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EXTRACTS FROM SPEECH  
BY

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ISRAEL MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Delivered in Washington D.C. on November 29, 1955 at a  
Development Bond for Israel Dinner held at the Willard Hotel

I am afraid that a war of nerves is now being unleashed against Israel.

I have read today in the American Press a dispatch from Cairo which, drawing its inspiration from British sources, conjures up most alluring prospects of an early peace in the Middle East. If only Israel would make certain concessions, trade will flourish between her and her neighbors, oil will start flowing from Iraq to Haifa, the blockade will be lifted and Israel will become economically viable. All that is necessary to usher in this state of bliss is that Israel should make territorial concessions in the Negev which, the dispatch says, is anyhow barren.

This argument about the barrenness of the Negev has long been used to befuddle the issue. The Negev was certainly far more barren than it is today before we started developing it, which was only a few years ago. It will certainly be less barren than it looks now when we bring to it the blessing of the waters from the North, as we are determined to do.

But even if some parts of the Negev stay barren, why should Arab states covet them, and if they do, why should Great Britain support their claim?

Have the Arab states been robbed by God Almighty of their due share in the distribution of deserts? Why should anyone begrudge to Israel its only little desert and why should the ambition of Arab states to add it to their vast areas of desolation be gratified?

Barren or not, that desert triangle has as its apex a most valuable asset for Israel which we would never dream of giving up -- it is the Port of Elath, our gateway to the Red Sea, the Indian Ocean and the seas of the Far East. Is it conceivable that any country in the world should willingly give up its access



to a sea -- particularly a little country like Israel which is engaged in a most intensive process of industrial and agricultural development, and is casting about for markets for its diverse products from oranges to phosphates and potash and from textile to cement?

It is sometimes said that we needn't give up Elath and all that is necessary is that there should be a corridor cutting through our territory and joining Egypt to the Kingdom of Jordan. This again is a fantastic claim! Why should Israel sacrifice its territorial compactness in order that the Arab states should establish a contiguity which they never enjoyed before?

Israel is going neither to submit to amputation nor cut itself in two. Any support for these irrational and unreasonable claims which are intended to cripple Israel without benefitting the Arab world in any real sense, is not conducive to peace. On the contrary, it is only likely to harden Arab intransigence and delay a peace settlement.

The Government of Israel will certainly beware of falling into this trap - laid in the name of peace - and it will warn all friendly powers not to become victims of a false illusion....



Washington, November 29 -- (UP) -- Israeli Foreign Minister Moshe Sharett tonight bluntly rejected suggestions that Israel win peace at the cost of territorial concessions in the Negev.

Sharett, speaking at an Israel Bonds Drive dinner, discounted news reports from Cairo saying there is optimism there over Arab-Israel peace prospects.

The Cairo reports quoted Egyptian and British sources as saying that peace appears to have become more of a possibility than at any time since the Armistice as a result of British explorations in Egypt and Israel.

"I am afraid," Sharett said, "that a war of nerves is now being unleashed against Israel." The "peace" reports, he said, envisage a solution involving an "amputation" of part of Israel. As Israel is not going to "cut itself in two," peace plans envisaging the "crippling" of Israel are an "illusion", he declared.

Sharett was introduced to the audience by Democratic Senator Hubert M. Humphrey, member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Among those present were Israeli Ambassador Abba Eban, Minister Reuven Shiloah and other members of the Israeli Embassy, accompanied by their wives. The following is the full text of Sharett's statement: