

Ceylon and the UAR



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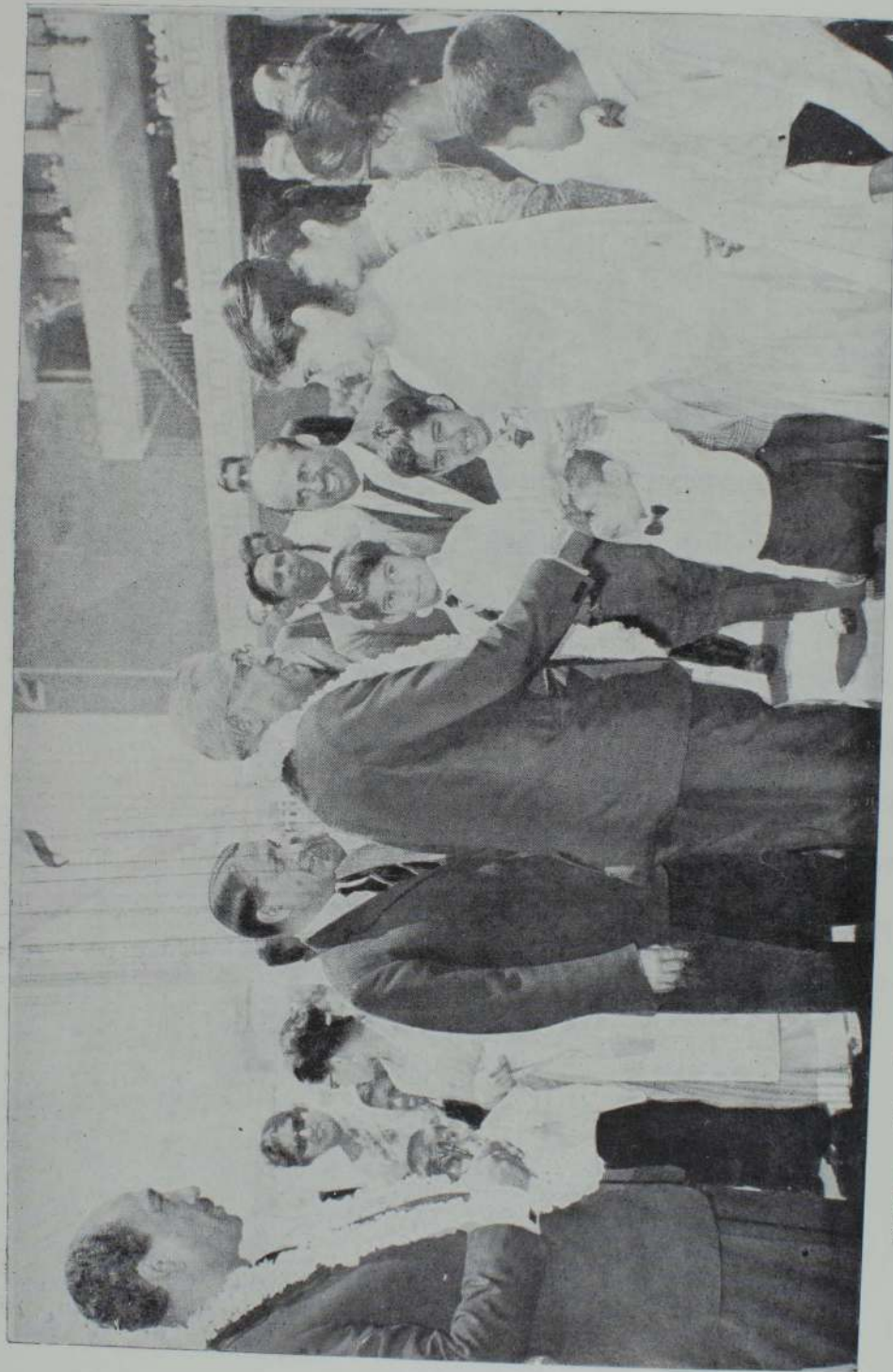
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Members of the Ceylon community in Cairo were among those present at the Cairo airport to greet the Prime Minister when he arrived there to begin his visit to the U. A. R.

Ceylon-Arab Relations— The background

CEYLON has had contacts with the Arab world since ancient times. Arab traders plying the Indian Ocean visited Ceylon for purposes of trade, and through them the products of Ceylon, notably precious stones and spices, found their way to the markets of the West. Ceylon took an active interest in this trade and there is a record of an Embassy sent in the 13th century by a Sinhalese monarch to the Egyptian Court. These contacts in due course led to the establishment of Muslim communities in Ceylon. They have played an illustrious role in the island's history, culture and economy.

In more recent times a sentimental link was established between the U.A.R. and Ceylon when Arabi Pasha, hailed as one of the pioneer leaders of Arab nationalism, was exiled in Ceylon. During his stay in the Island he endeared himself to the local inhabitants and his memory is still recalled with affection.

The contacts between the two countries were further strengthened in 1968 on the occasion of the 1,400th Anniversary of the Revelation of the Holy Quran. The Government of Ceylon declared special festivities on this historic occasion and Ceylon was in fact the only non-Muslim country that issued a special stamp to commemorate the event. Special delegations from Islamic countries were invited and the United Arab Republic delegation was led by H. E. Dr. Abdel Aziz Kamel, Deputy Minister of Wakfs.

The regard in which the Government has held the religious requirements of the Muslim community in the Island has been evident from the assistance it has extended to Muslim pilgrims from Ceylon to Mecca. Since 1967 a Muslim official has been appointed each year during the pilgrim season with the diplomatic rank of Attache, to attend to the needs of the Ceylonese Muslim pilgrims in their holy land.

*Prime Minister's
Press
Conference*

Ceylon and the U.A.R. have closely co-operated with each other in many fields of international action and endeavour. Such co-operation has been the natural product of their common history and their inheritance of common problems in a post-colonial world. The two countries have taken a common stand against Colonialism, Imperialism and Racism. They have been in the forefront of activity in the non-aligned world.

The Prime Minister of Ceylon, Hon. Dudley Senanayake, had this to say on the relations between Ceylon and the U.A.R., at a Press Conference in Cairo on May 30, 1969, at the conclusion of his State Visit to the U. A. R.—

“There are many ties that bind our two countries. Over the centuries there has been intercourse between the two countries in trade. People of this area not only traded over the centuries with our people but a good number of them have settled down in our country and ventured in enterprise and contributed to the community. It is a community of importance in my country and they are developing themselves as a cultural entity in harmony with the national aspirations of our country.

