CHAPTER V.

THE THIRD CONFLICT - DEEPER THRUST OF THE ISRAELI DAGGER

President Nasser said at a Press Conference on 28 May 1967, that in the even of a straight war with Israel "nothing will happen to the Suez Canal" but if others intervened "there will be no Suez Canal". He also emphasised that Egypt would in no circumstances allow Israeli shipping to sail through the Straits of Tiran. The Egyptian President also affirmed that "this was a stand from which I shall not budge an inch".

In Tel-Aviv, Mr. Eshakol said in a broadcast that Israel wished to resolve the dispute with Egypt by diplomatic means. At the same time he reiterated that the closure of the Strait of Tiran to Israeli shipping constituted an act of aggression against Israel, who had the right to self-defence and would exercise it is necessary. President Nasser did not bother about such statement and the blockade of the Gulf of Agaba was instituted by him in May 1967.

"The Government of India has taken the position as far back as 1957 that the Gulf of Aqaba is an inland sea and that entry to the Gulf Strait of Tiran lies within the territorial waters of the U.A.R. and Saudi Arabia. We adhere to the view. It is our view that no state or a group of states should attempt challenge by force the sovereignty of the U.A.R. over the Strait of Tiran", said Mr. Chagla, India's ex-Foreign Minister, in Indian Parliament on 25 May 1967.

This statement by Mr. Chagla correctly sums up the situation about the Gulf of Aqaba. Since the entrance to the Gulf of Aqaba is within the territorial waters of the U.A.R. and a state of war exists between the U.A.R. and Israel, the international law gives U.A.R. right to prevent
Israeli ships from passage in the Strait of Tiran.

The supporters of Israel are trying to confuse the world opinion by quoting wrongly from the Territorial Sea Agreement (1958) to prove that Israeli ships have a right "innocent transit of Tiran Strait", under para 4 of the article 16 of the Agreement. But this article of the International Territorial Sea Agreement is not applicable in this case. The provisions of the agreement are valid only in time of peace, whereas a statement war is still in exisstance between Arab states and Israel.

It should be remembered that it is not the first time that the U.A.R. denied to Israeli shipping of access to the Gulf of Aqaba. It is nothing more than the return to the status-quo which existed from the time Israel usurped the Arab territory of Palestine up till the time of Suez Aggression in 1956 when Sharm-al-Sheikh area, which is facing the island of Tiran, was occupied by Israeli invaders after the withdrawal of the U.A.R. troops from Sinai to meet the Anglo-French military threat of Port Said. The UN Forces had been withdrawn from its boarders, the UAR armed forces had taken over again the Sharm-al-Sheikh area and UAR had again imposed restrictions on Israeli shipping.

The fact that Israeli ships were allowed passage into the Gulf for a short span of time consequent upon the 1956 aggression and the presence of UN Forces, obviously enough, does not confer on it any immutable right to the usage of the Arab territorial waters. It was centuries ago when force and rights were synonymous. This can no longer be maintained in our age, otherwise even colonialism could be legally justified.

The Gulf of Aqaba is situated east of Sinai and boarders UAR in the West, and Saudi Arabia and Jordan in the east. It is 98 miles long. The broadest of the Gulf water does not exceed 12 miles. The only entrance to the Gulf is from the Red Sea which is 9 miles wide. At the entrance of the Gulf there are two islands – Tiran and Sansafir which are 5 miles
wide and are under Arab sovereignty.

"This innocent transit does not apply to the Israel and the UAR can never permit a transit of Israeli ships less than one mile from the coast nor would it permit the transit of weapons or strategic materials bound to strengthen the forces of aggression."1.

Following U Thant's acceptance of the Egyptian demand, the UN Emergency Force in the West Asia was officially withdrawn from the border between the UAR and Israel, on which it had been stationed for ten years. In a report to the Security Council U Thant said he had complied with the UAR demand for the withdraw of U.N.E.F. for the following reasons:

1. "In practical fact, U.N.E.F. could not remain for function without the continuing consent and cooperation of the host country."

2. "I have been influenced by my deep concern to avoid any action which would either compromise or endanger the contingents which make up the force."2.

