

C/693

ADDRESS BY THE PRIME MINISTER OF ISRAEL:

MRS. GOLDA MEIR

AT THE SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL

HELSINKI, MAY 25th, 1971

Comrade Chairman and Comrades,

May I be allowed to add my word of congratulation to Comrade Douglas, and may I tell him that I have some feeling of envy. I tried to do what you did now. I was not offered a silver plate, and you see what happened to me! I wish you well, but I don't believe anybody who has been in socialist activity as long as you have been really can resign. You think you will, but you really won't.

Comrades, the Middle East has been mentioned several times this morning, and it has been said that there is now a change in the situation. This is a fact since the real change has not yet taken place, and I don't think there is any one of us who is prepared to prophesize when that will happen. I mean when will somebody from our region be able to stand before an international or any other body and say that a new era has set in in the Middle East for the good and welfare of all the people in that area. And there are millions upon millions upon millions of people whose lot, I'm afraid, will not be improved until there is peace among the countries in the area - among the Arab states themselves and between Israel and its neighbours.

When that day comes it will be a great day. It will mean new life, a new development for an era that has known in its long, long history many struggles and many wars. But the mountains and valleys of that entire area can tell a story not only of wars and destruction and death. It happens to be a part of the world where a great story of culture was written. Moral principles have been handed down to civilisations, three of the great religions of the world were born, many things have been created in that part of the world.

I am convinced that in spite of anything that has happened and is happening, even today, that the day will come, because

the people want it and need it. And finally the leaders who don't express the real needs and desires of the people will either have to give in, or other leaders will have to take their place.

But some changes have taken place since we met last in Eastbourne. In the first place there have been some changes in some of our neighbouring countries. I believe when we met in Eastbourne I mentioned it, at any rate the situation on our eastern border was that the kibbutzim, our collective settlements in the valley of Beit-Shean, in the valley of the Jordan, were being shelled day and night from across the Jordan river. Children have grown up now, reached the age of four, five, six years and don't know what it means to live above ground, as they spent most of their days and all their nights in air shelters.

We were told by those who were supposed to have known, that we cannot hold King Hussein responsible for Al Fatah activities, terrorist activities that were performed against our settlements across the Jordan river. We were told that King Hussein just wasn't strong enough to do anything.

Lo and behold, a miracle has taken place! When Hussein felt it was not the children in the kibbutzim who were in danger but his throne in danger, Amman was in danger, - then he got from somewhere, some source, the strength, the courage and the ability to fight those terrorist groups against whom he was too weak to fight before.

At any rate I am happy to say as a result of that the border has been relatively quiet now for nine or ten months. We are thankful for little things, especially if so-called "little things" express themselves in no shooting and no people being killed.

For the last 9 months the Canal Zone has been quiet. No shooting. It is true we could not have all the joy of that

because first it was for a period of three months, and then the entire world that cared, and the United Nations, was siezed with this great problem - will the cease-fire be renewed? Finally it was renewed for a further three months, and finally this three months were up and then it was renewed for one month - just one more month. And I am happy to say that that has passed and there is still no shooting.

But at the end of that last period, which was ended on the 7th of March, the new President of Egypt announced no more cease-fire. But that doesn't mean that he is committed not to start shooting again. He will do it when he believes it is necessary for him, or when he is prepared to renew the shooting. And at any rate here we are now, towards the end of May, and there has been no shooting.

There is one great desire, greater than any other on the part of Israel and that is the desire for a final contractual peace treaty. If we cannot have that, then let's have it quiet. But the problem naturally is not solved. When in last August the Secretary of State of the United States presented to us and Egypt and Jordan a proposition called a "peace initiative", it consisted of several items.

One, that Israel should be prepared to change her basic position, which was direct negotiations between our neighbours and ourselves. Somehow we believe, we still believe, that parties that have been at war, countries that have been at war, if both honestly and sincerely have come to the conclusion that from now on we are going to live in peace, then those parties should be prepared to meet and sit around one table to argue, to see whether they can understand each other, to see on what items they can compromise, to have the real expression of preparedness to live in peace together.

It was said at the Eastbourne Conference that Israel is rather stubborn. Why does she stand on technicalities? And you people convinced us. So we said "all right, it will be

indirect negotiations". But even the Rogers Plan called for indirect negotiations between the parties under the aegis of Dr. Jarring. We accepted.

It is said, too, that Israel should commit itself for the implementation of Resolution 242 in all its parts. And we said "yes", and in the letter that we wrote we said we would do that and the Israeli army will withdraw from the cease-fire lines to secure and agreed borders when there is a peace treaty signed. And we proceeded to negotiations.

