

few weeks, and the experience should make us wiser in the future.

120. Mrs. MEIR (Israel): I should like first on behalf of the Israel delegation to express to Prince Wan Waithayakon our warm felicitations on his election to the high office which he now occupies. His unanimous election is a tribute not only to his country and to the peoples of Asia, but to him personally, in recognition of the long and distinguished service which he has rendered to the cause of international understanding, and of the high qualities of chairmanship which he has shown in previous sessions.

121. The past year has been an important milestone in the progress of the United Nations. It has been marked by notable developments both in its composition and in its responsibilities. Our membership is at last approaching that ideal of universality to which my delegation has always subscribed. Many European nations, which had until now been unrepresented among us, have at last been admitted in our numbers. At the same time, the swift process of African-Asian emancipation is reflected by the addition to our body of many countries which, like my own, had until very recent years been under colonial or mandatory tutelage.

122. We, on the western limits of the Asian continent, are identified with these other countries of Asia in their struggle for independence, and we have rejoiced with them in their ultimate triumph. We look to them, out of their own experience, to have understanding for our desire and determination to maintain our national existence in peace and independence.

123. In our belief that the interest of the world community will best be served by a maximum representation within this body, we have not refrained from voting in favour of countries where our own good will has yet to be reciprocated. It is our assumption and hope that every State which accepts the privileges and responsibilities of membership of our Organization will abide by the basic principles of its Charter, which enjoins upon every Member the duty to live in peace and friendship with every other Member.

124. I shall inevitably be obliged to concentrate most of my statement on the political problems which directly affect the people of our area, and which have taken up so much of the time of this Assembly in the past weeks. If I fail to deal with other important problems, it is due to no lack of interest or attention on our part to matters which affect the world community in general.

125. On the matter of Hungary, my delegation has already given expression to its position in the statement made and in the votes recorded. We shall express ourselves on other issues in the relevant Committees.

126. I should, however, like to take this opportunity to refer to one aspect of United Nations work which is, I believe, a source of satisfaction to all of us: that of the Technical Assistance Administration.

127. The work of building up and reconstructing our land and integrating our immigrant population has continued uninterrupted despite the heavy tensions and difficulties of the past years. Our relations with the United Nations and with the specialized agencies in the field of technical assistance are highly valued by us. It has been a fruitful association. We have received the advice and help of experts in various fields, from health and labour relations to productivity and taxation techniques.

128. We are glad to pay tribute to the manner in which the officials concerned have carried out their assignments and to their devotion to the ideal of international co-operation and mutual help amongst nations. At the same time we, for our part, take some pride in the fact that we are not only recipients of international technical assistance, but have also been able to make a modest contribution in supplying expert help to other countries in certain fields in which we have acquired a more specialized experience.

129. On the broader scene, I would like also to add the following on a topic which affects the very destinies and existence of mankind. During the last decade the world has suddenly become aware of the invisible danger lurking in the background: the possible biological effect of atomic radiation, a danger which may cause irreparable harm to many generations to come.

130. Many countries of the world are vigorously carrying out scientific investigations of the various facets of the new and extremely complicated problem of radioactive contamination. However, the United Nations bears a particular responsibility in this matter, since it has the authority as well as the technical means to deal also with the political problems involved—such as the control of tests of nuclear weapons.

131. A few days ago, the representative of Norway suggested to this Assembly [598th meeting] that, as a first step, any planned tests, expected to cause measurable world-wide radioactive fall-out, should be registered with the United Nations. My delegation was impressed by this proposal, and hope that it will receive the attention of the appropriate organs of the United Nations.

132. The desire for peace is deeply rooted among the people of Israel. And when, just nine years ago, the United Nations General Assembly, by more than a two-thirds vote, adopted its resolution [181 (II)] that a Jewish State be established in Palestine, our profoundest wish was that the hand of friendship which we then extended to our Arab neighbours would be accepted. Can it be doubted that, had that then been done, the benefits to all the peoples of our region resulting from the peaceful, co-operative endeavour of the Arab nations and of Israel would have been of the highest order?

