

the facts

ABOUT THE PALESTINE PROBLEM

A monthly bulletin produced by « The Arab Women's Information Committee »
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THE BACKGROUND

DEIR YASSIN ⁽¹⁾

April 10, 1948

JACQUES
DE REYNIER ⁽²⁾

On Saturday 10 April a very serious incident took place : I received a telephone call from the Arabs asking me to go immediately to the village of Deir Yassin (3), where the civilian population of the whole village had just been massacred. I learned that this sector, situated very near to Jerusalem, was held by Irgun extremists. The Jewish Agency and the Headquarters of the Haganah told me that they knew nothing of the affair and that in any case

(1) Extracts from Jacques de Reynier's «A Jérusalem un drapeau flottait sur la ligne de feu» (Neuchâtel Editions de la Baconnière, 1950, pp. 69-74.) Reprinted by permission of Les Editions de la Baconnière, S.A. Translated by the Institute for Palestine Studies, Beirut.

(2) Head of the delegation in Palestine of the International Red Cross throughout the period of hostilities, 1948.

(3) An Arab village of about four hundred inhabitants in the western suburbs of Jerusalem entirely surrounded by Jewish territory. A few weeks before the massacre its inhabitants had declared it an open village. The distance between Deir Yassin and Kastel is about two and a half miles.

Editor's note :

This is not a magazine, nor even a newsletter. No attempt will be made at long-winded analysis or description. It is literally a «factual» sheet.

FACTS will try to present the facts of the Palestine Problem. We think these will speak for themselves and need no comment or elaboration. It is this ignorance of the facts by the outside world that has been responsible for much of the human suffering that has taken place in Palestine. It is time that the facts were known. Only on their basis can disinterested and fair-minded people reach objective and intelligent conclusions. To help such people is our objective.

FACTS is produced by the Arab Women's Information Committee, a voluntary, non-professional, non-profit and private organization of Arab women living in Beirut, Lebanon, who have been appalled at the manner in which the Palestine Problem has been presented so far in the English-speaking press.

FACTS will be divided into two sections, the first dealing with background material, the second with current developments. It will appear on a monthly basis. We also hope to be able to publish supplements on specific issues as the occasion arises.

The background section will comprise quotations from Zionist writings to illustrate Zionist ideological and strategic thought, statistics pertaining to various aspects of the Palestine Problem, and summaries of the more important historical events and developments of the problem.

The selection of this material is necessarily arbitrary, but it is hoped that as much ground can be covered in successive issues of **FACTS** as space permits.

As to the section on current developments, it will focus attention on the developments that have taken place since 5 June 1967.

We shall endeavour throughout to give detailed reference for all the material that we publish. We hope that our efforts will contribute, however modestly, to a better understanding of the Arab point of view on the Palestine Problem.

FACTS welcomes all comments, suggestions and inquiries by its readers.

it was impossible for anyone to penetrate into Irgun territory. They advised me not to get mixed up in the affair, as, if I did, my mission would almost certainly be terminated.

Not only did they refuse to help me, they also refused to be responsible for what they were sure would happen to me. I replied that I intended to go, and that it was a matter of public knowledge that the Jewish Agency exercised its authority over all the territory in Jewish hands and was therefore responsible for my person as well as for my liberty of action, within the limits of my mission.

However, I did not know what to do. Without Jewish help, it was impossible for me to reach the village. Then, by thinking hard, I remembered that a Jewish nurse in a nearby hospital had given me her telephone number, telling me, with an odd expression, that I could call her if ever I found myself in an inextricable situation. Taking a chance, I rang her up late at night and explained the situation. She told me to go to a certain place with my car at 7 o'clock next morning, and there pick up the person I found waiting. Then she rang off.

The next morning, at the appointed place and time, a man in civilian clothes, but with pockets bulging with revolvers, jumped into my car and told me to drive on without stopping. At my request, he agreed to show me the road to Deir Yassin, but admitted that he could not do much for me. We went out of Jerusalem, leaving the main road behind the rear of the regular army, and took a road that cut across it. Very soon, we were stopped by two soldier-like individuals, whose looks were far from reassuring, with machine-guns in their hands, and large cutlasses in their belts. From their appearance I gathered they must be the men I was looking for. I got out of the car and submitted myself to a thorough search, then realized that I was a prisoner. Everything seemed lost, when suddenly, a huge fellow, at least two meters tall, and as large as a cupboard, appeared, pushed his comrades aside, and seized my hand and squeezed it in his enormous paws, shouting incomprehensibly. He did not understand either English or French, but in German we seemed to be able to communicate perfectly. He expressed his joy at seeing a member of the Red Cross because, as he explained, its intervention had saved his life no less than three times when he was a prisoner in a German concentration camp. He said that I was more than a brother to him, and that he would do everything I asked him. With such a body-guard I felt I could go to the end of the world, and so to start with, we went to Deir Yassin.

