

Foreign Policy and Defense

Introduction

On 17 January 1957 the General Assembly adopted another resolution calling for the additional and immediate withdrawal of Israel's forces. Since by that time both France and Great Britain had withdrawn their forces from Egyptian territory, Israel was the sole object of demands and implied threats. The Government of Israel decided to take a minimum stand, refusing to evacuate the Civilian Administration (as opposed to the military forces) from the Gaza Strip, which had been occupied by Egypt since 1948, and from the shore of the Gulf of Eilat, from which Egyptian forces had prevented Israeli shipping from entering the Gulf.

In order to demonstrate the widespread support this stand enjoyed across the Israeli political spectrum, Ben-Gurion initiated a political debate in the Knesset.

Sitting 228 of the Third Knesset

23 January 1957 (21 Shevat 5717)

The Prime Minister, D. Ben-Gurion: Mr. Speaker, Knesset Members, although Israel did not participate in the founding meeting of the U.N. in 1945, when it was not yet an independent entity, the principles of peace and justice between peoples, civil rights and national equality are neither new nor strange to Israel....These ideas were expressed by the prophets three thousand years ago...and were preserved in the hearts of Jews throughout their long exile and dispersion...influencing all mankind....In November 1947 it was the voice of mankind's conscience which spoke at the Assembly, when it was resolved to revive the Jewish state.

Israel's belief in the ideals of the U.N. was not broken even when, on the day the state was founded, five Arab countries, four of which were members of the U.N...invaded Israel in order to destroy it, and the U.N. did nothing....Israel does not regret the fact that it saved itself from its assailants, by its own strength, by the strength of its devoted sons and daughters, who gave their lives to defend their country and serve their people....

The eight years which have passed since we repelled the invaders in 1949 and signed Armistice Agreements with Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan and Syria have brought us bitter disappointments in the international arena. Those four countries all violated the Armistice Agreements as well as disregarding the U.N. Charter....Despite Israel's constant de-

mands to proceed from the Armistice Agreements to permanent peace settlements, our neighbors have refused to make peace....This was also ignored by the institutions of the U.N....

But those countries did not stop at refusing to make permanent peace, as the Armistice Agreements and the U.N. Charter obliged them to...and continued with their acts of hostility against Israel. Led by Egypt and the Arab League, all the Arab countries organized an economic boycott of Israel as well as against firms in other countries which traded with Israel, the object being to destroy Israel's economy.... Again, the U.N. did nothing...until, in response to our petitions, it passed a resolution in September 1951 affirming our right to freedom of navigation in Suez....This was disregarded by Egypt, and the U.N. did nothing to implement its decision....

When our neighbors saw that everything was permitted...they began acts of armed hostility, sending murderous gangs into Israel, to sabotage our irrigation pipes and, primarily, to kill innocent passersby, farmers in their fields and people sleeping in their beds, sparing neither men nor women, children nor old people....Between 1951 and 1955 alone we suffered 884 casualties...as a result of these daily incursions and murders....

The boycott, the blockade and the guerrilla warfare were not isolated criminal acts and violations of the temporary Armistice Agreements, they were an integral part of the Arab rulers' plan to wipe Israel off the face of the earth...as they declared openly and publicly. The Czech deal of 1955 constituted a grave and dangerous turning-point, since a steady stream of heavy weapons of all kinds was flowing to Egypt, and it was obvious that it was intended to be used against Israel....

The Gaza Strip, which was seized by the Egyptian invader in 1948, in contravention of international law, served all the years as a launching-pad for attacks on Israel....We have ample proof of the administrative connection between the *fedayeen* gangs and Egyptian army units there....After the Czech deal we were confronted with the danger of a fullscale war. The Egyptian tyrant made it perfectly clear...that he intended to gain control of the entire Middle East, if not all Africa. And his arsenal was constantly being swelled with tanks and cannon, Migs and Ilyushins....

The Suez crisis erupted, the Security Council met and on 13 October 1956 it again resolved that there could be no discrimination against freedom of navigation in the Canal. Egypt immediately announced that it would not honor this resolution with regard to Israel....The crisis blew over and the *fedayeen* attacks were renewed; Egypt's aggressive plans were coming to their climax. On October 23, after the elections in Jordan, a tripartite military pact was concluded between Egypt, Jordan and Syria, and the three armies were placed under Egyptian command. There was no doubt as to whom the pact was directed against.

...A brief look at the strange map of Israel is enough to reveal the danger to this country as a result of that alliance....An attack on three fronts could cut our country in two...expose our main centers of population to aerial attacks...prevent the mobilization of the reserves upon whom our security depends...and leave us defenseless....