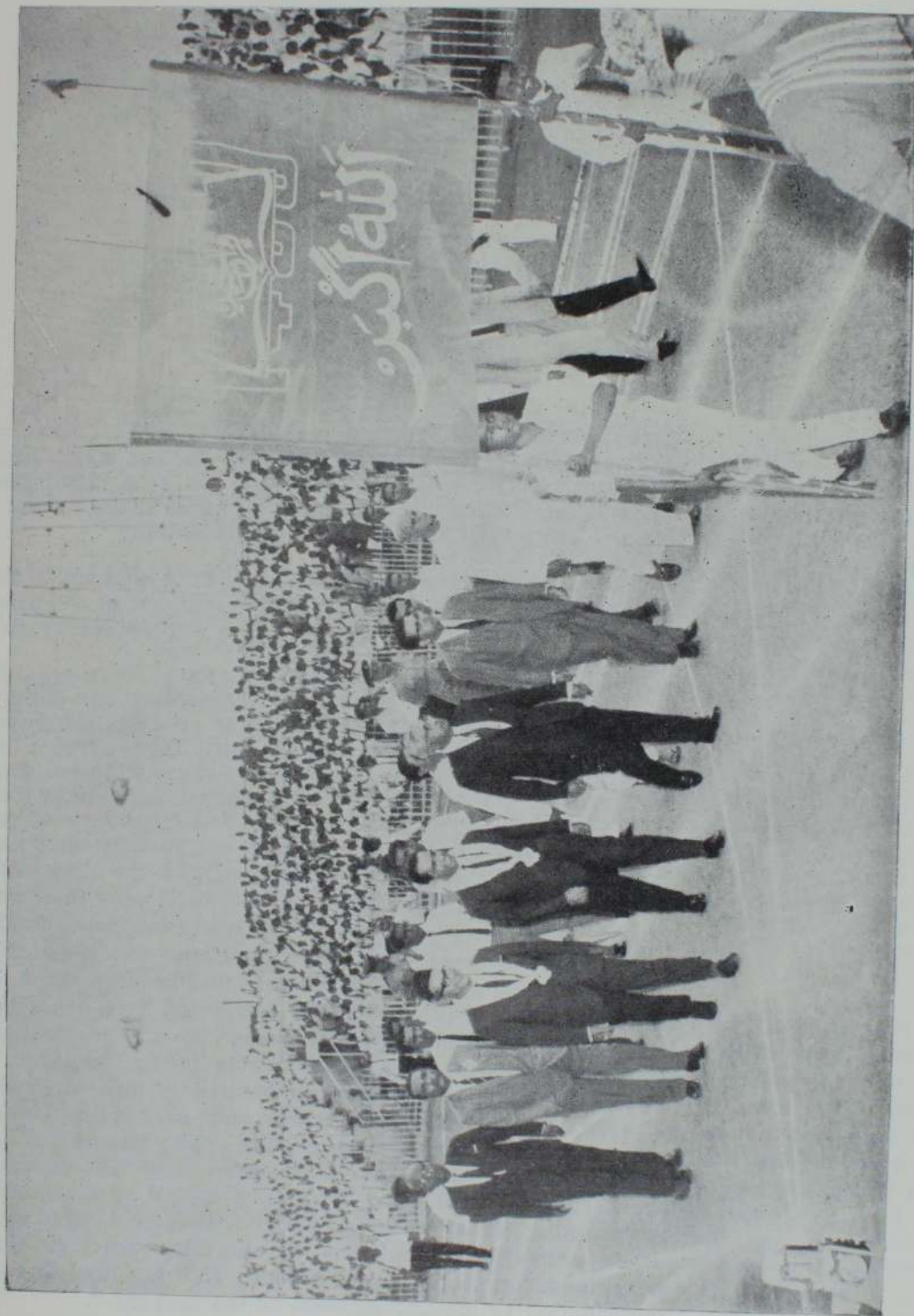
Then again we are both inheritors of ancient history and ancient civilisation. It is true that the civilization of the Nile Valley goes back much further. It goes back to the dawn of the history of civilised man. My country too has a long history and an outstanding civilisation respected in that part of the world. Moreover we both went through a phase of exploitation and subjugation. When the rest of the world in this century and the last was moving forward, through no fault of ours, we were denied that opportunity. Having regained our political independence we are striving to give our peoples the benefit of modern development and technical advances.

Ceylon
Supp
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We both belong to the non-aligned group of nations. So there are many factors we share in common—factors which have been responsible for the goodwill that has been manifested which I know will grow to greater strength in the future. I was therefore very keen to come to this country”.

In reply to a question on the significance of the Muslims in the political set up in Ceylon, the Hon. Prime Minister at the same Press Conference said—

“Well I wouldn’t call them a small group. There are 3 or 4, shall I say, different constituents composing our society. The Sinhalese are the largest, the next group is the Tamil group and the Muslims are quite a fairly large group; but more important than the number is the contribution they have made to the development of the country. Hitherto they have played a big part in the trade and commerce of the country, internal distribution and so on. And of course as I said earlier they have got on very well with the other communities of Ceylon and they have been developing their cultural and religious aspirations quite freely and independently and the Government gives every assistance for their cultural and religious development. Naturally they come in large numbers on pilgrimage to Mecca and in spite of the difficulties we as a country experience in the way of exchange all those facilities are made available to the pilgrims. A person of diplomatic status is appointed to look after the welfare of these people and it was only very recently that we celebrated a historical event—the 1,400 years of the Revelation of the Quran. The celebrations were Government-sponsored and we had the benefit of a visit of a Minister representing the U.A.R.—Dr. Abdel Aziz Kamel, who very kindly accompanied me in my tours in this country. So that they are a very important community that has made a vast contribution to the development of the country.”.



Celebrations to mark the 1,400th anniversary of the Holy Quran were culminated in Ceylon with a mass rally at Colombo's Sugathadasa Stadium. The special delegation from the U. A. R. led by H. E. Dr. Abdel Aziz Kamel, Deputy Minister of Wakfs is seen walking to the dais accompanied by the Prime Minister, Hon. Dudley Senanayake, the Minister of Labour, Hon. M. H. Mohamed and others.

Ceylon's Support for Arab Cause

On the Arab-Israel issue the Government has given positive support to the cause of Arabs. This support has been extended at the United Nations, at other international gatherings and in official governmental statements.

The major aspects of the Arab-Israel issue involve the question of the Palestinian refugees, the rights of navigation through the Suez Canal and the Gulf of Aqaba and, after the outbreak of hostilities on June 5, 1967, the withdrawal of Israel forces from occupied territory. In all these aspects the position of the Ceylon Government, based on recognized principles, has been in line with the Arab position and in accord with the resolutions of the United Nations

On the question of the right of navigation through the Straits of Tiran in the Gulf of Aqaba, the Hon. Prime Minister, in his statement in Parliament on June 2, 1967, supported the UAR position in regard to control of passage through the Straits. He pointed out that the Straits of Tiran were within the territorial waters of the UAR and that up to October, 1956, the UAR had exercised full control over navigation rights through the Straits. After the Israeli invasion of the Sinai Peninsula in October, 1956, and subsequent withdrawal of Israeli forces in March, 1957, a United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) was stationed in the Sinai including a point opposite the Straits of Tiran. This gave the UNEF control over the Straits of Tiran and international shipping had then been allowed free passage through the Straits of Tiran into the Gulf of Aqaba. The Prime Minister affirmed his view that the events after October, 1956, did not change the *status quo* prior to that period when the UAR did in fact control the passage of international shipping through the Straits. (*The full text of the Hon. Prime Minister's statement is at Appendix I*).