133. It is revealing to recall the reactions on that very day of the representatives of Iraq and Syria respectively to that resolution of 29 November 1947. The Iraqi representative said:

“I wish to put on record that Iraq does not recognize the validity of this decision, will reserve freedom of action towards its implementation . . .”¹

The Syrian representative, referring to the General Assembly resolution, declared: “My country will never recognize such a decision.” And he went on to say: “Gentlemen, the Charter is dead.”²

These statements were echoed by the representatives of all the other Arab Member States.

134. On that same day we in Jerusalem heard of the decision of the United Nations. As the head of the Political Department of the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem, it fell to my lot to address a huge demonstration there of our people and to appeal to the Arabs in Israel and in the neighbouring countries: “Our hand is of-

¹ *Official Records of the General Assembly, Second Session, 128th plenary meeting, p. 1427.*

² *Ibid.*

ferred to you in peace and friendship." A few hours later we buried our first victims of Arab attacks.

135. Six months passed, and on 14 May 1948, in pursuance of the General Assembly resolution, Israel was proclaimed an independent State. Within twelve hours, Tel Aviv was subjected to bombardment by Egyptian planes.

136. The story of the invasion of reborn Israel by the armies of the Arab countries is too well known to need repetition. But in view of the new-found enthusiasm of Egypt, witnessed by us here in the past few weeks, for the resolutions of the United Nations, it is worth while to recall the statement made to the Security Council at that time by the Egyptian representative when, after battle had raged for eleven days against Israel, the Council called for a cease-fire. He said:

"The Egyptian Government regrets that it cannot abide by a recommendation of the Security Council to cease fire in Palestine. . . ."⁸

And Egypt and the other Arab countries did not comply with the resolution of the United Nations General Assembly. Israel was left to its own fate. If Israel is alive today, it is due solely to the heroic self-defence of its people, young and old.

137. If I have ventured briefly to recall the events of eight and nine years ago, it was to emphasize three things: first, the role played by the United Nations in the establishment of Israel; second, the immediate attempt at its destruction by the Arab States—all but one of which were already then Members of the United Nations; and third, Israel's profound and unequivocal desire for the establishment of peaceful relations with its Arab neighbours.

138. The same day, in May 1948, that Egyptian bombs began fall on Tel-Aviv, the first Jewish refugee ship from the camps in Germany reached the shores of Israel. Six million of the seven and a quarter million Jews of Europe, outside of the Soviet Union, had been slaughtered by the Nazis; and now the survivors were coming back not as the banned "illegals" of the mandatory régime, but to the greeting prophesied by Jeremiah: "Thy children shall come back to thy border."

139. These two episodes are symbolic of the life of Israel since its inception—rescue and reconstruction, menaced constantly by the destructive efforts of its neighbours.

140. Israel's people went forth into the desert or struck roots in stony hillsides to establish new villages, to build roads and houses and schools and hospitals; marauders, later organized as *fedayeen*, entering from Egypt and Jordan, were sent in to kill and destroy.

141. Israel dug wells, brought water in pipes from great distances: Egypt sent in *fedayeen* to blow up the wells and the pipes.

142. Jews from Yemen brought in their sick, undernourished children with a tradition that two out of five die; that number has been cut down to one out of twenty-five. While we were feeding those babies and curing their diseases, the *fedayeen* were sent in to throw bombs at children in synagogues and grenades into baby homes.

143. This parallel went on for eight long years, day in, day out, and night after night. Men, women and children—the remnant who survived the Hitler atrocities,

and the more than 400,000 Jews from Arab-speaking countries, broken in body and spirit; people seeking to rebuild their lives, the new settlers of the Negev desert—these were the objects of the terror to which we were subjected.

144. For eight years, now, Israel has been subjected to the unremitting violence of physical assault and to an equally unremitting intent to destroy our country economically through blockade, through boycott and through lawless interference with the development of our natural resources. Since Israel's efforts to repulse the concerted Arab onslaught in 1948, my country has had no respite from hostile acts and loudly proclaimed threats of destruction.

145. It would be idle to pretend that the present situation can be discussed without regard to this background, or that the causes that precipitated Israel's recent security action can be ignored. If this Assembly is genuinely determined to restore peace to the Middle East, it must first determine from which source aggressive policies derive. It will serve little purpose to isolate one link in the chain of circumstances, to thrust the weight of resolutions upon one incident without considering the total effects.

