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QUESTIONS SUBMITTED TO THE PRIME MINISTER, MR. LEVY ESHKOL, BY FRANCIS AMIR OFNER,
CORRESPONDENT OF THE JEWISH CHRONICLE, THE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR, ETC.

Q. 1. Enumerating the crucial questions facing you as Prime Minister on July 10, you put economics before security. Does this imply that the danger to Israel's security has receded? If not, what made you reverse the customary order of tasks?

A. 4. Economics and security are inter-related. There can be no security without a sound economy - and vice versa. When I mentioned economics before security, I had no intention of establishing a list of priorities; in my view both problems are complementary and of equal importance.

I did want to stress, from the educational point of view, to our people here in Israel, the importance of the economic front - our need to be strong in every way - economically as well as defensively.

Q. 2. Would the Prime Minister welcome or accept the mediation of a third party to bring about direct talks with the Arabs? Has anyone offered himself as a mediator? Do you have the intention of asking anyone?

A. 2. Any constructive and serious effort to promote direct negotiations with our neighbours is welcome. This was our attitude in the past and this continues to be the policy of the present government. As I have already had the opportunity to state, Israel has in the past fully cooperated with third-party initiatives to bring about a meeting between Israeli and Arab leaders. ~~A few years ago Mr. Ben Gurion lent his full support to a top-level mission set up by one of the leading Western statesmen.~~ Unfortunately, the results of ~~that mission~~^{that mission} were completely disappointing, not because of any lack of competence and devotion on the part of the go-between, or any lack of cooperation on behalf of Israel, ~~but because the Head of the Arab State concerned refused to explore ways and means of achieving a peaceful relationship with Israel.~~

Despite this ~~and other disappointments in this field~~, I feel that we should be alert to new opportunities in that direction and examine any opening towards a peaceful settlement.

Q. 3. Regarding the Israel offer to compensate Arab refugees which, as you said, "still stands" (provided international assistance etc forthcoming) - would you be ready to recommend or actually recommend the Knesset to budget a certain yearly sum for such a compensation?

Would you be ready to repeat the Israel offer through emissaries who would try to contact directly the refugees, as suggested by Archbishop Hakim?

A. 3. ~~We will cross that bridge when we come to it. The policy of Israel is to make its contribution in the field of compensation within the framework of a general settlement of the refugee problem. Before prospects in this regard have matured, it would be premature to speak of procedures of payment. Israel also has her counter-claims for property confiscated by Arab states belonging to Israel or to Israel citizens. All these matters can be dealt with within the framework of discussions on the solution of the refugee problem. When agreement on the refugee question is reached, a suitable solution for the financial aspects of the compensation problem will be found. In the light of what I have said, you will understand that the question of procedure is a secondary matter. First we have to reach the stage in which the Arab governments are prepared to deal with the refugee problem realistically.~~

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③ We can then find a solution to other questions, taking into consideration the conditions already mentioned.
At the first sign of any real possibility to settle the refugee problem I am prepared to bring a special budget to the Knesset for approval - even after a special session of the Knesset is required.
④ To your second question, the answer is "yes".

Q. 4. Do you intend to appoint a high-level team for re-appraising, planning and eventually implementing Israel's long-term peace-strategy?

A. 4. We are continuously keeping the international scene under review, in order to adjust our policies, if necessary, to changing circumstances. I feel that we are well equipped for this task both within the Cabinet and in the Foreign ^{Ministry} office. If ~~new machinery~~ becomes necessary we shall consider establishing it.

It is ^{my} ~~our~~ desire & purpose to keep developments under permanent review also from a long range point of view & - interested - maintain a dynamic & flexible approach towards this goal.

~~Q. 5. What is your estimate of the value of Arab property left behind by the refugees? Does your method of evaluation differ from that of the Palestine Conciliation Committee? If so, in which way?~~

~~What do you think is the value of the Jewish property abandoned in Arab countries?~~

(Suggest deletion).

Q. 6. Would the Israel Government raise at the United Nations the issue of the persecuted Kurdish minority in Iraq? What is Israel's policy towards the Kurds?

A. ^{First,} 6. The Israel Government has not decided to put down any item on the agenda of the forthcoming General Assembly. I understand

~~that the Iraqi war against the Kurds was inscribed by Mongolia~~

~~as an item on the agenda, but Mongolia has withdrawn it. Therefore~~

~~I do not know whether the question will come up for discussion~~

~~at all.~~ To your second question, Alarming reports have come out of Iraq that the Iraqi Army

is carrying out a campaign of genocide against the Kurdish minority

in that country. We abhor any persecution on account of faith,

race, nationality or ethnic origin.

