Six Days War 1967
Mostafa Sharkawy

LEAD-IN:

The Six Days War was a shock for the Arab and its consequences changed the Middle East forever.

MUSIC: “Tears” by Yurdal Tokcan

Death ….. Despair …… Defeat …… That what was waiting for the Egyptian army at the fifth of June 1967. Israel launched a full attack on Egypt, Syria and Jordan on that day. The Egyptian army was mobilized to the boarders between Egypt and Israel in 19th of May 1967 due to reports about an imminent Israeli attack on Syria. The attack on the fifth of June started with an Israeli Arial raid to destroy the Egyptian air force. The Israeli ground forces attacked simultaneously from the north and east of the Egyptian east boarders. Despite the fact that many of the Egyptian unites remained intact, but the Egyptian command ordered the unites to retreat without and further details.

NATSOUND of footsteps and a jet plane

MUSIC: “Tears” by Yurdal Tokcan

Ahmed Fathy is the grandson of an Egyptian soldier at the 1967 war. His grandfather told him what happened during the six days of war. First the sudden attack of the Israeli army.

MUSIC: “sad Nai”

Fathy: “it was very chaotic, it was unexpected, the soldiers were dying everywhere my grandfather saw many of his friends die before his eyes, it was very hard for him.”

After the attack on the Egyptian army, the Egyptian field marshal Abdel Hakim Amir ordered the forces in Sinai to retreat, but that order meant defeat for the Egyptian army.

Fathy: “when the retreat orders were given, they didn’t contain any details on how to retreat. Soldiers were just escaping the guns being fired behind them, they just ran away.”

NATSOUND of running soldier

MUSIC: “sad Nai”
Without specific orders soldiers started to panic, some escaped, some surrendered to the Israeli army, and some didn’t even have the choice. Egyptian soldiers had to run almost 200 kilometers at foot to reach the canal.

Fathy: “all he could think about was his friends dying before his eyes. The scenes of his friends kept flashing before his eyes. It was very shocking and disturbing experience for him, he wasn’t able to sleep at all.”

The retreating soldiers didn’t feel safe to stop until they reached the other side of the canal

Fathy: “after passing the canal the soldiers were very relieved, they felt safer.”

MUSIC: ”Ada El-Nahar” by Abd El-Halim Hafez

The Egyptian army human loss was devastating, the numbers vary from one source to the other, but Egypt lost from 10 to 15 thousand soldiers from the 100 thousand that was stationed at Sinai at the time.

MUSIC: “Tears” by Yurdal Tokcan

Israel has a political agenda which lead to the war. Karim El-Baz, an AUC graduate student and a political science research specialist relate the war to the Egyptian Jamaal Abd El-Nasser foreign policies.

Baz: “Nasser kind of irritated Israel by his Middle Eastern policies and the Arab nationalist movements that he started that defected from Egypt, Yemen, Syria, Libya and even Algeria . At this time it was in the middle of the cold war and you can notice that this war wasn’t between two nations the Israeli and the Egyptian; it was between the capitalism and socialism from the other hand. By socialism I don’t mean the communist Russian socialism, I mean the Arab socialism and nationalism.”

But is it the fault of Abd El-Nasser that Israel declared war in 1967. Was his method of threatening Israel by deploying Egyptian troops to Sinai and asking the withdrawal of the United Nations Emergency Forces from the boarders’ right?

Baz: “Nasser was mainly dependent on the propaganda; the Egyptian army was not that strong at that time. He mobilized so many troops in Sinai and closed the straits of Tiran and Israel saw that these actions are actions of war against Israel so they thought of a preemptive strike against the Egyptians military basis and they succeeded by attacking the first day of the war and destroying almost all the Egyptian airports.”

The casualties of the war was very high for the Arab countries and specially Egypt, but was the political consequences on Egypt, Syria and Jordan after the six days war.
Baz: “some will say that the consequences were the failure of the Arab nationalism, the project that Nasser brought. In addition, when you look at the writings of El-Hodeby, Kotb and the Muslim Brotherhood members they thought that the Egyptian Army was an army of dancers and that we were actually defeated in the war because Nasser provided to the Egyptian front at that time some propaganda that included regular visits from actresses and famous Egyptian dancers at the front and actually the thought that the Israelis because they were praying before the war and the Egyptians were meeting with actresses that was the reason of the defeat. One can say that one of the major consequences of the 1967 war was the failure of Nasser and the rise of the Islamist, the political Islamist.”

As the price that the Arab countries paid was very high, the political gains that Israel achieved were very rewarding.

Baz: “first of all you should know that Israel during fighting any war they never fight it in their own land because of a term called collateral damage any war that happens on a certain field there is a collateral damage to it even if the Egyptian invaded Israel and attacked Israel and the Israeli attacked the Egyptians on the Israeli soil that means damage to Israel itself. So what Israel actually does in war is that it switches the fight itself into your own land before you get into theirs. As for the significance of the territory of Sinai is kind of more geographical and strategic issue because Sinai actually looks at the Mediterranean sea and the Red sea and Israeli naval ports on the Red sea are really limited because they only have one port which is Eilat at that time and they thought that with the location of Sharm El-Sheikh and Sinai they can actually master their command on the sea and control the trade line that passes through the Suez canal which give them more political influence on the countries that use the canal.”

The war of 1967 was a remarkable turning point in the history of the Middle East.

This documentary was produced by Mostafa Sharkawy

Special thanks to Ahmed Fathy and Karim El-Baz.

Music by:

“Tears” by Yurdal Tokcan

“sad Nai”

”Ada El-Nahar” by Abd El-Halim Hafez

Thank you for listening.