The U.N. Charter accords every country the natural right of self-defense. And even if it were not granted by the U.N., it would be self-evident....Since Israel was in danger of being destroyed...it was our first duty to act to defend ourselves, which is what we did at the end of October and the beginning of November. We restricted our defensive actions to the barest minimum and did not attack Jordan or Syria, because the principal danger came from Egypt's centers of aggression in the Sinai and the Gaza Strip. Israel was obliged to act as it did to protect itself, and with a clear conscience it can look all nations in the eye. It is sure that any other country in the same position would have done exactly the same.

What happened afterwards in the...U.N. is well-known, and there is no need to go into all the details....The U.N. today is not what its founders intended it to be, and it is far from being an impartial and fair body....As members of the Jewish people, the bearers of the heritage of the prophets and scattered throughout the nations, and as citizens of a small country besieged by its enemies, we are especially bound to cooperate with the U.N. as far as we can, and I will say where that limit lies in a little while. That is why we will not query the resolution of November 2 and those which followed it, regarding which there is no indication that any of those directed against Egypt will be implemented, whereas we are pressured to execute those directed against us with maximal speed.

On November 8, as you know, we gave our answer to the U.S. President and to the U.N. Secretary-General, stating that we were prepared to withdraw from the Sinai when satisfactory arrangements had been made with the U.N. Emergency Force. In our letter of November 21 to the Secretary-General of the U.N. we defined such arrangements as those which would ensure Israel against hostile acts on land and at sea....To date we have withdrawn from the entire desert, more than 30,000 square miles, apart from a narrow strip along the coast of the Straits of Eilat which ensures freedom of navigation to all shipping there. We have no interest in remaining in that area, and wish to leave it as soon as possible, with a guarantee that Israeli and international navigation there will not be harmed....

...The Gulf of Eilat is important not only for Israel, but for the whole world, and primarily for undisturbed contact between Asia and Europe. By demanding effective and genuine guarantees from the U.N. to ensure...freedom of navigation in the Straits of Eilat and the Red Sea, we are not abandoning our right and demand to freedom of navigation in

the Suez Canal, and the U.N. will be tested by its ability to implement this....Navigation in the Red Sea will be guaranteed when the four countries bordering it—Israel, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Egypt—sign an agreement to this effect...or when the U.N. decides that its forces will remain there until a peace treaty is signed....

As for the Gaza Strip, this was never Egyptian. Egypt held on to it for eight years as a prize for its invasion of Israel, and all that time did nothing to aid its development....From there the Egyptian ruler sent bands of murderers to attack Israel's civilian population....Any return to the Armistice Agreement of 1949, which was continually broken by the Egyptian ruler, means a return to murder and sabotage....Israel does not claim to be at war with Egypt, though Egypt claims to be at war with Israel...and Israel is prepared to sign an agreement to that effect immediately....

The situation of the Gaza Strip is unique, and no U.N. force can prevent *fedayeen* forces being organized there by the Egyptian rulers and sent to attack Israel. The entry into the Strip of U.N. forces will injure the security situation of all the Israeli settlements along it and in all the limited area of Israel. At the same time, the Strip will be cut off from every possibility of economic development, and the refugees will once more be abandoned to Egyptian incitement....

...Israel does not intend to maintain its forces in the Gaza Strip, but the benefit of its inhabitants as well as of their neighbors across the border requires that the Strip remain in Israel's hands, on the basis of an arrangement which should be reached by Israel and the U.N. The Israel administration will maintain the internal security of the Strip by a police force, will continue to develop independent administration by the inhabitants in towns and villages and will assure the inhabitants of such public services as health, education, electricity, irrigation, transport, agriculture, trade and commerce, as is done now. Israel will also make every necessary and possible effort to save 60,000 of the permanent inhabitants of Gaza who are currently destitute from their miserable situation, and guarantee them a decent standard of living. The Israeli administration in Gaza will constitute an area of Israel-Arab cooperation, while maintaining contact with the U.N.

Israel does not ignore the problem of the refugees in Gaza, which is part of the general Arab refugee problem. The moral failure of the Arab countries in the last eight years is nowhere so evident as in their attitude to the Arab refugees. While little Israel has absorbed hundreds of thousands of refugees, half of them the survivors of the Nazi Holocaust and half of them refugees from Arab countries, in its barren and destroyed country, the Arab countries—even those with extensive areas and small populations—refused to settle the Arab refugees in order to exploit them as a political weapon against Israel. The Government of Israel appeals

to the U.N. to prepare a permanent solution for the refugee problem...and Israel will contribute to this to the best of its ability.

...Under Israeli rule...for the first time in eight years the Gaza Strip and the surrounding area is quiet...plans are being drawn up for its economic development...and the U.N. can set about finding a solution to the refugee problem. The return of Egyptian influence, whether directly through the entry of the Egyptian army or indirectly via the U.N. force, could put an end to all those hopes and chances, restoring the Strip to chaos, to its own detriment and that of the entire region.