There was one more item: a cease-fire for at least 90 days, and the heart of the cease-fire arrangement was a standstill on both sides of the Canal. And since there were a few missiles on the Egyptian side of the Canal it pointed out exactly what the standstill meant: - no more missiles moving in. The situation must remain exactly as it was when the cease-fire went into effect. No bringing in of heavy equipment on either side, not on our side, not on the other side. We agreed to this and accepted it.

I must say with sorrow the cease-fire went into effect at twelve o'clock midnight, and in the morning we found that the situation on the other side of the canal had changed. New missiles had been moved in. Other missiles that were there before were moved closer to the Canal, and from that hour on SAM 2 and SAM 3 missiles were moving in. It was everything except a standstill.

An unbelievable situation arose. We saw them, but it was almost impossible for us to get other people to see them, even those who initiated the cease-fire and initiated the standstill article. It took about three weeks for other people to see what we were seeing. Now, it is difficult for us to believe that Israel, which is, of course, exceptionally able, in fact was so able that only Israel itself has the means to find out whether there were missiles in the Canal Zone or not. After three weeks when it was revealed that somebody

else also saw them and began comparing, let us say, notes, it finally was concluded that everything that we said was happening was actually happening.

By that time we were asked, as many ask us today, to be reasonable. They told us: of course missiles have been moved in; of course your situation is more dangerous now, but you don't expect the President of Egypt really to remove the missiles. You certainly don't expect those that were responsible for supplying the missiles that they should remove them. You just have to acquiesce to this new situation, to the new dangers that are facing your pilots and go back to the Jarring talks. And it's stubborn and intransigent for Israel not to want to go back.

Comrades, when we wonder about this situation called "keeping the balance of power" and it has been upset by the missiles. Then it was agreed that we would be supplied with more planes. And we said "Fine. The fact that you realise that the missiles are there in the Canal Zone and it requires more planes for us means that our situation is more dangerous. We are thankful and appreciative of new planes to offset those planes that might be shot down. It just happens that in every plane there is one man, sometimes two, and these, if they come down, cannot be replaced. They are gone for ever." But these are sentiments, and men of state and leaders of big countries, and sometimes even small countries, think that such little things really should not be taken into account. "Don't be stubborn, don't be intransigent. Don't stand in the way of peace. Maybe Israel doesn't want peace at all. Maybe what Israel really wants is acquisition of territory."

Sometimes we say to ourselves: how has it happened? Is the memory of the people of the world so short that they have forgotten what happened, not two thousand years ago, but only four years ago? Four years ago, exactly today, we first realised that the Sinai desert was being packed with men and guns and bombers, and then we went out to the world. We never

asked anybody to fight for us, but we went around to the capitals of the world, the friendly capitals, the capitals that could, we thought, translate the sentiments into action, not to help us to defend ourselves, but to prevent war. And at least two of the men who were the heads of those countries to which we came wanted to prevent the war. They were Harold Wilson as Prime Minister - let no one doubt that Harold Wilson wanted to prevent the war - and President Johnson of the United States. The third, to our sorrow; our great sorrow, was the head of France, a man who promised that we were his friends and allies and when we needed him most he decided that his friendship and his help were not forthcoming.

But there is something much more shocking. We are being preached to by the United Nations that borders are not important, that there is no such thing as "secure borders". We are being told that geography in modern life is not important. What is important is "international guarantees."

That is exactly what we had in Sharem El Shiekh, - international guarantees. On March the first, 1957, I had the sorry duty on behalf of my government as Foreign Minister to write out a statement to the United Nations that we were pulling back from Sharem El Sheikh and from the Gaza Strip, and there were hopes and aspirations and promises made by all the maritime powers in the world that the United Nations Emergency Force would stay there until normal conditions prevailed. And the letter from the then Secretary General - in that letter it said that the units cannot be removed unless it is brought to the General Assembly of the United Nations.

Well, I'm not going to trouble you with listening to that story over and over again, how the U.N.E.F. personnel just evaporated. No special meeting, no special committee, the whole force just evaporated. I have nothing against the men. How could they fight against Migs and Illyushins and guns? Naturally they left, and they left on the order of the new Secretary General of the United Nations. But between the 16th of May and the

4th of June even the Security Council could not be called, because one of the great powers, one of the Four, upon whom we are now expected to depend, to have our security depend on, one of them said until the 4th of June "nothing is really happening in the Middle East. That is Israel propaganda. No need for a Security Council meeting."