*Prime Minister
Supports
Arab Cause
in Canada
and Japan*

In June, 1967 in the course of an official visit to Canada and Japan, after the outbreak of hostilities in the Middle-East the Prime Minister, Hon. Dudley Senanayake, made further statements on the Arab-Israel issue. In these he stood firmly by the principle that the acquisition of territory by force was inadmissible. The Joint Communique issued on June 30, 1967, at the conclusion of his state visit to Japan contained the following paragraph:—

“The two Prime Ministers discussed the crisis in the Middle-East and while observing that hostilities had been brought to an end they noted that the terms of a fair settlement had yet to be realized. The two Prime Ministers agreed that there should be no territorial acquisition as a result of war”.

At a Press Conference in Tokyo he repeated that there could not be an enlargement of territory as a result of the recent hostilities.

In a statement issued on his return to Ceylon from the visits to Canada and Japan the Hon. Prime Minister stated—

“The crisis in the Middle-East was discussed and we were agreed on the principle that no country should be permitted to extend its territory by means of war. We could only hope that the current efforts in the war would bring about a just and honourable peace in that region.”

The Hon. Prime Minister's stand on the Middle-East question was greatly appreciated by the UAR Government which conveyed its thanks officially through the Ceylon Ambassador in Cairo.

Action taken by Ceylon at the UN

When hostilities broke out in the Middle-East on June 5, 1967, instructions were sent to the Ceylon Representative at the United Nations to participate in the emergency session of the General Assembly which had been summoned to consider the crisis. In accordance with instructions given to him, the Ceylon Representative intervened in the debate and made the following points in his statement on June 28, 1967 :—

- (i) Israeli forces should withdraw to positions held by them prior to June 5, 1967.
- (ii) Such withdrawal should be unconditional.
- (iii) Sovereignty of Arab territory must be respected.
- (iv) Any attempt to compel recognition of Israel by the Arab States would amount to a proposal placing the Arab States under duress.
- (v) Ceylon would support the re-establishment of a UN presence in the Middle-East on the basis that such a presence would be accepted on their territories by both Israel and her neighbours.

At this same Session Ceylon was invited to be a member of the Drafting Committee which prepared the "Non-aligned" draft resolution which the Arab States supported.

Ceylon also co-sponsored this Seventeen Power Non-aligned draft resolution. Practically all the Arab delegations expressed their gratitude to our Representative for this action.

The Seventeen Power Non-aligned Draft Resolution—

- (i) Called upon Israel to withdraw immediately its forces to the positions they held prior to June 5, 1967.
- (ii) Requested the Secretary-General to ensure compliance and the direct observance by all parties of all the provisions of the General Armistice Agreement between Israel and the Arab countries.

- (iii) Requested the Secretary-General to designate a Personal Representative who would assist him in securing compliance with the resolution.
- (iv) Called upon all States to render every assistance to the Secretary-General in the implementation of the resolution.
- (v) Requested the Secretary-General to report urgently on Israel's compliance with the terms of the resolution.
- (vi) Requested the Security Council, which was already seized of the question, immediately after the withdrawal of the Israel armed forces had been completed, to consider urgently all aspects of the Middle-East situation and to seek a peaceful solution on all problems.

Unfortunately the resolution was not adopted for lack of sufficient votes and the Arab-Israel question was referred thereafter to the Security Council.

At the UN General Assembly Session in October, 1967, Mr. H. S. Amerasinghe, Ceylon's Permanent Representative, in his statement in the General Debate, strongly supported the Arab position and severely criticised Israel for her actions. He considered as the most disturbing feature of the situation Israel's unabashed determination to retain control over the territory she had acquired by force and to absorb it permanently within her borders by establishing permanent Israeli settlements in it. He drew attention to the aggravation of the refugee problem resulting from the Israeli invasion of Arab territory. Thousands more Arabs had lost their ancestral homes and had been treated like so much human flotsam. The war had resulted in the closure of

the Suez Canal and this imposed a severe financial penalty not only on Egypt but also on all developing countries east of Suez. He dismissed the Israeli contention that she could not withdraw from occupied territory until her security was guaranteed. He pointed out that a country, which had the power and capacity to inflict such heavy destruction on others and to acquire and retain vast territorial gains through military operations, could hardly claim that its existence and security were in danger. He emphasised that the UN must bring all possible pressure to bear on Israel to withdraw to the positions held by her prior to June 5, 1967 and that the UN must also insist that such withdrawal should not be subject to negotiation or any prior condition. *(Full text of the Permanent Representative's statement is at Appendix II).*

An equally strong position was maintained by Ceylon's Permanent Representative, Mr. H. S. Amerasinghe, in the General Debate at the next General Assembly of the United Nations in October, 1968. He expressed Ceylon's full support for the Security Council Resolution of November 22, 1967, which emphasised the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war, and set out the lines for a peaceful and just settlement in the Middle-East. He criticised strongly Israel's negative response to this resolution and the imposition by her of conditions deliberately calculated to defeat the purposes of the resolution, to avoid compliance with it and to thwart its fulfilment. He reiterated that the recognition which Israel seeks from the Arabs must be the culmination and not the commencement of the process of reconciliation. He called on Israel to accept and implement without qualifications the terms of the Security Council Resolution of November 22, 1967. *(Text of the Permanent Representative's statement is at Appendix III).*

In the General Assembly Debate in October, 1969, Ceylon's Permanent Representative again strongly criticised Israel's failure to withdraw unconditionally from the occupied territories. He called on the United Nations and especially the Major Powers to concentrate on the substance of the Security Council Resolution of November 22, 1967 and to translate it into action. (*Text of the Permanent Representative's Statement is at Appendix IV*).

*P. M. on Middle-East Situation
at the
Commonwealth
Prime Ministers'
Meeting*

The Hon. Prime Minister attended the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference in January, 1969, in London, and at that gathering of Commonwealth leaders expressed his strong support of the efforts made through the United Nations to resolve the Middle-East crisis, and in particular of the terms of the Security Council resolution of November 22, 1967. He reiterated that it was a fundamental principle that territory could not be acquired by an act of war and that the integrity of nations in the area should be respected. He believed that a number of Commonwealth countries were in a position to influence the parties to the dispute as well as the super-Powers and that a great deal could be achieved by bringing influence on them to see that the UN Resolutions were implemented.

The Arab countries were very pleased with the support given by the Hon. Prime Minister to the Arab cause at the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference, and a delegation of three Arab Ambassadors called on a member of the Ceylon delegation to convey their thanks on behalf of the entire group of Arab States.

