

THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

REPORT FROM ISRAEL

September 1968

NOTE: The following report is sent regularly to the American Jewish Committee by an Israeli observer of affairs in that country. His comments do not necessarily reflect the views of the AJC.

What next in the Middle East? This question is now on everybody's lips both here in Israel and abroad. Israelis, of course, see everything in the context of their own fate and future, be it the war in Vietnam, the invasion of Czechoslovakia by the Russians, elections in the United States or the gyrations and maneuvers of the leaders in the Arab world. In the past when Jews were still locked in the ghettos of Europe and subject to the whims of rulers and their henchmen, the usual question about every happening was "Is it good for the Jews?" Today, Israelis free in their own country yet cast about on the stormy waves of international politics, repeat the formula by asking "How will it affect Israel?"

Let us then examine the latest international events in the context of Israel or their possible effect on Israel.

Czechoslovakia Unquestionably, the most shocking event of the 1968 summer has been the invasion of Czechoslovakia by the Russians and their allies. In the eyes of Israelis it has been a strange invasion indeed, and one full of memorable parallels from past history as well as lessons for the future. Both the parallels and the lessons are of striking importance for Israelis. Like Czechoslovakia, Israel is a small country amidst a sea of warring nations. Like Czechoslovakia, it was born as a modern state out of the decision of statesmen, and like Czechoslovakia, it was led into maturity by its outstanding leaders and visionaries. Again, like Czechoslovakia, Israel started off as an enlightened country, where freedom reigned, and culture and the arts were advanced. And, like Czechoslovakia, Israel has to fight almost constantly for its independence. Finally, like the Czechs, Israel's people show great personal and collective courage in adversity, as well as great good sense and even humor in meeting a numerically superior adversary.

The parallels between Czechoslovakia and Israel are reflected in their actions. In May and June of last year (1967), Israelis remembering the Czech experience, determined not to surrender without a fight. The betrayal of Czechoslovakia at Munich in 1938 was still vivid in the minds of all the Israelis of European descent,

and the invasion of Czechoslovakia by the Nazis in March, 1939 without any resistance was a living warning to every Israeli of the danger of lack of resistance. So Israelis decided in 1967 not to be like the Czechs in 1938, neither to be betrayed politically, nor to rely on the false promises of foreign political leaders who were always ready for their own interests to let down "a far away city in a far away land." The words on every Israeli's lips in May 1967 were "We are not going to be another Czechoslovakia."

Unbelievably, just a year has passed and Czechoslovakia has experienced a second invasion and occupation. True, the Russian occupation has not - yet - been as ruthless as that of the Germans a generation ago, but it has been a violent intrusion into the self-determination of a free people all the same. The end of the new Russian occupation and interference is not yet in sight. This much seems to be clear however: The Russians were totally taken by surprise at the passive and non-violent resistance of the people of Czechoslovakia. They had counted on being received in that country, after 20 years of strong communist rule, with open arms; instead they were received with closed fists. They had hoped to oust the present communist leaders, but they failed to find a leader to form a quisling government in Prague. They had expected to find the Czech and the Slovak peoples divided from each other; for the only "Czechoslovaks" - so the old joke ran, were the Jews. Yet, when the Russians invaded that country their occupation managed to wield the two people into one.

Much has been reported from Czechoslovakia about the Russian invasion, and Israelis have anxiously followed every move. It has been a strange invasion, all the stranger because the unexpected resistance has given the Kremlin leaders second thoughts about the occupation. Thirty years ago, the Czechoslovaks crumbled under the Nazi invasion. Today they stand up to the Russians as one man. Reliable reports say that the Czechoslovaks have taken an example from the Israelis. They have learned that only by being tough and resisting can a country avoid being enslaved. So they stood up to the invaders, as the Israelis have several times in the recent past. There is great sympathy for Israel in Czechoslovakia, Kremlin foreign policy on non-relations notwithstanding. The Czechs have learned the lesson of Israel, and have applied it successfully. Needless to say, the Russians have injected anti-Semitism into their occupation, and a number of the 18,000 Czech Jews have left, some for Israel.

Lessons for Israel

There have also been several important object lessons for Israel in the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia. The first is that the present leaders in the Kremlin do not always act wisely or sensibly. Nor indeed do they always pursue one single line of policy. They waver, doubt, try, cajole, bully, hurt, and cry. Russian intelligence services are faulty and mislead their own superiors. This revelation is not new. It happened over Berlin in 1958. It occurred over Israel in 1967, - when the Russian intelligence services mistakenly reported Israeli troop movements toward the Syrian border, thus frightening the Syrians, and thereafter the Egyptians and the Jordanians. It

happened again in Czechoslovakia, when the Russians were made to believe that their troops would be received with open arms, as "socialist comrades." The second lesson is that there is no true leadership in the Kremlin today. Where once there ruled one strong man, today three grey technocrats, three unsure and divided party hacks, hold sway. They lack the power of decision and fall into doubts and hesitations instead. More often than not, they back the wrong horses.