Meanwhile the calling-up of reservists by both Egypt and Israel was announced on 21 May 1967. Press reports from Cairo continued to speak of the continued eastward movement of strong Egyptian armoured forces in the direction of the Israel border.

The extreme tension which had persisted in the West Asia for several weeks and the build-up of large armed forces on both sides culminated in the early hours of 5 June 1967, in the outbreak of war between Israel on the one side and the U.A.R., Syria and Jordan on the other. Responsibility for the outbreak of hostilities was obscure, the Israeli alleging that Egyptian armoured units had advanced across the frontier into Israel, while the Egyptians alleged an Israeli attack across the border and an air raid on Cairo.

In one of the most rapid and dramatic campaigns in modern history,

Israel achieved within 80 hours a complete military victory over her Arab opponents before all hostilities ceased on June 10, in response to repeated cease-fire calls by the U.N. Security Council. After virtually destroying the air forces of Egypt, Jordan and Syria on the first day of the war, and gaining complete control of the air on all grounds, the armed forces of Israel had by the end of six day's war overrun to the entire Sinai peninsula, including Sharm-el-Sheik, advanced to the Suez Canal, and captured the Gaza Strip.

It was against this background that the U.N. General Assembly began on 19 June 1967 a special emergency session on the situation in West Asia, at the request of the Soviet Union. The convening of a special session of the General Assembly was supported by all the communist countries, the great majority of the Asian and African State, including all the Arab countries.

The first speaker at the Assembly's special session was Mr. Kosygin, the Soviet Prime Minister. He began by condemning the United States for its "aggression against the Vietnames people". He continued that Israeli troops began concentrating on the Syrian frontier and mobilization was carried out in the country. The Soviet Premier further said that "on 5 June, Israel started war against the United Arab Republic, Syria and Jordan. The Government of Israel flouted the charter of the United Nations and the standards of International law, and thus showed that all its peaceful declarations were false through and through" 1.

He further maintained that "the United Nations cannot overlook these crimes........(and) must compel Israel to respect international law. Those

who are the master-minds behind the crimes in the occupied territories of the Arab countries, and these who commit those crimes, must be sternly called to account." Mr. Kosygin continued: "What is the attitude of the United States and British Governments to the Israeli claims? In actual fact they are encouraging the aggressor here as well. By occupying territories of the United Arab Republic, Jordan, and Syria, Israel is continuing to challenge the United Nations and all peace-loving states.

The Arab case was put by King Hussein of Jordan, who visited New York to address the General Assembly in person, and also by President Atassi of Syria, Dr. Mahmood Fawzi, Deputy Foreign Minister of U.A.R. and other Arab representatives.

Dr. Fawzi alleged that Israel had made its plans for "aggression" long before 5 June 1967, while at the time of the Israeli attack on 5 June, U.A.R., Syria and Jordan had "not completed their defensive precautions". He said that "during the period of hostilities the U.S. Sixth Fleet, bristling with evil and foully-smelling C.I.A.", was "ominously poised" in the Vicinity of Arab shores, where its presence was resented. Britain also had polluted the waters of the Mediterranean behaving like a bull in a China shop and joining in with the big bull U.S.A. Dr. Fawzi rejected the American draft resolution and accused President Johnson of abetting Israel's 'insane ventures'.

President Atassi described Israel as a stronghold of "British, American and West German imperialism" and accused Israel of having occupied Syrian territory after the cease-fire. Support for the Arab states and criticism of Israel was expressed by the ex-Foreign Minister of India, Mr. M.G. Bhagla, the ex-Foreign Minister of Pakistan, Mr. Sharifuddin Pirzada the Spanish delegate.

3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
Mr. Azner. Mr. Chagla listed four "cardinal principles" which must be adhered to if an enduring peace was to be established, viz: (1) No country could start a war, merely because it felt that a threat to its security existed; (2) No aggressor could be permitted to retain the fruits of aggression, in this connection Mr. Chagla called for the withdrawal of Israeli forces from occupied Arab territories; (3) No country could acquire another's territory in order to bargain from a position of strength; (4) Rights could not be established, territorial disputes settled, or boundaries adjusted by armed conflict.

