

ל אמן: ספר א"י ספרייה 102
000 03558

סיפורה של שליחות — 1950—1956

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מיבצע-כנרת קטל, כמובן, כל סיכוי לתשובה חיובית על בקשתנו לנשק, אפילו היתה תשובה כזאת קרובה לבוא. הקהילה הבינלאומית נאחזה חלילה ושרת שקע בדיכאון. גולדה מאיר, שרת-העבודה, הגיעה אותו לילה לניו-יורק למסע נאומים ואישרה כי לא היתה כל התייעצות מוקדמת לא עם משרד-החוץ ולא עם שרים אחרים. בן-גוריון טיכס עצה עם עצמו בלבד. שרת סבור היה כי קביעת המועד מצד בן-גוריון גילתה, לכל המוטב, אדישות למאמצים הדיפלומטיים שלו, שאחרי הכל הוזמנו על-ידי הממשלה; במקרה הגרוע ביותר, כך סבר שרת כמדומה, היה משהו מכיוון מתחת לסף-ההכרה בפעולה ששללה ממנו תקוה קלושה לנצחון דיפלומטי אישי. בשובו לישראל עתיד היה לומר, בקורטוב של הגומה, ש"אפילו השטן לא היה יכול לבחור במועד גרוע מזה או בהקשר גרוע מזה לפעולה שכזאת".

הרגשתי-אני היא שאם היה עוד צל של אפשרות לשיתוף-פעולה מצד שרת עם בן-גוריון הרי עלה אותו סיכוי בלהבות בלילה ההוא בגליל. גם אני מופלא היה הדבר מבינתי איך יכול היה בן-גוריון ליישב שני קווי-פעולה. מצד אחד, הרי ביקש משרת שיעשה מאמץ גדול כדי להשיג פריצת-דרך לגבי בקשתנו לנשק. מצד שני, נתן היתר למיבצע צבאי שהדיו עזים עד כדי כך שלא יגיחו כל מקום לתשובה חיובית. סבור הייתי כי נפלה טעות בשיקול. אמרתי כך בגלוי במכתב ארוך ששלחתי לבן-גוריון בינואר 1956 לאחר שעברנו את המסלול השגור של דיון וגיגוי במועצת-הבטחון. על-ידי מזכירו קיבלתי תשובה מיידית שבה נאמר, "אני מבין בהחלט דאגתך ביחס למיבצע-כנרת. מודה אני ומתוודה שגם אני התחלתי לפקפק בחכמה שבדבר. אך כשקראתי הגוסס המלא של הסניגוריה המזהירה שלך על פעולתנו במועצת-הבטחון הופגו כל ספקותי. שיכנעת אותי שאחרי הכל היה הדין עמנו".

נראה היה לי כי בתשובה הזאת השובבה קימעה התקרב בן-גוריון לחרטה ככל שצפוי הייתי לזפות בה מצדו. הדיון שלי עם ירושלים לא היה לימוד-זכות על הדיפלומטיה כנגד הצרכים הצבאיים. היתה התנגשות בין שני צרכים צבאיים — הצורך בתגמול והצורך למועד ארוך בנשק-מגן. נדמה היה לי כי היעד לטווח קצר זכה לנצחון שלא-כדין על מטרותינו ארוכות-הטווח.

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My own feeling is that whatever remnants existed of Sharett's ability to work with Ben Gurion went up in flames in Galilee that night. I, too, found it impossible to understand how Ben Gurion could reconcile two such lines of action. On the one hand he had asked Sharett to make a big effort to secure a breakthrough on our arms request. On the other hand, he had authorized a military operation of such strong repercussion as to make an affirmative answer inconceivable. I thought that an error of judgment had been made. I said so frankly in a long letter to Ben Gurion in January 1956 after we had gone through the routine of discussion and condemnation in the Security Council. I got an immediate reply through his secretary saying: "I fully understand your concern about the Kinneret operation. I must confess that I, too, began to have my doubts about the wisdom of it. But when I read the full text of your brilliant defense of our action in the Security Council, all my doubts were set at rest. You have convinced me that we were right, after all."

I regarded this somewhat mischievous reply as being as close to repentance as I was likely to secure from Ben Gurion. My discussion with Jerusalem was not a defense of diplomacy against military needs. There was a clash between two military needs—the need for retaliation and the long-term need for defensive arms. It seemed to me that the short-term objective had triumphed unduly over our long-term aims.

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By now the tormenting pressure of raids by Egyptian and Jordanian forces and *fedayeen* groups had taken heavy toll of our nervous energy. It also provoked deep divisions within the Israeli leadership about the scope, range and intensity of armed retaliation. Ben-Gurion and Sharett were often at variance on this issue. Even more serious was the development of independent initiatives in international policy by Defense Ministry officials, without the coordination with the Foreign Ministry that would have been natural if personal tensions between the two ministers had not become extreme.

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