Israelis regard these two Russian weaknesses as grave sources of danger for the whole world, and, of course, for the Middle East. Where basic information goes wrong, decisions cannot be right. And where the rulers are weak, there is no way of predicting their action and meeting it. Frightened or doubting men may make fatal mistakes.

Russian Blunders The same Kremlin leaders who blundered into Czechoslovakia in 1968, blundered into the Middle East war in 1967, and themselves remained out of the war only because of warning from Washington over the Hot Line in June 1967. But they led the Arabs into a frightful debacle, and the Arabs will never forgive them for this. Will they let the Arabs get into another mess of this kind? This is the big question which Israelis now ask. For, this much is clear. Whatever the Arab leaders may say or do vis-à-vis Israel, it is Moscow which controls their military and political movements. If the Arabs scream for revenge against Israel, will the Kremlin men aid them in turning their shouts into deeds? So far the Arabs provide the sound of fury, but they have not provided a sense of reality. This may be up to their Russian masters. In the words of Alice in Wonderland "Take care of the sense and the sounds will take care of themselves." Will the Russians be able to provide the sense?

Russian Ships News of the Russian invasion had a divided reception in the Arab world. The radical Arab states hailed the invasion as a proper political move, - as if it were something they, - or the Russians for them, - should be doing to Israel. These Arabs ignored the hostile reception accorded to the Russian invasion all over the world. Egypt, Syria and Iraq, traditional enemies of Israel, and even Jordan, looked pretty silly welcoming the Russian invasion. But this was not of great importance. What is more vital is that the Russians have been sending more war ships into the Mediterranean Sea during these last weeks. Obviously, the naval move was intended to terrorize Yugoslavia, - a friend of the Czechs, - into complying with the Russian moves. However, the mere presence of so many more naval craft in the Eastern Mediterranean is a direct threat to Israel. This increased naval strength, together with the lack of clear and wise leadership in the Kremlin, creates a grave cloud over Israel's security. Frightened men with too many weapons on their hands are liable to do unpredictable things. Observers in Israel predict that Russia will heat up the Middle East border areas around Israel to divert world attention from her Czechoslovak complications.

Self-defense

How can Israel meet this threatening situation? She can hardly provide against a determined attack by the Russians themselves. But, then,

this is still far off. As for a Russian sponsored or supported attack, it is clear to Israeli leaders that no foreign protection can be expected in such a case. Czechoslovakia did not get any protection. Nor did Israel get foreign protection from Arab and Russian threats in May and June 1967. What Israel, or any other nation in a similar position, can expect is support by way of arms deliveries ahead of the military conflict. In other words, Israel, like any other small nation which is threatened by enemies, must in good time stock up weapons for defense, so that she can defend herself in time of attack. This is the practical lesson which Israel has been learning this summer.

By the way, this eventful and violent summer has been a season full of lessons. According to the latest Israeli joke you ask a person "How are you" and he replies "Doing alright and learning my lesson."

Just before the invasion of Czechoslovakia took the world by surprise, there was general expectation of a Russo-American summit conference as a final move by the outgoing President to bring order and security into a frightened world. This expectation has now faded, and with it the plan to find a global arrangement of the major crisis problems: Vietnam, the Arab-Israeli conflict and nuclear armaments. Only nuclear armaments, the most threatening of all Russo-American issues, is likely to be discussed in the near future. The rest must wait, and with it the Middle East impasse.

Arabs Divided

How long can the Middle East impasse continue?

The Arabs are becoming more and more restive, but their political and military measures seem

totally ineffective. In the political field, the Arabs are as divided as ever. Their foreign ministers met in Cairo early in September, but only empty words emerged from their deliberations. Their aim had been to come to the effective aid of the Jordanian army, but the final communique talked only about "strengthening the Jordanian front against Israel." Their aim had been to set up an "Arab Eastern command," with headquarters in Baghdad, Iraq, to comprise the armies of Iraq, Syria and Jordan. Instead of deciding on such a joint command, they talked of "liberating the areas conquered by Israel in the war." What is more important, however, is that the Arab foreign ministers decided to continue their support of the guerillas which attack Israel.

Open Support for Terrorists

There are four main groups of these terrorists.

All vow to "re-conquer Palestine" but none manage to do anything about it. Their losses in battle have been heavy, their morale is low, desertions

from their ranks have been serious, and they are continually plagued by jealousies, by each claiming the credit for any attack. One group put its commander-in-chief under house arrest, until he resigned.