...He told me the story of this village, inhabited exclusively by Arabs, approximately 400 of them, never armed, and living on good terms with the surrounding Jews. According to him, the Irgun had arrived 24 hours earlier and ordered the inhabitants by loudspeaker to evacuate all houses and surrender : the time given to obey the order was a quarter of an hour. Some of these miserable people had come forward and were taken prisoners, to be released later in the direction of the Arab lines. The rest, not having obeyed the order, had met the fate they deserved. But there was no point in exaggerating things, there were only a few dead, and they would be buried as soon as the « cleaning up » of the village was over. If I found any bodies, I could take them, but there were certainly no wounded. This account made my blood run cold.

I went back then to the Jerusalem road and got an ambulance and a truck that I had alerted through the Red Shield. The two Jewish drivers and the Jewish doctor who boarded them were more dead than alive, but followed me courageously. Before reaching the

Irgun outpost, I stopped and inspected the two vehicles. A good thing I did too, as I discovered two Jewish journalists preparing to get the scoop of their lives. Unfortunately for them, I very firmly got rid of them. I reached the village with my convoy, and the Arab firing stopped. The gang was wearing country uniform, with helmets. All of them were young, some even adolescents, men and women, armed to the teeth : revolvers, machine-guns, hand grenades, and also large cutlasses in their hands, most of them still blood-stained. A beautiful young girl, with criminal eyes, showed me hers still dripping with blood; she displayed it like a trophy. This was the « cleaning up » team, that was obviously performing its task very conscientiously.

I tried to go into a house. A dozen soldiers surrounded me, their machine-guns aimed at my body, and their officer forbade me to move. The dead, if any, would be brought to me, he said. I then flew into one of the most towering rages of my life, telling these criminals what I thought of their conduct, threatening them with everything I could think of, and then pushed them aside and went into the house.

The first room was dark, everything was in disorder, but there was no one. In the second, amid disembowelled furniture and covers and all sorts of debris, I found some bodies, cold. Here, the « cleaning up » had been done with machine-guns, then hand grenades. It had been finished off with knives, anyone could see that. The same thing in the next room, but as I was about to leave, I heard something like a sigh. I looked everywhere, turned over all the bodies, and eventually found a little foot, still warm. It was a little girl of ten, mutilated by a hand grenade, but still alive. As I was about to carry her out, the officer tried to stop me, blocking the doorway. I pushed him aside and went through with my precious load protected by my good friend the « wardrobe ». The ambulance set off, with orders to come back as soon as possible. As the gang had not dared to attack me directly, I could continue. I gave orders for the bodies in this house to be loaded on the truck, and went into the next house, and so on. Everywhere, it was the same horrible sight. I found only two more people alive, both women, one of them an old grandmother, hidden behind a heap of firewood where she had kept quiet for at least 24 hours.

There had been 400 people in this village; about fifty of them had escaped, and were still alive. All the rest had been deliberately massacred in cold blood for, as I observed for myself, this gang was admirably disciplined and only acted under orders.

Back in Jerusalem I went straight to the Jewish Agency, where I found the leaders dismayed, apologetic and pretending, which indeed was true, that they had no power over the Irgun or the Stern Gang (1). However, they had done nothing to try and prevent about a hundred men from committing this unspeakable crime.

...I went back to Deir Yassin. I found the Irgun people in a very bad temper; they tried to prevent me from approaching the village. I understood their attitude when I saw the number, and especially

(1) Cf. « White Paper on Violence, 1949 », pp. 601-12.

It has since become known that an agreement had been signed between the Haganah, the Jewish Agency's regular army, and the Irgun and Stern gangs, by which these gangs operated under Haganah orders.

(See Rony Gabbay, *A Political Study of the Arab-Jewish Conflict*, Geneva, 1959, p. 76)

the state of the corpses that had been lined up all along the main road. I asked very firmly that the burial be started and insisted on being present. After discussion, digging was started on a big grave in a small garden. It was impossible to check the identity of the dead as they had no papers, but I took careful note of all their particulars, with approximate ages. As night fell, I went back to Jerusalem, stating clearly that I was coming back the next day.

Two days later, the Irgun had disappeared from the place, and the Haganah had taken over; we discovered several places where the corpses had been stacked, without decency or respect, in the open air.

After this last visit, I went back to my office where I was visited by two gentlemen, well-dressed in civilian clothes, who had been waiting for me for more than an hour. They were the commander of the Irgun detachment and his aide. They had prepared a paper that they wanted me to sign. It was a statement to the effect that I had been very courteously received by them, and obtained all the facilities I had requested, in the accomplishment of my mission, and thanking them for the help I had received.

As I showed signs of hesitation and even started to argue with them, they said that if I valued my life, I had better sign immediately. The only course open to me was to convince them that I did not value my life in the least, and that a declaration quite contrary to theirs had already gone to Geneva. I added that in any case, I was not in the habit of signing statements written by others, but only those exclusively drawn up by me. Before I let them go, I tried to explain to them once more the purpose of our mission and asked them whether or not they intended to oppose us in the future. I did not get an answer that day, but later, in Tel Aviv, I saw them again; they needed our help for some of their own people, and in gratitude for our cooperation, they were of great assistance to us on several occasions, returning some hostages we claimed without argument.

