1967.
18. *Al Gumhurriya*, July 2, 1967.
19. Cairo Radio, March 22, 1966; Transcript of broadcast. BBC March 24, 1966.
20. Varda Ben Tsvi, "From Khartoum to Rabat," in Shamir, *Yeridat HaNasserism*, pp. 270–271.
21. Ibid., p. 271.
22. Text of Nasser's speech in *Al Ahram*, November 24, 1967.
23. Author's notes.
24. *Al Ahram*, November 10, 1967.
25. Riad, *Struggle for Peace*, p. 75.
26. Interview with Mahmoud Riad, February 1990.
27. Interviews with former Egyptian officers, February 1990.
28. Rabin, *Pinkas Sherut*, p. 209.
29. See notably Generals Badri, Mahgoub, and Zohdy, *The Ramadan War*, p. 10.
30. Rabin, *Pinkas Sherut*, p. 209. The engagement described by Rabin was in fact the one known to the Egyptians as the battle of Ras el-'Ush.
31. Badri, Mahgoub, and Zahody, *Ramadan War*, p. 9.
32. Interviews with former Egyptian army officers, February 1990.
33. Shazly, *The Crossing of the Suez*, p. 23, reports that of the 350,000 young men who came of draft age in Egypt each year in the early 1970s only some 120,000 were deemed fit.
34. The author is indebted for most of the information on the rebuilding of the Egyptian army to Major General (ret.) Talaat Mosellem of the Al Ahram Institute for Strategic Studies. See also Shazly, *Crossing of the Suez*, pp. 6–7.
35. Ibid., p. 7.
36. Interview with Major General (ret.) Talaat Mosellem, Al Ahram Center, Cairo.
37. Fawzi, *Harb Al-Thalath Sanawaat*, p. 199. General Fawzi says Nasser set three years as the time limit for accomplishment of this task. Other former Egyptian army officers told the author that three years was the minimum, but that Nasser made clear he realized that as many as eight years might be required.
38. Interview with Ashraf Ghorbal, Cairo, February 1990.
39. Dayan, *Aveneh Derech*, p. 513.
40. Conversation with Richard Parker, January 25, 1989.

Chapter 6

1. Dayan, *Aveneh Derech*, p. 513.
2. Interview with Minister of Communications Gad Yaacobi, Jerusalem, March 1990, and other former Israeli officials and journalists.
3. For more on the July 1967 dispute over navigation in the Suez Canal, see Odd Bull, *War and Peace in the Middle East.*
4. *Al Ahram*, October 2 and 4, 1967; *Al Yawm*, October 4, 1967; *Al Gumhurriya*, October 6 and 7, 1967, cited in Dishon, ed., *Middle East Record 1967*, p. 583.
5. See note 4 above.
6. See note 4 above.
7. Dayan, *Aveneh Derech*, p. 513.
8. Author's notes, and interviews with former Israeli army officers, March 1990.
9. Interviews with former Israeli army officers, March 1990.
10. Interview with Major General (ret.) Avraham Adan, March 1990. Also see Adan, *Al Shteh Gadot HaSuez*, pp. 43–54.
11. Haber and Schiff, eds., *Lexicon LeBitachon Israel*, pp. 93–94.
12. Interviews with former Israeli army officers.
13. Haber and Schiff, eds., *Lexicon*, pp. 329–330; and Adan, *Al Shteh Gadot HaSuez*, p. 47; and interview with General Adan, March 1990.
14. Adan, *Al Shteh Gadot HaSuez*, pp. 44–48.
15. Interview with Major General (ret.) Israel Tal, March 1990.
16. Haber and Schiff, eds., *Lexicon*, pp. 229–230.
17. Interview with Major General (ret.) Israel Tal, March 1990.
18. Interview with Major General (ret.) Avraham Adan, March 1990; see also Adan, *Al Shteh Gadot HaSuez*, pp. 49–52.
19. So General Tal claimed in my interview with him, March 1990.
20. Interview with Lt. General (ret.) Haim Bar Lev, March 1990.
21. At the time. The Suez canal has since been widened.
22. Interviews with former Egyptian military officers. Also see Dupuy, *Elusive Victory*, p. 361.
23. Interviews with former Egyptian military officers. Also see Field Marshal Abdul Ghani al-Gamassy, "Memoirs," *October Magazine*, Cairo, September 17, 1989.
24. Interviews with former Egyptian military officers; and al-Gamassy, "Memoirs."
25. IDF Press Office, cited in Dishon, ed., *Middle East Record, 1969–1970*, p. 167.
26. Interview with Yaacov Sarei, March 1990.
27. Interview with Yaacov Revah, May 1987.
28. Interview with Brigadier General (ret.) Yehuda Cohen, March 1990.
29. *Hadashot*, Tel Aviv, April 9, 1990, special supplement, "Anachnu Heramnu Milchama Levad," p. 13, interview with Yaacov Har Tsion, tank mechanic in the brigade stationed along the Suez Canal in the War of Attrition.
30. Ibid., p. 19.
31. Lieblich, *Chutz MeTsiporim*, p. 15.
32. Interviews with former Israeli officers.
33. Dayan, *Aveneh Derech*, p. 517.
34. Interview with Major General (ret.) Shlomo Lahat, March 1990.
35. *Hadashot*, April 9, 1990, p. 13, interview with Dr. Yaacov Sievan, former tank crewman.
36. Ibid., p. 19.
37. Interview with a former officer of IDF Education Branch.
38. Interview with Brigadier General (ret.) Yehuda Cohen, March 1990.
39. Dishon, ed., *Middle East Record 1969–1970*, p. 167.
40. FBIS transcript from Cairo Middle East News Agency (MENA) in Arabic, broadcast at 1545 GMT, March 12, 1969.
41. Author's notes.
42. Interview with Donald Bergus, October 1988.
43. Dayan, *Aveneh Derech*, p. 516.
44. O'Ballance, *The Electronic War in the Middle East*, p. 62.
45. Interview with Major General (ret.) Shlomo Lahat, March 1990.
46. *Davar*, May 13, 1969. The casualty figures were in fact higher than Dayan reported.
47. Dayan, *Aveneh Derech*, p. 517.
48. Schiff, *Canafaim MeAl Suez*, p. 45; *Hadashot*, April 9, 1990, p. 4; and interview with Major General (ret.) Shlomo Lahat.
49. Interview with Major General (ret.) Shlomo Lahat.