Attacks by these groups from across the Jordan river have been failures, so there has been no "re-conquest" of any area. In frustration, the terrorists have turned to other means. After the bombing of their bases at Es-Salt in early August, they swore revenge on Israel's civilian population. They laid grenades or gelignite explosives in waste baskets at public places in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, and "succeeded" in causing a good many injuries and one death. But this makes little sense from a military point of view. Such outrages do not even demoralize the Israeli civilians. The rational Israelis take it calmly, while the hotheads "counter-attack" Arabs in the streets. It is all senseless, and does not aid in the "re-conquest" of occupied Palestine.

Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Iraq are now openly supporting these Arab terrorist bands, because this sort of terrorism is the only form of Arab activity against Israel. There have been other, similar acts of Arab military desperation. The main "front" against Israel is in the Jordan and Beisan Valley, where shooting takes place every day, and Israeli soldiers are continually killed and wounded. Both Syria and Egypt feel that they are losing prestige if they don't "do something" against Israel. So Syria has started attacking Israeli army patrols across the cease fire line in the Golan area, and Egypt has ambushed Israeli soldiers from across the Suez Canal, killing two and capturing one. In military terms all this fails to make sense. Its only value is prestige, not to lag behind the activists, and it is all in blind fury.

The hijacking of the El Al airplane to Algiers was also an act of blind fury and folly. It took 39 days for the Israelis and their plane to be released much to the anger and anguish of most Israelis. The Italian government, from whose airspace the plane was hijacked, acted as the mediator in the release, and received an Israeli promise for a "gesture of a humanitarian nature", i.e. the release of some Arab political prisoners. The Israeli public was incensed at this price being exacted for an act of piracy, and Abba Eban, who demanded credit for the release of the Algerian prisoners and plane, came under heavy fire.

Be that as it may, failing the Arab ability to "re-conquer" Palestine, the terrorist attacks assume other, secondary, forms. Israelis will just have to put up with them or react to them, but they will not be deterred by them.

United Nations Inaction

What angers Israel most in the present impasse and its side shows, is the inaction of the United Nations and its Secretary General U Thant. Whenever a complaint is lodged against Israel at the Security Council, whether over a retaliatory attack or for any other reason, the Security Council takes violent decisions and threatens sanctions and the like. But, when Israel is attacked, whether by terrorists from across the Jordan or by Egyptians from across the Suez Canal, and Israel complains, her complaint ends in a resolution of no significance. No Arab state has ever been

condemned by the Security Council, but how often has Israel? The result is that the Security Council loses its prestige, its authority to resolve certain complaints or its power to restore order where the peace is threatened. The further result is that countries, such as Israel, whose complaints fall on deaf ears and get unequal treatment, must take their security into their own hands.

Secretary U Thant is not much better than the Security Council. Israelis feel that he has always disliked Israel. As principal servant of the United Nations, he goes along with the majority, which comprises Afro-Asians and communists hostile to Israel. His one-sided reporting to the Security Council on the Egyptian Suez incident has proved this once again.

Israel is Normal Israelis are a tough people. Over the years, they have learned to live with insuperable problems, sometimes ignoring them, but always carrying on their normal daily activities. So it was before 1967, and so it has been since. In the battle torn area along the Jordan, where Arab guns fire daily, farming life continues. In the early morning, the mine detectors of the army go out along the dirt tracks in the fields, and if the paths are clear, the farmers then tend to their lands. In Jerusalem, the Arab terrorists may lay grenades one evening, but the next morning life between Jews and Arabs continues its normal course. In this way, Israel is being developed at a fast pace.

Variety of Life Israel has for a long time been the country of contrasts, where old meets new, ancient meets modern, tradition meets progress, - and sometimes clashes with it, - east meets west, rich meets poor, highly advanced meets illiterate, enlightened meets superstitious, religions meet atheism. Sun and shade, peace and war, everything can be found in this small country, even heat and cold, sea and mountain, flora and desert. Its human life is so varied that thousands of stories could be culled and told every day from its colorful scenery.

Let us take just a few examples, at random:

Israel is fast becoming a major center for international conventions. At one time Israel was a major attraction for Jewish tourism, while the other side of the Holy Land was a major attraction for Christian pilgrims. Both of these are still true, but other, ordinary tourists, are now coming in ever-increasing numbers. Take the variety of conventions and you see what people come to see Israel. This last month alone there have been conventions of master tailors (no longer a Jewish trade), cardiologists, chicken growers, limnologists (lake water experts), scientists of all sorts. Among future conventions planned is one of private detectives.

The country is also full of "festivals." In August each year there is the Israel Festival of the Performing Arts (music, dance

and theater). This September there is a Safed festival of amateur painters. A wine festival is planned for next year.

