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MY VISION FOR ISRAEL

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PRIME MINISTER OF ISRAEL

I see that King Hussein has been giving my country some neighbourly advice.

Israel, he said, could improve her relations with the Arab world if she

first realized that "she cannot survive by hiding behind force."

The advice may or may not have been well-meant; it was certainly directed to the wrong address. If we have had to rely mainly on our own strength for our survival, that has never been a policy adopted of our own choice. It has been a necessity forced upon us by the attitude of the Arab states during the past sixteen years.

Over and over again they have declared that we have no right to exist, they obdurately refuse to meet us to iron out differences and discuss common problems; they repeatedly threaten to wipe us off the map whenever they feel the time is ripe.

Their leaders sometimes adopt a more moderate tone when speaking to foreign journalists, but they made no secret of their ultimate intentions when they met in conference in January, and only a few weeks ago President Nasser told his commandos: "The Yemen battle was not the last one. There is still the Palestine liberation battle."

If the Arabs are openly preparing for battle, we have no alternative but to be ready. But we are also ready to make peace, It is for them to make the choice.

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On scores of occasions my distinguished predecessor, Mr. David Ben-Gurion, offered to meet any Arab Head of State or Government, or all of them together, to try to reach agreement on any or all of the questions that divide us. During my year in office I have repeated the offer again and again; the entire nation stands behind it.

And I say once more, in the words of our prophet Isaiah, to President Nasser, to King Hussein, to all the other Arab kings and presidents: "Come, let us reason together." Stop shouting at us across the frontiers; let us sit down and talk across the conference table.

When I assumed the office of Prime Minister I also undertook the portfolio of Defence. It was not because I like the task of organizing military preparations or training young men to kill.

Nearly fifty years ago I left home as a youth of 19 to settle in the Promised Land. For years I helped to drain the swamps and establish flourishing villages where nothing grew before. Later I had the privilege of playing a leading part in ~~our~~ discovering and utilizing new sources of water. For ten years, as Minister of Finance, I dedicated all my energies to developing our economy, consolidating our finances, helping to build a new society.

Such were the goals that inspired my colleagues and myself over the past generations and more; such are the aims that Israel still pursues today. To achieve them we have no need of military adventures; what we need is peace.

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It breaks my heart to waste hundreds of millions on tanks, fighting planes and ships of war, instead of devoting all our resources to reclaiming the wastelands, building factories and schools, making our country a better place to live in, and offering our modest contribution to the happiness of mankind.

Although we have accomplished a great deal in the sixteen years of our renewed independence, we still have much unfinished business to do, and many difficult problems to solve. Our tasks are unlike those that any other country has to face.

Israel was not created for the benefit of its own population alone. It was established as a home for the Jewish people, and its gates will always be open to any Jew who needs refuge from oppression or distress, or decides of his own free will to come and lend a hand in building the Israel of the future.

During the past sixteen years we have taken in over a million immigrants, with the wholehearted cooperation of the Jews of the world, and particularly of American Jewry, who have made a magnificent contribution to this joint enterprise.

Tens of thousands are still arriving year by year. The newcomers have to be fed, housed, trained and employed. Complete integration is, for many, a lengthy process, and much remains to be done to make a united nation out of men, women and children from a hundred countries, differing in language, tradition and way of life.

Moreover, we cannot be content so long as large differences still exist between poor, uneducated masses at the one end of the social scale and comfortable, settled veterans at the other. We have built our resurgent State on foundations

of freedom, democracy and equality before the law, but formal equality is not enough.

Our pioneers developed a variety of social patterns based on co-operation between equals and a profound faith in the value and importance of the individual.

The collective and cooperative settlements, the kibbutz and the moshav, have won the admiration of the world as nuclei of a society in which no man's labor is exploited and all work together for the common good.

But all these are only a beginning. We have succeeded in erecting the scaffolding of a new society and solving the most urgent problems, but we have not yet fully translated our vision into reality.