Visit of the Hon. Prime Minister to the UAR

The visit of the Prime Minister, Hon. Dudley Senanayake, to the U. A. R. in May, 1969, was in response to a long-standing invitation from President Nasser. The Prime Minister had originally planned to visit the UAR in June, 1967, but the outbreak of hostilities in the Middle-East at the time necessitated the deferment of the visit.

President Nasser's invitation to the Prime Minister and the Prime Minister's visit to the UAR were a reflection of the close personal ties between the two leaders and the bonds of friendship and co-operation that have traditionally existed between Ceylon and the UAR. The Prime Minister was received in the UAR as an honoured guest. Friendly and cheering people greeted him during his stay in Cairo and on his visits to Alexandria, Luxor and Aswan.

The two leaders held official discussions on a wide range of international questions, and these talks were held in an atmosphere of warmth and cordiality. Naturally the Middle-East was the issue of principal interest in these talks. There was wide measure of agreement between the two leaders on questions relating to this region and their endorsement of a common position is evident from the text of the Joint Communique issued at the conclusion of the visit.

Referring to the Middle-East crisis, the Communique said :—

“ The two leaders agreed that the present crisis in the Middle-East was one that causes the gravest international concern and emphasized the urgency of finding a just and lasting solution to this problem which would remove the sources of conflict and ensure an enduring peace to the countries and peoples of the region.

In this connection they affirmed that the Security Council Resolution of November 22nd, 1967, provided the means for a just and peaceful settlement of the problem. They expressed their serious concern at the lack of progress towards a solution of the problem on these lines, and regretted that failure to resolve the present crisis could not but have incalculable consequences to peace, stability and progress both in the region and outside. They noted with concern the failure of Israel to abide by the provisions of the Security Council Resolution and in this connection stressed the responsibility of the international community and in particular the Major Powers for bringing about a settlement in accordance with that Resolution.

The Prime Minister of Ceylon expressed his strong support for the cause of the Arab peoples. He reaffirmed his country's position that Israel's forces should withdraw unconditionally from Arab territory to positions they occupied prior to June 5th, 1967. A fundamental principle was that acquisition of territory by use of force was inadmissible. He expressed Ceylon's support for the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people including their right to return to their homelands or to receive compensation, in accordance with United Nations Resolutions.

The President of the United Arab Republic expressed the gratitude and deep appreciation of the People and Government of the United Arab Republic for the firm stand taken on these issues by the Prime Minister and people of Ceylon".

The programme arranged for the Prime Minister enabled him to see many places of interest in the UAR. He visited a land reclamation project in the Nile Delta region, and the Aswan High Dam which is one of the world's largest river control and power development projects. He also visited the world famous Pyramids and in Luxor the ancient Egyptian temples, tombs, and other archaeological monuments. The Prime Minister was most impressed by what he saw of the rich historic treasures of the country as well as of its vast new development projects. He expressed his admiration for the tremendous progress made by

the government and the people of the UAR in recent years in spite of the many difficulties they had to face. He envisaged the possibility of technical cooperation between the UAR and Ceylon in fields such as agricultural and power development where he felt the experience of the UAR would be valuable to Ceylon which faced similar technical problems. The President had readily agreed to such co-operation.

The Prime Minister's State Visit to the UAR constitutes a highlight in the relations between the two countries and their peoples. The feelings of warm friendship and regard prevailing between the leaders of the two countries and the peoples of Ceylon and the UAR found renewed expression in the farewell message of the Prime Minister to President Nasser at the conclusion of the visit, and in President Nasser's reply which are quoted below :—

*Farewell
Message from
the Prime
Minister*

“ As I leave your country I wish to express to Your Excellency and through you to the Government and people of the UAR our warmest thanks for the cordiality with which my delegation and I have been received throughout our four-day visit. I appreciate very much the opportunity that this visit has given me to get to know you and I hope that you will visit Ceylon soon to renew our acquaintance. During my visit I was able to see for myself the impressive progress that your country has made under your dedicated leadership. You have achieved much in the economic and social fields in spite of the many difficulties confronting you. I was also able to see for myself the great efforts that are being made to preserve the ancient treasures of Egypt. I have no doubt that under your wise leadership your country will progress to still greater achievements in all fields.

I send you my warmest personal regards and best wishes for the happiness and prosperity of your people ”.



The Prime Minister, Mr. Dudley Senanayake, chatting with President Nasser.

Message from the President of the UAR

"Have received with great pleasure the kind message which you sent to me following your departure from the United Arab Republic after the conclusion of your visit which has further deepened and strengthened the cordial relations existing between our two countries. While appreciating the noble sentiments you have expressed towards the United Arab Republic people and myself it pleases me to have the opportunity of visiting your country soon. I also hope and pray that the ties of affection and friendship binding our two peoples together may grow from strength to strength to their mutual benefit. With my most sincere regards to your person, I send to you and to your delegation my most heartfelt thanks together with my best wishes for your good health and happiness and for the grandeur, progress and prosperity of the friendly people of Ceylon".

Gift of Baby Elephant

As a postscript it would be of interest to refer to the gift of a baby elephant by the Prime Minister to the children of the UAR on behalf of the children of Ceylon. The gift had a special significance. The Prime Minister who was a guest of the UAR Government was staying at the Kubbeh Palace and whenever his motorcade went through the city thousands of children used to line up cheering him and applauding him. The Prime Minister was touched by the spontaneity shown by the children of Cairo and he thought that a gift of this nature would create endearing relations between the two countries. The baby elephant named Mithra (meaning friendship) was handed over by the Prime Minister to the UAR Ambassador in Ceylon on July 9th at a ceremony at Temple Trees, and was flown to Cairo the same day. Mithra will undoubtedly be a popular children's attraction at the famous Cairo zoo.



Al-Aqsa Mosque

Al-Aqsa Fire— Ceylon's Views

The Prime Minister expressed his deep shock and grief on learning of the damage caused to the Al-Aqsa Mosque, one of Islam's holiest shrines. The people of Ceylon, he stated, shared with their Muslim brethren a deep sense of unhappiness that damage should have been caused to so historic a place of worship. He considered it essential for world peace that the matter should be investigated by an impartial tribunal and that full restoration and restitution should be made. He indicated the readiness of the Government of Ceylon to make its own contribution towards the restoration of the Mosque. (*Text of Hon. Prime Minister's statement of August 23, 1969, is at Appendix V.*)

On instructions from the Government, Ceylon's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, intervened in the Security Council debate on the Al-Aqsa fire. The singular feature that distinguished the Al-Aqsa fire from other fires in holy places, he pointed out, lay in the fact that at the time of the fire the territory on which the Mosque stood was under foreign occupation, established by force of arms and in breach of the principle repeatedly affirmed and emphasized unanimously by the Security Council and the General Assembly that the acquisition of territory by war is inadmissible. Israel's unconditional withdrawal from Arab territory to positions they occupied prior to June 5, 1967, he stated, was an indispensable condition for peace in the area. He called on Israel to perform this act of redemption in order to eradicate the bitterness created by the Al-Aqsa incident and to create a proper atmosphere for a peaceful settlement.

