

For release: Friday AM's
December 12, 1969

For information: Caryl Conner
202- 638-4508

REMARKS

THE HONORABLE HUBERT H. HUMPHREY

UNITED JEWISH APPEAL DINNER

NEW YORK CITY

DECEMBER 11, 1969

One of the most significant contributions Israel has made to the family of nations in its relatively short years of existence has been in the area of economic development. Unfortunately, in the world in which we live there still are hundreds upon hundreds of millions of people who live far below the barest minimum standard of living, or we might better call it the bare minimum of survival. Modern technology and productive capacity surely can assure much more. In my view one of the gravest threats to peace and stability in the world is this continued privation and the terrible living conditions of these hundreds of millions of citizens in the less developed countries of the world.

Relative to her size, Israel has played a tremendously important role in this area. First it has provided an example of what can be done with the kind of will and determination and the wise policies it has pursued. No one of the less developed countries can help but be aware of the phenomenal rate of economic growth of Israel in the face of limited natural resources and in spite of the heavy burdens associated with economically absorbing hundreds of thousands of immigrants and the difficulties associated with the social and political assimilation of these newcomers.

Further, Israel's economic development has been all the more phenomenal in the fact of huge and continuing security expenditures. Yes, Israel's example has certainly served as an inspiration to leaders and people in many, many developing nations in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Also, Israel has done more than merely offer an example of what the developing countries can do to achieve notable progress. Israel has sent its technicians to countries around the world to help them with their agricultural and irrigation problems, with their transportation and infrastructure facilities, assisted in the development of tourist facilities and services, organized conferences and invited students and technicians to come and share Israel's know-how and experience. Many nations, wary of heavy reliance on the big powers for economic assistance, have turned to Israel for technical assistance and even joint ventures. The benefits have been substantial and such activities have been increasing in scope and in impact.

I emphasize this developmental aspect of what has happened in Israel and its relations to the less developed countries because this lends greater urgency to the need for peace between Israel and her neighbors. Today, vast amounts of money are being spent in an arms race and in tragic destruction and killing. These scarce and valuable manpower and financial resources used by Israel's neighbors could much better be devoted to economic and social development which so many countries in the Middle East desperately need. Similar resources used by Israel could be devoted so much more fruitfully to the betterment of mankind -- especially mankind in the developing world.

Unfortunately man has not yet learned to live with his neighbors peacefully. In our own neighborhoods and in our cities, as well as among nations, we just don't seem to realize how costly and how futile it is to wage wars. We have not begun to realize how costly it is to equip and maintain huge defense forces, let alone armies and navies and air forces at war. If only we would spend a small fraction of the money and men to prevent violence and war that we spend for such activities we could live in a far more prosperous and fruitful environment.

It is difficult to believe the size of Israel's resources being diverted at this time to building armaments and fighting units to preserve security. Able young men and women are engaged in military training and military activities when they could and should be completing their education or being productive in agriculture or industry or in the developing nations. Yet, until there is peace and until the prospects vastly improve for continued security and for no further acts of aggression, Israel has no alternative but to remain strong.

All of us have learned that for any country to be strong and secure it must be economically strong. Israel is no exception. It must build its economy simultaneous with building its security. It must educate its future generations of leaders and technicians, it must provide its people with adequate health facilities, it must absorb its newcomers in agriculture, industry, trade and other services. Its productive civilian life must go on or its military-based security will be short lived.

Today the drain on Israel's total production and on its government budget is almost unbearable. We in the United States complain about our defense budget which accounts for some 8 or 9 percent of our total output. In Israel, I am told, defense expenditures account for much more than double the proportion in the United States. It is probably the highest among any nation in the world today. And a relatively bigger burden can be borne by developed and affluent nations than by those still in the development, modernization and industrialization stage.

Despite whatever official help Israel may get from friendly nations in her struggle to survive and achieve peace, she will still need to devote unprecedented proportions of her own funds and other resources to security. That means if Israel is to continue the educational and health and other social services so essential for her future and if she is going to continue to build her productive capacity for an ever-expanding and even stronger economy, then she must have the cooperation and support of friends throughout the world.

I know and you know that the burden must and does fall most heavily in these trying days on the Israelis themselves. No one can take over the burdens of personal physical risk at the frontiers or in the widening areas of guerrilla operations. Nor can outsiders meet the heavy and rising tax load imposed on the Israelis. But her friends can help shoulder some of the social and economic expenditures and investments which the Israelis themselves have been able to carry in increasing measure under more peaceful circumstances.

I know Israel has benefitted tremendously from the support of friends throughout the world, Jewish and non-Jewish, but I also know that Israel's friends have benefitted greatly from Israel's contribution to principles of democracy and justice and to economic and social development. The future of Israel is not just of interest to the Israelis nor to Jews who feel a kinship with Israel. It is important to all democratically oriented and freedom loving people everywhere. That is why, in my judgment, the highest priorities must be given to those efforts to re-establish peace in the Middle East and in the meantime to assure Israel's survival and continued social and economic progress.

Let me emphasize what I have just said -- that the highest priorities for the United States and for the United Nations, and I would hope for other countries, should be focused on improving the prospects for peace. Certainly no one is going to be an absolute victor in continued killing and destruction in the Middle East. The longer the fighting lasts the most remote are the prospects for peace and the greater will be the dangers of larger and larger hostilities.

Americans are properly and deeply concerned about Vietnam and the termination of hostilities in that tragic country and a just settlement are absolutely essential. However, without downgrading the importance of peace in Vietnam, let me say that in my judgment continuation of what is now going on in the Middle East holds out the gravest danger of a broader and broader conflict that could involve more and more nations. This is too great a risk in these days of atomic warfare to permit this kind of activity to go on.

I am unqualifiedly for assistance to Israel so that she can remain secure but, again, I repeat that an arms race is not the answer. We must explore and succeed in finding the path to peace. That is the only long-run answer and the only assurance that the major powers will not become involved in a conflagration starting in that corner of the world where we should expect to find the basis for peace rather than the source of war.

#



Minnesota Historical Society

Copyright in this digital version belongs to the Minnesota Historical Society and its content may not be copied without the copyright holder's express written permission. Users may print, download, link to, or email content, however, for individual use.

To request permission for commercial or educational use, please contact the Minnesota Historical Society.



www.mnhs.org