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JERUSALEM, November 15, 1955

TRANSLATION OF A STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER
OF DEFENCE, MR. DAVID BEN-GURION, IN THE KNESSETH
(PARLIAMENT) IN JERUSALEM ON NOVEMBER 15, 1955,
IN ANSWER TO A QUESTION ABOUT THE PROPOSALS
OF THE BRITISH PRIME MINISTER,
SIR ANTHONY EDEN

Question addressed to the Prime Minister and Minister of Defence by
Mr. Baruch Azania, M. K. (Mapai), on November 14, 1955:

- 1) Has the statement made by the British Prime Minister,
Sir Anthony Eden, on November 9th, come to the attention of
the Prime Minister?
- 2) Is the Government of Israel prepared to accept the mediation
of the British Prime Minister on the basis of the conditions
set out in his statement?
- 3) Does the Prime Minister not believe that Sir Anthony Eden's
statement is likely to encourage Arab aggression and that the
Government of Israel should therefore make an authoritative
and precise statement on its position?

Answer by the Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, Mr. David Ben-Gurion,
as delivered in the Knesseth on Tuesday, November 15, 1955:

I have read the statement made by the British Prime Minister on
November 9th with the serious attention it deserves and I regret that its
main contents are in complete contradiction to its declared objective. His
proposal to truncate the territory of Israel for the benefit of its
neighbours has no legal, moral or logical basis and cannot be considered.

Instead of fostering better relations and bringing peace nearer, it is likely to encourage and intensify Arab aggression and to lessen the likelihood of peace in the Middle East.

Sir Anthony Eden has levelled justified criticism at the Soviet Government, which has decided, as he put it, "to inject into this delicate situation a new element of danger and to deliver weapons of war, tanks, aeroplanes, even submarines to one side only."

And he asserted that it is "impossible to reconcile this Soviet action with protestations that they wish to end the cold war in the new spirit of Geneva."

It is astonishing, on the other hand, that the British Prime Minister should defend Egypt's part in this "transaction", the transaction of which Sir Anthony Eden says that "it is fantastic to pretend that this deliberate act of policy was an innocent commercial transaction." It is even more disquieting that Sir Anthony Eden deliberately ignores the grave danger which the supply of weapons of war "to one side only" involves for Israel.

The British Prime Minister contends in his speech that the main responsibility rests on the suppliers and not on the recipients, as if the purchasers of the arms had bought them for decorative purposes only. Does not the British Prime Minister know as well as I do for what purposes these arms are intended in Egypt? Sir Anthony Eden, who places the responsibility on the suppliers, has apparently forgotten that for a long time his Government too had been supplying arms "to one side only"—and there is no indication in his statement that it will not do so again in the future.

The British Prime Minister is rightly concerned at the increase of tension in the Middle East, particularly between Egypt and Israel, although he passes over in silence the danger involved for Israel in Egyptian arms superiority, and he points out that "the hostility between Israel and her Arab neighbours is unreconciled. Here time has proved no healer."

Sir Anthony Eden did not see fit to point out that Israel, which was the victim of aggression in 1948, harboured no hostility towards her neighbours

after the end of the fighting, and stretched out her hand for peace—and that hand is still outstretched. But the British Prime Minister did single out Israel in his proposals for peace between the two sides: Israel must cede some of its territory to its neighbours, and this proposal is what Sir Anthony Eden calls a "compromise between these (the Israel and Arab) two positions." And why does the British Prime Minister use the word "compromise" to describe the truncation of Israel's territory? Because the Arab States, according to him, take their stand on the United Nations resolution of November 29, 1947 and Sir Anthony Eden declares that "it is not right, I agree, that United Nations resolutions should be ignored." But since Israel takes no stand, according to Sir Anthony, on the frontiers set out in the armistice agreements of 1949, it is necessary to find a compromise between these two frontiers: to cut off part of the "excess" territory of Israel and hand it over to the neighbouring states.

I believe that Sir Anthony Eden's definition of the "innocent commercial transaction" can be applied with a greater measure of force and truth to this "innocent" compromise.

The British Prime Minister ignores in his so-called compromise proposal a series of basic historical and political facts, of which it is quite inconceivable that he, as a man who has headed the British Foreign Office for many years, could fail to be aware.

1) History does not begin with the United Nations General Assembly's resolution of November 29, 1947.