146. Unless the United Nations is prepared to use its influence to prevail upon the countries of the Middle East to negotiate a fundamental solution, the Middle Eastern cauldron will continue to seethe and the region will be a powder-keg for others anxious to exploit its inflammable possibilities. Not only the well-being of Israel, but perhaps the peace of mankind, demand that the question of responsibility for unrest in this part of the world be squarely faced and the causes of tension removed.

147. Israel is ringed by hostile States which invoke the terms of the 1949 Armistice Agreements when they find it convenient, and which flout those agreements when they find them oppressive. They refuse to sign peace treaties, clinging desperately to the discredited theory of a "belligerent status" against Israel, while at the same time piously demanding the protections of peace for themselves. As long ago as 12 June 1951, an official Egyptian representative defended his country's obstruction of Israel shipping through the Suez Canal with the following extraordinary words:

"We are exercising a right of war. We are still legally at war with Israel. An armistice does not put an end to a state of war. It does not prohibit a country from exercising certain rights of war."

148. We know from agonizing experience what these "certain rights of war" are. They include indiscriminate terror, arson and economic attack. At the same time, any Israel effort to stop murder and pillage, to make existence tolerable for its beleaguered population, is met with an outcry about the violation of peace, a peace which exists only in so far as it accords with the convenience of those who have broken it. A comfortable division has been made: the Arab States unilaterally enjoy the "rights of war"; Israel has the unilateral responsibility of keeping the peace.

149. But belligerency is not a one-way street. Is it surprising if a people labouring under this monstrous distinction should finally become restive and at last seek a way of rescuing its life from the perils of regulated war conducted against it from all sides?

150. For the people of Israel, this paradox is not merely a question of logic or semantics. Among the

⁸ Official Records of the Security Council, Third Year, 305th meeting, p. 46.

“rights of war” exercised against Israel has been the *fedayeen* campaign unleashed by Colonel Nasser in the summer of 1955. You know who these *fedayeen* are. They are gunmen, trained by Egyptian army officers and recruited chiefly from among the Arab population in the Gaza Strip, which was captured by the Egyptian army when it invaded Israel in 1948. *Fedayeen* gangs have been planted in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. Very heavy concentrations of these *fedayeen* units were stationed in the Sinai desert. Israel’s narrow borders and long frontiers make it particularly vulnerable to terror squads who cross the border at night with the sole objective of indiscriminately shooting or bombing any Israel house, or any man, woman or child.

151. The murders committed by the *fedayeen* were hailed by the Cairo radio on 31 August 1955 with words which left no doubt as to the identity of the organizers of these outrages:

“Weep, O Israel, because Egypt’s Arabs have already found their way to Tel-Aviv. The day of extermination draws near. There shall be no more complaints or protests to the United Nations or the Armistice Commission. There will be no peace on the borders, because we demand the death of Israel.”

152. The slaughter of six children and their teacher in the agricultural school of Shafir, the bombing of a wedding in the Negev village of Pattish: these are examples familiar to the world of the kind of heroic exploits so lustily applauded by Colonel Nasser when he addressed a *fedayeen* unit in the Gaza Strip in the following terms:

“You have proven by your deeds that you are heroes upon whom our entire country can depend. The spirit with which you entered the land of the enemy must be spread”.

153. The list of daily murders, of acts of robbery and sabotage, can be indefinitely extended. But let me only remind this Assembly of the events of 23 September of this year on another front, when a group of archaeologists was fired upon in Ramat Rachel from the Jordanian border. Five Israelis were killed and sixteen wounded. The next day two more Israelis—a man and a woman—working in their fields in different parts of the country, were killed by Jordanian units.

154. When, in response, on 25 September, deterrent action was taken at Husan by an Israel army unit, this action was officially described by the United Nations representative as “unprovoked”.

155. May I say that the people of Israel cannot emulate, nor do they understand, this legalistic detachment. When their peaceable fellow-citizens are murdered in cold blood, in the course of their daily occupations, they are provoked, and they demand that their Government reflect that sense of provocation by affording them the protection which every State owes its citizens and which international bodies are apparently unable to provide.