The Government of the U. A. R. has requested the Ceylon Ambassador in Cairo to convey to the Ceylon Government its sincere appreciation for the support given by Ceylon to the Arab cause at the Security Council debate on the Al-Aqsa fire. (*Text of the Permanent Representative's statement of September, 12, 1969, is at Appendix VI.*)

Appendix

I Statement made by the Prime Minister, Hon. Dudley Senanayake, in Parliament on June 2, 1967—

“As the House is aware, I shall soon be making a State Visit to the United Arab Republic.* Amongst other matters of mutual concern, the situation in the Middle-East will be discussed. In these circumstances, I propose to confine myself to a statement of the facts as I see them now.

It would be necessary, in the first instance, to recount briefly the background to the present tension in the Middle-East, which is now occupying the attention of the world and is the subject of serious debate in the Security Council of the United Nations. The conflict dates back to the termination of the British Mandate in Palestine on 15th May, 1948, and the simultaneous declaration of the establishment of the State of Israel. This was followed by war between Israel and the Arab States which was brought to an end by the Armistice Agreement of 24th February, 1949.

A strip of coast approximately 7 miles on the northern end of Gulf of Aqaba was held by Israel and is known as the Port of Eilat. Access to this port is through the narrow Straits of Tiran, the land on either side of which is under the territorial sovereignty of the UAR on the one side and Saudi Arabia on the other. The island of Tiran, which is under the sovereignty of the UAR, stands between the mainlands of UAR and Saudi Arabia. Both the UAR and Saudi Arabia have throughout held that the waters of the Straits of Tiran are within their territorial waters and have throughout claimed the right to control access to the Gulf of Aqaba. It is an unquestioned fact that UAR for its part has exercised this right after the establishment of the State of Israel and until the Anglo-French-Israeli attack of October, 1956, when the Israeli armies attacked the military installations at Sharm El Sheikh and Tiran Island and occupied this part of UAR territory. Withdrawal of Israel troops was effected on 8th March, 1957, when the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) took over the task of manning and patrolling the UAR-Israeli border from Gaza across the Sinai and up to the Israeli port of Eilat. A UN Observer Force took up position at Sharm El Sheikh.

This gave UNEF control over the Straits of Tiran and since then international shipping has been allowed free passage through the Straits of Tiran into the Gulf of Aqaba. At that time and in the period that followed, some of the leading maritime nations of the world have declared that

the Straits of Tiran were an international waterway. The UAR and a number of other countries however have not accepted this position.

The question arises as to whether the status quo which obtained in the Straits of Tiran has been altered by the events of October, 1956 and thereafter. I do not think so. However, it would be appropriate to quote here the relevant paragraphs of the Report of the Secretary-General in pursuance of General Assembly Resolution 1123 (XI) (Document A/3512) dated 24th January, 1957:—

Document A/3512 Part Two. D.

“23. In connexion with the question of Israel withdrawal from the Sharm El Sheikh area, attention has been directed to the situation in the Gulf of Aqaba and the Straits of Tiran. This matter is of longer duration and not directly related to the present crisis. The concern now evinced in it, however, calls for consideration of the legal aspects of the matter as a problem in its own right. It follows from principles guiding the United Nations that the Israel military action and its consequences should not be elements influencing the solution.

“24. As stated in the previous reports (A/3500 and Add. 1), the international significance of the Gulf of Aqaba may be considered to justify the right of innocent passage through the Straits of Tiran and the Gulf in accordance with recognized rules of international law. However, in its commentary to article 17 of the articles of the Law of the sea (A/3159, page 20), the International Law Commission reserved consideration of the question “what would be the legal position of Straits forming part of the territorial sea of one or more States and constituting the sole means of access to the port of another State”. This description applies to the Gulf of Aqaba and the Straits of Tiran. A legal controversy exists as to the extent of the right of innocent passage through these waters.

“25. Under these circumstances, it is indicated that whatever rights there may be in relation to the Gulf and the Straits, such rights be exercised with restraint on all sides. Any possible claims of belligerent rights should take into account the international interests involved and, therefore, if asserted, should be limited to clearly non-controversial situations”.

Neither these views nor others which have been advanced in international forums and outside, have been the subject of international adjudication. However, the fact remains that the UAR has always asserted that she had the right to control the passage of international shipping through the Straits of Tiran.

* Note:—The visit had to be deferred on account of the outbreak of hostilities in the Middle East on June 5, 1967.

This state of affairs continued until May this year, when threats, charges and counter-charges between Israel and her Arab neighbours brought about a more serious renewal of tension. In the previous month, on April 7th, to be exact, Israel had undertaken a punitive attack on Syrian territory as a reprisal for terrorist raids and sabotage which she alleged originated from Syria. Israel's action resulted in her being censured by the Security Council. The crisis in May arose from Israeli allegations that Syria had renewed her terrorist activities and Israeli leaders publicly announced their intention to attack again in reprisal. A threat was also issued that Israel would march on the Syrian capital of Damascus. Israel's Arab neighbours declared their own preparedness to meet any situation that may arise.

At this point the UAR requested the Secretary-General of the UN to withdraw the UNEF which were patrolling the UAR side of her border with Israel. On 18th May, the Secretary-General summoned a meeting of the Advisory Committee and informed them of UAR Government's request. The Secretary-General's view was that UNEF troops were on UAR's soil with the consent of the UAR Government. This in fact was the view expressed by our Permanent Representative in March, 1957, when the entire question of the stationing of UNEF was under consideration. There is no question that the UAR has complete sovereign rights over her territory both in Sharm El Sheikh and the Island of Tiran and UNEF troops having been stationed there with her consent, they cannot continue to be there after this consent is withdrawn.

Following the withdrawal of UNEF, UAR forces have taken up positions on their side of the border including Sharm El Sheikh, while Israeli troops have moved into positions on their side. Shortly after the withdrawal of UNEF, the Secretary-General visited Cairo for urgent discussions with the UAR Government. The report following his visit is now being considered by the Security Council.

It might be worth quoting what is perhaps the central theme of his report. I quote :

"A peaceful outcome of the present crisis will depend on a breathing spell to allow tension to subside from its present explosive level. I therefore urge all the parties concerned to exercise special restraint to forego belligerence and to avoid all other actions which would increase tension to allow the Council to deal with the underlying causes of the present crisis and to seek solutions".

The position of the Ceylon Government today is no different from what it was in 1957 and I would myself endorse the request of the Secretary-General that all sides exercise restraint in the interests of international peace."

