

ing state of war with Israel. Hammarskjold had replied "for Nasser to concede no state of war existed would be fatal to his position". "I asked him," said Ben-Gurion, "are you representing UN or Nasser? You are here to see agreements are carried out, not to protect Nasser's position". He recalled stormy occasion when Hammarskjold from Cairo sent him message through me (Cairo's 249, April 13 to Department)⁵ saying Secretary General convinced Nasser wanted peace and Secretary General felt question war or peace was in Israel's hands, making no suggestion Egypt had any responsibilities. "I refused to accept message" he said, "Then I received long cable in which he excused himself with lot of sophistries".

5. Defending Israel's Sinai-Gaza campaign, he said, when nation is convinced its very existence is threatened and all sources of help are ignoring its plight, then it alone can decide what course to take. Israel, convinced destruction Egyptian build-up was matter of life or death, had attempted to destroy Egyptian army before it destroyed Israel. "I am convinced US under similar conditions of life or death would take like steps. Even President Eisenhower, sincere and strong advocate of peaceful settlement, would not disagree with this thesis".

6. Summarizing, Ben-Gurion said he considered Secretary's interview with GOI representatives in New York as gracious first step which he hoped would not be last toward détente Ben-Gurion suggested in conversation I reported Embtel 774.⁶ If US could see Tiran and Gaza as imperatives of Israel position there was no other issue in mid-east complex on which GOI would not endeavor coordinate its policy with ours.

Lawson

⁵ Reference should be to telegram 2054 from Cairo, April 13, not printed (Department of State, Central Files, 684A 86/4-1356)

⁶ Vol. xv, p. 1326.

4. Editorial Note

Speaking before a joint session of Congress on January 5, President Eisenhower stressed the importance of the Middle East to the United States and warned of the danger which international communism posed to governments in that part of the world. Eisenhower then proposed that the United States, through joint action of the President