Chapter 7

1. This chapter is based almost entirely on my notes and unpublished manuscript written in 1971 following completion of my tour of duty (1967–1971) as political officer and then chief of the political section of the American embassy in Tel Aviv. From May 1968 to December 1969, I was responsible for the embassy's reporting to Washington on Israeli domestic politics. Facts and interpretations given in this chapter are drawn both from my personal observation at that time and from numerous conversations with Israeli political figures and journalists.
2. Yosef Harif, in *Maariv*, February 27, 1969.
3. Mapai: Mifleget Poalei Israel, or Israeli Workers Party; Achdut Haavodah, or Unity of Labor; Rafi, Reshimat Poalei Israel, or Israeli Workers List. So heavily imbued with socialist idealism was early Zionism that for more than two decades after Israel's independence any party that seriously aspired to govern had at least to pretend to represent the working class.
4. *Hayom*, June 19, 1968.
5. Author's notes.
6. *Haaretz*, June 19, 1968.
7. *Yediot Acharonot*, June 19, 1968.
8. Ibid.
9. *Davar*, November 7, 1968.
10. *Hayom*, February 10, 1969.
11. Meir, *My Life*, p. 378.
12. *Haaretz*, March 20, 1969.

Chapter 8

1. UNSYC Document S/10070.
2. Interviews with former Egyptian diplomats, February 1990.
3. Interview with Joseph J. Sisco, October 1988.
4. Nixon, *The Memoirs of Richard Nixon*, p. 433.
5. U.S. Department of State Bulletin, February 17, 1969, pp. 142–143.
6. Interview with Harold H. Saunders, November 1988.
7. Interview with a former State Department official.
8. Interview with Mohamed Heikal, February 1990.
9. Interviews with former senior U.S. officials.
10. Interview with Harold H. Saunders, November 1988.
11. Interview with Joseph J. Sisco, October 1988. Henry Kissinger, in *White House Years*, p. 353, says it was he who suggested to Nixon that the United States agree to both the two- and the four-power forums. He makes no mention of a State Department memorandum on this subject, although the memorandum would have had to cross his desk to reach the president.
12. Interview with a former State Department official.
13. Interview with Joseph J. Sisco, October 1988.
14. Interview with a former State Department official.
15. Ibid.
16. Kissinger, *White House Years*, p. 341.
17. Interview with a former senior U.S. official.
18. Kissinger, *White House Years*, p. 348.
19. Interviews with former State Department officials.
20. Interviews with Joseph J. Sisco, October and November 1988.
21. Kissinger's theory of the futility of negotiation and the benefits to be derived from deadlock in the Middle East is set out at length in *White House Years*, pp. 341–379.
22. Interviews with former State Department officiais.
23. Interviews with former U.S. officiais.
24. Rabin, *Pinkas Sherut*, p. 228.
25. Ibid., pp. 247–248.
26. Kissinger, *White House Years*, p. 367.
27. Interviews with former State Department officials.
28. Interview with Joseph J. Sisco, October 1988.
29. Kissinger, *White House Years*, pp. 368–369.
30. Nixon, *Memoirs*, p. 479.
31. Kissinger, *White House Years*, p. 372.
32. Quandt, *Decade of Decisions*, pp. 89–90.
33. Interview with Joseph J. Sisco, October 1988.
34. Ibid.
35. Interview with Ashraf Ghorbal, February 1990.
36. Interview with Mahmoud Riad, February 1990; and Riad, *Struggle for Peace*, pp. 110–111.
37. The text of Ria's November 16, 1969, messages to Rogers was transmitted by Bergus to Washington in U.S. Interests Section (USINT) cable Cairo 2750, November 18, 1969. For Ria's version of it, see *The Struggle for Peace in the Middle East*, pp. 110–111.
38. Dishon, ed., *Middle East Record 1969–1970*, p. 38.
39. Interviews with former State Department officials.
40. *New York Times*, December 11, 1969.
41. *Haaretz*, December 11, 1969.
42. Kissinger, *White House Years*, p. 376.
43. Rabin, *Pinkas Sherut*, p. 264.
44. Interview with a former Israeli diplomat.
45. The full text of the Israeli embassy paper was transmitted by State Department unclassified telegram dated December 27, 1969, to Secretary Rogers at Key Biscayne.
46. Rabin, *Pinkas Sherut*, p. 273.
47. Ibid., pp. 267–268. Kissinger makes no mention of this meeting in his memoir, *White House Years*. Rabin suggests that Kissinger also openly criticized Rogers. To his account, Rabin added the comment: "If in the same conversation Kissinger used stronger words than these when speaking about Rogers—well, it was a private conversation."
48. Rabin, *Pinkas Sherut*, pp. 267–268.

