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Remarks by Senator Edmund S. Muskie at a Luncheon in Honor of Israel's 22nd Birthday

Edmund S. Muskie

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SA 2^d day 1-
Remarks by Senator Edmund S. Muskie
At a Luncheon in Honor of
Israel's 22nd Birthday
May 11, 1970
repaired by
Jack Sando

Ambassador Rabin, distinguished colleagues, ladies
and gentlemen:

This is a solemn and happy occasion. Our presence
here today bears witness to the continued vitality of a national
and religious impulse that has persisted for three millennia--an
impulse which stems from traditions that are common to both of
our religious faiths.

I feel particularly privileged to be able to share
with you on such an occasion some thoughts about the establish-
ment of Israel and its role in the world today.

In 1948, a nation was born. Since then, Israel's
spirit, character, and accomplishments have established it as
perhaps the most gifted and vital new member of the family of
nations. Israel's efficient combination of local resources and
foreign assistance brought new industries into being and restored
life to areas that had been desert for 1500 years. Israel's
artistic and scholarly achievements, moreover, have made this
small Middle Eastern nation one of the bright and hopeful centers
of modern civilization.

These achievements take on even greater proportions when one considers they took place and were preserved despite great natural and political difficulties.

Only three years ago the world watched anxiously as ^{erupted} war ~~erupted~~ ^{But} ~~not knowing that~~ the Book of Judges still lived, and that Israel's safety would ^{was} again be assured by its citizen army and the brilliant planning and foresight of its Chief of Staff.

The drama of those days moves me to wonder how much more perfect Israel's contribution to the world and to the area might be, were it not for the hostile attitude of its neighbors.

For this reason, to me peace is the most important and desirable development resource in the area--a resource whose value exceeds even that of oil or human skill.

- Without peace Israel must support heavy ^{materiel} costs of defense, ^{as well as} ~~and in time~~ ^{incalculable} the spiritual cost ^{being} of an occupying power;
- Without peace, the margin of Israel's military superiority over its neighbors may in time diminish;
- ~~Without peace, the interests of Israel's friends in the area remain on the defensive;~~
- ~~Finally, Without peace, the Soviet grip on the Arabs' reliance on Soviet assistance and commitment to them will increase, together with~~ ^{and the} ~~the possibilities for a confrontation between the~~ ^{involving Israel's} ~~friends will multiply.~~ ^{super-powers.}

unclear

~~Neither Arabs nor Israelis will deny the importance~~
~~of peace. But peace, all agree, must be the second policy goal.~~
~~On one side come first the overriding needs of national security,~~
~~and on the other, considerations of prestige and self-respect.~~

The psychological problems alone, facing the contestants, are considerable. Israel ^{fears} the Arabs are not prepared to live in peace. The Arabs ^{fear} ~~do not feel~~ Israel is ^{not} prepared, as part of a peace settlement, to withdraw from the territories occupied in 1967.

How, one may ask, can the parties proceed ^{to break the stalemate} ~~from the first goals to the level of the second?~~

Speaking frankly, and as a friend, let me recall the words of President Johnson before the B'nai B'rith in 1968: "No nation that has been part of the drama of the past 20 years is totally without blame."

~~Fortunately the principles that must underlie a just and lasting settlement are not in doubt. They were defined by the unanimous resolution of the United Nations Security Council in November, 1967.~~

~~The Resolution, however, is neither self-enforcing nor self-defining. The two parties must still confer at some point face to face in order to define how the Resolution will apply to them.~~

~~The outside power, as an alternative, can consider imposing a solution on either side. Outside powers, I believe, should seek to help the parties to the conflict work out their differences through the United Nations, but the final responsibility for peace must lie with Israel and the Arabs.~~

The Arabs must be prepared to indicate a willingness to conclude a binding peace settlement with Israel. Moderate statements made in private cannot be expected to outweigh public declarations of frantic militancy.

Israel, for its part, should not underestimate the ^{uncertainty} ~~fear~~ and hostility with which three wars have caused it to be regarded by the Arabs.

In Arab eyes Israel now possesses overwhelming superiority in both diplomatic and military terms. They believe also ^{all} that the mere fact of their appearance at the conference table may sacrifice their ^{single} only political asset: ^{the} a symbolic refusal to accept Israel's existence. ^{Absent that symbol, the Arabs envision} Israel ~~they fear would then be able~~ ^{is in the position of being able} to impose a settlement, rather than seek it through negotiations.

As a result we face a stalemate in which the Arabs have ^{present} no prospects of defeating Israel militarily, and Israel none of compelling the Arabs to begin negotiations. Over time, this stalemate will be harmful to the cause of peace and the best interests of both sides.

In a spirit of friendship and concern, I would like
to ^{urge} ~~suggest~~ that ^{both and its Arab neighbors} Israel ^{should} continue to pursue diplomatic
avenues tending toward a settlement, provided they are consonant
with ~~its~~ understandable needs for security.
^{I suggest that} Israel could, for instance, specifically affirm ^{that}
in ^{the} context of the comprehensive peace settlement envisioned by
the Security Council, ^{readjust} ~~it was proposed~~ to withdraw from territories
^{occupied} in the recent conflict. ^{must} It ~~would~~ be understood, of course,
that this would not include minor boundary adjustments reflecting
the needs of both sides for improved security.

Such a statement would help dispel Arab fears, ^{well-founded or not,} of Israeli
expansionism. It would in no way diminish Israel's security
margin, ^{And it} but ^{it} would confront the Arabs ^{nations} and ~~the U.S.S.R.~~ with the
choice of responding positively or of making clear where the
diplomatic obstacles ^{lie} ~~lay~~.

The Arab-Israeli problem may be the most difficult to
confront statesmen in this century. It must, however, be
successfully resolved. Failure would be catastrophic for the
future of civilization in the Middle East. It ^{could} ~~might~~ even ^{write} ~~sign~~
the final chapter to the story of mankind.

^{however,} I am convinced that the problem is not insoluble.

In moments of doubt I take heart in Israel's almost miraculous creation which we are now celebrating, and which not long ago would also have seemed visionary and unrealistic.

I then can read, as a hopeful message for our times, ^{and the future} these words of Isaiah:

"In that day Israel will be with Egypt and Assyria a blessing in the midst of the earth, whom the Lord of Hosts has blessed saying, 'Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel my heritage.'"

(19:24)