The affair of Deir Yassin had immense repercussions. The press and the radio spread the news everywhere among Arabs as well as Jews. In this way a general terror was built up among the Arabs, a terror astutely fostered by the Jews. On both sides, it was made into a political argument, and the results were tragic. Driven by fear, the Arabs left their homes to find shelter among their kindred; first isolated farms, then villages, and in the end whole towns were evacuated, even when the Jewish invader had done no more than make it appear that he intended to attack. Finally, about 700,000 Arabs became refugees, leaving everything behind in their haste, their one hope being to avoid the fate of the people of Deir Yassin. The effects of this massacre are far from being over today, as this immense crowd of refugees is still living in makeshift camps, without work and without hope, the Red Cross distributing to them emergency aid provided by the United Nations.

The Jewish authorities were terribly shocked by the affair which took place four days after they had signed the Geneva Convention. They begged me to use my good offices with the Arabs to persuade them that it was an isolated incident (5).

(5) Menachem Begin, the leader of the Irgun and present Minister without portfolio in the Israeli Cabinet, had this to say about Deir Yassin : « The massacre was not only justified, but there would not have been a state of Israel without the victory of Deir Yassin ». (*Erskine Childers, The Other Exodus, The Spectator, May 18, 1961*).

The Stifling of a Voice of Justice

Background to the assassination of Count Folke Bernadotte

Count Folke Bernadotte, U.N. Mediator in Palestine, was assassinated in September 1948 by Jewish terrorists. Following are extracts from his book « To Jerusalem » : « I had to have a private conversation with Mr. Moshe Shertok, (then Foreign Minister of the State of Israel)... I began discussion by saying that in my opinion the international position of the government of Israel was worse than it had been only a few weeks before. It no longer enjoyed the goodwill it had previously. The reason was, I said, that the government had expressed itself on various occasions in such a way that people could only draw the conclusion that it was well on the way towards losing its head. It seemed as though Jewish demands would never cease... It was my definite impression — I continued — that the Jews now felt they had two enemies. The Arabs were still enemy No. 1 but I and the United Nations observers ran them a close second... I knew from my own experience (that my) officers, when they first arrived, would be very sympathetic towards the Jewish cause : but I also knew that they would soon find themselves compelled by force of circumstances to revise their attitude... The Israeli government had had a very great opportunity in connection with the Arab refugee question. It had missed that opportunity. It had shown nothing but hardness and obduracy towards these refugees. If, instead of that, it had shown a magnanimous spirit, if it had declared that the Jewish people, which itself had suffered so much, understood the feelings of the refugees and did not wish to treat them in the same way as it itself had been treated, its prestige in the world at large would have been immeasurably increased...

« Shertok's reply was : 'The Jewish government could under present conditions in no circumstances permit the return of the Arabs who had fled or *been driven from their homes* during the war'... I observed that I was surprised that the representatives of the Jewish people in particular should look at this problem from such a narrow point of view, that they should regard it purely as a political question without taking into account the humanitarian side of the matter... »

The Israeli government was getting bolder and wilder as the Fixed Idea came nearer realization... Count Bernadotte continues : « ... nothing that I could propose aroused any response; I got nowhere. It was significant to read later in the Jewish Newspaper 'Palestine Post' : 'Count Bernadotte has had a fruitless meeting with the Foreign Minister of Israel'. That was evidently regarded as a great triumph for the Jews... Their military successes during the ten days' war had gone to their heads... whatever questions came up, we were always met with the same passive resistance and the same lack of will to cooperate... » (pp. 199-200)

Count Bernadotte goes on : « ...When Shertok and I passed on to the question of the future of Palestine, Shertok agreed I had been right in that the three alternatives I had suggested for the Arab part of Palestine doubtless exhausted the possibilities. (But) he hinted that there might possibly be a fourth alternative, namely that the whole of Palestine should belong to Israel... »

(From To Jerusalem, by Count Folke Bernadotte, published in 1948)

The 22 November Resolution

● TEXT OF RESOLUTION S/RES/242 (1967)

THE SECURITY COUNCIL,

Expressing its continuing concern with the grave situation in the Middle East,

Emphasizing the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war and the need to work for a just and lasting peace in which every State in the area can live in security.

Emphasizing further that all Member States in their acceptance of the Charter of the United Nations have undertaken a commitment to act in accordance with Article 2 of the Charter.

1. **Affirms** that the fulfilment of Charter principles requires the establishment of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East which should include the application of both the following principles :

- (i) **Withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict;**
- (ii) Termination of all claims or states of belligerency and respect for and acknowledgement of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every State in the area and **their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries** free from threats or acts of force;

2. **Affirms further** the necessity.

(a) For guaranteeing freedom of navigation through international waterways in the area;

(b) For achieving a just settlement of the refugee problem;

(c) For guaranteeing the territorial inviolability and political independence of every State in the area, through measures including the establishment of demilitarized zones;

3. **Requests** the Secretary-General to designate a Special Representative to proceed to the Middle East to establish and maintain contacts with the States concerned in order to promote agreement and assist efforts to achieve a peaceful and accepted settlement in accordance with the provisions and principles in this resolution;

4. **Requests** the Secretary-General to report to the Security Council on the progress of the efforts of the Special Representative as soon as possible.