After we have withdrawn from the entire Sinai desert, apart from a coastal strip along the Straits, it is our right and duty to ask the U.N. not to allow the Sinai to become a launching-pad for attacks once more...Egypt did nothing to settle the Sinai or accommodate the refugees there...and Israel calls on the U.N. to impose demilitarization in that area, thereby preventing future military clashes between Israel and Egypt.

The Government of Israel's position on these questions is dictated by its conscience, its right to exist and its future, as well as by its sense of justice and its ardent desire to ensure true peace in the region. The Government of Israel is convinced that all the members of the U.N. who study the problems we face will support our stand.

The Jewish people, the oldest nation in the Near East, which has given many of the nations of the world the basis of their faith and their spiritual culture, and which appreciates the original and ancient cultures of the other peoples of Asia, calls on the conscience of the world to do everything it can to prevent any possibility of a renewed conflagration in the Middle East and to bring about peace and justice there, so that the lands of the Bible may once again be a source of inspiration and blessing for the world, once there is peace and cooperation between its peoples.

M. Begin (Herut): Mr. Speaker, for the sake of the future, we must judge the past. It is a fact that the Egyptian enemy was thrashed on the battlefield; but that military defeat was accompanied by political success. We were victorious on the battlefield, but this was followed by political defeat...How could this happen? The first step in this analysis must be to admit our failure, and I suggest that the Government, which denies this, refrain from relying on its majority...Having the support of a majority does not mean that one's decisions are right, as was proved not long ago by Chamberlain in England.

...The Government has acted most strangely. It issued a statement on November 7; it gave a midnight speech on November 8. And it claims that nothing changed between those two dates, and there is no discrepancy between what was said on those two occasions...I suggest that the Government abandon its haughty intransigence and tell us why it changed its tune so radically from one day to the next...Were we re-

ally threatened with being bombed and destroyed if we failed to retreat? Would such fierce economic pressure be exerted that we could not exist? No clarification has been made, and to this day no one in Israel knows what happened between November 7 and 8.

The various documents—Bulganin's letter with the phrase: "raises doubts about Israel's very existence as a state;" President Eisenhower's letter demanding a withdrawal in accordance with the U.N. resolution...; the U.N. Assembly's resolution demanding our withdrawal to the armistice lines—were all before the Government on November 7. What, then, happened between the two pronouncements?...We are not the only ones who oppose the withdrawal. Party groups and individuals within the Coalition have objected to it...

...To the best of our knowledge, the reason for our political defeat after our military success was political...Since October 1955 the Government of Israel has been conducting a political campaign against the military campaign upon which we embarked in October 1956, giving it all kinds of names: "preventive war," "initiated war," "aggression," "an escapade," "insane advice." We will never take that course, you said. From a study of the documents I can say that no Government in the world condemned the Sinai Campaign post factum as the Government of Israel did beforehand.

...Regarding Israel's situation vis-à-vis Egypt, Winston Churchill wrote: "If Israel decides to ward off the Egyptian attack," he did not say "to launch a preventive war," or "to attack" or "to start an aggressive war."...That great foreign statesman could see that our situation was untenable, and that any action we took to end it would constitute legitimate defense...The Government of Israel, however, stubbornly clung to its contention that it would never take "aggressive steps." But a party which is in Opposition, and which proposed that a campaign be launched in October 1955 for national defense, thought that in April 1956 the opportune moment had been missed and that we would have to wait until the enemy attacked us...

I know that the Government representative will shortly ascend this podium and, with feigned innocence, claim that if the Government had said the opposite of what it did say during the past year our situation would have been no better...I believe that if we had, it would...But in the final event it is policy which matters. And if policy means saying and doing foolish things, and then saying that even without those foolish things our situation would still have been bad, what does one need policy for? You have failed the nation, especially in the last year, you have placed it in the dock, calling the Sinai Campaign in advance "an escapade," "aggression," "initiated war." Do not think that these things do not have an adverse effect on policy...

We must draw conclusions about the future from these developments...Therefore, I say to you...our just and noble and righteous Gov-

ernment, do not say again: we will not fight unless we are attacked, in case you fight in order not to be attacked.

A second reason for Israel's current political defeat is connected with its commitment to withdraw unconditionally. Today the Prime Minister stood on this podium and appealed to the U.N. to make the Sinai a demilitarized zone...after Egypt filled it with its troops and weapons, after it intends to renew its attack on Israel, with the tacit agreement of the world, and with the aid of that "great lover of peace," tovarich Nikita Khrushchev, after all that does the Prime Minister ask the U.N. to demilitarize the Sinai Peninsula?...You did not make that demand in the letter to Bulganin, in the reply to President Eisenhower, in missives to the U.N., in talks with governments, in the press or from this podium when the IDF was still in the Sinai; only after it had withdrawn did you demand the demilitarization of the Sinai....Is that political realism? It is a mockery....

