JOHNSON PLEASED BY GAINS ON TRUCE
By MAX FRANKEL Special to The New York Times
New York Times (1857-Current file); Jun 9, 1967; ProQuest Historical Newspapers The New York Times (1851 - 2002)
pg. 1

JOHNSON PLEASED BY GAINS ON TRUCE

Looks to a Stable Peace—White House Discloses Use of the Hot Line

By MAX FRANKEL
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, June 8—President Johnson welcomed spreading acceptance of a cease-fire agreement in the Middle East today, but urged all parties to move promptly toward the "many more fundamental questions" bearing on a stable peace.

While thus pressing for more than merely another frail armistice, the While House also disclosed that its hot-line connection with Moscow had been used for the first time this week in an international crisis.

The United States used the teletype link this morning when it heard of an attack on an American communications ship off the Sinai Peninsula. At the time, the source of the attack was not known.

The Soviet Government, whose warships have been observing the movements of the United States Sixth Fleet in the eastern Mediterranean, was advised that the carrier-based American planes were scrambling into action for the sole purpose of assisting the distressed vessel.

It was later learned that Israeli forces had attacked the American ship in error.

The announcement of quick exchanges to prevent misunder-

Continued on Page 18, Column 1

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Johnson Welcomes Spreading Acceptance of a Cease-Fire in the Middle East

PRESIDENT LOOKS TO STABLE PEACE

White House Discloses Use of Hot Line to Moscow During the Crisis

Continued From Page 1, Col. 7

standing of military moves was symbolic of the United States' interest in cooperating with the Soviet Union, not only to prevent a direct clash, but also to construct a more durable settlement in the Middle East.

Diplomatic efforts are now foreseen to bring the Israelis and the Arabs to a conference table, to develop new rules for passage through the Suez Canal and the Gulf of Aqaba, to limit or halt the sales of arms to the Middle East, to design multinational development projects and perhaps even to fix Israel's frontiers through treaties.

The basic United States objective of a lasting settlement has thus far appealed more to the Israelis than to the Arabs. But Soviet collaboration, following Moscow's reassessment of its Middle East policies, is deemed here to be vital.

Perhaps to relieve some of the Arab nations' resentments against the United States, President Johnson's statement contained a special, though indirect, message of good intentions toward them.

Mr. Johnson's public comments on the situation were contained in a letter of assessment solicited by Senator Mike Mansfield of Montana, the majority leader, and later made public by the White House.

The President acknowledged the importance of keeping the Senate informed, described the United States proposal in the United Nations for direct Israeli-Arab talks, praised Israel for accepting responsibility for the attack on an American communications ship off her coast and described the cease-fire as "only a beginning" of the quest for peace.

Then, turning to the Arab world, Mr. Johnson emphasized his adherence to the policies of three previous United States administrations. He thus implied continued commitment to the "territorial integrity" of all Middle East nations.

He said these policies embraced a consistent effort "to maintain good relations with all the peoples of the area in spite of the difficulties caused by some of their leaders."

"This remains our policy," Mr. Johnson added, "despite the unhappy rupture of relations which has been declared by several Arab states."

The United Arab Republic and six other Arab and African nations have broken diplomatic relations with the United States, allegedly because American planes attacked the United Arab Republic. The United States has heatedly denied the charge.

United States officials believe that the charge was made to deny the Israelis credit for their swift military success and in an effort to enlist the more active help of the Soviet Union. Washington has been pleased by Moscow's refusal to become involved.

Assurances that the United States was not in any way involved in this week's fighting were said to have been contained in one of the messages exchanged over the Hot Line with Moscow.

The teletype circuit, which runs from the White House communications center to the Pentagon to the Soviet terminal point, believed to be in the Kremlin, had never before been used in a crisis. It was established Aug. 30, 1963, after the signing of the nuclear test-ban treaty. The Cuban missile crisis of 1962 had demonstrated the need for urgent and direct contact to avoid military misunderstandings and miscalculations.