(U.N. Monthly Chronicle
November 1967)

ARTICLE 2 OF THE U.N. CHARTER :

4. All members shall refrain, in their international relations, from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or any other manner inconsistent with the purposes of the U.N.

What the Israelis know the resolution really means

« The Security Council explicitly resolved that Israel should withdraw to the lines of 4 June 1967. It is no good playing with words and trying to interpret the Security Council Resolution in any other way.

Israel must be frankly reserved as

regards the Security Council Resolution which clearly calls for an Israeli withdrawal to the 4 June lines ».

(Moshe Dayan, Minister of Defence, at a meeting of the Labour Party Bloc in the Knesset, 19 June 1968, Davar, 20 June 1968)

How it is interpreted Israeli-Style

« the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war »... 

« the withdrawal of Israeli armed forces... » 

« peace within secure boundaries »

Annexation of Arab territory

« The Security Council Affirms that the fulfilment of Charter principles requires... the respect for the territorial integrity and political independence of every state in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries ».

«...the respect for the territorial integrity and political independence of every state in the area ».

« The Security Council... emphasizing the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war... ».

The Diplomatic Annexation of Mr. Eban.

« It would not be wise to abandon the equilibrium inherent in the formula 'secure and recognized borders', for the formula enables us to settle all the areas without affecting our identity as seekers after peace. »

(Eban to Labour Party Conference, Davar, 5 August 1969)

« Israel would be ready to relinquish **some** war-won land if the Arabs would agree to a genuine peace reached through face-to-face negotiations ». But he repeated the Jewish state's refusal to go back to the borders existing before the 1967 Middle East War.

(Abba Eban, AP, 21 March 1970, Daily Star)

« Mr. Eban distinguished between 'security frontiers' and 'state frontiers' which Israel seeks, saying that it wants full sovereignty over the territory it finally keeps in Sinai. He added that « the majority of Israelis desires the maximum of security with the minimum of additional Arab population within the state of Israel. » He repeated the Israeli position that the return of the Golan Heights is « totally excluded ».

(Herald Tribune, 6 February 1969)

Israel's Security and the Jephtha Judgement.

« Mr. Allon expressed his surprise that a member of the Cabinet could have publicly negated the Biblical affinity of the Golan Heights and the Bashan range. 'The Golan is no less a part of Ancient Israel than Hebron or Nablus, for did not Jephtha judge there?' declared the Minister. There could be no question of the Syrians returning to the Golan Heights. Israel's security made it imperative that Syrian guns never again threatened Galilee villages, Mr. Allon emphasized. »

(Jerusalem Post, 16 August 1967)

The « New Map » Approach of Moshe Dayan.

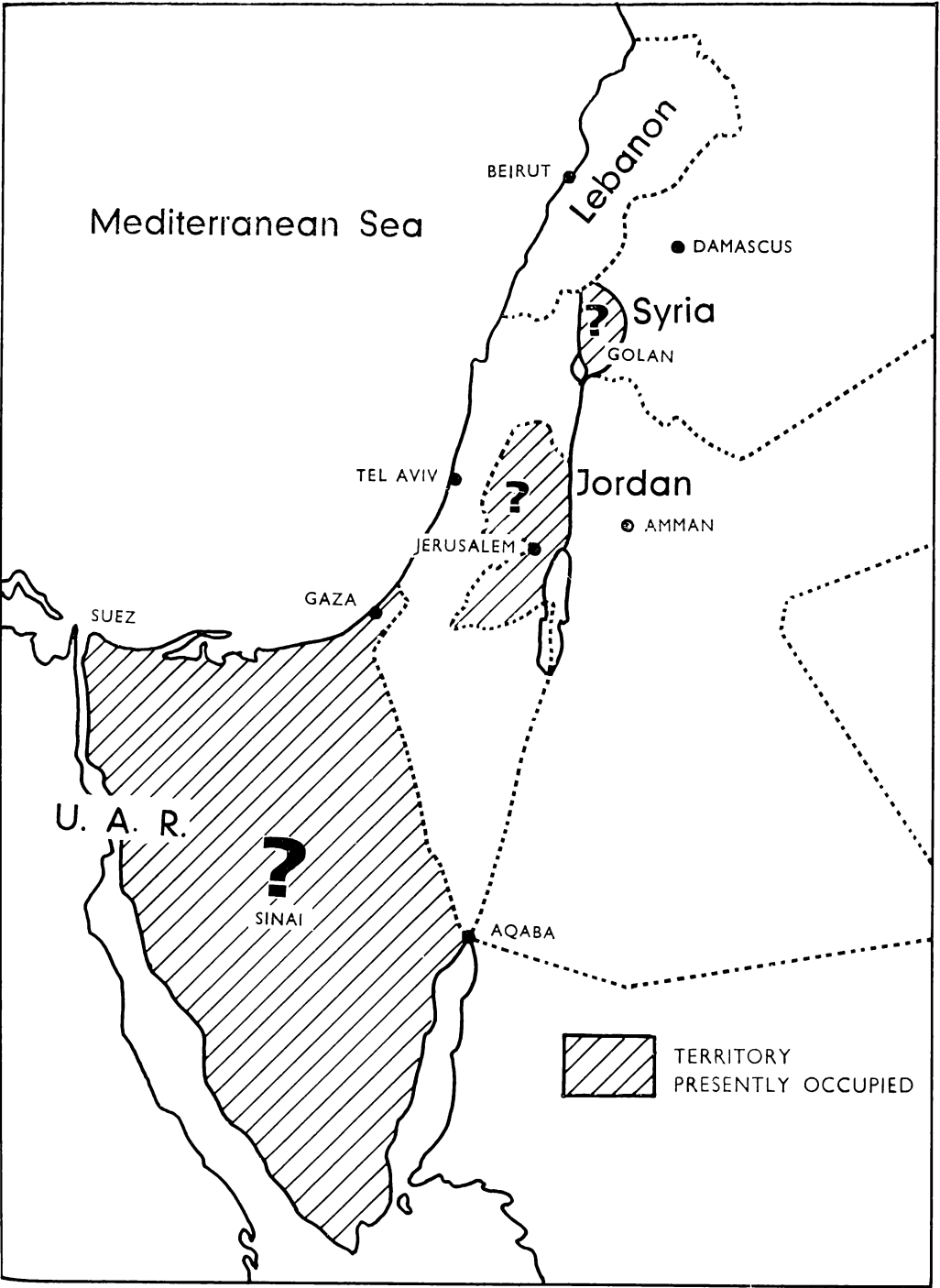
« We should draw a new map of Israel. What have we been insisting on for two years ? What was it that so much blood was shed for ? Was it only for the sake of direct negotiations, or is it because we persist in our desire for a new Israel ? When we sit down to negotiate, we shall talk of the new Israel. »