I Text of statement made by Mr. H. S. Amerasinghe, Ceylon's Permanent Representative to the UN General Assembly in October, 1967, pertaining to the Middle-East situation :—

"I turn now to the other and equally serious area of crisis, the Middle-East. For the third time in the life of the United Nations fighting erupted in that area. With each outbreak of hostilities the fighting has been heavier, the scale of casualties has been greater and the toll of misery has increased. But whereas on previous occasions some measure of stability was restored and the authority of the United Nations, despite Israel's refusal to accept a United Nations presence within its own territory, was established, the situation that exists today is infinitely more disturbing.

The efforts of the Security Council and the General Assembly in Special Emergency Session to bring about a peaceful settlement have so far failed. Far from respect being shown for the General Assembly's appeals and decisions, we find that even when they have received a measure of support constituting the nearest approach to unanimity attainable in this organisation, such appeals and decisions have been completely ignored. Worse still, the most disturbing feature of the present situation is Israel's unabashed determination to retain control over the vast areas of territory that she has acquired through military operations and to absorb them permanently within her borders by establishing permanent Israeli settlements in them. Here we are being treated to the latest exercise in colonization, confirming the worst fears of the Arabs. Actions such as these are not calculated to promote a settlement.

The refugee problem has been aggravated. Thousands more Arabs have lost their ancestral homes and are treated like so much human flotsam.

The Suez Canal remains closed to international traffic. Its closure not only inflicts continuing and cruel loss on Egypt ; it also imposes a severe financial penalty on all the developing countries East of Suez, which depend so heavily on the smooth movement of traffic through the Canal and which are now compelled to draw on their depleted foreign reserves to pay the higher freight charges resulting from the diversion of traffic around the Cape.

Ceylon has always supported Israel's right to exist in peace and security. We still support that right. But Israel's demand for recognition by the Arab States as a condition precedent to all negotiations is, in our opinion, imprudent, ill-timed and insupportable. Recognition must be the culmination and not the commencement of the process of reconciliation.

If we have correctly understood the Israeli argument or excuse, it is that she cannot withdraw from the territories that she has seized in war, unless her security is guaranteed and that

such a guarantee can come only through a settlement reached directly between herself and the Arab world.

The Six-Day War of June this year provides the most telling rebuttal of these arguments and pleas. A nation that could have succeeded in equipping itself with sufficient material and in preserving its economy in a sufficient measure of strength to invest it with the power and the capacity to inflict such heavy destruction on others and to acquire and retain such vast territorial gains through military operations, as Israel succeeded in inflicting and acquiring in the course of the June War, cannot claim that its existence and security were imperilled. We are fully aware that Israel has had, in the past, to face a barrage of threats, but if oral threats over the press and radio could be regarded as aggression to which the only possible deterrent is pre-emptive force, war would be endemic today in this world.

Israel's present attitude creates the uncomfortable feeling that she seeks to cling to her acquisitions by stipulating exacting terms for a settlement.

The continued closure of the Canal, the re-opening of which could be achieved without in the least endangering Israel's security, is a blow directed not merely against the Arab States but, in its effect, against all those countries in Asia which rely on this waterway for the movement of commerce vital to their economic interests. A nation that looks to the world for understanding should not hold such a large section of the world to ransom. But let me make it clear that, however severe the strain imposed on us by the closure of the Canal, we would not want to barter away an iota of Arab interests or Arab rights or any important principle in order to secure the re-opening of the Canal.

Those rights and the principles we are called upon to defend in this instance have been clearly stated by us in the Special Emergency Session. The United Arab Republic is entitled to and must have complete administrative control over the Canal and sovereign territorial rights over it. This Organization should never acquiesce in nor condone the taking away or circumscribing of those rights by the use of force. As regards Israel's claim to the right of innocent passage in the Gulf of Aqaba, Ceylon's position has been and still is that the events of 1956 and thereafter did not alter and could not affect the status quo ante 1956 so far as the legal rights of any party are concerned. The position prior to 1956 was that the United Arab Republic had the right to and did in fact control traffic through the Straits of Tiran. In the absence of international adjudicating on Israel's claim to the right of innocent passage in the Gulf of Aqaba, the question remains yet to be settled. The use of force as a means of settlement cannot, however, be countenanced by this Organization.

If the principles of the Charter are to be vindicated the United Nations must bring all possible pressure to bear on Israel to withdraw to the positions held by her prior to June 5 1967, and must insist that that withdrawal should not be subject to negotiation or any prior condition.

The Middle-East crisis represents the gravest threat to the prestige and moral authority of the United Nations. A great deal, it might be said the very future of the United Nations as the custodian of international peace and security, depends on its capacity to act and act promptly and effectively in the Middle-East situation. If it fails, it would be reduced to the position of a moral refugee".



Statement made by Ceylon's Permanent Representative, Mr. H. S. Amerasinghe at the General Assembly of the United Nations in October, 1968:

"In regard to that other area of crisis, the Middle-East, the delegation of Ceylon stated in the General Assembly debate on October 12, last year that the most disturbing feature of the situation then existing was Israel's unabashed determination to retain control over the vast areas of territory that she had acquired from military operations and to absorb them permanently within her borders by establishing permanent Israeli settlements in them. We stated further that, if the principles of the Charter were to be vindicated, the United Nations must bring all possible pressure to bear on Israel to withdraw to the positions held by her prior to June 5, 1967, and must insist that that withdrawal should not be subject to negotiation or any prior condition.

The seventeen months that have elapsed since the war of June, 1967, have produced on Israel's part only a defiant display of power on the anniversary of the war, brutal and calculated reprisals against the Arabs completely out of proportion to any alleged acts of provocation that occasioned them and undisguised plans and preparations for consolidation of territorial gains.

The resolutions adopted by the Security Council at regular intervals since November 22, 1967, together form the gravest possible indictment of Israeli policies. The Security Council has emphasised the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war. It has affirmed that a just and lasting peace in the Middle-East requires not merely the withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the June, 1967, conflict but, equally, the termination of all claims or states of belligerency and respect for and acknowledgment of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every State in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognised boundaries, free from threats or acts of

force. Along with these requirements the Security Council has affirmed the need for guaranteeing freedom of navigation through international waterways in the area, for achieving a just settlement of the refugee problem and for guaranteeing the territorial inviolability and political independence of every State in the area through measures including the establishment of demilitarized zones.

While two of the Arab nations involved in the June, 1967 war have announced their acceptance of the Security Council resolution of November 22, 1967, Israel's response has been the imposition of conditions which are deliberately calculated to defeat the purposes of the Security Council resolution, to avoid compliance with it and to thwart its fulfilment. The patient efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General have been foiled and frustrated by Israel's insistence on direct negotiations with the Arabs.

I should like to reiterate the position we took on the occasion of the General Debate last year that the recognition that Israel seeks must be the culmination and not the commencement of the process of reconciliation. The United Nations came into being to establish new forms of settlement in conflicts between nations, forms that cannot be reconciled with the claim of a victorious army to dictate terms. Likewise, the right to recognition cannot be asserted through force of arms.