49. Interviews with former State Department officials. Also see Riad, *Struggle for Peace*, p. 114: “Although our reply to Rogers on 16 November 1969 had not been negative … the Soviet reply to the same proposal on 3 January 1970, after consulting us, was to reject them.” (Riad mistakenly puts the meeting between Dobrynin and Rogers and Sisco at January 3, 1970, when in fact it was on December 23, 1969.)

50. Interviews with former State Department officials.

51. Ibid.

52. Interview with Joseph J. Sisco, October 1988.

Chapter 9

1. Weizman, *Lecha Shemaim, Lecha Aretz*, p. 311.
2. Ibid., p. 312.
3. *Davar*, May 29, 1969.
4. Allon, *Masach Shel Choi*, p. 417.
5. Margalit, *Sheder MeHaBeit HaLavan*, p. 54.
6. Interview with Major General (ret.) Talaat Mosellem, February 1990.
7. Bar Siman Tov, *The War of Attrition*, p. 82.
8. Schiff, *Canafaim MeAl Suez*, p. 35–36.
9. Weizman, *Lecha Shemaim, Lecha Aretz*, p. 312.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. Weizman, *Lecha Shemaim, Lecha Aretz*, p. 312; Schifi, *Canafaim MeAl Suez*, p. 50.
14. See note 13 above.
15. IDF Spokesman, cited in Dishon, ed., *Middle East Record 1969–1970*, p. 167.
16. Dishon, ed., *Middle East Record 1969–1970*, p. 167.
17. Eytan with Goldstein, *Rafoul: Sipour Shel Chayal*, p. 211.
18. Adan, *Al Shteh Gadot HaSuez*, pp. 49–50; Weizman, *Lecha Shemaim, Lecha Aretz*, p. 313; Schiff, *Canafaim MeAl Suez*, p. 54.
19. O'Ballance, *Electronic War*, p. 88.
20. al-Gamassy, "Memoirs," *October Magazine*, September 17, 1989.
21. Heikal, *Road to Ramadan*, p. 73.
22. Dishon, ed., *Middle East Record 1969–1970*, p. 136.
23. Ibid.
24. Heikal, *Road to Ramadan*, p. 73.
25. Rabin, *Pinkas Sherut*, p. 248.
26. Ibid., p. 254.
27. Ibid., p. 253–254.
28. Ibid., p. 253.
29. Parker, oral history interview, Association for Diplomatic Studies.
30. Rabin, *Pinkas Sherut*, p. 253.
31. Ibid., p. 261.
32. Author's notes.
33. Eban, *An Autobiography*, p. 465.
34. Interviews with former Israeli diplomats.
35. Ibid.; and Rabin, *Pinkas Sherut*, p. 258.
36. *LaMerhav*, September 23, 1969.
37. *LaMerhav*, November 13, 1969.
38. Author's notes.
39. Dishon, ed., *Middle East Record 1969–1970*, p. 172.
40. Ibid., p. 167.
41. Interviews with former Israeli officers.
42. Dishon, ed., *Middle East Record 1969–1970*, p. 140.
43. Schiff, *Canafaim MeAl Suez*, p. 66.
44. Eytan with Goldstein, *Rafoul*, p. 112; and Schiff, *Canafaim MeAl Suez*, p. 187–189.
45. Dishon, ed., *Middle East Record 1969–1970*, p. 142.
46. Author's notes.
47. *Haaretz*, July 24, 1970.
48. Margalit, *Sheder MeHaBeit HaLavan*, p. 41.
49. Interview with a former IDF Intelligence Officer.
50. Margalit, *Sheder MeHaBeit HaLavan*, pp. 42–43.
51. Interview with former Israeli diplomats.
52. Ibid.
53. Eban's interview in *Haaretz*, January 2, 1970.
54. Margalit, *Sheder MeHaBeit HaLavan*, p. 39.
55. Dayan, *Aveneh Derech*, p. 517.