(Dayan at Rafi Party Conference, Davar, 18 August 1969)

Ed. Note Jerusalem is declared non-negotiable by all Israeli leaders as its annexation to Israel is taken for granted.

Peace as envisaged by the israeli leaders

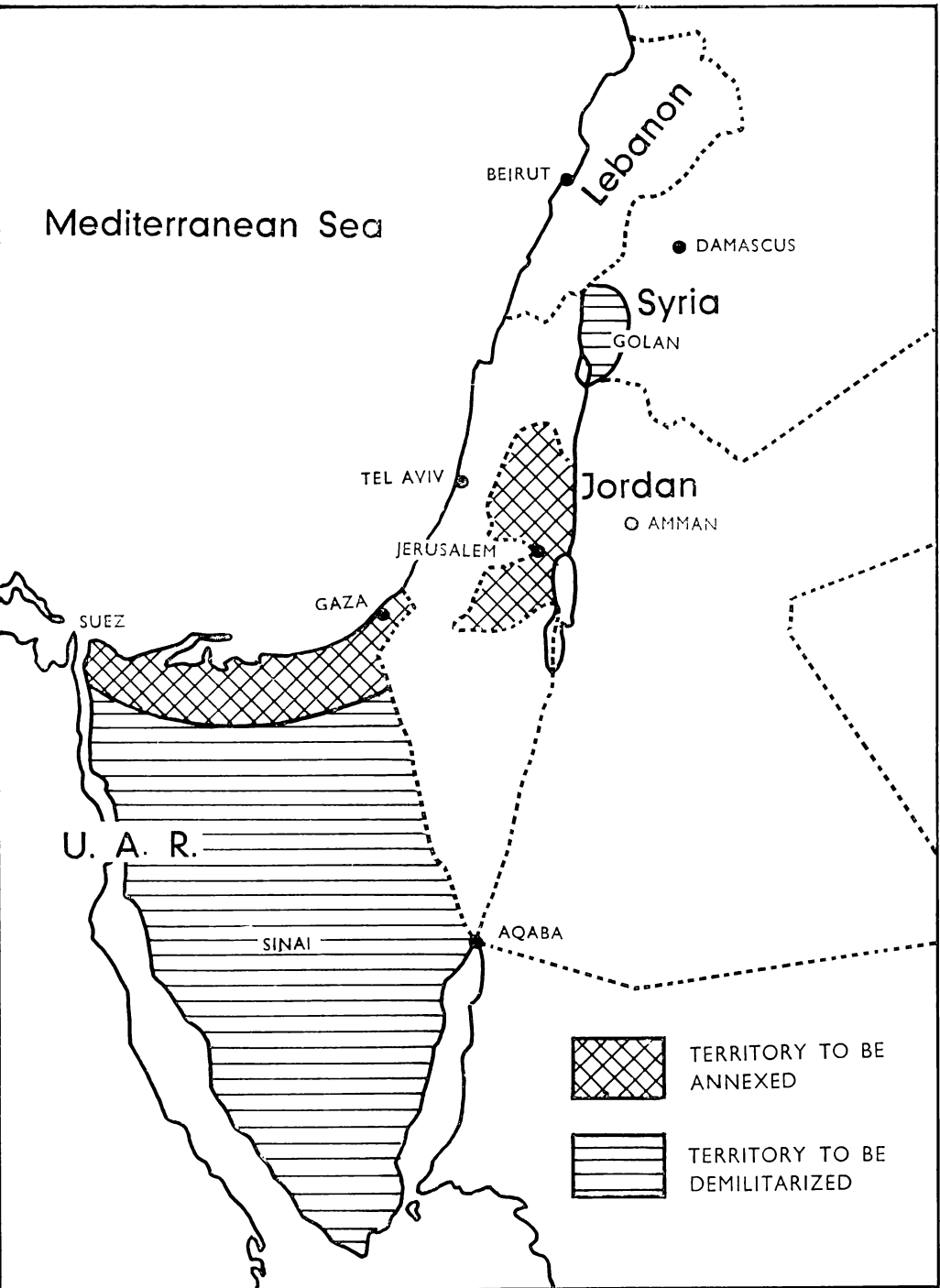
Golda Meir's peace plan Daily Star, Agencies, August 5, 1970, p. 1)