No condition was attached to the commitment to withdraw which was given to President Eisenhower....The objective of every war is peace. Our only reason for entering the Sinai Peninsula was to obtain peace. And because the enemy says that he will maintain the state of war, we cannot withdraw. When we discuss peace we will discuss the areas we control, that is the international practice....By holding onto the last vestiges of the fruit of the blood shed by the best of our sons we are contravening the resolutions of the U.N. and are subject to pressure from both West and East....

The third point is that we have lost precious time....Was it necessary only today to announce that we will not move until freedom of navigation in the Straits of Eilat is assured? For two months the Government has refused to say what the limit of its withdrawal will be. We withdraw, without saying either yes or no, and only when we are at the last stage do we say no, which in fact implies yes....

What would have happened if we had said that six weeks ago? The U.N. Assembly would have met, passed a resolution with a majority of 74 that we had to withdraw, and what would have happened? The Government would meanwhile have been able to mobilize counterpressure, world public opinion....You could have stood firm at A-Tur, allowing no U.N. force to enter without our agreement. And what would have happened? You have lost the most precious time. Now we are almost at the end....

We heard an extremely dangerous statement about Gaza today, when the Prime Minister announced that we would be willing to withdraw the IDF from Gaza, leaving a police force there....On November 8 the Prime Minister said on the radio, addressing the officers and soldiers of the IDF: the second aim of the Sinai Campaign was to liberate that part of the homeland which had been occupied by the Egyptian invader....The Minister of Justice knows the significance of those words

in international law....And if you withdraw from there is it still part of the homeland? Do you not see the danger in that? What is the difference between Nazareth and Gaza? Those two towns were liberated at different times. Both of them are inhabited by Arabs. We liberated Nazareth in opposition to the decision of the U.N. Are you sure that, on the basis of that statement, Israel will not be asked to withdraw its troops from Nazareth?...

You want to leave a police force in Gaza, in cooperation with the U.N. What kind of cooperation? Who will be in command of the police force?...You are placing our control of the Gaza Strip in very great danger....The whole plan is fictional. Either the status of Gaza will not be agreed upon by Mr. Hammerskjold and his colleagues, in which case the Army will remain there anyway, or you will reach some kind of agreement, in which case not even a police force will be permitted to be there....

As I have said before, the future is the main thing, and it is with that in mind that we must look east as well as south. I believe, Mr. Speaker, that the break between Britain and the conquered area of our homeland east and west of the Jordan River known...as Jordan is to be welcomed....It paves the historic way for us, than which there is no other, to liberate the land of our fathers, to establish a state in which Arabs and Jews can live in peace and equality....After the agreement of the four countries in Cairo, the Arab Legion has become part of the Egyptian army. As to what our policy should be in view of this, I will permit myself to adopt the policy of Mapam, which is also part of the Coalition.

Is it not true, my friend and rival MK Rubin—the only representative of Mapam here now—that a few weeks ago your party group decided to include Gaza in the State of Israel?...This was done only post factum, after we had conquered it. But why did you do it...? Because it is part of the Land of Israel. Is not Hebron part of the Land of Israel? Both Gaza and Hebron are inhabited by Arabs....So who are you trying to fool?

The Prime Minister spoke of the liberated part of the homeland. Mapam demands that Gaza be included in the State of Israel. Ahdut Ha'Avodah did not want to leave El-Arish. And after that you will say that any idea of a campaign of liberation undertaken at the opportune moment, with good strategy, with intelligence, without endangering Israel's existence in any way, means "expansion," "aggression," "an escapade," and so on.

I. Ben-Aharon (Ahdut Ha'Avodah-Po'alei Zion): If the Coalition goes on this way it will be out of work.

M. Begin (Herut): MK Ben-Aharon, we hear you! I hope that the Government which you support will continue along the path I propose, and I will be willing to be out of work for the rest of my life—liberate Jerusalem and Hebron.

E. Habibi (Maki): That doesn't depend on MK Ben-Aharon or on you.
(MK M. Sneh ["bush" in Hebrew—translator] shouts from the floor.)

M. Begin (Herut): Will the bush that has been consumed kindly stop beating about itself.

M. Sneh (Maki): You'll get burned yet.

M. Begin (Herut): That is the basis—both moral and political: the right to liberation and national defense is justified not retroactively—because that would be a failure—but from the outset.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker...if the Government remains in the liberated part of the homeland...and if it keeps our soldiers along the Gulf of Eilat—which is the only guarantee of freedom of navigation, then, despite our resentment of the unnecessary withdrawal which has already been implemented...we, the members of the loyal Opposition, will call upon the nation to stand united....We will call upon the nation to withstand the economic pressure exerted by the U.S...because the liberation of Gaza is worth the sacrifice....After the Prime Minister's statement, however, I must say that there is no guarantee that we will stand firm. Let that be a warning.