56. Schiff, *Canafaim MeAl Suez*, p. 199.
57. Author's notes.
58. Interview with Donald Bergus, October 1988.
59. Ibid.
60. Ibid.
61. Interview with Richard Parker, January 1989; and Parker, oral history interview, pp. 35–36.
62. See note 61 above.
63. William Dale, oral history interview, Association for Diplomatic Studies.
64. Ibid.
65. Schiff, *Canafaim MeAl Suez*, p. 199.
66. Ibid.
67. Ibid., p. 200; and Margalit, *Sheder MeHaBeit HaLavan*, p. 65.
68. Author's notes; and Margalit, *Sheder MeHaBeit HaLavan*, pp. 65–66.
69. *Haaretz*, January 2, 1970.
70. *Davar*, January 16, 1970.
71. Israel Government Press Office press release, January 28, 1970.
72. Riad, *Struggle for Peace*, pp. 112–113.
73. Ibid.
74. Ibid.
75. *Le Monde*, December 24, 1969, cited in Shamir, ed., *Yeridat HaNasserism*, p. 281.
76. Transcript of broadcast of December 24, 1969, reported in BBC, December 26, 1969, cited in Shamir, ed., *Yeridat HaNasserism*, p. 281.
77. *Le Monde*, December 24, 1969, cited in Shamir, ed., *Yeridat HaNasserism*, p. 281.

Chapter 10

1. Interview with Mohamed Heikal, February 1990.
2. Heikal, *Sphinx and the Commissar*, p. 193.
3. *Pravda*, June 6, 1969, article by V. Rumyantsev, cited in Glassman, *Arms for the Arabs*, p. 71.
4. Glassman, *Arms for Arabs*, p. 73.
5. Schiff, *Canafaim Me Al Suez*, p. 209.
6. Heikal, *Road to Ramadan*, pp. 83–88.
7. Ibid., p. 87.
8. al-Gamassy, "Memoirs," *October Magazine*, September 17, 1989.
9. Ibid.
10. *fane's*, 1974.
11. Ibid.
12. al-Gamassy, "Memoirs," *October Magazine*, September 24, 1989.
13. Ibid.
14. Heikal, *Road to Ramadan*, p. 89.
15. Kissinger, *White House Years*, p. 560; and Rabin, *Pinkas Sherut*, pp. 275–276.
16. Interviews with former senior State Department officials.
17. Ibid.
18. Kissinger, *White House Years*, p. 561.
19. Interviews with former senior State Department officials.
20. Rabin, *Pinkas Sherut*, pp. 275–276.
21. Kissinger, *White House Years*, p. 562.
22. Interviews with former senior State Department officials. Whether Kissinger did actually foresee that the Soviets would send combat forces to Egypt, and to what extent he in fact acted to try to prevent this, will only be known once the archives are opened for examination.
23. Bar Siman Tov, *War of Attrition*, p. 235.
24. Interviews with former senior U.S. officials.
25. Ibid.
26. Schiff, *Canafaim MeAl Suez*, pp. 210–211; and Dishon, ed., *Middle East Record 1969–1970*, p. 150.
27. See notably Bar Siman Tov, *War of Attrition*, pp. 145–146; and Glassman, *Arms for Arabs*, pp. 73–74.
28. Schiff, *Canafaim MeAl Suez*, p. 209.
29. Interviews with former Israeli officials; and Margalit, *Sheder MeHaBeit HaLavan*, pp. 51–52.
30. Dishon, ed., *Middle East Record 1969–1970*, p. 148.
31. Author's notes.
32. *Yediot Acharonot*, April 10, 1970.
33. *BaMachane*, April 14, 1970.
34. Dishon, ed., *Middle East Record 1969–1970*, p. 149.
35. Dishon, ed., *Middle East Record 1969–1970*, p. 149; photographs furnished by IDF archives, in author's possession.
36. *Bitaon Chel HaAvir*, September 1989, interview with Major General Aviahu Ben Nun, pp. 21–22.
37. Author's notes.
38. International Institute for Strategic Studies, "Strategic Survey for 1970."
39. Margalit, *Sheder MeHaBeit HaLavan*, p. 68.
40. Rabin, *Pinkas Sherut*, p. 278.
41. Interviews with former U.S. officiais.
42. Interview with Joseph J. Sisco, October 1988.
43. Interview with Elliot Richardson, April 1990; and interviews with former senior U.S. officials.
44. Kissinger, *White House Years*, pp. 564–565 and 570–571; and interview with a former NSC staff member.
45. Kissinger, *White House Years*, p. 565.
46. Ibid., pp. 565–566.
47. Rabin, *Pinkas Sherut*, pp. 280–281, and Kissinger, *White House Years*, pp. 168–170. Rabin's memoirs give a much more detailed account of this meeting than do Kissinger's.
48. Rabin, *Pinkas Sherut*, p. 281.
49. Ibid., p. 284.
50. Ibid., p. 285.
51. Quoted by Mohamed Heikal, in an editorial in *Al Ahram*, June 11, 1970.
52. Dishon, ed., *Middle East Record 1969–1970*, citing IDF spokesman.
53. Schiff, *Canafaim MeAl Suez*, p. 219.

54. Dishon, ed., *Middle East Record 1969–1970*, pp. 151–152.
55. Ibid., p. 172, from IDF spokesman.
56. Schiff, *Canafaim MeAl Suez*, p. 220.
57. Ibid., p. 221.