We support Israel's right to exist in peace and security. That right can best be guaranteed by the United Nations. That guarantee is explicitly offered in the Security Council resolution of November 22, 1967. But Israel, by failing to accept the terms of that resolution, seems to have chosen to place herself beyond the pale of international law and to set herself above the Charter.

What this Organisation expects of Israel is not nine commandments as a retort to the Security Council Resolution of November 22, 1967, but unqualified acceptance of it.

My delegation would like to express its appreciation of the patience and perseverance with which the Secretary-General's Special Representative in the Middle-East, Ambassador Jarring, has persisted in the discharge of a most delicate and exacting mission. We trust that it will be possible for him to continue while the hope remains, however distant, that Israel will show a change of heart and that twenty-one years of turmoil and turbulence will close with complete pacification of the Middle-East."

I Text of statement made by Mr. H. S. Amerasinghe, Ceylon's Permanent Representative to the United Nations at the General Assembly Debate in October, 1969, on the Middle-East situation:—

More than two years have passed since the Middle-East war of June, 1967 and it is almost two years since the Security Council unanimously adopted its Resolution 242 of November 22, 1967. That resolution was acclaimed almost universally as a carefully balanced one but there is yet no definite prospect of its implementation. Tension in the area grows unabated bringing the world time and again perilously close to the brink of war and disaster. The Secretary-General has in the clearest possible terms stated that the fighting in the Canal Zone constitutes virtually a state of active war. His own Observation Forces, unarmed and in the line of direct fire, are exposed to intolerable dangers, but continue to face them with a heroism which goes unnoticed in a world where the only badge of honour is a weapon.

Israel's failure to withdraw from the occupied territories not only implies a rejection of the proposition fundamental to the settlement contemplated in Security Council Resolution 242 that acquisition of territory by war is inadmissible but is an obstacle to the creation of the only conditions in which a just and lasting peace can be discussed. The use of occupied territory as a form of hostage in international negotiations is contrary to the spirit of the Charter.

Concern has quite properly been expressed over attacks on airports and the hijacking of planes. These are not, however, the most serious features of this problem. We do not condone such attacks on innocent persons. They are to be deplored. But in scale, in consequences and in the degree of force employed they are diminutive in comparison with the regular and systematic Israeli attacks on Arab territory and the trial of death and destruction that these attacks leave. The Israeli contention is that these reprisals are in retaliation for the actions of Arab resistance groups. There are many countries in this Assembly whose peoples have suffered the indignity of foreign occupation and have found in organised resistance the only hope of deliverance when no help can come from outside. Such resistance is a matter of right until the alien trespasser is evicted. Are these demonstrations of resistance, conducted under the vigilance of an occupying power, in the shadow of overwhelming strength and at the certain risk of draconian punishment amounting to total devastation of property and complete evacuation, to be treated as violations of the cease-fire and as a pretext for terrorising the population of the occupied territories? Resistance of this nature by the population of an occupied territory is a natural and understandable reaction. A distinction must be drawn between such acts of resistance and the furious and frenzied reprisals for which they serve as a mere excuse.

Events which in other circumstances should have no bearing on the Middle-East dispute tend to increase its gravity and enhance the risk of war. I refer to the recent fire at the Al-Aqsa Mosque which formed the subject of discussion in the Security Council during September of this year and ended characteristically with a resolution that was remarkable more for the support it received than for its relevance to the issue

or for its contribution to a settlement. The Security Council Resolution of September 15, 1969, regrettably, skirted the real issue. The fire at Al-Aqsa was neither the direct nor the indirect consequence of Israeli measures to change the status of Jerusalem. Measures which the Security Council has refused to recognise. It was not the status of Jerusalem that was the point at issue but the ever present danger of a grave breach of the peace and of a renewal of war inherent in a situation that can only be described as the illegal usurpation of temporal power through war.

The cause of peace in Middle-East will not be served by drawing red herrings like the Security Council Resolution of September 15, 1969, across the trail but rather by a determined effort on the part of the United Nations and especially the major powers to concentrate on the substance of Security Council Resolution 242 of November 22, 1967, and to endeavour to translate it into action. The two essential features of that Resolution are :

- (1) that Israel must withdraw from all Arab territories in accordance with the principle that acquisition of territory by war is inadmissible ;
- (2) that there must be a just settlement of the Palestine Arab refugee problem.

Despite the numerous United Nations Resolutions reaffirming the right of the refugees to return to their homeland or to receive compensation—Resolutions which have received overwhelming support—Israel, far from complying with such Resolutions, has taken action to evict Arab residents from the occupied territories. As we see it, the Palestine refugee problem is the heart and core of the Middle-East question. There can be no approach to a settlement unless the four major powers, in the discharge of their primary responsibility as permanent members of the Security Council, make it clear to Israel that the Security Council Resolution of November 22, 1967, alone contains all those elements that can bring about a lasting peace, and that it is not subject to any conditions such as direct negotiations, recognition and peace treaties which are not specified in it, but may well follow.

Peace cannot be ensured in the Middle-East by the redrawing of boundaries but by a spirit of reconciliation and tolerance on both sides, by a recognition of the right of all parties to exist in peace and security and by a permanent solution of the problem of the Palestinian refugees through full and fair restitution to those dispossessed and displaced by the act of partition of Palestine. There are no boundaries that are secure while injustice prevails. The four major powers have both the duty and the capacity to bring peace to the Middle-East and to avert a conflagration that could envelop the world. It rests with them to insist first on Israel's withdrawal from the territories she now occupies by the anachronistic right of conquest and thereafter on the implementation of the rest of the terms of the Resolution by all the parties concerned. This can in no sense of the term be described as an imposition of a settlement on Sovereign Powers”.

V

Statement by the Prime Minister, Hon. Dudley Senanayake, on August 23, 1969, on the Al-Aqsa fire :—

“I was deeply shocked and grieved to learn of the damage by fire to one of the holiest places of Muslim veneration and worship. I refer to the damage caused to the famous Al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem. Historic places of veneration, particularly those sanctified by the association of great religious leaders of the world, are institutions of the deepest international respect. Al-Aqsa mosque is one closely associated with the life of Prophet Mohamed and has been mentioned in many places in the Holy Quran. It is a place of veneration to Muslims throughout the world and is held in the most profound respect by all peoples. That damage should have been caused to so historic a place of worship must rouse the deepest sorrow amongst everyone. The people of Ceylon share with their Muslim brethren this sense of deep unhappiness.