Mrs Meir said « that there would be no return to the boundaries of June 4, 1967 which lay the state open to the temptations of aggression and which on various fronts, lend the aggressor decisive advantages. »

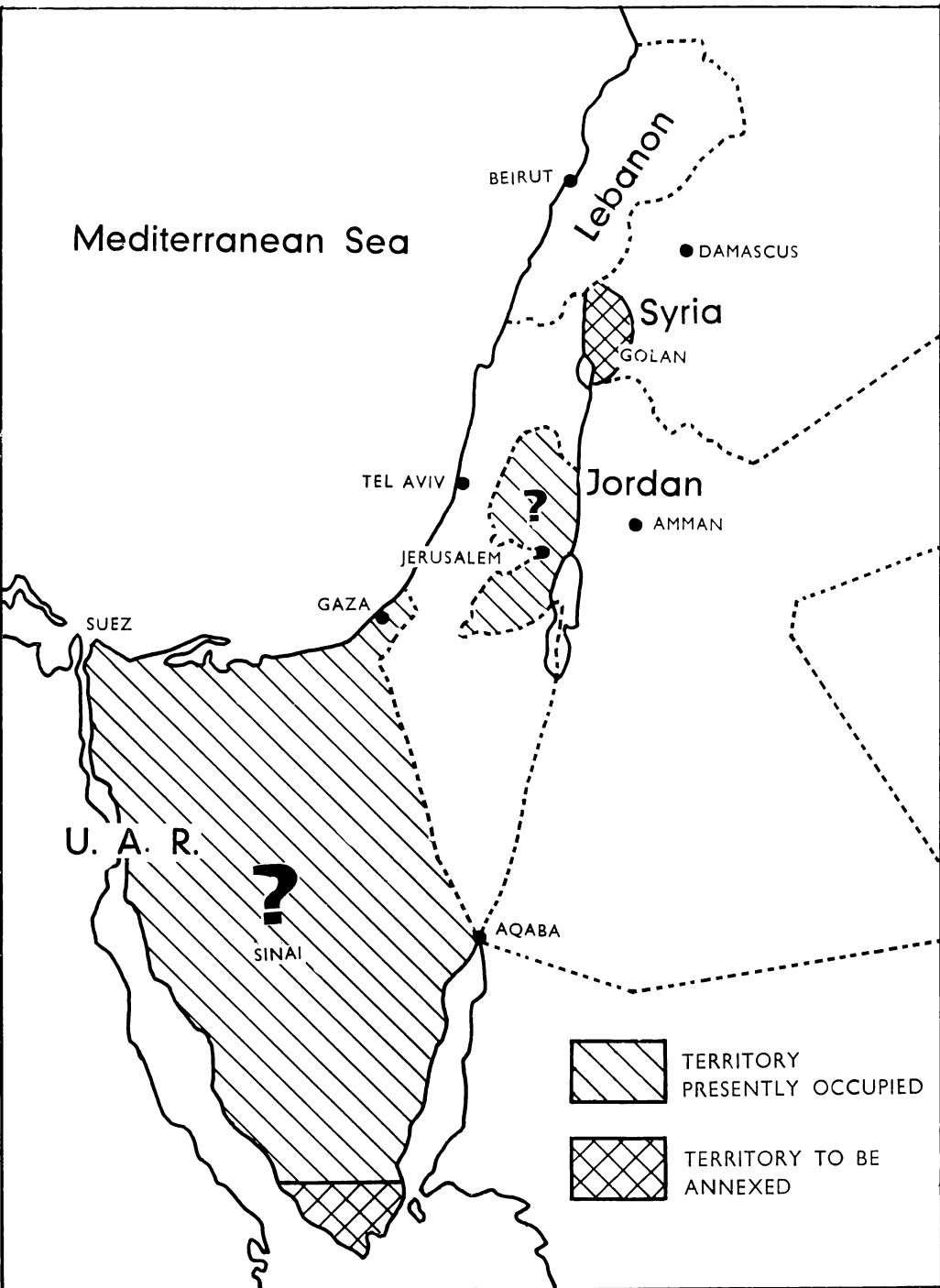
Editor's Note : The status of Jerusalem is declared non-negotiable by all Israeli leaders who consider that its annexation to Israel is taken for granted.