...When you adopt the majority resolution and are sure that it is good and right, remember what our representative said at the U.N. that night. Facing a majority of 74, when only brave, friendly France voted with us...he said: the majority is not always right. On the eve of the Sinai Campaign, after the year which had preceded it, you knew that the majority had not been right. After this withdrawal, supporters of the Government, remember, the majority is not always right.

...

P. Bernstein (General Zionists): ...I also do not think that the Government is entirely blameless in this matter, because for the last year it has described action initiated by us in all kinds of ways, declaring that we would never undertake anything of that nature....I think, however, that above all we should express our surprise at the great organization which has seen fit to term our action aggressive and even draw far-reaching conclusions from it. All our political vicissitudes since the Campaign derive from the fact that we have been branded the aggressor.

I. Ben-Aharon (Ahdut Ha'avodah-Po'alei Zion): That is not true. There is no U.N. resolution branding us the aggressor.

P. Bernstein (General Zionists): I did not say...that the U.N. decided that we were the aggressor, but the resolution that we had to withdraw was justified on the grounds that we were the aggressor....That is the underlying assumption of the condemnation....Even though we may not have explained it well, it is evident to anyone familiar with the situation that we acted defensively, because our situation is unparalleled

anywhere in the world, and the rules which apply elsewhere cannot be applied to us. We are a small nation of one and a half million people surrounded by nations thirty or forty times our size who declare their intention of destroying us....And it cannot be denied that there is a very big gap between the U.N.'s noble principles and its actual deeds....

...The Prime Minister did not say that we would withdraw from Gaza...which does not constitute Egyptian territory....As to the threats which occasioned the Prime Minister's radio broadcast, I would like to say that, contrary to MK Begin's opinion, I considered them to be very serious....They were serious enough to justify the Prime Minister's broadcast. Post factum it is easy to say that it was a bluff. There was panic, both here and in the U.S., but because after all we did not open the package we do not know today whether it contained a bomb or a cake. It could be said that the Americans made use of the Russian threat, but that is not the point....Certain events were occurring elsewhere in the world at that time which gave us cause to believe that what was threatened would be implemented....What was unfortunate was that the chance of holding onto territory until a settlement—perhaps even peace—could be reached was missed....

The second disappointment is that the U.N. Force appears to be virtually under Egyptian control....In view of all this, the Government's demand for the demilitarization of the Sinai would seem to come a trifle late....I maintain, however, that we should remain permanently in the coastal strip of the Gulf of Eilat, and refuse to leave it on any account....The only purpose it served for the Egyptians was to prevent our ships from sailing there freely....We also maintain that the Army—not a police force—should remain in Gaza....

...I believe that we should flatly refuse to withdraw any further, no matter what sanctions are involved....It has always been my view and still is, that our political situation is far weaker than our military one, and now we are reaping the harvest of our weakness....

Despite the disappointments, we continue to admire the U.N., which is a great deal for us since that organization comprises countries which are hostile to us and one of which, even one of the most important ones, threatened quite explicitly to destroy us....We hope that the gap between the U.N.'s ideals and its deeds will be reduced...and that we will receive genuine help from it, eventually attaining true peace....We do not think peace can be gained through war, but we regarded the Sinai Campaign as a means of removing the threat of destruction from us, and in that, I believe, we succeeded.

But we want peace, and it would seem that we will not attain it without help from outside. Let us hope that we will obtain that honest and effective help from that organization.

...

I. Raphael (Hamizrahi-Hapoel Hamizrahi): ...Although the world brands us as aggressors...we know that our sole desire is for peace. The first aim of the Sinai Campaign—ending our continual harassment by bands of murderers coming from across the border—was achieved....If that is what MK Begin regards as a failure, all we can do is pray for more such "failures."...It is not to the U.N.'s credit that it has forced us to withdraw from Sinai, which we never intended to keep without reaching any agreement with Egypt....This has merely served to place peace further away from our region....

We also succeeded in opening the way for our ships in the Gulf of Eilat...and we hope that this right will also be accorded to us in the Suez Canal....Our Government is right to demand guarantees with regard to withdrawing from the desolate area of the Sinai...but the Gaza Strip is a very different matter...there there is no room for compromise there, for "Gaza with her towns and her villages" was given to the tribe of Judah because "Judah took Gaza with the coast thereof." Because we took Gaza with its coast, the Strip is once again part of our homeland....No more will it serve as a fist raised against the heart of our country....We will no more give it up than we will give up part of Galilee, no matter how much we have to suffer....

Naturally, we cannot ignore the refugee problem which the restoration of the Strip to the state involves....We have good will as well as experience in resettling refugees and...with international help, we will undertake the humanitarian task of resolving that problem which has been shirked by the Arab countries till now....