The Jewish people will always remember—and remember in gratitude and esteem—that thirty years before that United Nations General Assembly, the British Government, under the leadership of Lloyd George and Balfour, and with active cooperation of the President of the United States, Woodrow Wilson, acknowledged the historical connection between the Jewish people and the land of Israel. And this connection did not come into existence as a result of that Declaration; the opposite was the case. This connection was in existence throughout the generations, and we

live in our land as of right and Israel was in existence in this country in a period when human history knew nothing of the existence of America or Britain. And Jerusalem was the capital of Israel when the world was unaware of the existence of London, Moscow or Paris.

2) The British Government was the only non-Arab state which declared at the United Nations General Assembly as early as September 26, 1948 that she would not implement the United Nations resolutions on the Palestine problem. The British Government acted according to this declaration, thereby encouraging, directly or indirectly, the armed opposition of the Arab States to these resolutions. It refused to hand over the administration of Palestine during the transition period to the U.N. Commission, and abandoned the country to chaos. Only the establishment of the Government of Israel on May 14, 1948, eight hours before the British withdrawal, saved the Jewish Community from annihilation and the country as a whole from ruin.

3) The Arab States—Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Transjordan and Saudi Arabia—which, according to Sir Anthony Eden, take their stand on the U.N. resolutions of November 29, 1947—did not content themselves with public pronouncements about their disagreement with and opposition to the U.N. resolutions; they invaded the country with their armies immediately after the departure of the Mandatory Government and engaged in a war of annihilation against that State of Israel, the re-establishment of which had been decided upon by more than two-thirds of the members of the United Nations. The United Kingdom and the other member states of the United Nations then did not raise a finger to save the young state and its small people (which then numbered only about 650,000/ ^{souls}). Moreover, British officers, who then headed the Arab Legion, and British arms in Egypt, Iraq and the other Arab countries, played a considerable and predominating part in the shelling of Jerusalem, and would have destroyed it

but for the supreme heroism of its Jewish inhabitants and the devotion of our sons and daughters who successfully repelled the attacks

lives.

The invasion of the Arab States has made all the U.N. resolutions on Palestine null and void. They cannot be brought back to life anymore than can the thousands of Jewish defenders who gave their lives for the salvation of their people and the renewal of its freedom.

4) The U.N. General Assembly never decided to do what Sir Anthony Eden now proposes—to increase the areas of the neighbouring states (Egypt, Transjordan, Syria and Lebanon) at the expense of the land of Israel. This is a fantastic suggestion, which did not enter anybody's mind at the U.N. General Assembly. Palestine territory was to be handed over to the neighbouring states. Sir Anthony Eden's proposals, in effect amount to the dismemberment of the State of Israel and the grant of a reward to the Arab aggressors of 1948.

The only state in the Middle East entitled to redress for the criminal attack of the Arab States in 1948 is the State of Israel. Israel was attacked by her neighbours. Egypt, Transjordan, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Saudi Arabia were the aggressors, and these countries still continue their war against Israel by other means: boycott, blockade and the organization of bands of saboteurs and murderers who are sent from time to time into Israel territory. This fact of aggression against Israel by the Arab States is still fresh in the memory of our generation all over the world.

The fact that is in contradiction to the U.N. resolutions is the presence of the Egyptian army in the Gaza Strip.

The second fact that is in contradiction to the U.N. resolutions is the annexation by the Transjordan Government of a considerable part of western Palestine—the Old City of Jerusalem, Hebron, Nablus, etc. The British Government, and I believe only the British Government, recognized this annexation in April 1950, completely ignoring the U.N. resolutions. If Sir Anthony Eden does not consider that the armistice agreements of 1949 are binding upon both sides, and if he is correct in his contention that it is not right that U.N. resolutions should be ignored, then Egypt should immediately leave the Gaza Strip and Transjordan should

When I presented the new Government to the Knesseth on November 2nd, a fortnight ago, I announced that "we do not covet a single inch of foreign soil. But as long as we live we will not permit anyone to rob us of a single inch of our land."

This is the considered and determined policy of the Government of Israel. Accordingly we do not see in Sir Anthony Eden's proposal a way for the resolution of the conflict in the Middle East, but a factor making for its intensification.

My proposal for a direct meeting with any of the Arab rulers in order to achieve a mutual settlement, without any prior conditions, which I announced a fortnight ago in the Knesseth, still stands. There is room for local frontier rectifications agreeable and beneficial for both sides, carried out as a result of mutual agreement. But the British Prime Minister's proposals for the truncation of the territory of Israel, means giving a reward to the aggressors. The Government of Israel will not conduct any negotiations on this basis.