Q. 7. Regarding your statement that "there would be great value in effective security guarantees" - from which countries did Israel request such guarantees?

What reactions were received so far?

A. 7. All countries which are willing and able effectively to guarantee the territorial integrity and political independence of Israel can make a major contribution to the attainment of peace and stability in the Middle East by pledging themselves to resist any attempt to change the existing status quo by force. These views have been made known by Israel to the leading world powers. The question of a security guarantee is a very complex matter, and I am sure that the Israel viewpoint is being given serious consideration.

8. Would a U.S. guarantee be a sufficient substitute for Israel's efforts in the nuclear field? If not, would such a guarantee open Israel's nuclear efforts to U.S. inspection?

(Suggest deletion)

Q. 9. You said that "the construction in Dimona is proceeding according to plan as envisaged in the Prime Minister's statement to the Knesset in December 1960". Mr. Ben Gurion then said that it will be completed in "three or four years". Could you, please, tell us whether you expect it to be completed in 1963 or in 1964, or later?

A. 9. This is an engineering and constructional program, and, you know, dealing with engineers, constructors and architects is not an exact science. I would therefore not commit myself to any date.

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*waiting for reply
from jsh*

Q. 10. Mrs. Meir said that it had been established beyond any doubt that gas had been used by the Egyptians in Yemen. The U.N., however, claims that it found no evidence to this effect. Is the Israel Government prepared to submit evidence on which the Foreign Minister's statement was based to an international forum?

A. 10. The use of gas in Yemen by Egyptian forces is common knowledge. The world press has given detailed reports on the effect of gas-bombings. Available evidence should be submitted by those who were ~~able~~ able to collect it on the spot.

Q. 11. You foresaw the functioning of the Kinneret-Negev Water Scheme for the spring or summer of 1964. The Arabs, on the other hand, went on record that they will resist the scheme. Is Israel ready to fight to defend her right to develop the Jordan water project?

A. 11. I have already made a comprehensive statement on our policy in this matter. ^{At my press conference on July 10.} ~~I have~~ stressed that we are carrying out a project devoted to peace and development. We are doing so in accordance with a unified ^{plan} ~~scheme~~ which was devised a few years ago. ^{By Ambassador Eric Johnston & approved at the time by all} The Arab riparian countries are also proceeding with their water development schemes based on the Jordan-Yamouk river system, ^{in accordance with the same plan.} The development of these water resources, which is now proceeding on both sides, is beneficial to the population of these countries. I cannot conceive that Arab countries should act against their own interests by intervening with force against the execution of such life-giving projects. ~~Of course, any act of aggression directed against Israel will be met by determined resistance with the use of all means at their disposal.~~

^{our} For us the implementation of Kinneret Negev Water Plan is of vital importance to redeem & develop vast tracts of desert & arid land.

Any attempt to obstruct the implementation of this plan will be considered an act ~~of~~ aggression & will be dealt with accordingly.
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Q. 12. You spoke warmly of the Zionist movement on several occasions. Do you intend to use it as the main channel for contacts between Israel and the Diaspora Jewry?

As you know in 1952 the
-01-0 passed a law regarding
status of World Org in 1954.
gov entered into a charter w
the Zionist executive.

We have been acting & shall
continue in the spirit & letter
of these documents.

Besides unique historic
relationship between the Zionist
movement & I we have very close
& friendly relations w many
non-Zionist org, groups & ind.
We hope that our ties w all our
friends will strengthen as time
goes on.

Q. 13. Did the material compiled by Mr. Hagay Eshed in
your Ministry shed any new light on the Lavon affair?

(Suggest deletion)

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Q. 14. You predicted the other day that Mapai will unite with
Ahdut Avoda within a year. Do you still stand by this prediction?
And if so, why?

Q. 15. What has been your most satisfying and what the most disappointing experience since you became Prime Minister of Israel?

A. 15. The most satisfying experience - how could it be anything else than my interviews with journalists? The most disappointing experience - distorted press reports. But seriously...

It has been most satisfying to see the democratic spirit of our people, though they received the news of Mr. Ben-Gurion's resignation with deep regret, they have closed ranks behind - new gov ~~an supporting~~ - it & have welcomed it warmly. It was gratifying to know that our gov has the confidence of the people.

As for disappointment it is too soon to speak in such negative terms.