Alcohol is certainly no Israeli drink, even though the local wine is good. It is the soft drink which holds the Israeli spell-bound. The local soft drink industry does a thriving business, due partly to the heat and perspiration, and partly to habit. Recently, Coca Cola opened an Israeli plant, and soon conquered the local market. Their demand is so tremendous that they are now doubling the size of their plant. In keeping with this, all the other soft drink firms have increased this year's output by 25 percent. If anyone ever had doubts about whether the Arab boycott of Israel could harm Coca Cola by its going into Israel, the figures prove that the Israeli market is the best in the Middle East.

In fact, Israel is heading for another boom. Unemployment has vanished and labor is being imported from the administered (Arab) areas. In the building trade wages have risen, and in industry experts are at a premium. The government is bent on holding the line on wages, but how long can it do so?

There is little trouble these days from the orthodox section. It is worthy of note that the orthodox no longer interfere with the holding of non-orthodox Jewish services in progressive synagogues. This toleration is a step forward. In other fields, orthodox leaders have recently made pronouncements. On post-mortem examinations, the orthodox fight a holy battle with tremendous fervor. Yet, as far as transplants in the human body are concerned, the chief Rabbi has declared that this is allowed under Jewish rabbinical law, provided the recipient is in danger of death. Nothing was said about the clinical death of the donor, for this is really a medical problem. The rabbis also made a pronouncement on birth control, especially in view of Pope Paul's encyclical forbidding its use among Catholics. The chief Rabbi declared that birth control means as such are not prohibited. This seems to be a departure from previously accepted Jewish doctrine.

Immigration is the most important problem facing Israel, after defense. About 15,000 immigrants arrived in Israel in 1967, many of them from the free world. The number expected in 1968 is over 30,000. The new immigration ministry under Deputy Prime Minister Yigal Allon, is taking over the tasks of settling immigrants into this country, of which housing is currently the most difficult. Most of the immigrants now are young people, many of them highly qualified.

The "Shabbes-goy" has almost died out, but not quite. This function of the Gentile for the Jews was an institution of the diaspora to help orthodox Jews observe all the Sabbath rules without infringement. Such necessary jobs as had to be done, were done for the Jew by the Shabbat-gentile. In several orthodox quarters of Israel, including Bnei-Brak, the Shabbas-goy has been kept on, in

the old fashion. When the man who held this post at the Bnei-Brak utility center died recently, it was claimed by his heirs that he had really been a Jew, not a Gentile. This claim caused great embarrassment to the Bnei-Brak people, but hilarity among those who believe that such foreign habits should be discontinued among Israeli Jews. A Jaffa Arab has succeeded to the post.

Israel is not only a country of contrasts, but also one of great beauty. The Israel Natural Reserve Authority preserves places of exceptional beauty, and there are scores of them everywhere. In the occupied areas alone, many beauty spots have been turned into parks, and camping places have become a major attraction for tourists and Israelis alike.

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NOTE: The following report is sent regularly to the American Jewish Committee by an Israeli observer of affairs in that country. His comments do not necessarily reflect the views of the AJC.

There has been motion in the Middle East without any real movement. The June War of 1967 has changed the map of the Middle East for the time being, but the Arabs have been trying ever since to undo these changes. It has also changed other things, especially the relationship of foreign powers in this area. While the western powers are vacating more and more positions in the Middle East, the Russians are quickly moving in. The French also tried to move in, or rather to come back, - but they have failed. The British are evacuating their positions in the vital oil area along the Persian Gulf, for reasons of economy, and the Russians are already preparing to take over. This is totally unintelligible to Israelis.

No Changes of Mind

There have been no changes, however, in the minds of those involved in the Middle East scene. The Arabs continue to deceive themselves, basking in illusions of Arab unity, prowess and grandeur, and refusing to see reality. The Israelis, stubborn as always, - Moses called the Children of Israel "A stiff-necked people" - persist in total refusal to relinquish what they gained in the June War. Furthermore, after living in this country in a state of permanent defense against Arab attacks for the last fifty years, they see no reason to treat recent terrorist attacks or even martial threats from re-armed Egypt as more than the usual hostility to be borne stoically. So stoicism once again becomes the guideline for Israeli conduct, as the security situation deteriorates.

Of the outside powers, the Russians persist in their open and active support of the Arabs, and the Americans try to adopt a posture of neutrality between Israel and the Arabs, a posture which is impossible because the Russians and the Arabs will not allow it. But it does manage to do harm, because it leaves their only ally in this area, the Israelis, more exposed to Soviet-Arab attacks, politically and militarily.

