

ARAB STATES - ISRAEL: It was quiet on both fronts again yesterday, except for a clash on the east bank of the Suez Canal. The POW issue has not yet been resolved and the UN Security Council continues to grapple with the problem of staffing its peacekeeping force.

The incident in the Sinai involved the movement of about a company-sized Egyptian force closer to Israeli lines near the Gidi Pass. An Israeli spokesman said the Egyptians probably were trying to improve their positions, rather than break out. The Israelis fired warning shots over the heads of the Egyptians, and an hour-long skirmish ensued involving artillery and tanks. The Syrian front was calm throughout the day; [REDACTED]

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Israeli and Egyptian officers held a fourth meeting yesterday to discuss the question of POWs. No breakthrough was reported. A UN observer post reported that Israel was willing to return 35 wounded Egyptian POWs yesterday morning if Egypt would repatriate wounded Israeli POWs the same day. Syria, meanwhile, has announced that it is prepared to submit a list of Israeli POWs in Syria to the International Red Cross and allow Red Cross officials to visit them if Israel will:

--state officially that it will comply fully with the provisions of the Geneva conventions;

--return the bodies of Syrians killed in the war; and

--allow Syrian villagers displaced during the fighting to return to their homes.

Yesterday's informal UN Security Council meeting served only to sharpen the controversy over which members should participate in the UN Emergency Force. The Soviet Union demanded that the decision to permit Canadian logistic units be reversed unless Warsaw

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Pact members also are included. Canadian Foreign Minister Sharp is expected to confer with Secretary General Waldheim, but for the moment Canadian participation seems in doubt. Nonaligned states insisted that the council disregard the Israeli requirement that contributors have diplomatic relations with Israel. Together with the Arabs, the nonaligned states are pressing the African states--which the Secretariat believes must be represented on the force--to offer contingents only if they have severed relations with Tel Aviv.

In Israel, Mrs. Meir's Labor Alignment was able to carry the day in a Knesset debate earlier this week over the POW issue, largely because of General Dayan's announcement of Egypt's readiness to cooperate with the International Red Cross. Despite this success, the Labor Party will face rough treatment in the weeks ahead as opposition leaders sharpen their attacks on the government's handling of pre-war intelligence and military preparedness, the decision to allow the Egyptian Third Army to be resupplied, and the alleged capitulation to US pressures.

Influential Egyptian editor Haykal commented in a column this week that any new outbreak of hostilities would probably be initiated by Israel, but he implied that Egypt itself is also ready. He asserted that Israel stopped fighting only because of US pressure, but "might now be beset by the temptation to slip free" and take action toward "redressing the situation on the battlefield." He added that he believes "one who does not advance is in fact retreating." With this oblique reference to possible Egyptian military action, he joins a growing list of Egyptians who are advocating--somewhat more directly than he--renewed war.

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