156. If moral distinctions are to be made, then let me suggest that controlled military actions—with limited and well-defined military or police objectives—are less abhorrent, even to the most sensitive conscience, than wanton and indiscriminate murder which strikes not at military targets, but solely at civilians.

157. The campaign of terror unleashed against Israel was not stopped by the intervention of the United Nations. The cease-fire secured by the Secretary-General last April was not honoured. Instead, despite Israel’s exemplary compliance with the cease-fire agreement,

violence was immediately resumed and increased on every border.

158. Every sign pointed to the fact that the Egyptian dictator was about to realize his cherished and fully-publicized ambition of a second round aimed at destroying Israel. He had amassed huge stocks of heavy armaments, secured largely from the Soviet Union and affiliated countries. He had concluded treaties with Jordan and Syria according to which the military forces of those countries were placed under the Egyptian High Command. We knew of large concentrations of armour and *fedayeen* in the Egyptian bases in the Sinai desert and the Gaza Strip directly along the borders of Israel. There was a minimum of reticence about the proposed “extermination” of the small neighbouring State.

159. We recognized the symptoms. Within the lifetime of nearly every person here present, a dictator arose who, like this disciple of his, informed the world in advance of his bloodthirsty plans. The ashes of the crematoria, the carnage of millions, a world in ruin, testified to the fidelity with which he kept his promises.

160. Such a lesson should not be forgotten. Certainly the people of Israel are not likely to forget what the threat of total extermination means.

161. It is not my intention to enter here into a description of the acts of hostility of the Egyptian Government in many other fields. But the Assembly cannot remain indifferent, above all, to the fact that ever since the Security Council resolution of 1 September 1951 [S/2322] was adopted—and, indeed, before that—the Government of Israel has patiently striven to solve the grave international problem of a double sea blockade imposed against Israel by Egypt in the Suez Canal and in the Straits of Agaba. The Security Council confirmed the illegality of this blockade and rejected the Egyptian argument of a “state of war” by which Egypt sought to justify the blockade. The Council ordered Egypt to terminate these practices.

162. In October 1956, the Security Council repeated its call for free passage without any discrimination, “overt or covert” [S/3675].

163. These decisions have been flouted. At the same time Egypt and the other Arab countries have sought by every means, direct, and indirect, by organized boycott and by indiscriminate threats and attempted blackmail of countries friendly to Israel, to cripple Israel’s commerce and to strangle its economic life. It has extended that boycott of Israel even to the agencies of this very Organization, the United Nations.

164. We are a small people in a small barren land which we have revived with our labour and our love. The odds against us are heavy; the disparity of forces is great; we have, however, no alternative but to defend our lives and freedom and the right to security. We desire nothing more than peace, but we cannot equate peace merely with an apathetic readiness to be destroyed. If hostile forces gather for our proposed destruction, they must not demand that we provide them with ideal conditions for the realization of their plans. Nor should it be permitted that the sincere desire for peace, shared by so many, should be used as the shelter for such preparations.

165. The action of the Israel army in the unpopulated Sinai desert served to disrupt well-laid Egyptian plans to liquidate new bases of active hostility against us. The texts of captured Egyptian military documents which Israel presented to the Security Council on 15 November [S/3742] indicate how imminent was the

attack. I shall not repeat the long and detailed directives to the Egyptian commanders. But it would be salutary for all of us not to forget the introduction, which read:

“Every commander is to prepare himself and his subordinates for the inevitable campaign with Israel for the purpose of fulfilling our exalted aim which is the annihilation of Israel and its destruction in the shortest possible time in the most brutal and cruel battles.”

166. I wonder if there are any other countries represented in this Assembly which live under similar conditions. And I wonder whether there is a people in the world prepared to commit itself to a policy that, if placed in Israel's situation, it would take no action in self-defence.

167. Is it conceivable that this Assembly should view the situation in Israel preceding 29 October 1956 as one of peace? Why should acts of cowardly murder of unarmed men, women and children, carried out for years, evoke less resentment than an open military operation against nests of *fedayeen* and bases of hostile forces?