Mr. Pirzada said that it was clear that Israel had fired the first shot on 5 June 1967, without any justification....... The only course of action for the Assembly, he declared, was to condemn the aggression launched by Israel on 5 June, and to demand the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Arab territories including the Holy Places, to be position they held prior to hostilities.

Mr. Azner said the aggression had clearly been committed by Israel, and argued that the western world should support the Arab cause lest other powers gain influence in the Mediterranean. Mr. George Brown, the British Foreign Secretary, addressed the Assembly on 21 June. After stressing that there should be no territorial aggrandisement resulting from the war, and that the status of the Jerusalem should not be altered unilaterally, he based the British view of a settlement of four principles: (1) Settlement of the refugee problem; (2) recognition of the right of all states in the area to exist in Freedom and peace; (3) respect for the right of free and innocent passage through international waterways; (4) the ending of the arms race in the West Asia.
The U.A.R. request for the withdrawal of the United Nations Emergency Force from Gaza and the Sinai Peninsula was explained by several Indian publicists and writers. Dr. S. L. Poplai, Secretary General Indian Council of World Affairs, said in a broadcast over All India Radio on 3 June 1967: "Even if for the sake of argument it is assumed that all gulfs and bays surrounded by territories of more than one state constitute international waters......there is no automatic right of innocent passage in favour of Israel which had technically never ended its state of war with Egypt." 1.

After tracing the developments culminating in the Israeli threat to strike a decisive blow at Syria, Dr. Poplai said: "In view of her commitments under the 1966 treaty with Syria, the U.A.R. Government had to provide some protection of the Syrian Government, had to take some action that might act as a deterrent against a possible Israeli attack on Syria." 2.

Dr. B. S. N. Murthy, Director of Studies, Indian Academy of International Law and Diplomacy, examined the question in depth in the course of a broadcast on 7 June 1967. He said: "It is significant to note that the U.A.R. has not sought to prohibit totally the right of passage to all ships but has only prohibited Israeli ships and other ships with the principles of International Law." Dr. Murthy brought to bear on the problem of the Gulf of Agaba his expert knowledge of International law and commented: "The Arab claim to sovereignty over the Gulf is based on immemorial possession." 3.

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1. India and West Asia. Edited by G. S. Bhargava. Page 42.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
Prof. Mohd. Habib of Aligarh Muslim University, who was the opposition parties' candidate for Vice-Presidentship, in another broadcast looked at the cultural and historical aspects of the West Asian Crisis. In a talk over All India Radio on 14 June 1967, Prof. Habib said: "The state of Israel is not a product of Jewish culture but one of the most cruel types of European Jewish colonialism that the world has seen. It is based on the Balfour Declaration of 2 November 1917, which stated that England would establish in Palestine a national home for the Jewish people. The object was to win over world Jewry to the side of England during the First World War." 1.

Prof. Habib went on to say: "We of the elder generation remember how, week after week, month after month, from 1918 to 1948 the Arabs were driven out of their homes. Mahatmaji (Gandhi) had voiced the feelings of all Indians and the substance of all congress resolutions." 2.

In conclusion, Prof. Habib observed: "It is heartening to see that during the past few weeks, despite pressures to the country, India has stood by the Arabs on the question of UNEF's withdrawal, Arab rights in the Strait of Tiran and the pulling back of forces to the positions occupied by the combatants of 5 June 1967. India's policy legitimate rights and justice of the issues involved and the desirability of finding a durable peace in West Asia, an important element of India's national interest." 3.

1. India and West Asia. Edited by G.S. Bhargava. Page 47.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
Based as it is on considerations of Justice, the Indian position on Arab-Israeli dispute has always been of the warmest sympathy to the Arab cause. After the establishment of Israel, India has consistently refused to have diplomatic relations with it. On specific questions, especially concerning Arab refugees, Indian leaders have often declared their fullest support to the victims of Zionist colonisation. This was recently reiterated when Mrs. Indira Gandhi, along with President Tito and President Nasser reaffirmed India's support to the just demand of Palestine refugees. As regards India-Pakistan dispute, the position of the Arab States, collectively taken, is clear and unequivocal. They have often declared that they do not want to pronounce any opinion on the merits of the dispute, since in their opinion that would impede the possibility of their settlement between the parties. Obviously, this stand has been well appreciated by the Indian Government which itself has often been declaring that the dispute should be settled bilaterally between India and Pakistan without outside interference. India's attitude towards this problem cannot be governed merely by the example of some other countries, who have either been pressurised by the interested big powers, or have not had a proper comprehension of the problem or whose stakes in the Arab world are not as high as are ours. India's policy of lending support to the Arabs stems from many important factors.