Chapter 11

1. Interview with Mohamed Fayek, February 1990.
2. Office of the IDF Historian, "Tabulation of Israeli and Egyptian Reports of Aircraft Losses During the War of Attrition."
3. Interview with Major General (ret.) Mordechai Hod, March 1990.
4. Author's notes.
5. Ibid.; and interview with Colonel (ret.) Thomas Pianka, former assistant U.S. defense attache, American embassy Tel Aviv.
6. Zeev Schiff, *Milchama Lelo Gevoul*, p. 142.
7. *Hadashot*, April 9, 1990, interview with Pinchas Kenan, p. 7.
8. Ibid.; interview with Yaacov Har Tsion, p. 16.
9. Interview with Ambassador (ret.) Marshall Wiley, former second secretary, U.S. Interests Section Cairo, 1969–1970.
10. *Al Ahram*, March 7, 1969.
11. During the course of research in 1989 and 1990, I made repeated requests to the Egyptian Ministry of Defense for information on casualties during the War of Attrition. None of my requests was ever answered.
12. Interview with a former Israeli intelligence officer.
13. Adan, *Al Shteh Gadot HaSuez*, p. 65.
14. Interview with Major General (ret.) Mordechai Hod, March 1990.
15. Harkabi, *Bayn Israel LeArav*, p. 101.
16. Interview with Colonel (ret.) Reuven Gal, Israel Institute for Military Studies, Zicharon Yaacov, Israel, March 1990.
17. In interviews I conducted during March 1990 with a half-dozen former senior Israeli officers who were on active duty in 1969 and 1970 (and held commands that should have made them familiar with conditions on the Suez line), not one acknowledged that there was ever a serious morale problem there or that Israel's hold on the canal waterline was ever threatened.
18. Rabinovich and Shaked, eds., *From June to October:* p. 140.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid., p. 113. The figures are in 1970 U.S. dollars.
21. Rabinovich and Shaked, *June to October*, p. 189.
22. Interview with Mohamed Fayek, February 1990.
23. Rabinovich and Shaked, *June to October;* p. 112.
24. Ibid., p. 100.
25. Netanyahu, *Self Portrait of a Hero*, p. 188.
26. *Haaretz*, October 3, 1969.
27. Dayan, *Mapa Chadasha*, article entitled "New Borders and Different Relations."
28. Ibid., p. 36.
29. Margalit, *Sheder MeHaBeit HaLavan*, pp. 61–64.
30. Author's notes.
31. Ibid.
32. Margalit, *Sheder MeHaBeit HaLavan*, pp. 84–85.
33. Goldmann, *The Autobiography of Nahum Goldmann*, p. 294.
34. Ibid.
35. Gazit, *Taalich HaShalom*, pp. 44–45. See also Margalit, *Sheder MeHaBeit HaLavan*, pp. 85–86.
36. Levin, *Ma Ichpat LaTsipor?* p. 30.
37. Ibid., p. 44.
38. Ibid., p. 86.
39. Ibid., p. 88.
40. *Al Ahram*, July 28; August 11; November 17; and December 1; 1967.
41. Interviews with Egyptians, February 1990.
42. Ibid.
43. Milson, "An Allegory on the Social and Cultural Crisis in Egypt: 'Walid al-Ana,' by Naguib Mahfouz," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, no. 3, 1972, pp. 324–347.
44. Shamir, ed., *Yeridat HaNasserism*, article by Haim Raviv, "Bitouii Ha-Metsouka BaTsibour," pp. 346–347.

Chapter 12

1. *BaMachane*, February 1990, p. 37.
2. Interviews with Mahmoud Riad and with former Egyptian military officers, February 1990; and Dishon, ed., *Middle East Record 1969–1970*, p. 172.
3. Interview with Gad Yaacobi, March 1990.
4. Knesset records, July 13, 1970, cited in Bar Siman Tov, *War of Attrition*, p. 167.
5. See *Haaretz*, July 17, 18, and 21, 1970.
6. Yaacobi, *Kechut HaSeaara*, p. 22.
7. Letter to the author from Lt. General (ret.) Haim Bar Lev, May 6, 1990.
8. Eban, *An Autobiography*, p. 49; and interview with Major General (ret.) Shlomo Lahat, March 1990.
9. Dishon, ed., *Middle East Record 1969–1970*, p. 167.
10. *Yediot Acharonot*, March 2, 1990, interview with Colonel Constantin Popov.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. Kissinger, *White House Years*, p. 574.
14. Ibid.; and *BaMachane*, February 1990, pp. 36–37.
15. *BaMachane*, February 1990, pp. 36–57.
16. Dishon, ed., *Middle East Record 1969–1970*, pp. 156–157.
17. Ibid.
18. *Bitaon Chel HaAvir*, September 1989, p. 22.
19. *Yediot Acharonot*, March 2, 1990, interview with Menachem Ainy.
20. Lieblich, *Chutz MeTsiporim*, p. 38; also *Yediot Acharonot*, March 2, 1990.
21. Weizman, *Lecha Shemaim, Lecha Aretz*, p. 319.
22. *Yediot Acharonot*, March 2, 1990, interview with Colonel Yigal Shochat.
23. Haber and Schiff, eds., *Lexicon*, pp. 325–326.
24. Author's notes; also Dishon, ed., *Middle East Record 1969–1970*, p. 159.
25. Dishon, ed., *Middle East Record 1969–1970*, p. 159.
26. Ibid.
27. Interview with Major General (ret.) Mordechai Hod, March 1990.
28. Ibid.; Dishon, ed., *Middle East Record 1969–1970*, p. 160; and Schiff, *Canafaim Me Al Suez*, p. 227.
29. *Yediot Acharonot*, March 2, 1990, interview with Colonel Constantin Popov.