168. The practical problems which, it is claimed, divide the Arabs and Israel are not beyond solution. The world, has, for instance, known and still knows refugee problems of far wider scope than that of the Arab refugees. In Korea, in India and Pakistan, in Greece and Turkey, in Europe after the Second World War, these numerically far larger problems have been or are being successfully handled. Who more than the Jewish people have endured the tragic fate of the refugee? If today there is no bitter Jewish refugee problem in the world, it is because Israel, supported by the solidarity of the Jewish people everywhere, and with the aid of friendly Governments, has largely solved it.

169. There need never have been a Palestine Arab refugee problem at all, had it not been created by the action of the Arab States. Given the co-operation of those same Arab States, this distressing human problem could readily have been solved and can be solved today. In its solution Israel, as has been previously stated on behalf of my Government, is prepared to play its part.

170. But while Israel was absorbing Jewish refugees to a number exceeding that of all the Arab refugees—and hundreds of thousands of those whom we absorbed came from those same Arab lands—the Arab States for their part, with the exception of Jordan, were erecting an iron wall between themselves and these kinsmen of theirs. And since then they have lost no opportunity of exploiting these people as a political weapon in their war against Israel.

171. The fundamental problem in the whole situation is the systematically organized Arab hostility against Israel. Arab enmity towards Israel is not a natural phenomenon. It is artificial—fostered and nurtured. It is not, as has been here alleged, Israel which is an instrument of colonialism. It is the Israel-Arab conflict which keeps the area at the mercy of dangerously contending outside forces. Only by the liquidation of that conflict will the people of the region be able to work out their own destinies in independence and hope. Only in that prospect lies hope for a brighter future of equality and progress for all the peoples concerned. If hatred is abandoned as a principle of Arab policies, everything becomes possible.

172. Over the over again the Israel Government has held out its hand in peace to its neighbours. But to no

avail. At the ninth session of the General Assembly, the Israel representative suggested [491st meeting] that if the Arab countries were not yet ready for peace it would be useful, as a preliminary or transitory stage, to conclude agreements committing the parties to policies of non-aggression and pacific settlement. The reply was outright rejection. Our offer to meet the representatives of all or any of the Arab countries still stands. Never have we heard an echo from across our borders to our call for peace.

173. The concept of annihilating Israel is a legacy of Hitler's war against the Jewish people, and it is no mere coincidence that the soldiers of Nasser had an Arabic translation of *Mein Kampf* in their knapsacks. Those concerned sincerely with peace and freedom in the world would, I think, have been happier had some more ennobling literature been offered these men as a guide. We are convinced that these dangerous seeds have not yet succeeded in corrupting the Arab peoples. This fatal game is one which the Arab political leaders should halt in the interests of the Arab peoples themselves.

174. I wish at this point to renew an appeal already heard from this rostrum to Egypt to desist from the shameful and disastrous policy recently initiated of wholesale persecution of its Jewish population.

175. I shall not elaborate on the mass of detailed information now reaching us in this connexion, some of which has been incorporated in a memorandum [A/3412] which it was my honour to transmit to the Assembly on 1 December—the sordid and disgraceful story of deportations and concentration camps, of indignity and spoliation, of the holding of hostages to ensure silence on the part of those expelled, and of callous brutality. I can only hope that the shocked conscience of the world will have its effect on the rulers of Egypt and that they will yet desist, and desist at once, from the measures on which they have embarked.

176. What ought to be done now? Are we, in our relations with Egypt, to go back to an armistice régime which has brought anything but peace and which Egypt has derisively flouted? Shall the Sinai desert again breed nests of *fedayeen* and of aggressive armies poised for the assault? Must the tragedy be re-enacted in the tinder-box of the Middle East? The peace of our region and perhaps of more than our region hangs on the answers which will be given to these questions.

177. In a letter of 4 November 1956 to the Secretary-General of the United Nations [A/3291], we put the following questions:

“Does Egypt still adhere to the position declared and maintained by it over years that it is in a state of war with Israel?”

“Is Egypt prepared to enter into immediate negotiations with Israel with a view to the establishment of peace between the two countries as indicated in the *aide-memoire* [A/3279] of the Government of Israel of 4 November 1956 to the Secretary-General of the United Nations?”

“Does Egypt agree to cease economic boycott against Israel and lift the blockade of Israel shipping in the Suez Canal?”

“Does Egypt undertake to recall *fedayeen* gangs under its control in other Arab countries?”