Ezer Weizman's peace plan (Nouvel Observateur, August 10, 1970, p. 16)



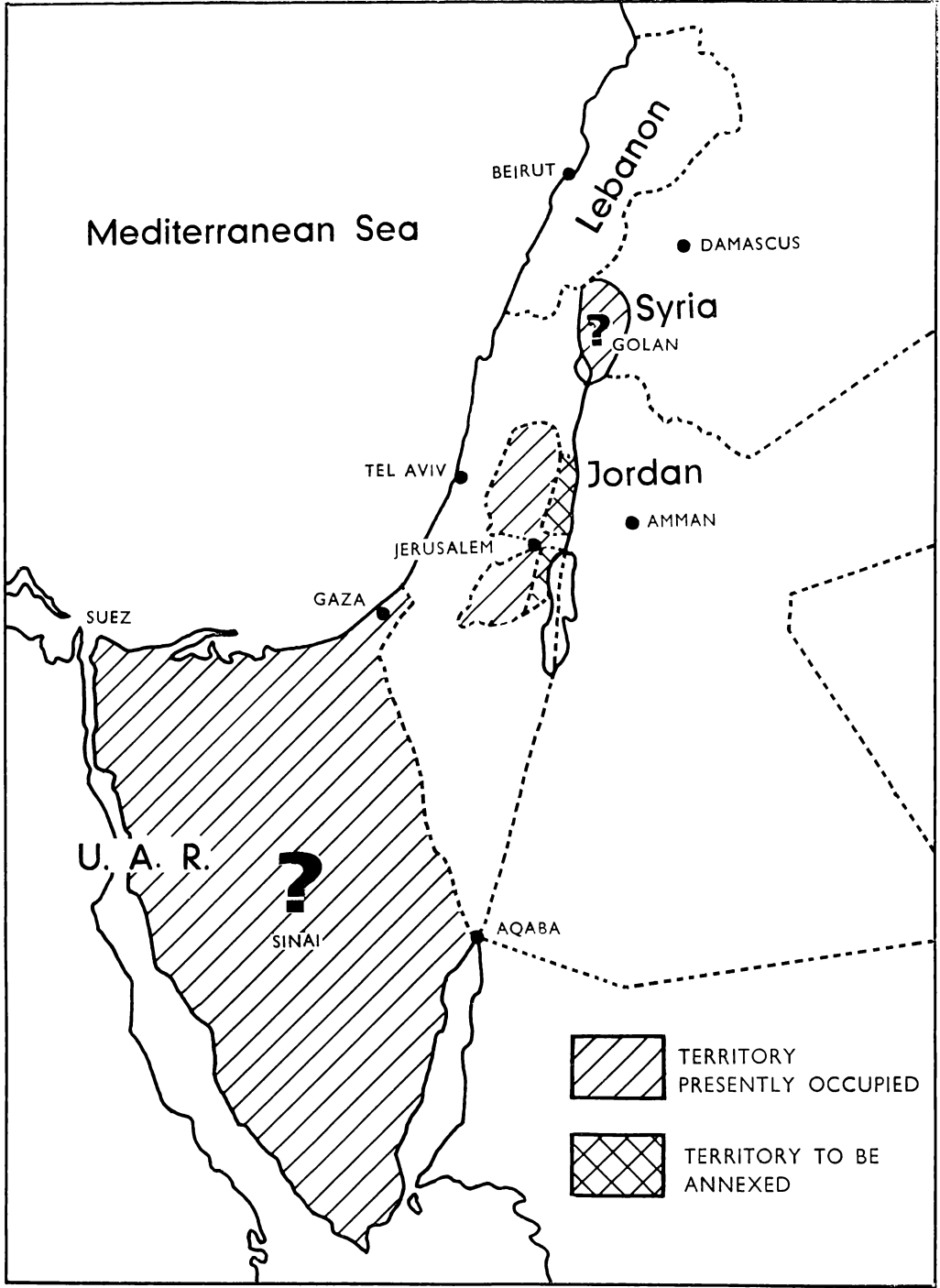
« I think that the evacuation of the Golan Heights, a part of which should be demilitarized, is negotiable... The Jordan River Valley should constitute the eastern frontiers of the State of Israel. Israeli forces should remain in northern Sinai whereas southern Sinai should be demilitarized.

Abba Eban's peace plan (Daily Star, Keuter, August 18, 1970, p. 2)



« He (Eban) repeated Israel's contention that in order to assure peace Israel woul have to control the occupied Golan Heights and the Straits of Tiran at the tip of the Sinai Peninsula.»

Yigal Allon's peace plan (L'Orient, AP, AFP, August 9, 1970, p. 1)



« Mr. Yigal Allon declared that he hopes the « Allon Plan » (which foresees the creation of a series of Israeli strategic strongpoints the whole length of the Jordan River) will be discussed along with other propositions assigned to bring about peace between Israel and the Arabs ».



