Prospects for Peace
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New York Times (1857-Current file); Jun 6, 1967; ProQuest Historical Newspapers The New York Times (1851 - 2002)
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Washington Feels Cease-Fire Must Await a Test of Military Power

By TOM WICKER
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, June 5—There is little likelihood of an end to the fighting in the Middle East until the realities of military power in that area have been made clear, diplomatic sources here believe.

Both President Nasser of the United Arab Republic and Israel, in this view, will be politically unable to agree to a truce until one of them has established a clear military advantage.

News Analysis

The Israelis, it is believed, are unlikely to halt their armies while they have a chance to administer a sufficent military defeat to the Arabs to discourage them on their goal of destroying Israel.

President Nasser, having reasserted his primacy in the Arab world by closing the Gulf of Aqaba to Israeli shipping and cargoes, could hardly acquiesce in a cease-fire until he proves he has the military prowess to back up his claims.

These goals are mutually exclusive. "When nations begin to fight," as one diplomat put it, "somebody has to lose."

Until someone does lose, or is clearly in danger of doing so, diplomats believe, a cease-fire cannot be accepted by either side.

Mr. Nasser probably will never find a more auspicious occasion to fight Israel. With other Arab nations tenuously behind him, with Israel militarily isolated, after 10 years of building up his armed forces following the Suez war, and with some Soviet backing, if he cannot strike a hard blow at Israel now it is doubtful that he ever will be able to do so.

To accept a truce under such circumstances, particularly if it was accompanied by some kind of United Nations Force in Egypt, would be particularly hard. Such a force was in Egypt until two weeks ago, leading other Arab states and Israel alike to taunt him for "hiding" behind its shield.

Sources here said such a truce—like a resounding military defeat—surely would end Nasser's pretensions to lead the Arab world and might even bring about his downfall as head of the United Arab Republic.

On the other hand, he can be under no illusion that other nations—particularly the United States—would stand by and permit him actually to liquidate Israel. Thus, once he had established his military power by making a good showing, which would cement his position as the leader of the Arab world and as a major international figure, he might be willing to call off the fighting under terms he felt were advantageous.

For her part, Israel is believed to have been more disturbed in recent days by increasing Arab unity and militance than by the actual closing of the Gulf of Aqaba. While she might physically have survived the loss of shipping lanes through the gulf, the closing of the militant Arab ring around her—the reunion, for instance, of the Jordanians and the Egyptians—was viewed as a real threat to her survival.

Thus, to acquiesce in a quick truce that left this Arab threat mostly intact and unimpaired might even worsen the Israeli position. The Aqaba question would remain unsettled and a political solution would be just as hard as ever to achieve.

The Arab hostility to Israel would probably be enhanced by the fighting and the Israeli leaders would surely believe they would have the whole business to go through again—probably sooner rather than later.

From the viewpoint of Tel Aviv, therefore, a hard blow at the Arabs now, particularly if it brought down Mr. Nasser or ended any possibility of the Arab states' uniting under his leadership, would make for more sense than a truce.

See Diplomatic Failure

Moreover, since neither the United Nations nor the United States succeeded politically in breaking the Arab grip on the Gulf of Aqaba, the Israeli probably see a better chance of resolving that issue through war than through diplomacy.

In the final analysis, they too know that the United States is unlikely to take no action if the Arab strength proves enough to overwhelm Israel.

Diplomats here generally discounted the likelihood that the desert war would quickly draw in the United States or the Soviet Union, since neither has any desire for a confrontation with the other.

In fact, some diplomats felt that an ultimate truce probably would come about more nearly through the combined efforts of the Soviet Union and the United States than through the United Nations action.

They believed that Israel had little if any confidence in United Nations guarantees, particularly since the quick withdrawal from Egypt of the Emergency Force at Egypt's request. Since repeated American guarantees also failed to prevent the present hostilities, any new pledges from Washington might also meet increased skepticism.

Parallel Soviet and United States action either to force a truce or to guarantee a political arrangement in the Middle East, or both, might therefore be necessary to get the fighting stopped.

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