All this takes place against a backdrop of a world which has other problems to tackle, each in its own area, and cannot really be bothered at this moment with the Middle East crisis. All of

Europe is galvanized into fear and depression at the sight of the violent Soviet invasion of Central Europe and the threats against Germany. North America is apparently pre-occupied with its own domestic problems of race, poverty and violence, and the elections, while most of South America is now experiencing a wave of student rioting which may well spread into greater upheavals of a socio-political nature. Africa is still trying to prove its claim to actual national independence, while Asia faces its own eternal problems. This means that in the end, the countries of the Middle East, Israel and the Arabs, will have to rely on themselves and on their own resources to find a modus vivendi in this area. Nobody from outside can help them in this. Russia will certainly not lead the Arabs into another war, unless by blunder, nor will the west help anybody along this dangerous path.

Middle East Must
Solve Its Own
Problems

This means that both sides will have to see reality and accommodate themselves to each other, by negotiation or a continuation of the present situation. In talking about reality, not only military positions, geo-

graphical gains or new arms and influence will play a role, but also the mentalities and attitudes, the loves, hates, religious prejudices and national heritages, will have to be considered: the lack of realism of the Arabs, the stubbornness of the Israelis, the ancient way of the east and the dynamic manner of the west, - of which the Israelis are the local exponent.

United Nations.
Not a Court of
Justice

Against this background, much has been said and done, but nothing has really changed. Israelis have a poor opinion of the United Nations, because this body is politically loaded against Israel. No Israeli complaint

is ever considered on its merits, - nor were the recent complaints of Egyptian attacks along the Suez Canal, but Arab complaints against Israel end in severe strictures bordering on threats to impose sanctions on Israel. Jews have by a tradition of three thousand five hundred years seen justice as the pinnacle of all social functions ("Justice, justice pursue!" as the Jews were enjoined in Deuteronomy). It requires repeated efforts by Israeli leaders to explain to their people that the United Nations is not a court of justice, but a body of politicians.

However, everyone still pays lip service to the U.N. and there is the annual General Assembly. When Mr. Dean Rusk announces that the U.S. will not adopt re-hashed Russian proposals for "solving" the Mid-East crisis, he says that the U.S. "will only act through the United Nations." And when the Security Council of the U.N. resolves to send an emissary to Israel to "investigate the condition of the Arab population in the Israel-held territories" and refuses at the same time to send this emissary into Arab countries, to investigate the ill treatment of Jews (3000) in Syria, and the imprisonment of Jews in Egypt, - the Israel government has expressed its willingness to receive the emissary, but only if he is also permitted to examine the situation of the Jews in Arab countries.

Egypt Makes
A "Crisis"

The real "crisis" in the Middle East was created artificially by Egypt, and in anticipation of the United Nations General Assembly. The Arabs want to get the occupied territories back and to re-open the Suez Canal. Israel will not budge from these territories, but is attempting to hold and defend them until a permanent arrangement is reached. The Arabs, after Nasser had talks in Moscow, decided to heat up the border areas in order to highlight the situation, - because everybody was pre-occupied elsewhere with their own problems. The Egyptians therefore "lit up" the Suez Canal area with artillery attacks and cross-Canal infiltration and said "War is imminent any day." This was untrue, for neither Egypt nor Israel was ready for war. Israel had not mobilized for that purpose, while Egypt, though re-armed, was in no state to attack. At best, Egypt could defend its own side of the Canal area against Israel. Egypt's behavior was most provocative but it takes two sides to make a war, unless one side invades the other, and without Israel, there was no war. Israel, being strong, tolerated all the acts of provocation, losing a lot of young men in the process, - but did not hit back nor did she respond with words to the war talk from Cairo. Eventually, the Egyptian war hysteria died a natural death.

Hussein Forbidden
To Make Peace

The only Arab leader in this area who wants to have peace is King Hussein of Jordan, for under conditions of war, his rule is in constant danger, and his people suffer most from the consequences of the June War. Hussein called on President Nasser in Cairo at the end of September, but Nasser forbade Hussein to initiate contacts with Israel at the United Nations with a view to a settlement. Of all the Arabs around Israel, he needs peace most. Egypt does not need peace, she merely wants revenge against Israel to assuage her wounded national pride. Israel would prefer to make peace with Nasser, for he is the strongest leader of the Arabs, but he can survive only by talking war and defiance, - and getting Russian arms for that purpose.

Russia is
Real Threat

The real problem for Israel was Russia. In conjunction with the Arab attacks on Israel ceasefire lines, Russia issued a long statement condemning Israel. At the same time Moscow sent Washington proposals for Soviet-American action to "impose" an arrangement on Israel and the Arabs and so end the stalemate. The first point in this proposal was to force Israel to evacuate the occupied areas, which created violent Israeli objections. Foreign Minister Abba Eban called the Russian proposals "neither new, nor a plan nor a peace plan." Similar suggestions to evacuate without a permanent peace arrangement were turned down by Israel after the U.N. resolution of 22 November 1967, and again last spring. Israel will not withdraw without peace or security, whatever the pressure. The Russian "peace plan" will certainly come up during the United Nations General Assembly, and Israel will have to resist it. There are four major world problems, but only one of these is to be debated at the U.N. The three larger problems have been pushed

aside for political reasons. The Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia is not on the agenda, as an "internal socialist" problem, because of Russian insistence, yet nobody can resist mentioning it. The murder of hundreds of thousands by starvation in Biafra is not being considered because it is "an internal problem" of Nigeria. Nor is the Vietnam war on the agenda. This leaves only the Arab-Israeli situation, where the Russians can be expected to spearhead the 40 Afro-Asians in an attack of words and threats on Israel.