The Israeli Negotiators

GENERAL MOSHE DAYAN, ISRAELI DEFENSE MINISTER :

« We must have great faith in ourselves and believe in the most elementary things. This is our homeland and if I say 'homeland' I mean also Nablus and Jericho ».

(New York Times, 28 June 1969)

...AND OTHER MEMBERS OF THE CABINET :

General Ezer Weizman, Israeli Transport Minister, implied that he favoured the removal of the 300,000 Arab refugees from the occupied Gaza Strip to other areas. He also emphasized that he considered Arab areas overrun by Israel in the 1967 war not as occupied territory but as part of Israel. General Weizmann said : «One of the oddities of the conflict is that Tel Aviv is called old Israel and Hebron new Israel... As far as I am concerned Hebron was, is, and will be part of Israel. King David was crowned in Hebron and reigned there for seven years and six months.»

(Reuter, 15 March 1970, Daily Star)

Mrs. Golda Meir, Israel's Prime Minister, has stated that Israel will stay for ever in the Etzion area between Bethlehem and Hebron in the occupied West Bank of Jordan. Mrs. Meir told the Knesset that it was official government policy to remain in the area, where since the June 1967 war two villages have been established and another is planned.

(Reuter, 2 April 1970, Daily Star)

Shimon Peres, Israel's Acting Minister of Immigrant Absorption, will soon present to the Cabinet a program for doubling the Jewish population of Jerusalem within the next four or five years. Peres proposes that all new immigrants to Israel during this period be settled in Jerusalem, which now contains 200,000 Jews and 70,000 Arabs.

(Newsweek, 16 March 1970)

Israel Galili, Israeli Minister of Information, stated : « I believe that it can be said definitely that the Gaza region will not again be separated from the

state of Israel. I told members of Nahal Yam (a fishing settlement) that Arab intransigence in the past made it incumbent on them to continue the consolidation of the entire region. »

(New York Times, 5 July 1969)

Yigal Allon, Acting Prime Minister :

« We need new borders which by their very existence will act as a deterrent against further war... Israel at present is unconquerable. »

(AP, 17 June 1969, Daily Star)

The leadership of the Israeli Labour Party officially declared that «the nation would retain the Golan Heights, the Gaza Strip and a considerable part of the eastern and southern Sinai peninsula.»

The leadership avoided a decision on the occupied area of the West Bank of the Jordan River, but said that the river would remain the «eastern security border».

(Herald Tribune, 4 August 1969)

The Territories

« ...What, one wonders, did they expect Israel to do with these territories ? Did they expect Israel to put them into some kind of eternal left-luggage office ?... most left-luggage offices confiscate property not collected after a certain period. »

(Jewish Observer, 8 August 1969)

« The Scriptures explicitly forbid the ruthless expulsion of the Canaanites; we must carry out an orderly and humane transfer over a relatively extended period, rather than abruptly. The Arabs who inhabit this country today are an essentially alien element to it. »

(Mr. Shuraga Gafui in Mahanaim, official magazine of the Israeli Army Rabbinate, April 1969)

« I think we must first of all define our own essential interest. In the West Bank I would say that we are there, primarily, as of right, and not on sufferance. We must find a way to make it possible for a Jewish locality to exist next to an Arab one. This does not mean that they can settle in Israel, nor total balance of rights. I would oppose the right of self-determination for them. »

(Moshe Dayan to the Guardian, 10 November 1969)

...On Tuesday (November 4) a high-ranking Israeli officer said Israel had begun enforcing a « tougher policy », and that Arabs in the occupied territories faced three choices : to fight the Arab terrorists themselves, aid Israeli troops by informing on the terrorists, or do nothing and « face the consequences. »

(Jewish Observer, 7 November 1969)

« ...The deeper significance of Defense Minister Moshe Dayan's decision to punish innocent Arabs in the occupied territories for failing to report impending guerrilla operations must be seen also as a veiled warning to Israeli

Arabs to instantly report suspicious signs or also risk punishment.

This punishment in the occupied territories, including blowing-up of homes, is supposed to turn passive Arabs into informers... »

(Washington Post, 20 November 1969)

Defense Minister Moshe Dayan has warned that stricter measures will be taken in Gaza if terror continues in the city... Dayan said that one of the measures that could be taken was the banning of fishing, one of the chief economic activities in the Gaza Strip. Fishing was used as camouflage for the infiltration of terrorists from Egypt, he asserted.

(Jerusalem Post, 21 November 1969)

The officer in charge of Defence Ministry policy in the administered territories, Brigadier Shlomo Gazit, explained in a radio interview that in applying the so-called « selective neighbourhood punishments », the accent was on the word « selective ». All cases were judged on their merits, and the punishments applied only when the authorities were convinced that a neighbourhood had collaborated with the terrorists. Collaboration, by this definition, extended to knowing about the terror acts and doing nothing to prevent them or bring them to the notice of the authorities.

Jewish Observer, 21 November 1969)



THE ARREST OF AN ARAB DEMONSTRATOR IN NABLUS.

« Sooner or later Arabs are bound to understand where their interests lie. »

(Le Nouvel Observateur 5 January 1970)