It is difficult to believe now how it is that for weeks the region was in an uproar. There was a volcano, and no hand was lifted to see that the lava would not flow over the populations in that area. The same Security Council, the same permanent members, the same United Nations, the same family of nations.

I want to be just. Many many people all over the world were concerned about us. Many people really worried about us. Many people feared for our fate. But the family of nations together, the United Nations, the Big Four, the Security Council did nothing.

I say this only to try to recall what the situation was. And sometimes, Comrades, to be very very frank, I come to the conclusion: why try again? Maybe we don't know how to tell the story. Maybe because it is so very very simple that we don't succeed in expressing ourselves. There's nothing that's so unjust when here and there, even from friends, we hear the same kind of language: "acquisition of territory by force".

You can imagine that one bright morning the Israeli government had nothing else to do, so it looked out of the window and decided: "well, maybe we should acquire some territory, some more sand, some more rocks, we don't have enough!"

There are some places in the world where history is re-written, but in a lot of countries history is not re-written. What has been and what has happened remains. And this history of four years cannot be re-written. People are still here. They remember, still remember it. There are still articles in all

your papers in all your countries of the 16th of May, of the 23rd of May and the 4th of June. We can still read them. Many of them have a real bearing on what has happened and what is going to happen to Israel.

And I say things have changed in our area. On the death of President Nasser another man took over. We naturally watched carefully. We were very happy when Dr. Jarring succeeded in getting from President Sadat a statement that he is prepared to make peace with Israel. We had never heard that for 23 years, and we thought this was very important, and we wanted to believe this is the real thing. And to our great sorrow we found that it wasn't - not yet, at any rate.

President Sadat said to Dr. Jarring that he would be prepared to make peace with Israel on condition that Israel makes a prior commitment that it will withdraw from all territories - all Egyptian territories and all other Arab territories - and then when we do that there will be peace. There will be shipping through the Suez Canal according to the Convention of 1888. This very Convention was given as a reason throughout the years why there should not be Israeli shipping. In the Straits of Tiran navigation according to international law. That is exactly what was said in the past. "You have no right. This is not an international water, go to the International Court of the Hague and wait."

But never mind these minor matters. We said to Dr. Jarring that we were prepared to go into negotiations with the parties under his aegis, that we would not ask for any pre-commitment, nor would we accept any pre-commitment. We demand and desire that there should be free negotiations, each side will say what it wants. After the President of Egypt had said that in its memorandum, we said: all right, now this is our position - secure and agreed borders. We don't accept the pre-5th of June lines. This is our position. We don't ask Egypt to commit itself beforehand that it accepts that we should not go back to the 4th of June lines. We do not say that. We said "we know what the Egyptian position is now, and this is

our position. Now, Dr. Jarring, please let us go point by point through the parties' stands and let's see what can be agreed upon. Three times we have asked Ambassador Jarring to convey this to the Egyptians. He sent the messages to the Egyptian government, and there is no answer.

Instead, on the 24th of March, already after the Egyptians submitted their memo, President Sadat on the French television said - and I quote - "The entire matter is summed up in two points: withdrawal, Israel's withdrawal from all the territories occupied after 5th June; and the national aspirations of the Palestinians.." (not the refugees) "..If this problem is not solved, nothing will be solved. We are talking about peace, but there can be no peace if the Palestinian peoples' rights are ignored".

Comrades, if you want to know the definition of what the "Palestinian peoples' rights" is, read what leaders of the Arab states say, what Arafat, who is supposed to be head of the Palestinian people means when he demands the liberation - we know how countries have been "liberated" in the past - the liberation of the Palestinian fatherland and our removal from the map. In the goodness of his heart he sometimes says that maybe those who were in the country of Palestine before 1917 may be allowed to remain.

A very important, able, knowledgeable newspaperman in Egypt, Hassanein Heikal, wrote on the 25th February in his weekly column: "The defined purposes which are current in the Arab sphere are only two: one, the first purpose, the removal of the traces of aggression of 1967.." (We are the aggressors, naturally) "..by the withdrawal of Israel from all the territories which it conquered that year; two, the second purpose, the removal of the traces of the aggression of 1948 by the very liquidation of Israel". And he said "The mistake of some of us.." (By "some of us" he means the Arab leaders who are arguing amongst themselves) "..is that they commence with the last step before they start with the first step .. but let us not discuss it prematurely."

Maybe this explains why we do not hear now the Arabs saying that they want to throw Israel into the sea. Not now. Let's take the first step, then the second step and the rest will follow.