Russian Fleet

However, what bothers Israel more than words are Russian deeds. The ever-increasing Russian fleet in the Eastern Mediterranean may

be a direct threat to Israel in case of a confrontation with the Arabs. Russia has now over 40 ships including helicopter carriers, battleships, and torpedo-boats. Slowly the NATO powers are waking up to this threat, which also affects Greece, Turkey and Italy. Israel's own fleet is pitifully small, and can never be large; Israel needs forces on land and in the air, and has neither men nor money for a large navy.

Colossal Defense Cost

On land, Israel is well able to look after herself. Both last year's tremendous Russian booty in Egypt and new acquisitions since, have kept her land forces up to relative

strength with the Arabs. This and other purchases cost Israel annually half her total budget, which is over 6 billion Pounds (\$2 billion). This year's Israeli defense budget will be near 3.5 billion Pounds. Needless to say, the heavy foreign purchases in tanks, modern equipment and electronic detection materiel have upset Israel's foreign trade balance and put her march toward a positive trade balance into reverse gear. And just to show how heavy the burden is on Israelis, 13.8 per cent of her gross national product is spent on defense. In this Israel ranks fourth after North Vietnam, Laos and Korea. In the U.S. and the USSR, by comparison, 9.8 and 9.7 respectively are spent on defense, and those are much richer countries.

Needs Phantom Planes Urgently

Whatever the rate of spending, Israel has no choice if she is to survive. For this reason, Israel is more worried about re-armaments than about hostile talk or temporary hostilities

along the borders. It is for this reason alone that so much has been said in recent months of Israel's need to get supersonic fighter planes, to match the MIG 21 now in Egypt and the MIG 23 which may get there in the future. Hope that Israel would eventually get the French Mirage Mark V has been dispelled by Abba Eban's latest talk with his French colleague. The only other comparable plane is the American Phantom jet. That is why Israelis want to buy fifty of that type, and to buy them right now. True, they are much more expensive than the French Mirage planes, and they are more complicated to handle. Yet they are the only western made fighter planes of the speed and maneuverability to equal the Russian planes in Egypt. All Israeli ears have been alerted to

statements by the President, - who has kept his counsel and made no decision, - and to the presidential candidates, - who have made promising statements. Israel cannot understand why President Johnson holds out on these essential supplies. They know that he fears an arms race and also wants to end his term of office with a world wide Super-Power accommodation. The Israelis fear that Johnson is falling victim to a dangerous illusion. Israelis do not want a "pie-in-the-sky"; they want "planes-in-the-sky." They want these planes, because they agree with Foreign Minister Eban that at present "War is not near, but hopes for peace are dim."

Eastern Arab Command

What makes the hopes for peace so dim is the determination of the Arabs to prepare for war. On the Egyptian border with Israel the situation may be tense but not immediately dangerous. Things are beginning to be different on Israel's eastern border with Jordan and Syria. Here Egypt has now succeeded in setting up the Eastern Arab Joint Command. This will comprise the forces of Jordan, Syria and Iraq. Command will be in the hands of an Iraqi officer, because Iraq has the largest army of these three. There are 15,000 Iraqi troops still in Jordan, and Jordan has been re-armed with new American tanks and some planes. However, the new command, which was intended to supersede the former all-Arab High Command, will only be a coordinating body, not a real command; for Syria, torn by internal strife and ever suspicious of other Arab countries, refuses to submit her own troops to the new force.

Suicide Guerillas

Thus, of all the Arabs who are actually fighting against Israel at this time, there are only the guerilla bands. These formations have been dreadfully hit. The many thousands of young men who flocked to their ranks are deserting them now, because infiltration into Israel usually ends in their being killed. All bands so far have been caught and wiped out. There remain only the suicide squads, guerillas who know they will be killed once they are inside Israel. These suicide bands present a new problem, because in the process they kill Israeli soldiers in great numbers. Among recent victims have been four senior Israeli officers. Their loss has caused much complaint here about sending senior commanders into battle against ordinary marauders hiding in caves in difficult terrain. Be that as it may, the effect of these bands on the military situation has been nil.