What are the main tasks to which we must devote ourselves in the next decade?

First comes our duty to our brethren who have not yet reached our shores.

There are still Jewish communities in a number of lands where social and political upheavals have created pressure for emigration. Whatever the difficulties, we regard it as a privilege, a sacred mission, to help them to come, settle down, strike roots and help to build the Jewish homeland with us.

We shall always cherish in our hearts the hope for renewed contact with that great community in the East which is cut off from the living body of Jewry. We look forward to the day when any Jew, anywhere, shall be free to join us if he so desires.

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At the same time we are glad to see a growing trend among Jews in the

prosperous countries, ~~of the world~~, especially the youth, to come and settle

in Israel of their own free will, not driven by persecution and distress but

attracted by the opportunity of working with us to build a new society.

To employ the immigrants and the rising generation, develop essential

services, maintain our defence forces, and speed the day when we can make

ourselves independent of foreign aid, we shall need additional large-scale

investments. For these ends, we shall encourage every type of industry and

initiative, local and foreign, private and public, Jewish and non-Jewish.

Our economy will continue to be a pluralistic one, with State, cooperative

and private sectors working side by side. There will be a wide field for the

private investor and entrepreneur, who will continue to receive, not only

a fair deal, but active encouragement and aid.

Foreign capital will be welcome, and will receive all the facilities and

concessions provided by our Law for the Encouragement of Capital Investments,

and Israel. The Arab League refused to reply to this plan, for no other reason

than that Israel would also benefit from it, but it fully satisfies all the needs

of the Arab countries concerned, as stated by their own engineers.

Although a considerable proportion of our population enjoy all the benefits

of modern civilization and technological progress, a large part of our country

is still underdeveloped. In the arid Negev and the uplands of Galilee, there

are wide spaces where there is ample room for the expansion of agriculture and

the creation of new industries.

We shall continue with the development of the Negev, and I have proposed a large-scale plan for the development of Central Galilee for the benefit of all its inhabitants, Jews, Arabs and Druzes alike.

This will be a challenge to the pioneering instincts of our young people, and we are confident that they will rise to the opportunity. We believe that this creative work will also inspire young Jews from other countries - scientists, technicians and skilled workers - to come and work side by side with the best of our youth.

If we are to do these things, we shall have to utilize every available drop of water and develop new sources. In the near future we shall begin to operate the Kinneret-Negev Project, which will bring down to the arid South some of the water that has been running to waste in the North.

We have based this great constructive enterprise on the Unified Plan for the exploitation of the Jordan-Yarmuk river system which was worked out in 1955 by the late Ambassador Eric Johnston in negotiations with the Arab Governments and Israel. The Arab League refused to ratify this plan, for no other reason than that Israel would also benefit from it, but it fully satisfies all the needs of the Arab countries concerned, as stated by their own engineers.

Syria, Lebanon and Jordan are drawing all their requirements from the Jordan-Yarmuk system, and we have undertaken to remain within the framework of the quantities specified in the Unified Plan. There is not the slightest basis, in law or common sense, for Arab opposition to our project, and we are going ahead with it.

But we are looking even further ahead. At our very doorstep lie inexhaustible quantities of water, if only we can develop economic methods of desalinating the waters of the sea. Some of our best scientists and technicians have been working on this problem, and several methods are already in the pilot plant stage. We have been profoundly encouraged by President Lyndon Johnson's generous offer to cooperate with us in a joint effort to tackle this problem, which is of momentous importance for the world, and we shall be very proud if we can make a modest contribution to its solution. We shall broaden the special measures we have initiated. We shall pay constant attention to the social aspect of our economic activities, to the need to build a just social order, in which one individual will not be exploited by another and the claims of the State will be balanced by the rights of the citizen. We are convinced that this can be achieved by a democratic society, which guarantees equality of opportunity and the right to work, encourages individual and group initiative, and prevents exploitation and unearned privilege. There is nothing in common between our idea of a free, co-operative society and those regimes that impose rigid economic patterns on a browbeaten population, which can neither choose its governors or decide its own future. It is our aim to make it possible for each man or woman to develop his creative talents and capacities, with the aid of modern scientific and cultural achievements. Israel's free and fair citizens are realizing that their future depends on the peace and progress of the whole country. We want them to make their full contribution to Israel's welfare and to derive full benefit from the progress that we have made and wish to achieve for all our people.