Chapter 13

1. Margalit, *Sheder MeHaBeit HaLavan*, p. 61–62.
2. Ibid.
3. Kissinger, *White House Years*, p. 562.
4. Rabin, *Pinkas Sherut*, pp. 280–281. Kissinger makes only vague mention of these terms in *White House Years* (pp. 567–568).
5. In *White House Years* (pp. 567–568), Kissinger gives the impression he had no particular interest in Dobrynin's cease-fire proposal and that it was Rabin's idea to take it to Jerusalem: "He [Rabin] considered it important enough to take to Jerusalem personally." Rabin's account stands in total contradiction to Kissinger's. Rabin writes that Kissinger told him: "In the matter of the cease-fire, I ask, I insist, that you not send cables to Jerusalem but go there for consultations." (Rabin, *Pinkas Sherut*, p. 281.) Of the two accounts, Rabin's is the more detailed and, to me, rings more true.
6. Rabin, *Pinkas Sherut* p. 282. Kissinger *(White House Years*, pp. 568–569) says Rabin told him Israel would agree to an undeclared cease-fire provided all military activity ceased simultaneously, the replacement figure was doubled, and there was a public announcement of Nixon's assurance about maintaining Israeli air strength and the military balance in the Middle East.
7. Rabin, *Pinkas Sherut*, pp. 282–283. Kissinger makes no mention of this exchange.
8. Kissinger, *White House Years*, pp. 570–571.
9. Interview with Joseph J. Sisco, October 1989.
10. Ibid.
11. Interviews with Donald Bergus and Joseph J. Sisco.
12. Interview with Joseph J. Sisco.
13. Ibid.
14. USINT Cairo 803, secret NODIS cable dated April 13, 1970, reporting Sisco's meeting with Nasser. Cable declassified May 29, 1990, pursuant to author's request under the Freedom of Information Act.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.; and USINT Cairo 794, secret NODIS cable dated April 12, 1970; declassified May 29, 1990.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid.
23. Interview with Joseph J. Sisco, October 1988.
24. USINT Cairo 794, April 12, 1970.
25. Interviews with Joseph J. Sisco and other former U.S. officials.
26. Cairo Radio May 1, 1970; transcript of broadcast, BBC May 4, 1970.
27. Interview with Donald Bergus, October 1988.
28. Interviews with former U.S. officials; and Kissinger, *White House Years*, pp. 573–574.
29. Interviews with former U.S. officials; and Margalit, *Sheder MeHaBeit Ha-Lavan*, pp. 114–115.
30. Various Israeli newspapers on May 27, 1970; and Margalit, *Sheder MeHaBeit HaLavan*, p. 116.
31. Margalit, *Sheder MeHaBeit HaLavan*, pp. 116–118.
32. Ibid., pp. 118–119.
33. Interviews with former U.S. officials.
34. Author's notes; and interviews with former U.S. officials.
35. Interview with Joseph J. Sisco, October 1988.
36. Kissinger, *White House Years*, pp. 576–578.
37. Interview with Donald Bergus, October 1988.
38. Ibid.
39. Ibid.; and Riad, *Struggle for Peace*, p. 132.
40. Rabin, *Pinkas Sherut*, p. 293.
41. Ibid., p. 291; and Eban, *An Autobiography*, p. 466.
42. Author's notes; and Touval, *The Peace Brokers*, p. 171; and Margalit, *Sheder MeHdBeit HaLavan*, pp. 128–130.
43. Rabin, *Pinkas Sherut*, p. 294.
44. Interviews with former U.S. officiais.
45. Rabin, *Pinkas Sherut*, p. 294.
46. Margalit, *Sheder MeHaBeit HaLavan*, p. 130.
47. Rabin, *Pinkas Sherut*, p. 294; and Margalit, *Sheder MeHaBeit HaLavan*, p. 134.
48. Rabin, *Pinkas Sherut*, pp. 294–295.