Sinai Beduin Aid Terrorists

A new problem in terrorism has been created by help given from inside. There have been acts by Beduin in Sinai, who laid mines on roads and tracks for the terrorists outside. And, there have been terrorist acts against the civilian population by local Israeli Arab youths. As for the Beduin, who were taken into the pay of the Egyptians, Defense Minister Moshe Dayan has met all the principal Sinai Sheikhs and told them bluntly that either they "control" the movement of saboteurs in the areas of the various tribes, or else all Sinai Beduin will be moved elsewhere for security

reasons. The fact is that in the empty spaces of the Sinai desert every tribe knows precisely all the movements in its territory.

Israeli Arab Youths, Too

As for Israeli Arab youths, these have been found responsible for bombing outrages in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv streets and movie houses, and will be put on trial. It is sad, though not surprising, that some local Arab youths should have formed themselves into terrorist cells under the influence of Arabs from the administered areas. The Arab elders of the villages involved have rushed to proclaim their loyalty to Israel, but the Israeli intelligence services will now have more areas to watch.

Occupation Troubles

In the Israel administered areas, there has been mounting tension along the Suez Canal. The Arabs in their Suks (markets) and coffee houses follow these events and react immediately. Thus, when the son of a wealthy Nablus family was found among the terrorist bands, and his father's house blown up as a measure of repression and warning to others, the mayor of Nablus resigned; but Moshe Dayan persuaded him to stay on. When the town of Gaza was the scene of repeated bomb outrages in the main street, a nightly curfew was imposed.

Prayers in Hebron

There was even trouble with the mayor of Hebron, Muhammad Jaabari, known for his wise cooperation with Israel, over the Tombs of the Patriarchs. Last spring, a group of religious Jews refused to leave Hebron, and eventually had to be coaxed to live in the military compound. During the fall Holy Days, other religious Jews requested permission to pray at the Tombs, but the Muslim religious leaders refused this permission. Israel's Minister of religions relied on last year's prayers held during Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur at the Tombs; but the Muslims acted on orders from Jordan and refused. In the end, Moshe Dayan had to be called in. He told the mayor of Hebron that the Israeli government had decided that Jews could pray at the Tombs of the Patriarchs during the fall Holy Days. He said that this did not depend on Muslim consent, any more than the occupation of Hebron depended on Muslim consent.

The case of the Tombs of the Patriarchs is a complex one. The structure over the Tombs is a Muslim Mosque, where Muslims pray 5 times each day, and the Jewish prayers are held in the ante-room. For centuries no Jews were allowed to set foot at the Tombs, because the Muslims claimed that Abraham (Ibrahim) was their own "friend" according to Koran texts. Now for the first time, Jews have access, for visits, to the Tombs of the Forefathers of the Jews, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Complications

It appears that the present conflict over prayer at the Tombs of the Patriarchs would not have ended in a one-sided order, had not two facts intervened. The first is that one week before Rosh Hashana,

Prime Minister Eshkol, ever jealous of the popularity, power and success of Moshe Dayan, proposed to the cabinet that administration of the occupied areas be put into the hands of an eleven-member ministerial committee with each responsible for affairs of his own department. This was a total surprise for Dayan, who as defense minister is in sole charge of occupation. Then came the first test, over prayer at the Tombs. Dayan refused to act, saying this was now in the hands of the Minister of Religions, Dr. Wahrhaftig. The latter, however, was at a loss how to act, and appealed back to Dayan.

In the meantime, seeing Israeli cabinet dissent over powers in the occupied areas, and seeing that Dayan was no longer in charge of the Holy Sites, the Muslim religious leaders took courage and blandly refused consent for Jewish prayers. In thus refusing, they acted both unwisely and out of malice. For this, Dayan punished them, when he issued orders instead of asking for their consent.

The Muslim leaders have been spreading the rumor that the religious Israeli Jews want to take over the Tombs of the Patriarchs as a Jewish religious site. This is untrue, and the military government would never allow it. In any case, the whole issue is somewhat artificial, borne out of temporary zeal rather than out of a real religious need. The Tombs of the Patriarchs are graves, and under Jewish religious precepts, one does not say prayers, whether daily or festive, at a graveside. So the whole idea is really religiously wrong, but amounts to a matter of chauvinistic-religious zeal. It need never have arisen.

Politicians - Old
and Not So Old

Bickering among Israeli politicians has often been a source of chagrin to many people. At the moment bickering and infighting is carried on at a steady pace, yet not at a high pitch. Here as elsewhere in the world, a revolution is beginning to take shape, except for this difference, that in Israel the "young revolutionaries" who want to take over from the elders, are by now themselves in late middle age. Dayan, Allon, Peres, and their contemporaries are in their fifties, - but then the elders are in their seventies.