We are keenly aware that laws and administrative decision are not enough.

The most important factor in creating the new society is the man of vision.

The character of our country will not be determined by the nominal ownership of the means of production or by the Government's policy, however progressive. It will be shaped by the individual Israeli.

As a major instrument in realizing these ideas, we shall ~~persevere~~ ^{persevere} in our

efforts to expand and improve education and make it available for all, irrespective of origins or social standing. We shall broaden the special measures we have initiated for the benefit of those children who are handicapped by family circumstances in deriving full benefit from their schooling.

Education is the principal method of bringing about the complete integration of all our communities, veterans and newcomers, into one nation. It enables every man to realize all his potentialities and overcome the handicaps of parentage or poverty.

It also offers the best prospect of betterment for our Arab citizens. By raising their educational standards, we shall enable them to take their rightful place in all aspects of national life. The five-year-plan for the development

of the Arab countryside is being energetically implemented. We are establishing a special fund to assist Arab and Druze students of limited means, and we are helping to provide public and private employment for the Arab intelligentsia.

More and more, Israel's Arab and Druze citizens are realizing that their future depends on the peace and progress of the whole country. We want them to make their full contribution to Israel's welfare and to derive full benefit from the prosperity that we wish to achieve for all our people.

For all these purposes, we need peace, and we shall neglect no opportunity of progress towards an understanding with our neighbours. The world today watches with bated breath the apparent beginnings of a thaw in the relations between the great world blocs. Nowhere is the glaring contrast between hopes for peace and the reality of hostility more apparent than in our own neighbourhood.

In the major international arenas we hear the watchwords of co-existence and negotiation proclaimed as the hope of mankind. And yet the Arab Governments persist in threatening our very existence and squandering much-needed resources in acquiring increasing quantities of more and more destructive weapons of aggression.

While developing our defensive preparedness, we continue to call upon other peace-loving States to play their part in safeguarding the peace in our area and the independence of its people. The responsibility of the major powers is particularly heavy, since it is they who can best deter the potential aggressors and prevent the supply of destructive arms to those who make no secret of their intention to use them for aggressive war.

The real problems of the Middle East are poverty and hunger, disease and illiteracy. If the enormous resources now invested in preparations for war could be dedicated to constructive ends and a fruitful partnership between all the nations of the area, there could be a united advance towards greater prosperity and a higher standard of living for all its peoples.

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There are numerous indications that the sincerity of our desire for peace is making a growing impression upon the consciousness of the world. Our friendships with many countries in all the continents are becoming closer and more comprehensive from year to year.

We have achieved particularly close relations with many of the developing lands of Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Mediterranean area. At their request, we have sent out some 850 experts and advisors, in addition to hundreds of others sent by various public and private bodies.

Some 4,500 trainees and students from these countries have attended hundreds of courses and seminars in Israel to study our methods in those fields where we have had some measure of success. We are proud of this close and friendly co-operation; it is as inspiring to us as we hope it is to our friends abroad.

It is my dearest wish, as it is the wish of all our people, to see this pattern of cooperation and friendship extended to the nations in our immediate neighbourhood. We have no quarrel with them; we see no cause for dispute or difference that could not be solved if only we could sit down round the conference table and talk things over. In the meantime, so long as they persist in their attitude of enmity and refuse to recognize our right to live, we shall continue - as we must, whatever the cost - to keep our power dry.

But I have no doubt that one day better counsels will prevail, and an alliance of peace and friendship will arise between the ancient Jewish nation, rebuilding its homeland, and the Arab peoples, with their great historic traditions and potentialities.