Messages in the past were limited to exchanges of greetings when the line was inaugurated, on the first anniversary of the inauguration in 1964 and on every New Year's since then, according to George Christian, the White House press secretary.

The first message in the present crisis was sent by Premier Aleksei N. Kosygin on Monday, after the Middle East war began, and was given an immediate reply from President Johnson, Mr. Christian said. Presumably these exchanges expressed the desire of the two Governments to avoid embroilment and a direct clash.

Several other messages were traded on the line, Mr. Christian disclosed, without giving any details. Most, and possibly all were signed by the two heads of government, he said. The Soviet messages arrived in Russian; the American notes went out in English.

How to build upon the minimal cooperation symbolized by these exchanges has become a primary diplomatic concern of the United States.

Past efforts to interest the Soviet Union in an embargo on arms shipments to the Middle East failed. It is thought here that Moscow used its influence in Cairo to counsel against military action against Israel, but the Soviet Union sought friendship and influence in the Middle East by supplying the United Arab Republic and, at times, Syria and Iraq with up-to-date planes, tanks and other weapons as well as economic aid.

Washington now hopes that the Soviet Union may gradually adjust its policies, recognizing the risks to itself in a Middle East arms race and the waste of costly arms on client nations that made such poor use of them in this week's war.

United States officials feel Soviet support will be needed to induce the most belligerent Arab Governments to move from a cease-fire to a more lasting peace settlement. Without such a settlement, the officials doubt that Israel will agree to withdraw again from the Sinai Peninsula and the heights controlling their vital sea route through the Gulf of Aqaba.

With Soviet help, officials believe, some progress could be made. They suspect that Jordan and Lebanon would be among the early signatories of a settlement with Israel if Cairo ceased its opposition to all forms of accommodation.

The Israelis' military success is thought to have placed all Middle East issues on the table again, including the Arab grievance about the fate of a million Arab refugees from what became Israeli territory in 1948. Unless these "fundamental questions" are met soon, officials here contend, the entire region may soon be plunged again into an arms race.

This analysis accounts for Mr. Johnson's sense of urgency about moving beyond a mere cease-fire and his daily comments to this effect.

The White House has also kept an eye on the domestic repercussions of its handling of the Middle East situation. It has received an avalanche of mail and telegrams that, at one point this week, left the operators of a local telegraph office wading in telegraphic tape. Almost all the messages have urged support for Israel.

The crisis has posed two domestic problems. Congressional sentiment, presumably reflecting opinion around the country, was from the start opposed to unilateral intervention by the United States.

At the same time, many politicians, organizations and civil leaders, including Jews, have stressed United States commitments to insure survival of Israel.

The President's sympathies apparently lay with Israel as the immediately aggrieved party after Egypt's proclamation of a blockade of the Gulf of Aqaba. But his highest concern was for the avoidance of conflict, and, that failing, the avoidance of a Soviet-American clash.

Now that Israel has established her military supremacy, Mr. Johnson could combine what he regards as good policy with good politics by endorsing her interest in a stable settlement.

Symptomatic of the White House's sensitivity to the political situation was the fact that today's mass rally by American Jews across the street from the White House brought a high-ranking official to the gate to receive their petition.

Normally, contact with demonstrators is made through junior officials and White House staff men. But Rabbi Norman J. Strizower of the Seaview Jewish Center of Brooklyn was able to deliver his petitions today to Nicholas deB. Katzenbach, Under Secretary of State, and Bromley Smith, executive secretary of the National Security Council.

Mr. Katzenbach was said by the White House to have told the rabbi that "even in times of crisis, when so much of the President's time and that of his advisers is devoted to efforts to bring peace in the Middle East, we are always happy to hear the views of our citizens."

The same sentiments were said to have been expressed by the same officials a half hour later when they received a statement from a representative of pro-Arab pickets, Dr. Mohammed T. Mehdi, secretary general of the Action Committee on American Arab Relations.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.