After initial successes of the "younger" ones, the elders are now fighting back. With Pinhas Sapir, the former finance minister, in charge of Labor party affairs, the "younger elements" have been out-voted by the rest, and things will stay as they have been hitherto. There will be no elections to the coming Labor Party convention, and the old guard will remain in the saddle. Dayan, fed up with Labor Party machinations, has resigned from its councils and devotes his time to national and military matters only. He is by far the most popular minister. Eshkol, who represents the old guard, hopes to stay in power to the same age as Ben Gurion did, i.e. 77, which means for another 5 years.

Health and Power

Now, there is nothing to stop Eshkol and his contemporaries from staying in power indefinitely, barring a revolt inside Israel. The present leaders have made sure that their party has every chance of staying in office. Through merging their own Mapai with Ahdut Avodah and with Rafi (Dayan) and now also adding Mapam on the left, they are certain to have over half the votes at the next elections. After that they can pass laws to drive out the smaller parties, abolish all effective opposition by bringing the right wing into another national coalition (as is the case now) and so rule Israel from party headquarters. If then they can control their own floor, - as they manage to do now, - the older leaders can stay in office as long as they like or their health permits. Indeed, health is no longer a reason for office. The Tel Aviv mayor, Mordecai Namir suffered a serious stroke two years ago, but refuses to vacate his office. Tel Aviv is run without a mayor. Namir is of the old guard, and for reasons of personal loyalty he is not being replaced. For the same reasons, men like Allon are given nominal jobs like deputy prime minister without any real power, and men like Dayan are jealously watched.

Yet personal bickering does not detract from national unity, except in rare cases. All political leaders, even the communists (except the pro-Chinese branch) stand together on matters of national importance. This habit of personal bickering, known at all levels of our public life, has sometimes deceived the outsider. Thus, in May 1967, one of the reasons for Nasser's under-estimating Israeli strength was his impression that the country was deeply divided by its politicians. Nasser took this infighting as a sign of an unbridgeable gulf, which would stop Israel from standing up to fight.

Government By Compromise

In places where there is no infighting, there are sometimes negative results. Israel has a national coalition government, comprising all parties, except the communists, and has 22 ministers. Since it is a cabinet of all parties and shades, it is thought that many basic decisions are being left unmade because so large and comprehensive a body cannot agree on many vital issues. Often this is true. Prime Minister Levi Eshkol is more of a committee chairman than a national leader and this results in decisions by compromise only, and that of course only to the extent that compromise is possible. There is rarely a majority vote, usually it is a compromise vote. Foreign observers have charged Israel with failing to make any move towards peace in the Israel-Arab conflict just because the Israeli cabinet is unable to make basic and far-reaching decisions.

In Israel's domestic affairs there is a great variety of problems. The University year has started, with thirty thousand students. This is just 1 per cent of the population, much too little for a modern society. In Jerusalem alone, about 700 students had to forgo their studies, because of the present shortage of

living accommodation. The number of students from abroad is steadily increasing.

There are many doctors in Israel, of course, but few places for medical study. The 80 new places in Jerusalem's medical school are being besieged by 900 applicants. On the other hand, the University is making efforts to attract oriental youngsters. While still serving in the army, these youngsters from oriental homes can attend preparatory courses for future study at the Hebrew University.

Population,
Immigration,
and the Pill

The population problem is Israel's biggest headache. This summer, Israel (without the occupied areas) had 2.4 m. Jews and four hundred thousand non-Jews. The average Jewish family has 2.6 children, and the average Muslim family 8 children. There is of course Jewish immigration, but it will at best be 30,000 this year. The (contraceptive) pill has come to Israel, but is used by only 19 per cent of the families. About half the families do not use any contraception at all, with twenty per cent objecting on religious or moral grounds. As for immigration, there are occasionally converts to Judaism among them. Recent immigrants included a former Quaker family which could trace its American origin back to the Mayflower.

Signs of
the Times

With the economy in full swing there is a shortage of labor. For this reason, Beduin in the Negev are now needed in Negev industrial plants, and five hundred of them have already been trained and hired. This is a completely new way of life for nomad shepherds.

Rising buying power and rising defense costs may necessitate new taxes. The government is unwilling to alienate the electorate by new taxes one year before the elections, but a new turnover tax has been mooted.

Exports are constantly rising in extent and in type. Among the less important, but perhaps more characteristic, exports are now "Gefillte Fish."

At home, coffee drinking is an important part of daily life, from old-fashioned Turkish coffee with special spices to ultra-modern Espresso. Only the Russian Jews drink tea. No wonder, then, that Israel now wants to try to grow her own coffee. Surely this can be done, just as cotton, European fruit, potatoes, and most other products are now being grown here.

Official disappointment for title-holders in Israel: If you have a title like "Dr." it will not appear on your Israeli passport.