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C.B.S. Television Interview

Question 1 Both you and President Johnson are famed practitioners of the art of political negotiation. How do you think you will get on?

Answer My only contacts with President Johnson till now have been by letter. It is my impression that he has a warm and friendly nature, and I hope and believe that we shall get on very well.

Question What do you expect to negotiate?

Answer Well, I am not going to Washington to "negotiate". I am going on a good-will mission at the President's invitation. I expect that our talks will range freely over all matters of common interest - the international situation, the Middle East and Israeli problems. I cannot tell in advance what issues will receive most attention in our talks.

Question What do you want to accomplish?

Answer A deeper understanding between the United States and Israel - especially on matters affecting Israel's security. Our understanding is already close, but I hope to give the President an intimate and frank picture of how the situation looks from where I sit.

Question In your opinion, as Prime Minister of Israel, has there been any change in American policy in the Middle East since President Johnson took office - or in the attitude of the American government towards Israel?

Answer The friendly policy of President Kennedy towards Israel has been continued and developed by President Johnson. My chief impression is of continuity - not of change.

Question What changes would you like to see in American policy in the Middle East?

Answer It is not for me to determine American policy. I believe that the main purposes of that policy are sound: the promotion of peace and development, and support of the integrity and independence of Middle Eastern States, including Israel. I may have some comments to make on the methods most likely in my judgment to further that policy; but you will not expect me to publish those comments in advance of my talks with the President.

Question Do you think that the Arab reaction against Israel's Jordan River Project indicates a real danger of war or of acts that might lead to war?

Answer I do not believe that any Arab state will go to war. Our project is legitimate, constructive and fully in accord with the interests and needs of all the States concerned with the Jordan-Yarmuk river system. World opinion is, I believe, fully in support of carrying out the project. Water in the Middle East should be used, not wasted. And it should be used in accordance with principles of international equity and economic justice. The Israel water-project fully meets these conditions. We have kept in close touch with the United States on this matter ever since President Eisenhower sent his envoy, the late Ambassador Eric Johnston, to the area to work out a Unified Plan. We are taking the amount of water allocated to Israel in that plan.

We do not anticipate that Arab governments will wish or be permitted to start a war - for which there is no justification at all. But, of course, I am not responsible for their decisions.

Question Does the support for the Arab cause voiced by Soviet Premier Khrushov during his meeting with Egypt's President Nasser represent any danger to Israel?

Answer I should frankly have liked to see Prime Minister Khrushchev give greater emphasis in his Egyptian tour to what he said in his January message - about the need to prevent any territorial changes in existing states by force. I have no reason to believe that Premier Khrushchev has abandoned that principle. The question is whether Nasser accepts it.

If Nasser is given more arms - and especially new types of arms - then this will certainly increase tension and instability in the Middle East.

Question Is there a present balance in the military capacity of Israel and that of the Arab states? If so, is this balance in danger of shifting and how can it be maintained? If not, how can the balance be restored?

Answer If we were attacked we could successfully defend ourselves. It is important that our neighbours should understand this. We have both the determination and the capacity to frustrate any aggression - even though our neighbours have more planes, tanks, submarines and ships than we.



There are, however, some categories in which the arms balance is not satisfactory even to a minimal degree. The balance can be restored quite simply - if the Powers interested in deterring aggression give us the necessary equipment. They should do this not merely in friendship for Israel - but on behalf of international peace.

Question What do you think ought reasonably to be the role of the United States with regard to military capacity in the area?

Answer The United States has repeatedly accepted the principle that Israel, like other peace loving states, should have a military capacity sufficient to deter or thwart aggression. From time to time we discuss with the United States the method for putting this principle into effect.

Question Is there a real threat of the introduction of nuclear weaponry into the Arab-Israel area within the near future?

Answer I recently spoke to our Parliament on this question. Every time a new category of weapon has been introduced into the Middle East it has been introduced by Egypt. This was the case with super-sonic aircraft, with submarines and now with missiles. We are following their armament program as closely as we can, since Nasser openly declares that his ambition is to attack Israel. I do not know what his nuclear intentions are. Our nuclear research is for the purpose of scientific progress and peaceful economic development.

Question What should be America's role in this regard.

Answer I ask myself whether the United States could induce the Soviet Union to join in a concerted policy to keep new and more destructive weapons out of our area under an agreed and mutual system of inspection and control. It would be a blessing for our region if we could prevent any further escalation of this costly arms race which is wasting the resources that I should like to see devoted to economic and cultural progress.

But, of course, this objective could only be achieved if the Arab governments would accept it - both in principle and in practice. I do not know whether this is a feasible prospect - but it exercises my mind a great deal.

Question Do you see any new initiative that is possible for the United States in the effort to achieve a real Arab-Israel peace, or a lessening of tension in the Middle East?

Answer My advice is:

First Make it very clear that the United States supports the independence and integrity of Israel as of all other States and would use its full influence to deter or thwart aggression against us.

Second Make very sure that the arms balance is not allowed to deteriorate in Israel's disfavor. If Nasser bombs Yemeni villages and not Israeli towns, it is only because Israeli towns are defended while Yemeni villages are not.

Third Do what you can to prevent a new escalation of arms, and to get the governments of our area thinking of economic development.

If all this is done then tension will ultimately be reduced and the prospect of a negotiated settlement would come into view.

If our neighbours really despair of destroying us they may see no course but to negotiate with us. We on our part are prepared to negotiate a peace settlement with them at any time.