...International public opinion is moving in our favor now....The U.N. must begin to treat us and the Arabs with the same impartiality, as was the intention of its founders....The nation in Zion, remaining faithful to its mission, will take upon itself a burden of debts and suffering for the sake of peace....We must unite in the face of what lies before us and prepare ourselves for the test. If we are firm in our resolve...the U.N. will recoil from taking steps which will harm us and the nations of the world will counteract pressure and threats, admiration for this ancient, brave nation will grow and the Lord of Hosts will guide our steps in the battles of the coming days.

I. Ben-Aharon (Ahdut Ha'Avodah-Po'alei Zion): ...The attempt made from this podium by MK Begin to describe our so-called political defeat in the wake of the Sinai Campaign is totally unfounded. Those who made that claim appear to have forgotten the stranglehold we were in ever since the Baghdad Pact, the Czech deal, the threat to push us back to the borders of 1947 and to subdue us by force of arms, with the aid of Soviet weapons and the world-imperialist oil conspiracies surrounding us....

The Sinai Campaign rent several tissues...creating new openings for Israel's political struggle. We had no alternative. The timing of the

battle had been under consideration for two years. No world Power was surprised, and their contentions that they were surprised are untrue....We must not be alarmed by the current parliamentary reality of the U.N....We are confronting policies determined by the Powers' own interests, which do not directly concern us....

The true picture of the situation is not reflected in the balance of parliamentary powers of 72 votes regarding our affair, or 62 regarding that of Hungary. There was no withdrawal from Hungary because of the 62 votes. It would be folly to think that we can disregard the U.N., but nor must we accept those parliamentary decisions as if they were international justice....

As the Knesset knows, my party maintains that we must entrench ourselves in a defensive line in Sinai as long as there is no peace, as long as we are threatened with renewed war, as long as the U.N. is unable to impose peace upon its members...which the U.N. is patently unable to do...Which country has allowed the U.N. to decide when it comes to its essential concerns? Have they disarmed? Have they stopped producing nuclear weapons? Have they withdrawn from territory?...The price of independence, of formulating our own policy, of making our own decisions, of our security, is a high one in the world we live in today....But we must not abandon the hopes we have put in that organization....

Our "political defeat," as Mr. Begin terms it...would have been our lot even after our reactions at Kalkilya and Husan...but without the Sinai Campaign we would probably have been pushed back to the 1947 borders....In international relations today there is no way of avoiding serious crises with the Powers, regardless of the attitudes towards them of the various political parties....We are in conflict with mighty, selfish forces, concerned solely with their own interests, which they are attempting to further at our expense....The nation should be aware of the fact that the price of our independence and security is high, and will continue to rise...not because we oppose the so-called true interests of the Arab peoples, not because we do not further the so-called cause of progress, which is so deeply-rooted in this region, but because we are what we are, and no one has yet managed to buy us, and we have not abandoned our independence....

We are fighting this battle with the blood of our sons, with the labor and efforts of our workers and pioneers and with the unending loyalty of Jews throughout the world.

...We have gained some support in the world, from men of vision and conscience, and I believe that support for us will grow....Does MK Begin really think we went into this battle joyfully, out of a desire for conquest and territorial expansion? Why these crocodile tears at the withdrawal? Did we think that we would not withdraw after we had bro-

ken the enemy's outstretched arm? We broke it and did our work well....

We can and must disobey the parliamentary combination which tries to block our route to the nations of Asia and Africa in the Gulf of Eilat and the Suez Canal; we can and must disobey any international force which tries to revive the threat against us by turning three hundred thousand innocent Arabs into *fedayeen*, into murderers and terrorists, bringing disaster upon them and us. We must continue the political battle...for the demilitarization of Sinai...which would be as much for Egypt's defense as for Israel's....I know that the world learned something from the fact that Nasser's tissue of lies was exposed by the IDF's brave and pure arm.

...We call on the nation to see not only the glory of victory...but also the real gravity of entrenching ourselves in the last defensive line beyond which there is no withdrawal, paying the price through our struggle for life and our fighting and pioneering endeavor, as was evinced by our army....It is that which will carve Israel's independence among the nations which are faithful to our vision, which is also the vision of the U.N.

...
Y. Riftin (Mapam): ...We are discussing the resolutions of the U.N. Assembly with the respect that international institution deserves. We have not forgotten the U.N.'s failure to act when Israel was invaded by the neighboring countries as soon as it was established...or its failure to force Egypt to grant freedom of navigation in the Suez Canal to our ships....But nor have we forgotten the U.N.'s historic decisions which preceded the establishment of Israel....Our nation's history has sharpened our sense of self-preservation, and verbal assurances will not satisfy us where our fate is concerned....