178. Is it too much to expect clear, simple, binding answers? Are we, and not only we but you fellow Members of the United Nations, to take as an answer the announcement on Cairo radio, on 2 December 1956,

repeated again later in the day, that: "The *fedayeen* command has decided to launch a fierce campaign within Israel during the coming winter season"? Can the United Nations make itself responsible for the restoration, once again, on our southern borders, of murder and sabotage units pursuing a one-sided belligerency?

179. ~~The blockade in the Gulf of Aqaba is now terminated. The battery of guns installed a few years ago by the Egyptian Government on the desolate and empty shore at the southern tip of the Sinai peninsula for the sole illegal purpose of preventing the passage into the gulf of Israel shipping no longer exists. Would it not be grotesque for an international body to permit the creation anew of the conditions which made that blockade possible; or to permit Egypt to perpetuate unhindered its parallel blockade in Suez? We cannot believe that that is the case. To do so would constitute a distortion of the very meaning and essence of the Charter.~~

180. My Government has undertaken an obligation to withdraw its forces from Egyptian territory, and we are implementing it. But we must know—I think the Assembly must know—what will be the role of the United Nations Force after the Israel forces are withdrawn. We are certain that it is not the intention of the Assembly to recreate the conditions laden with the identical dangers which produced the explosion of 29 October.

181. May I remind the representatives of the Soviet Union that there was a time, not so long ago, when they understood Israel's right to self-defence and appreciated the true disposition of forces in the Middle East? Mr. Jacob Malik declared in the Council in 1948 in words which are as apt today as the day they were uttered:

"Ever since its birth this State [of Israel] declared that it wished to live in peace and entertain peaceful relations with all its neighbours . . . It is not to blame for the fact that this appeal did not meet with any response from its neighbours."⁴

182. The truth is that, since 1948, when the words of the USSR representative that I have quoted were uttered, nothing has changed in Israel's desire or intentions. We seek, as before, to fulfil our historic mission of rebuilding our land for our harried people and to live in peace with our neighbours. But I say again neither peace nor war can be unilateral. A boundary must be respected by two sides; it cannot be open to *fedayeen* and closed to Israel soldiers.

183. What does Israel want? Its requirements are simple. We wish to be secure against threats to our territorial integrity and national independence. We wish

⁴ Official Records of the Security Council, Third Year, 383rd meeting, p. 22.

to be left alone to pursue the work of developing our country and building a new society founded on social justice and individual liberty. We wish to co-operate with our neighbours for the common good of all the peoples of the region.

184. These objectives do no more than give practical expression to the principles and purpose of our Charter. These are not special claims; they are the aims and policies of all peace-loving Members of the United Nations.

185. I would urge this Assembly to think of the future with the same vigour and insistence that it has dealt with recent events. Can this Assembly leave this subject without raising its voice, with all the authority it carries, in a call to all the Governments of the region immediately to enter into direct negotiations with the purpose of arriving at a peace settlement? We, the people of Israel, believe not only in the necessity but also in the possibility of peace.

186. Only last Wednesday, 28 November, the representative of Egypt, speaking from this rostrum, made the following statement:

"With the great majority of the peoples of the world, Egypt has been saying, and will continue to say, that all nations can and should, for their own good, moral as well as material, live together in equality, freedom and fraternity, and with modern science and its vast potentialities at the service of man, enabling him, carried by the momentum of liberty and faith, to live an infinitely more productive and honourable life." [600th meeting, para. 60.]

With that statement we whole-heartedly concur. We for our part are ready to make of it a practical reality. It is now for Egypt to do the same.

187. The countries of the Middle East are rightly listed in the category of the "under-developed". The standard of living, disease, the illiteracy of the masses of people, the undeveloped lands, desert and swamp—all these cry out desperately for minds, hands, financial means and technical ability. Can we envisage what a state of peace between Israel and its neighbours during the past eight years would have meant for all of us? Can we try to translate fighter planes into irrigation pipes and tractors for the people in these lands? Can we, in our imagination, replace gun emplacements by schools and hospitals? The many hundreds of millions of dollars spent on armaments could surely have been put to a more constructive purpose.

188. Substitute co-operation between Israel and its neighbours for sterile hatred and ardour for destruction, and you give life and hope and happiness to all its peoples.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.