The Security Council Resolution 242 has been mentioned here this morning, and it is a very popular item. Sometimes I wonder if the people who speak about the 242 Resolution - some of them with great enthusiasm - if they ever really took the trouble to read it, because if they did then I don't understand how they can repeat that the 242 Resolution calls for withdrawal from all the occupied territories. It doesn't. There was a suggestion at the time in the Security Council that it should read "withdrawal from all occupied territories", or "the occupied territories". That version was not accepted. The Resolution that was accepted said: "withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied...", not all territories or the territories. The operative paragraph of that Resolution reads "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" and one of the principal provisions in the Resolution is the right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries.

Some time ago, on the 4th of February, President Sadat suggested that the Suez Canal should be opened. I went to parliament on behalf of my government on the 9th of February and said by all means, let's negotiate the possibility. Now we find out that what is in his mind is that we should move from these defensive lines along the Canal and immediately afterwards the Egyptian army will cross the Canal and thus take the first step of the advance up to the international border. All this to be done under the constant threat that the shooting can be renewed at any moment. But this time there will be a renewal of shooting not when the Canal is between us and Egypt, but when they are right at our backs. This formula, "obstinate" and "intransigent" Israel is not prepared to accept. We will be happy to

cooperate in the opening of the Canal and the clearing of the Canal. By the way, it was not Israel that put the Canal out of order, the Egyptian government did that.

We are prepared to cooperate to open the Canal for shipping, but we demand that Israeli ships should also go through the Canal as all other boats. It is true we managed for 20 years without Israeli shipping in the Canal. This time we are asked to agree that Israeli shipping should be discriminated against. That is a little bit too much. We are prepared to negotiate a way of opening the Canal without hurting Israel's security. And we said if our parliament will agree to our proposal, the Israeli forces will pull back a certain distance from the Canal.

This is not the final line, naturally, and the discussions under the aegis of Dr. Jarring should go on, but then they will go on in a peaceful relaxed atmosphere with no pistol held at our heads - "if you don't move, if you don't pull back there's going to be more shooting". If that's the case, if there's danger of more shooting then the Canal is the best defense line that Israel can have. But we are prepared to go to a line that is maybe not so good provided there is no more shooting. And once we are negotiating for peace over a conflict that lasted for 23 years, if people are sincere about it then they have to realize that it must take time, maybe weeks, maybe months, but a lot of patience and a lot of determination to come to a peace treaty, to a peace agreement, to make a real peace and to end all wars. There's no gimmick by which you can do it, and nobody else can do it except the parties concerned.

I don't know where from stems the authority of the Four Permanent members of the Security Council to meet among themselves and to try and take decisions that affect the very fate, the very life of other people. I thought socialists certainly and many others would think that in the '70s of the twentieth century the days have passed when big powers - no matter how big they are may decide the fate of small nations. Maybe the bigger they are the less we should ask of them to decide the nature and fate of small countries.

And now for a moment let me analyse the composition of this so-called "Court of the Four". The second biggest power of the Four - I don't think I need especially mention the name although I don't think they would mind, they're there - is the Soviet Union. If Harold Wilson will permit me, let me say in a real British understatement, the Soviet Union is not the best friend that Israel has. Then there is the French government - we say it with a lot of pain, because we shall never forget that in many hours of need the French government was with us. I say "government" because I believe the French people are with us even today, but governments deal in the name of the people. Fifty of our Mirage planes, for which we have paid over sixty million dollars several years ago, are still on French soil, but the French government will not release them. On the other hand they sold and began delivering Mirage planes to Libya, when the President of Libya said in public that his planes are Egyptian planes, and when Egypt needs them to use against Israel they will have my planes. That is the second member of the Four.

We consider the two others friendly countries. But the two others, and this is to their credit, are not against the Arab countries. They are friends of Israel, but they are friends of Egypt and Syria and Libya. They want to be friends of Egypt. What does it mean? It means that there are two countries that will try to be fair to both sides, so Israel has no special advantage there. There are none that say "Israel, right or wrong", and I don't expect it. There are two that are against Israel, regardless of what she says or does.

Now, Comrades, if there is one person in this room who will stand up and say "if I were the head of my country in a similar situation I would allow one of the big powers, or any other country for that matter, to decide my future or my existence", I will go back to Israel and advise my government to do the same. But I refuse to be the first one to do it, to put the fate of our country in the hands of four countries as they are.