No wonder India is lending its full support to the cause of the Palestinian Arabs who are engaged in a grim battle against the Israeli colonialists, implanted on their land through the force of naked arms from Europe and America. Mrs. Indira Gandhi has admirably summed up the Indian position in this when she told a special correspondent of the Cairo Daily "Al-Ahram" that we oppose Israel not only because of our friendship with the Arabs. But also because we are opposed to the creation of States
on religious bases neither can we recognize territorial gains made through aggressions.1.

It is thus clear that both in its basic philosophy and in the execution of her internal and external policies, Israel stands directly opposed to India's policies and interests. In such a direct conflict the question of remaining non-aligned does not arise at all. Since India is regarded as a great champion of truth, her continued indictment of Israel for her sins against peace and humanity would go a long way in strengthening the forces of justices, which alone can ensure peace in the Middle East. This way India would not only protect her own national interests, but would also render a great service to the cause of world peace.

In fact, India's foreign policy towards the West Asia has been subject of bitter and fiery criticism. Both foreign and Indian critics have contended that India being a non-aligned nation should not have gone all out to support the Arabs. The case should have been judged on merits. Israel, according to them as free sovereign State has a right to exist and live according to its own ideology. It has a right to demand guarantee against foreign attack and of indeterred navigation in international waterway like the Suez and Aqaba. The Arabs would do well to reconcile with the fait accompli. "Their arch enemy, the State of Israel, has come to stay and no internationally permissible method can undo it. The idea of annihilating a political entity which has struck its political roots so deeply in the Arab soil is not only impracticable but also ill conceived. The only way out of this stalemate is to come to a just, honorable and permanent settlement with Israel and to end this perpetual and purposeless state of hostility."

1. 10 July 1966.
This view, however, practical it might be, does not carry conviction with the Arabs. What is just and honourable settlement from their point of view is repugnant to Israeli dream of a greater Israel. Moreover what will happen to the Palestinian Arab refugees who have a greater claim on their own land than the de facto usurpation of Jews. Professor Dr. Haqqi strikes at the root of the problem when he says that "it is most uncharitable to accuse the Government of India of having abjured the path of dignity and impartiality, of decency and of pragmatic idealism when it condemned in strong and unequivocal terms the Israeli aggression against her neighbours. The critics would do well to ponder and search their hearts for an answer to the following questions: should the principle of preemptive strikes be accepted and endorsed? Should an aggressor be permitted to retain the fruits of his aggression? Should we remain silent spectators when peace is threatened, aggression committed or freedom imperilled?".

Our basic interest in the region are the preservation of peace and stability so that our trade link with the West and with the region itself may remain intact, the growth of progressive forces in the region which are friendly to us and with which we can cooperate and the avoidance to any situation which may lead to a great power confrontation in the region. Our policy has to be based on these interests.

So far as the solution of the problem is concerned, it may not be easy to arrive at such a settlement in the near future. Infact, there seems to be some risk of a revival of hostilities, as the two armies are standing face to face. However, world opinion, if it takes a firm stand on the basic principle of complete withdrawal followed by negotiations, might have some effect.

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Israel must also be aware that it cannot exist peacefully in a hostile Arab world which vastly outnumbers its own population by relying mainly on its military victory. Its interest lies in coming to settlement which respects the honour, dignity and essential requirements of both the sides.

The Arabs, like all peace-loving people all over the world, have hailed the Tashkent Declaration as a worthy example of bringing peace between the two neighbours. But, it should be realised that this peace became possible only because both the countries accepted each other's bona-fide and were universally accepted as sovereign, independent nations. In the case of Arabs and Israel, the situation is entirely different. Her very existence symbolises a constant aggression against the Arab people specially of the Palestinian Arabs. It is at best as foreign enslave whose justifications rest upon the massive arms aid given to her by Western Powers and their equally vast economic aid.

