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### **MS-4787: Abba Hillel Silver Papers, 1902-1989.**

Series V: Writings, 1909-1963, undated.

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Madison Square Garden, 1955.

ADDRESS BY DR. ABRA HILLEL SILVER

HONORARY CHAIRMAN, AMERICAN ZIONIST COUNCIL

AT MADISON SQUARE GARDEN, TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 1955

On the subject of arms for Israel, the President of the United States clearly stated his position at Denver on November 10th, recognizing that arms are needed for legitimate self-defense and that it is proper for a state which is in danger to make requests for such arms. He stated that our country would consider such a request when it will be made by the State of Israel.

Secretary of State Dulles made a declaration to the same purpose recently in Geneva.

We are therefore justified in concluding that this is now the policy of our government -- a wise policy we believe and an inevitable one. Some officials have stated that the Government of the United States would agree to sell Israel "a sufficient quantity of arms". Against this background the recent declaration by one of the State Department spokesmen that "there has been no decision" can only refer to the quantity of arms to be sold and not to the fact of sale. If we are mistaken, then the spokesman is muddying the waters and creating doubt and apprehension at a time when Israel, the Arab world, the Soviet Union and the free world must be left in no doubt whatsoever as to the clear intent and resolve of the American Government.

It is diplomatic tacking, weaving and double talk which lead nations into very grave dangers from which they wish to escape. There must be no obfuscation of a clearly enunciated policy in the lower echelons of government. Time and again the little foxes have laid waste a promising vineyard.

No government or people will approve more enthusiastically the recently expressed opposition of President Eisenhower to an arms race in the Middle East than the government and people of Israel. They want no arms race. They want to

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spend every precious dollar available to them on the upbuilding of their country, on agriculture, irrigation and colonization, on science, education and health and on caring for the broken in body and spirit who come to them from many lands, and most of them in recent years from Arab lands where their positions have become insecure and fraught with danger.

But the State of Israel wants to live! -- wants to make sure of its survival as a free nation. On every border surrounding Israel are threatening governments which for seven years now have refused to make peace with Israel, to recognize its existence or to sit down with its representatives to negotiate a settlement for any outstanding issue between them. They have preferred the ways of boycotts and blockades and have encouraged raids upon Israeli territory, pillage and sabotage.

When Israel now appeals to the free world in an hour of danger, when its bitterest foe has succeeded in augmenting its considerable military arsenal with staggering purchases of weapons of all kinds, it is not of an arms race that Israel is thinking but of survival!

Does America believe that Israel is entitled to survive? America helped to establish the State of Israel. It was the first to give it official recognition. The American people, the major political Parties, the Congress of the United States heartily approved these acts.

Has Israel done anything in the last seven years to justify its abandonment through defenselessness to avowed enemies who have threatened to erase it? Has it betrayed any trust which had been confided to it? Has it launched any war upon its neighbors? Has it instituted any boycotts or blockades? Has it coveted any of its neighbors' territory? Has it declined to sit down with the Arabs to explore ways for an amicable adjustment of their differences? No, Israel has done none of these things. But the Arabs have done all of these things.

Has Israel built its new State competently, earnestly, with an eye to progress, education and freedom? The consensus of world opinion has been loud <sup>in praise</sup> of the amazing

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work of construction and rehabilitation which the young State has carried on.

Why, then, should Israel be penalized now by isolating it in a hostile world, or by imperilling it through a denial of adequate means of self-defense?

This is to play directly into the hands of the Soviet. When the Czechs first began to sell vast quantities of arms to Egypt at bargain rates, we wondered what desperate game they were up to. We were for a time mystified by the action. The Soviet had been proclaiming from the house-tops that it wanted peace more than anything else in the world, that it wanted the Cold War between the East and the West to come to an end, that it was straining every muscle to bring about disarmament. Its propaganda machine had gone in high gear extolling the new Geneva spirit of better understanding and cooperation between nations.

We failed to understand how all this tallied with shipments of large scale armaments to Egypt. Surely the Soviet leaders must have known that this could only lead to an all out armaments race in the Near East, to the increase of tensions which were fast reaching a point of explosion and conceivably also to the disaster of war. Was Russia encouraging war in the Eastern Mediterranean while urging peace in Geneva? Did Molotov hope to persuade the Allied statesmen that Russia's penetration into the Arab world by way of tanks, jet planes and submarines was intended to demonstrate her sincere and pacific intentions?

It is clear now that the Geneva peace effort, which was so nobly advanced by the President of the United States, was abortive and we are no longer left in any doubt as to what were the original intentions. The game of power politics had not been abandoned. What may follow now is an intensification of the Cold War, and increased activities on the part of the Soviet Union to provide arms in vast quantities to other Arab states.