What do we ask of our Arab neighbours? In negotiations with Israel don't put prior commitments, don't ask of Israel anything beforehand. Come to the negotiating table and put anything you want on the table. Argue with Israel, disagree with us, keep on arguing, but don't dictate to us. We haven't forgotten what happened four years ago. It wasn't we who were responsible for the war and, thank God, it wasn't we who lost it. But that is our only fault; we haven't lost it and yet we are being dictated to. Immediately after the war we said: no dictated peace from a winner to a loser. We want to live with these people in the same area, in the same neighbourhood. We know that we will remain. Naturally we are not so foolish as to believe they will disappear. Naturally they will remain and so will we. So no negotiations dictated by one over the other. We have said over and over again we want to sit down with you, not in the spirit of conqueror speaking to the conquered. But in that sense the situation to my sorrow has not changed.

In the last few weeks we have seen new airlifts, some of the most sophisticated weapons that are available anywhere being flown into Egypt mainly, and enough arms also to Syria. I would like to ask if anybody suggest to us to go back to the 4th of June borders and I would invite him first to come to the Golan Heights. You won't need field glasses. Stand on those hills and look down at the members of the kibbutzim and without field glasses you can see and hit every house. And they were hit, more than once, in the nineteen years. Really, should we step right down so that it would be possible for the Syrians to take up their guns and do the same all over again?

It was said here this morning that we should all be courageous to state our opinions and our ideas. I agree with it one hundred percent. But I am afraid, if I may say so, it takes a little bit more than even courage to tell another people you must do this or you must do that, even if you think you are in danger. I don't know if that can be called courage exactly.

I am pleading this here although I know the Socialist International cannot supply us with the necessary planes or tanks or other equipment which is absolutely essential for the balance not to be upset more than it is now. Some day - since I believe honestly and sincerely that there will be peace some day - it will be told of what was earnestly called "the balance of power in the Middle East". But it has been upset, dangerously upset. It is being upset every day by one of the big power which constantly sends more advanced weapons that are not sent by the Soviet Union to any other country in the world except to Egypt.

I know that Comrade Peterson has no storehouse of planes and tanks which he can send to Israel, but we are comrades, we believe in the same things. We believe in peace and we all believe that socialism includes the precept that not only the individual should be free and should be equal, but that countries, sovereign countries, sovereign peoples have the right to live and be safe in their countries. I am older than many people that sit here. I am glad to say so - not that I am older but that there are many young people here. I believed in socialism when I was really young, and I never stopped to believe in it. Sometimes it pains me. That wasn't what I really thought and believed in my youth that the Socialist International would do. But friends, I think it was the Italian comrade who said this morning, that there are various dates when the International community did not act.

I plead for one thing. If you are convinced that Israel is wrong, say so. If you are convinced that Israel didn't start the war, that Israel didn't go out for territorial acquisition, that Israel didn't go out for more territory, but that Israel was protecting herself, that Israel had the right, as every single one of you, to have borders that you consider safe and defensible, that Israel should also have the same right - not more, God forbid, but not less, - then say so.

Friends, I think it is the elementary duty of the socialist community to say so. And to say that Israel should be helped

and that Israel should be equipped in such a way that not only will it be able to defend itself if and when attacked. But the strength of Israel to defend itself is its best guarantee. No United Nations can guarantee the safety of Israel if it has no ability to defend itself.

In 1948 exactly the same thing happened. In 1947 the United Nations decided to have Jerusalem internationalized. We did not like it, but we accepted it. In 1948 Jerusalem was shelled. It was an international city. Who came to save it from the attack by the Jordan army? Nobody but we ourselves.

On the 5th of June, the late Prime Minister, Eshkol sent a message to King Hussein: "If you don't come into the war nothing will happen to you". But he received another message that morning from President Nasser: "I am bombing Tel Aviv, come in" and, poor man, he came in and began shelling Jerusalem. This time we could save it, and we did.

And my closing words: I will never understand why so many people in the world evidently didn't spend sleepless nights, when for 19 years the old city of Jerusalem was under the rule of the Moslem countries, and Jews were the only ones who were not allowed to come to their holy places. In 19 years not one Jew was allowed in the old city. Our synagogues were destroyed, our cemeteries desecrated and roads paved with the gravestones. Why, tell me why are people uneasy now when Jerusalem is united and is part of Israel and everybody - Christians and Moslems - can come to their holy places in the old city. And the Israeli government say we have no interest in the administration of the holy places. Let each group, Moslem and Christian, take care of its holy places.

I am sorry, Comrades, that maybe some words sound harsh, but I don't wish it upon any one of you to come from a little country in an area of that kind, pleading for life and security and an ability for Jews that want to, or have to, leave the countries in which they live and come to Israel, - pleading all this and not always, let me say, being understood.