49. Ibid., p. 295; and Margalit, *Sheder MeHaBeit HaLavan*, p. 135.
50. Israel Government Press Office press release, June 30, 1970.
51. Interview with Mohamed Heikal, February 1990; and interviews with former Egyptian diplomats and historians. Riad, in *The Struggle for Peace in the Middle East* (p. 134), claims he favored acceptance of the U.S. initiative, but there is so much testimony to the contrary that this hardly seems credible.
52. Riad, *Struggle for Peace*, p. 135.
53. Kissinger, *White House Years*, p. 579.
54. Ibid.
55. Interview with Alfred L. Atherton, June 1990.
56. Interview with Mohamed Heikal, February 1990.
57. Riad, *Struggle for Peace*, p. 143.
58. Ibid., pp. 143–145.
59. Ibid.
60. Interview with Mahmoud Riad, February 1990.
61. Heikal, *Road to Ramadan*, p. 93.
62. Riad, *Struggle for Peace*, pp. 143–145; and Heikal, *Road to Ramadan*, p. 95.
63. Riad, *Struggle for Peace*, pp. 143–145.
64. *Novoe Vremia*, July 10, 1970; and *New York Times*, July 15, 1970, cited in Dishon, ed., *Middle East Record 1969–1970*, p. 65.
65. Cairo Domestic Service broadcast in Arabic (1748 GMT) August 7, 1970; FBIS transcript, August 10, 1970.
66. Interview with Donald Bergus, October 1988.
67. Cairo Domestic Service broadcast in Arabic, July 23, 1970; transcript of broadcast BBC, July 25, 1970.
68. Cairo Domestic Service broadcast in Arabic, July 24; FBIS transcript, July 27, 1970.
69. Ibid.
70. Rabin, *Pinkas Sherut*, p. 296.
71. Ibid.; and Rabin, *Rabin Memoirs*, p. 175.
72. Rabin, *Pinkas Sherut*, p. 296; and Rabin, *Rabin Memoirs*, p. 175.
73. Author's notes.
74. The account that follows is based on notes I made at the time of the events described from my vantage point as head of the political section of the American embassy in Tel Aviv.
75. *Maariv*, June 30; and author's notes of conversation with Yosef Kharif.
76. Author's notes.
77. Ibid.
78. Israeli Government Press Office press release, August 2, 1970.

Chapter 14

1. Author's notes.
2. Ibid.; and interview with J. Owen Zurhellen, October 1988.
3. Author's notes, from official Israeli sources at the time.
4. Interview with Joseph J. Sisco, October 1988.
5. Ibid.; and Rabin, *Pinkas Sherut*, pp. 297–298 *(Rabin Memoirs*, pp. 177–178); and interview with Michael Sterner, former office director for Egyptian Affairs, Department of State.
6. Rabin, *Pinkas Sherut*, p. 298.
7. Interview with a former U.S. official.
8. Kissinger, *White House Years*, p. 585.
9. *Jerusalem Post*, August 14, 1970.
10. Interview with J. Owen Zurhellen, October 1988. Margalit, *Sheder MeHaBeit HaLavan*, gives a somewhat different though not contradictory account.
11. Interview with Donald Bergus, October 1988.
12. The text of the paper drafted by Dayan and Sisco on missiles in the standstill zone was published by the *New York Times* and *Haaretz* on October 27, 1970. It called for Egypt and Israel to commit themselves:

> (1) not to introduce, move forward or construct missile sites within the said zone, (2) not to construct concrete missile emplacements, (3) not to carry out any work of constructing new positions for missile batteries (except for the purpose of carrying out maintenance work on already existing installations), and (4) not to make improvements on the existing missile emplacements and missile bases.

13. Interview with Donald Bergus, October 1988.
14. Interview with Yossi Kaanan, Jerusalem, March 1990.
15. *Bitaon Chel HaAvir*, September 1989, p. 22, interview with Brigadier General (ret.) Oded Erez.
16. Rabin, *Pinkas Sherut*, p. 300. Rabin identifies the source of the instruction to Zeira only as "a very high official of the Defense Ministry." This could only have been Dayan.
17. Interview with a former U.S. official.
18. Ibid.
19. Interview with Joseph J. Sisco, November 1988.
20. Interview with Lt. General (ret.) Haim Bar Lev, March 1990.
21. Rabin, *Pinkas Sherut*, pp. 304–306; Kissinger, *White House Years*, p. 587.
22. Quoted in Kissinger, *White House Years*, p. 588.
23. Interview with Donald Bergus, October 1988.
24. Interview with a former U.S. official.
25. Interview with Donald Bergus, October 1988.
26. Riad, *Struggle for Peace*, pp. 151–152.
27. Kissinger, *White House Years*, p. 592.
28. Interview with a former U.S. official.
29. Interview with former U.S. officials.
30. Kissinger, *White House Years*, p. 591.
31. Interview with J. Owen Zurhellen, October 1988.
32. Cairo Radio August 15, cited in Dishon, ed., *Middle East Record 1969–1970*, p. 164.
33. *Al Ahram*, August 27, 1970, cited in Dishon, ed., *Middle East Record 1969–1970*, p. 165.
34. *Al Anwar* (Beirut), October 30, 1970, cited in Dishon, ed., *Middle East Record 1969–1970*, p. 165.
35. Interview with former Egyptian military officers.
36. Fawzi, *Harb aUThalath Sanawaat*, p. 210.
37. Ibid., pp. 210–212.
38. *Jerusalem Post*, October 27, 1970.
39. Interviews with Mahmoud Riad, Mohamed Heikal, and with former Egyptian military officers, February 1990.
40. Dishon, ed., *Middle East Record 1969–1970*, pp. 552–553.
41. Interview with Ambassador (ret.) Tahsin Bashir, February 1990.
42. Sadat, *In Search of Identity*, p. 202.
43. Interview with Ambassador (ret.) Tahsin Bashir, February 1990.
44. Interview with Elliot Richardson, April 1990.
45. Ibid.