I have no direct information as to the cause of the damage and I am only aware of what has been reported in the newspapers. I note that leaders of Muslim countries in the Arab world in particular have expressed their sense of shock and have proposed certain courses of action. I have also noted that the Israel authorities who are in temporary occupation of Jerusalem have proposed a Commission of Inquiry. Whatever may be the cause of the incident, it is essential for world peace that the matter should be investigated by an impartial tribunal and that full restoration and restitution should be made. I do not want at this stage, without a knowledge of the facts, to apportion blame but I cannot help making the comment that when a foreign country occupies by force land belonging to other countries, a special onus rests on that country to ensure that places of historic veneration should receive the closest protection.

Besides finding out the cause of the damage, I hope that immediate steps will be taken towards the restoration of this ancient shrine and I would wish to state that the Government of Ceylon would be happy to make its own contribution towards its restoration.”

VI

Statement by Mr. H. S. Amerasinghe, Permanent Representative of Ceylon to the United Nations, at a meeting of the Security Council on September 12, 1969.

“I thank you and the members of the Security Council for affording the Delegation of Ceylon an opportunity of participating, without the right to vote, in the discussion on the question that has been brought before the Council by 25-Member States. It gives me great pleasure to exercise this privilege under your Presidency. The degree of experience and the measure of sagacity and prudence that you command should prove valuable assets to this Council in the orderly and business-like despatch of its work.

It is many years since the Delegation of Ceylon took part in the debates of the Security Council. The last occasion was when we ourselves were members of the Security Council during the years 1960-61. We have chosen to break our long silence because the question that is now engaging the attention of the Security Council is one of great moment for the entire world.

The act of sacrilege committed in Jerusalem on August 21, 1969, has grievously injured the religious susceptibilities of Muslims the world over to whom the Al-Aqsa Mosque, which was damaged by fire on August 21, was a shrine and a symbol of their faith. The sense of pain and shock has not, however, been confined to the Muslim world. The condemnation of the outrage has been universal and this, if nothing else should offer some hope that the means of restitution finally determined would receive universal endorsement.

On August 23, the Prime Minister of Ceylon, Mr. Dudley Senanayake, in a statement that has been made public, observed: "That damage should have been caused to so historic a place of worship must rouse the deepest sorrow amongst everyone. The people of Ceylon share with their Muslim brethren this sense of deep unhappiness". He went on to state: "Whatever may be the cause of the incident it is essential for world peace that the matter should be investigated by an impartial tribunal and that full restoration and restitution should be made. I do not want at this stage without a knowledge of the facts to apportion blame but I cannot help making the comment that when a foreign country occupies by force land belonging to other countries a special onus rests on that country to ensure that places of historic veneration should receive the closest protection."

There are implications, both sacred and secular, in this insane act of vandalism. But the Delegation of Ceylon does not see this incident as a confrontation between Jew and Moslem or between a demented incendiary and a bewildered regime whose illegal presence serves to aggravate the situation. The feelings of shock, grief and indignation will be assuaged with time, but it is not with those feelings that this Council has to concern itself. As the organ of the United Nations entrusted by its membership with the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, a responsibility delegated to it by the membership in the interests of prompt and effective action, it is the Council's duty to examine the real circumstances that have made such a situation possible and to find the remedy.

Surprise has been expressed in certain quarters that the fire at Al-Aqsa Mosque should be cited as an incident of exceptional gravity and one of international significance. It has been stated that there have been fires in other places held sacred by Muslims. To draw such a comparison is to ignore, wittingly or unwittingly, the singular feature that distinguishes the Al-Aqsa fire from other fires in holy places. This distinction provides

the principal justification for the inclusion of the item in the agenda of the Security Council. It lies in the fact that at the time of the fire the territory on which the Al-Aqsa Mosque stands was under foreign occupation, an occupation established by force of arms and maintained in breach of the principle repeatedly affirmed and emphasised unanimously by the Security Council and the General Assembly that acquisition of territory by war is inadmissible. If this principle were not scrupulously observed and if it were not effectively enforced, the United Nations would have no meaning or purpose. That is the heart of the matter.

It has been stated that a civilized man is by definition one whose only reaction to the fire is one of shock and concern, undiluted by any other sentiment or motive of prejudice, of rancour or of political advantage. But there is another definition of civilized man which has been overlooked and which is equally applicable to the civilized State. By that definition a civilized State would be one that showed a proper respect for the principles of the Charter and for the unanimous determinations of the organ of the United Nations that is primarily responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security. For the civilized world the ideal of peace and security together with the principles that alone could ensure it should be pre-eminent. Hatred and mistrust result only when that ideal and the principles relevant to its realisation are flouted.

Official Israeli opinion has also been quoted to the effect that any attempt to exploit the fire for purposes of political and religious incitement merits the unqualified condemnation of all enlightened mankind. We are human enough to know, however, that sorrow and indignation often go together, especially when man's deepest instinct is outraged.

In every community, in every society there are elements that are actuated, on occasions such as this, initially by impulse and emotion. Cold reason and sober reflection are not the attributes of man in the aggregate. If appeals to passion and emotion are the immediate reaction of the aggrieved, they are at least understandable and can, with time and goodwill, be quenched. What cannot be undone is the act of desecration itself. The solution that has to be sought is one that would avert a similar risk in the future. One fact is incontestable and if that is recognised the solution is obvious. Had the area not been under foreign occupation, the situation which we are discussing could never have arisen.

Security Council resolution 242 of 1967 provided and still remains the soundest basis of a just and peaceful settlement. We have ourselves expressed concern over Israel's failure to abide by the Security Council resolution and have stressed the responsibility of the international community and in particular the Four Major Powers for bringing about a settlement in accordance with that resolution. Our position has always been that Israeli forces should withdraw

unconditionally from Arab territory to the positions they occupied prior to June 5, 1967. This is an indispensable condition for peace in the area. That is the lesson of the Al-Aqsa fire. Those who continue to waver on that issue would have failed to learn that lesson and would have added one more to history's long and tragic list of lost opportunities. The fire that started in Al-Aqsa must not be allowed to spread throughout the world. It must not be permitted to consume and destroy but must be employed to cleanse and heal. It is neither through the punishment of the culprit nor through the restoration of the shrine nor through the fervent expression of sympathy, the genuineness of which we have no reason to question, that Israel can redeem itself.

The only act of restitution that can eradicate the bitterness and resentment created by this incident and set in train a process that could lead to peace and harmony is the relinquishment of

Israeli control over Arab territory which it now, in the judgement of the Security Council and the General Assembly, unlawfully occupies. This result could be achieved only if the Security Council itself showed sufficient unity and determination to assert its authority. The act of redemption which we seek on the part of the Israel might well create that spirit of forgiveness, compassion and mutual tolerance which could prove to be a far more reliable guarantee of a final settlement of the Middle-East question than any contractual arrangement.

The portents are there for those who choose to heed them. Indifference could spell disaster.

The task before the Security Council is to find that special alchemy that can transmute this fire into a benediction. We wish the Council success in its efforts."





The Prime Minister and the Ambassador of the U. A. R. admiring the baby elephant which was gifted by the Prime Minister to the children of the U.A.R.