Moreover, Israel refused to comply even nominally with the minimum of demands of peaceful international behaviour, as embodied in the several resolutions of the United Nations. A simple test of Israel's sincerity would be to ask whether she is willing to pay even a nominal lip service to the U.N. resolution. To complete her criminal record, Israel is never tired of embarking upon ever-fresh ventures of aggression against her neighbour defying openly the august authority of the United Nations. It is also to be noted that throughout the years whenever Israel starts talking about peace, it soon becomes obvious that she is preparing for an aggressive war. Those who have been responding to Israel's repeated proclamations of willingness to talk of peace with the Arabs fail to realize that peace, in order to be real, has to be based on justice and equity. The Israeli behaviour constitutes a gross defiance not only of dictates of justice, but also of requirements as a bona-fide member of International community.
It is true that Palestine is not the only country which has been partitioned. There are many countries like Korea, Germany and Vietnam where the division has proved distressing and painful. The partition of the Indian sub-continent, too, is a pertinent example. But, there is a basic difference between the division of other countries and the so-called partition of Palestine. In the first place, it is wrong to use the word 'partition' in relation to Palestine. In Palestine it has not been a case of partition. It is that of usurpation. The usurpers were not the people who belonged to the area. In the case of partition of other countries, two facts are common to all. Firstly, on both sides of partitioned state, lived inhabitants originally belonging to the area. To that extent, the tragedy was somewhat diminished, since no foreign usurpers had come and settled there in the place of the original inhabitants. Secondly, as the case with the Indian Sub-continental, the partition, however painful it might have seemed to some people, was voluntarily agreed upon by leaders of the sub-continent. Both have given unstinted recognition to each others existence as independent, sovereign and lawful states. In the case of Palestine, the situation was entirely different. The original inhabitants in Palestine were forcibly thrown out, and their hearths and homes misappropriated.

"Israel owes its incipient rapid growth and prosperity to what Toynbee has called "robbery", the forcible eviction and expulsion of 900,000 Arabs from their fields, orchards, vineyards, homes, shops, factories and businesses and confiscating their property worth according to U.N. estimates, 560 million dollars (old rate)." It is generally accepted that humiliation at one stage and defeat at a certain stage do not draw

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the curtain on history. Poland was wiped out four times. Yet today Poland exists. Boundaries change, justice does not. And therefore, "we stand with the Arabs because justice is on their side. We stand with them because they are fighting against bigger powers seeking to undermine their independence".

It is, therefore, in our interest to side with the progressive forces of the Arab world and not to confuse the issues on a communal approach. There is Christian President in Lebanon. A person's religion does not matter. What does matter is that we side with progressive forces and we side with a person like President Nasser of U.A.R. who, according to Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru, helped us for more than any powers did at the time of the Colombo proposals. The Indian attitude is more thoroughly reflected in the observation made by Mr. R.K. Nehru, former Secretary General of the Ministry of External Affairs. He said, "No Afro-Asian can ignore the fact that the State of Israel is essentially a foreign creation. The European Jews, with whose sufferings India has every sympathy were imposed on the homeland of an Asian people. They drove out the people of the soil and formed a state which is based on the principle of a master race professing a certain religion. They have also consistently opposed a solution of the Arab-Israel problem on the basis of the resolutions of the United Nations. "India has not established diplomatic relations with the new State. It is not necessary for country to establish diplomatic relations with every other country. Apart from that, Indian generally feel that approval should not be shown of the way in which Israel was created and is functioning. Unlike the other Afro-Asian countries which have liberated themselves from foreign rule, Israel is the result of an act of imposition from outside. The creation of this new state is not in line with the general trend of the Afro Asian resurgence".
Professor Dr. Haqqi further maintains that the "Indira Government's stand on the Arab-Israeli conflict has thus been consistent with India's anti-imperialist past, and in line with what Nehru and Gandhi had always maintained, namely, "Palestine is an Arab Country and Arab interests should prevail there." 1.