Epilogue

1. For details on Jarring's February 1971 initiative and Egypt's and Israel's answers, see UNSYC Document S/10929, May 18, 1973, par. 73–84.
2. See Rabin, *Pinkas Sherut*, vol. 2, pp. 356–357.
3. Ibid.
4. *Hadashot*, April 9, 1990, interview with General Bar Lev, p. 17; and author's interview with General Bar Lev, March 1990.
5. Dishon, ed., *Middle East Record 1969–1970*, p. 167, citing IDF spokesman.
6. Rabin, *Pinkas Sherut*, p. 303 and 307.
7. Kissinger, *White House Years*, p. 1279.

Appendix B

1. The phrase given here as "no truce with Israel" has also been translated as "no peace with Israel" and as "no peace treaty with Israel."

Appendix C

1. U.S. Information Service press release, July 23, 1970.

Appendix D

1. Israeli Government Press Office, August 4, 1970.

Appendix E

1. *Jerusalem Post*, August 14, 1970.

Note on Sources

My own notes, collection of published documents, and recollections from my time at the American embassy in Tel Aviv from 1967 to 1971 are the foundations on which this book was built. The years before and after that time that I spent working on Middle East problems at the State Department in Washington and on assignments overseas gave depth and perspective.

Unfortunately, the diplomatic archives of the period have not been opened in any systematic way. The memoirs of political and military leaders and the writings of journalists who have had access to these figures give an occasional look into the secret files, and scholarly inquiry has broadened the pool of knowledge of what went on behind the scenes. But, for the most part, the writers of memoirs have revealed only what they deemed convenient to their purposes or relevant to the story they wished to tell. Although the Congress of the United States mandated in the Freedom of Information Act of 1966 (amended and broadened in 1974) that materials that no longer warrant classification should be declassified and released upon request by the public, since 1981 the executive branch has chosen to interpret the provisions of the act quite narrowly. The request that I submitted to the Department of State in October 1988 for access to classified documents bearing on the issues dealt with in this book was not answered until May 1990, and, even then, fewer than half of the documents that I sought were released to me. Because all deal with events twenty years or more past and almost all the persons involved in the making of those events are dead or no longer active in politics or diplomacy it is difficult to imagine that there could be any legitimately compelling reason for withholding information important to the historical record. I should add that my experience is not unique. Other researchers, in recent years, have found the Department of State to be only minimally responsive to requests made to it under the Freedom of Information Act.

This made interviews all the more indispensable. They would have been essential in any case because documents alone give only a narrow and sometimes distorted picture and much that actually transpired is not told in them. In the course of my research, I interviewed some one hundred persons—Americans, Israelis, and Egyptians—who participated in one way or another in the events described therein or who had special knowledge of them. Some spoke for attribution, others not. The names of those who did not request anonymity for the specific information they provided appear in the notes after that information.

The bibliography lists the main published works consulted in the writing of the book. As will be seen, Israeli political and military leaders have been especially prolific writers of memoirs. Most of these memoirs have been published in an English-language version as well as in Hebrew. In almost every instance, however, it is necessary to consult the Hebrew original to get the full picture. Either because the memorialists felt free to speak candidly only to the Israeli public, or because American and British publishers insisted on brevity, the English-language texts are often only a skeleton—and a prettied up one at that—of the Hebrew originals.

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About the Book and Author

For three years following Israel's victory in the Six-Day War, Egypt, with a massive infusion of weaponry from the Soviet Union, continued to do battle with Israel in what became known as the War of Attrition. The history of these years holds the key to understanding the Arab-Israeli conflict today. In this book, David A. Korn offers a detailed insider's account of the first—and, until recently, the only—U.S.-Soviet cooperative effort to bring peace to the Middle East and an explanation of the origin of the "land for peace" formula. He relates a fascinating story of political intrigue in Washington and Jerusalem that stymied the efforts of peacemakers; of Egypt's massing a huge army along the west bank of the Suez Canal; and of Israel's desperate search for a strategy to hold the east bank with a token force and minimal losses. He also describes the incredible miscalculation that nearly plunged Israel into war with the Soviet Union and the great heroism on both sides of the Suez line.

This book fills a large gap in the history of the conflict between Israel and its Arab neighbors and is the first to analyze war and diplomacy in the Middle East during the critical years of 1967–1970 from the Egyptian as well as the Israeli point of view. To both, Korn brings penetrating insights based on a wealth of materials never before published. It is a gripping story by a writer who had a grandstand seat on the line.

David A. Korn was deputy chief and then chief of the political section at the American embassy in Israel from 1967 to 1971. He later served as the State Department's office director for Israel and Arab-Israeli Affairs and as U.S. envoy to two African countries. He is the author of books on Ethiopia and Iraq.

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