What alternatives are there open for Israel? It must either acquire from the free world adequate arms for self-defense, or alternatively, it must be invited by the free nations of the world into a Security Alliance which would make the further

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acquisition of arms both on the part of Israel and the Arabs quite needless and pointless.

Both the Governments of the United States and of Great Britain have urged upon Israel and the Arabs to sit down and negotiate their differences. Israel has repeatedly expressed its desire to do so. The Arabs have consistently refused. The President and Mr. Dulles have both indicated that the United States is prepared to guarantee the boundaries which will be agreed upon in such negotiations. But here's the rub! The Arab Government will not engage in any negotiations with the representatives of the State of Israel. Israel has in the past indicated that it would be prepared to grant the Arab states routes across her territory, free port facilities at Haifa, and compensation for lands left by the Arabs when they fled in 1948. These considerable concessions have been brushed aside as of no moment. It is now suggested in a roundabout way by Prime Minister Eden of Great Britain that Israel should surrender territory to placate the Arabs. The formula of whittling down the territory of Israel to placate the Arabs has been a favorite one with the British since 1922 when they withdrew Transjordan from the terms of the Balfour Declaration and thus reduced the size of the Jewish National Homeland by two-thirds. Every subsequent White Paper of Great Britain, and there were many, proceeded along this same line of curtailing the size of the Jewish Homeland and simultaneously insuring Great Britain a corridor from Jordan to the sea.

The Arabs however have consistently maintained, as did the Egyptian Minister of National Guidance last year, that "even if Israel should consist only of Tel Aviv, we should never put up with that." The Arabs even rejected the ill-considered, unrealistic Bernadotte Plan, which would have given the whole of the Negev to the Arab state of Jordan.

Israel will not sacrifice any of its already sharply reduced territory of 8,000 square miles in order to augment the 2,700,000 square miles of its Arab neighbors. The need of the Arab states is not for additional territory in the

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desert wastes of the Negev, which can only be reclaimed by irrigation and tremendous application of human resources as the Israelis are doing today. If the Arabs are so inclined, they have vast deserts of their own which can be made fruitful and productive. If they are so inclined, they can hasten to approve of the Jordan Valley project which the American Government has been fostering and which would provide water for the irrigation of vast tracts of land upon which Arab refugees can be settled.

Egypt certainly has no claim upon any territory in Israel. What Nasser wants is not more territory but more prestige to bolster up his dictatorship by military victories over Israel or concessions wrung from it.

The basic intentions of the heads of our government towards Israel have always been friendly, and on decisive issues affecting the fate of Israel they were greatly helpful. But mistakes have been made in certain areas of diplomatic action which have led to a serious deterioration in the Near East. Our government could have pressed for peace and the lifting of the blockade against Israel when Egypt courted its support in her efforts to free the Suez Canal Zone from British troops. It was the logical thing to have asked for as part of the general pacification of that region. But it was not done and Egypt was given a full measure of support unconditionally. When we armed Iraq, it was part of statesmanship to arm also Israel so as not to create a military imbalance in that part of the world such as Russia is now doing in the arming of Egypt. When our government encouraged a regional Defense Pact there, Israel should have been included. This too was not done. Had our government served notice on the Arab states that unless the vitally important Jordan Valley project were approved of by them, it would not only not restrain Israel but would encourage Israel to proceed with water projects of its own, there would have ensued no political juggling with the plan such as has taken place.

The same blindness which formerly afflicted the Mandatory Power in its

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dealing with the Arabs and the Jews of Palestine has now come to afflict some of the people in our government who deal directly with the Middle East. Woo the Arabs -- by-pass Israel -- and you will save the Middle East from Communist penetration! The very opposite of course has happened.

President Eisenhower and Secretary Dulles must know, I am sure, that Israel is no threat to the basic interests of American foreign policy in the Middle East. They must know that Israel is a democracy deeply rooted in the millennial democratic traditions of the Jewish people and of Judaism and that it will to the last defend its democratic way of life and institutions. They must know that there is a large reservoir of goodwill and gratitude to the government and people of the United States among the citizens of Israel for having helped so vitally in the establishment of their State and for the economic assistance which has been given to it to this day. They are too proud to put their friendship on the auction block or use it in any diplomatic game of blackmail. They know that Israel wants peace with all her Arab neighbors.

They know that Israel is prepared to cooperate in the solution of all the outstanding issues between it and its neighbors in a spirit of goodwill.

Israel asks for the right to live and to defend itself!

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