In the preceding chapters I have tried to bring out as clearly as I could, keeping in view the limitations of space and time, the Palestine Problem and the attitude of India towards it. India has been very keenly interested in the Problem of Palestine, the running scar in the Arab world, which has taken full advantage of the imperialist and colonial powers of the West. After the half-hearted application of the Wilsonian formula of self determination and the formation of the mandates, appropriately called by Schuman "imperialism in transition" seems to have been a constant effort on the part of these powers to some-how manipulate, the thrust of the Israeli dagger in the heart of the Arab world and to leave it to bleed for all time to come. The Indian leaders before independence and the Indian Government after it have most sincerely stood by their Arab friends not only as a matter of diplomacy or a policy of enlightened self interest but as a matter of principle—the principle of justice, equity and good conscience. The spiritual humanism of Gandhi and the sound and bold pragmatism of Nehru laid its foundation.

The friendship between India and the Arab countries has a special significance. It is not like the common run of international relations confined to the diplomatic or protocol level. It is a friendship based on close identity of national and international policies and world outlook, and has consistently served the cause of peace, freedom and peaceful co-existence and cooperation between nations. After independence, both countries have been striving to consolidate their hard won freedom and
develop themselves economically without interference from outside.

It has become a truism to say that the U.A.R. and India are two of the main pillars of the non-aligned world, often described as the peace areas. Striving restlessly to expand the area of cooperation between them, the U.A.R. and India have always stood together in the face of numerous international crises. The leaders of the U.A.R. and India have always held each other in high esteem; between the two peoples, who are the inheritors of two of the most ancient civilizations in the world, has grown a deep understanding of the mutual points of view and values. In this first broadcast to nation as leader of the Indian Interim Government before independence, Jawaharlal Nehru expressed his desire for the closest possible relationship between independent India and the Arab nations. Egypt was one of the countries with which free India first established diplomatic relations: Sardar K.J. Panikkar was the first Indian Ambassador in Cairo.

In the field of trade, the relations between the two countries have been as flourishing as the political friendship. India's exports to the U.A.R. have been more than doubled in value i.e. from Rs.13.37 crores in 1960-61 to Rs.27 crores in 1965-66. There was some increase in imports also, they rose in value from Rs.16.42 crores to Rs.19.99 crores during the same period.

The result was a remarkably favourable turn for India in the balance of trade position. In 1960-61, the value of the imports from the U.A.R. exceeded that of export to that country by about Rs.3.7 crores. In 1965-66 the balance of trade was in India's favour to the tune of about Rs.7 crores. Region-wise, India's most important trade partner in Africa is the U.A.R. India is an important buyer of Egyptian cotton while Egypt is one of the two principal African buyers of Indian jute and tea.

Apart from the material trade relations and the fact that India's life line of international trade runs through the Arab world, there have been age
old cultural and spiritual relations between the Indians and the Arabs. It is, therefore, not surprising that India's bonds of unity with the Arabs have stood the test of time and have grown stronger and stronger with the lapse of time. Doubts have been expressed in the political circles of India over the wisdom of aligning itself with the Arab cause against Israel as a permanent article of political faith, but as Nehru once said there can be no non-alignment when it is the question of aligning with good or bad, India's forceful advocacy of the Arab cause in International Councils is not an unprincipled or dogmatic alliance with a group of countries but permanent adherence to a just cause.

Indian leaders, scholars, jurists, intellectuals, diplomats and publicists have been discussing the pros and cons of India's policy vis-à-vis the State of Israel but India has not yet deviated from her cherished path except that there is a slant in favour of providing a guarantee that Israel also has a right to exist provided it settles its accounts with the Arab refugees and starts with a clean state. As long as the Palestinian Arab refugees will remain homeless, there can be no recognition of the fact that Israel has a right to exist at a place from where its rightful owner have been ousted to suffer till eternity. Mahatma Gandhi once said: "I have all my sympathies with the Jews. But sympathy does not blind me to the requirements of justice. The cry for the national home for Jews does not make much appeal to me. Palestine belongs to the Arabs in the same sense that England belongs to the English or France to the French. It is wrong to impose the Jews on the Arabs......nothing can be said against the Arab resistance in the face of overwhelming odds."