The State of Israel cannot forego genuine guarantees of freedom of navigation on the way to Eilat, nor does it relinquish freedom of navigation in the Suez Canal. It cannot permit the Gaza Strip to revert to being a base of terrorist aggression directed against innocent civilians. As is known, our party has proposed a plan based on the inclusion of the Strip in the State of Israel while rehabilitating the Arab refugees there, with the help of the U.N. This will not only prevent the threat to Israel's security but will also make a considerable contribution to solving the malignant problem of the Arab refugees, which cries out for a solution.

Whatever one's opinion regarding the Sinai Campaign...it is obvious that such issues as freedom of navigation for Israeli shipping and the security of the inhabitants of Israel cannot be resolved by formalist gymnastics, and certainly not by placing pressure on Israel. Our historic undertaking of the ingathering of the exiles deserves not only the help of the entire Jewish people, but of all mankind....Threats will not bring us to our knees.

...The absence of any demand for peace...by the U.N. and the Powers increases the anxiety of our nation. Only reaction and alien forces which seek to rule the peoples of our region could be interested in the absence of peace. Our future is linked with the historic fate we share with the peoples of Asia in the struggle for national independence and social progress. Not even the Eisenhower Doctrine can put a stop to that....

We demand that our region be placed outside the sphere of the competition between the Powers; we demand that all the military alliances in the region be dissolved. We demand a policy of non-alignment, economic and political independence and true neutrality of Israel and all the countries of the region. We call on all those involved to make a supreme effort to attain peace....We must reject reckless pseudo-patriotic demagoguery...as expressed by Herut....Our people must be alert, we must be ready to make sacrifices, to act responsibly and to stand firm on the basic rights of the State of Israel.

...
S. Mikunis (Maki): ...The Prime Minister's statement that Israel will not withdraw from the strip along the Straits of Eilat and the Gaza Strip embodies additional dangers for Israel....There are few parallels to the lack of national responsibility, political blindness, absence of political understanding and unbounded recklessness as that evinced by the...Ben-Gurion Government....

The Government's decision to delay the withdrawal constitutes a severe provocation to the nations of the whole world, peace-loving world public opinion and all the peoples of Asia and Africa. Larger countries than Israel, such as Britain and France, have had to acknowledge the failure of their military escapades and withdraw from Egyptian territory. Is there anyone here who thinks that Israel will succeed where the colonialist Powers have failed? Is it not evident that the days when aggressors were rewarded have passed, that Israel will have to withdraw to the armistice lines? That being so, what is the point of acting in this arrogant manner?...

The Prime Minister...has tried to conceal his political failure. ...What was he thinking of when, in order to further the interests of British and French colonialism, he marched the IDF to the escapade on Egyptian soil? What is he thinking of now when his policy of delaying and evading a full withdrawal is endangering Israel's security and making us a laughing stock among the nations? We are not unaware of Israel's difficulties...but nor are we unaware of the basic fact that the Government's pro-imperialist and anti-Arab policy...is principally responsible for them....

The Prime Minister claims that leaving the IDF in the Gaza Strip and the coastal strip of the Gulf of Eilat will ensure freedom of navigation and aid Israel's security. If that is not political blindness, it is deceit. Our own experience has proved that failure to withdraw our troops

guarantees neither freedom of navigation nor security, merely the continuation of the state of war....Only a few days ago the Prime Minister...said that Herut's proposal not to leave El-Arish was insane. That was a good definition, which this House and the nation accepted....Then why should the decision not to leave Sharm el-Sheikh and the Gaza Strip be any less insane?

Y. Kesse (Mapai): Only someone insane like you would ask that.

S. Mikunis (Maki): ...Tell the nation that you are gambling with its fate in the crumbling stock exchanges of Paris, London and Washington, and that your policy is a suicidal one....We know that you are too cowardly to do so...you do not even have the courage to resign...as anyone else in your position would do.

E. Ichilov (General Zionists): Like Khrushchev did after Hungary?

...
S. Mikunis (Maki): ...You seek guarantees for Israel...from the imperialist forces which have abandoned you before. You ignore the fact that the best guarantee for Israel is to change its policy from dependence on others to one of peace and neutrality. The tragedy is that you continue to rely on reactionary forces whose only interest in the Middle East is to steal oil and establish aggressive alliances, to make the nations subservient and restore the colonialist regimes....You have placed Israel in opposition to the trend of political development in the region....

All the signs in the world press...indicate that your delay of a full withdrawal is solely in the interests of the French, the British and the Americans, who wish to exert pressure on Egypt at Israel's expense while addressing it from a position of strength....You are also serving the Eisenhower Doctrine, which seeks to take over Britain's and France's positions in the Middle East....It is in our national interest to end the Israel-Arab conflict, but serving the imperialists will achieve the opposite....

