

COPY OF LETTER

ADDRESSED BY

MR. SAM WATSON

TO Mr. J. Griffiths

Mr. Attlee

Mr. Morrison

Mr. Gaitskell

Mr. H. McNeil,

etc.

NO 03351

30th October, 1953.

Dear .....

I understand my friend, the Israeli Ambassador, Mr. Elath, has been to see you about the Anglo-Egyptian negotiations that are taking place and the need for us to secure certain assurances from Egypt that peace in that part of the world should be completely safeguarded.

May I add my humble plea in this connection, as you know I am a great believer in the greatness of the new state of Israel.

Together with Yugoslavia, I consider her to be one of the bastions of social democracy, and so necessary to our own survival that anything we can do to allow her to develop in peace and security should be done.

A nation that turns sand into soil, and upholds the best traditions of democracy, has neither the urge for nor the spirit of expansion and war.

To make two blades of grass grow where none grew before is a service to mankind, and as such should receive our economic and political support.

I would be the last to claim that mistakes have not been made by Israel, the Arab States, or by Britain and America, but I earnestly hope that we do not make the tragic mistake of misunderstanding the importance of Israel to these ideals and beliefs for which we have struggled so hard and to which none has made a bigger contribution than you.

The real aim is and should be peace in the Middle East, but I doubt very much whether this can be accomplished unless the negotiators acting for Britain make it clear beyond doubt that certain safeguards are essential for Israel.

We cannot, and indeed it would be wrong to, impede the national aspirations of Egypt. She has certain claims which must be respected, but we are entitled to expect that in the progress towards genuine national ideals she will be called upon to grant to others what she expects herself, namely proper safeguards for peaceful development and economic security.

A rampant Nationalism in Egypt, with encouragement from the other Arab States, could engulf the new state of Israel in deadly combat, which would cause untold suffering and misery. And if Israel went down in defeat (for she would fight to the last rather than surrender) it would be in part a defeat for social democracy.

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It is surely not too much to request that the following safeguards should be forthcoming:-

1. That the military base should not be re-activated if we leave, and on no account must it be used as a base against Israel.
2. That all nations in times of peace must have full and unimpeded access through the Suez Canal.
3. That if we must supply arms to Egypt, we should make it a condition that these arms shall not be used against Israel.
4. That until an agreement is reached through the United Nations or some other authority, securing peace between Israel and the Arab States, Israel should not be placed in an inferior armed position to Egypt.
5. That every effort should be made to bring about peace in the Middle East, and to emphasise to General Neguib and his supporters that any attempt to use force against Israel, either by economic sanctions or military expeditions, will be opposed by Britain.

In the present world situation the need for Britain and Israel and America to draw close together was never more urgent. The halt in the expansion of totalitarianism is only temporary, but the dynamic cannot stay put.

The totalitarian states are buying time with the object of increasing the tempo of expansion at the appropriate time. We need, the democratic world needs, all the help and support we can get if we are to come through the present temporary "change of heart" successfully.

We cannot sit in the grandstand watching our periphery forces being weakened. That luxury has long since passed us by. Geography, trade, political beliefs, and the pressure of military totalitarianism does not warrant any respite, and I would most earnestly urge that you use your great influence to secure for Israel such safeguards as will enable her people to assist in the task of building a democracy which will bring hope to millions of people in the Middle East, and will be a sure friend and supporter of all we in the English-Speaking World hold dear.

I hope you will forgive me writing in this strain, but I have the feeling (which I cannot express in words) that unless we help Israel to overcome her economic problems and stand side by side with her in her claim for peace and security, we will help forward the cause of totalitarianism and weaken the foundations of social democracy.

Yours sincerely,

.....S.W.

P.S. I am writing a similar letter to other friends.