D. Hacoheh (Mapai): What about Bulganin's doctrine concerning Israel?

S. Mikunis (Maki): Bulganin's doctrine will be victorious throughout the world. It is a doctrine of peace and the victory of socialism. It is in Israel's interest to withdraw fully from the occupied territories. The only Power which has worked for peace in the Middle East is the U.S.S.R.

(From the floor: Ho-ho-ho!)

H. Ariav (General Zionists): By sending arms!

S. Mikunis (Maki): That Power has made, and continues to make, efforts to secure peace in the region and end the Israel-Arab conflict....The Soviet statement of 17 April 1956 which you described at the

time as objective...stresses the U.S.S.R.'s support of the independence of the peoples of the region...and the necessity of solving the Israel-Arab conflict by peaceful means...recognizing the just national rights of both sides....That is the only way....

...
The Speaker, J. Sprinzak: Three proposals have been submitted to sum up the debate. The Prime Minister apologizes for being unable to attend the conclusion of the debate because he is unwell. I give the floor to MK Meridor.

J. Meridor (Herut): On behalf of Herut I bring the following proposal before the Knesset:

A. The Knesset resolves that Israel will not agree to the entry of a foreign force, under any name, to Gaza and the Strip, which are, according to the nation's historic right, liberated parts of our homeland, or to place them in any way under foreign rule or supervision.

B. The Knesset resolves that the only way of assuring freedom of navigation in the Straits of Eilat, as long as peace has not been made with Egypt, is to maintain Israeli forces along the coast of the Gulf.

C. The Knesset resolves that the Government of Israel should not have withdrawn the IDF from the areas it controlled as long as a peace agreement with Egypt had not been made and complete freedom of navigation in the international waterway of the Suez Canal had not been assured.

D. The Knesset resolves that the recommendation by the U.N. that Israel withdraw beyond the armistice lines in the south, which means abandoning the liberated part of the Jewish homeland and returning to a situation of bloodshed, is morally invalid. This recommendation harms not only the State of Israel's right to exist and undertake legal self-defense, but also peace in the entire region, which is a vital interest of all nations. Consequently, it is Israel's right, as a sovereign member of the U.N., and in accordance with its Charter, to refrain from implementing that recommendation.

The Knesset expresses its gratitude to the French people and government for their support of Israel.

The Knesset states that in the battle for the remaining fruits of our army's victory the nation must stand united and accept with love any suffering entailed as a result of foreign pressure. Because our cause is just, we will eventually triumph.

E. Wilenska (Maki): On behalf of the Israel Communist Party I have the honor of submitting the following resolution:

For the sake of Israel's benefit and security, in order to extricate Israel from international isolation, to pave the way to peace with the neighboring countries, to eradicate the results of the war against Egypt and for the sake of peace in the Middle East and the world, the Knesset

resolves that the Israeli forces shall withdraw from all the territory conquered after 29 October 1956 and return to the armistice lines.

A. Govrin (Mapai): On behalf of the Coalition party groups: Mapai, Ah-dut Ha'Avodah-Po'alei Zion, Hamizrahi-Hapoel Hamizrahi, Mapam, and the Progressives, and on behalf of the General Zionists, Agudat Yisrael-Po'alei Agudat Yisrael, Progress and Labor, the Democratic Arab List and Agriculture and Development, I have the honor of submitting the following proposals to the Knesset:

A. The Knesset notes that in its resolution of 19 January 1957 the U.N. Assembly does not only fail to advance the peace in the Middle East to which Israel aspires but also totally ignores the danger threatening Israel because of the declared refusal of the Egyptian government and the other Arab countries to recognize Israel's existence and make peace with it.

B. After having heard the Prime Minister's statement of 23 January 1957, the Knesset resolves:

1. Israel will remain in the Gaza Strip and will be responsible for internal and external security there; it will continue to maintain and develop independent administration by the inhabitants of the Strip in every town and village; it will enable UNWRA to continue with its work for the refugees and will continue to ensure that the inhabitants of the Strip receive public services.

2. The IDF will not withdraw from the coast of the Gulf of Eilat until Israeli and international freedom of navigation is ensured in the Straits of Eilat and the Red Sea, to and from Eilat, by genuine guarantees to which Israel will agree.

3. Israel demands the demilitarization of the Sinai Peninsula.

4. Israel asks the U.N. to draw up a plan for a permanent settlement for the refugees, including those in the Gaza Strip. Israel will contribute to the best of its abilities to a settlement of this kind.

5. Israel will insist that in every settlement of the Suez Canal problem Israel's navigation will be assured without discrimination.

The Knesset and the nation will stand firm to defend Israel's rights and security.

The Speaker, J. Sprinzak: We will now vote.

The Vote

| | |
|---|----|
| Those in favor of MK J. Meridor's proposal | 11 |
| Those in favor of MK E. Wilenska's proposal | 6 |
| Those in favor of MK A. Govrin's proposal | 54 |
| (MK A. Govrin's proposal is adopted.) | |