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Transcript of the Susskind-Eban interview
on channel 5 Sunday evening, 17 November.

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FROM:

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THE DAVID SUSSKIND SHOW

Interview: The Hon. Abba Eban - Minister
of Foreign Affairs -for Israel

Taped: Monday Evening, November 11
(Prior to his departure for
Israel)

Air Date: Sunday Evening, November 17

DAVID SUSSKIND: It's a rare privilege and pleasure to present to you one of the great statesman of our time, the Honorable Abba Eban, Minister of Foreign Affairs for the State of Israel, and author of the soon-to-be-published book, "My People: The Story of the Jews." I thought you said it had a sub-subtitle, too.

ABBA EBAN: I suggested to Random House the subtitle, "The First Four Thousand Years are the Hardest."

SUSSKIND: That would have been particularly appropriate at this moment.

(LAUGHTER)

SUSSKIND: How do you find time to write a book with all that you're doing?

EBAN: Well, I began this some six or seven years ago, but it was interrupted by events, including a certain episode in May, 1967, but, because of the interest that - that last year's war evoked in the world, not only concerning Israel, but concerning Israel's historic roots, I thought that this was the time for me to give my interpretation of Jewish history and my response to this very singular and mysterious story of a people's persistence and so I did some work with the midnight oil during the summer and the result is that this will be available for contemplation and criticism some time in December of this year.

SUSSKIND: What's the underlying, basic theme of the book, away from its theological statements? I mean, what is the story of the four thousand years of Jewish struggle?

EBAN: Well, I say it here in the introduction that, after writing these hundreds of pages, I come back to the fact that it's an unpenetrated mystery. There is nothing whatever in the history of nations on which one can base a comparative research. There's no other case of the persistence of a people having been maintained in conditions such as this. All one can do is to illuminate what has happened. One cannot explain it.

SUSSKIND: You held a press conference at - just earlier today - in which you said you were going back to Israel because, in fact, the Egyptian foreign minister and the Jordanian foreign minister have already left the United Nations and have returned to their countries. Does that assume that further talk, further deliberation is impossible?

EBAN: No, there was a statement by the Secretary-General yesterday in which he said that the two Arab foreign ministers said that they were not breaking off the dialogue and that they would be available for contacts with Ambassador Jarring, either at United Nations headquarters or elsewhere. So that there isn't any formal rupture of the negotiations. Nevertheless, the fact is that we all came here in order to engage in a dialogue on the problems of peace.

It's also true that I presented, about a week ago, a detailed statement of Israel's position on the chief questions at issue and I invited the UAR foreign ministers to state the positions of his government, on those questions. My thought was that we should then compare our positions and see where the distances were greatest and where they were smallest and carry a constructive dialogue forward.

I think this was a reasonable approach. World opinion had expressed itself favorably on the address that I made in the General Assembly on the eighth of October: a nine-point program for peace in the Middle East. And all I asked Mr. Ryad to do was to say what he thinks about these eight problems if he doesn't agree with what I think about them. I say that - that peace is a formal and juridical situation ending the conflict forever. I say that agreement ought to be expressed in the normal, contractual treaty form. I said that we ought to work out a new secure and agreed boundary and not play around any longer with demarcation lines or anything provisional and temporary, such as that which we've had so far. I outlined our position on navigation in the Suez Canal, on the refugee problem, on how to express the concept of the recognition of the sovereignty and identity of states. I think that his duty was to formulate the UAR positions.

But, when he saw my document, he seems to have said to himself, they're getting perilously near to a discussion about peace. He, therefore, booked up a seat in an airplane as soon as he could and went away. He fled from the arena of peace. Now, I hope that he will one day come back either here or meet me with Ambassador Jarrying at a place where I shall also be again.

The fact is that the momentum of the dialogue was broken at a formative stage on the initiative and the responsibility of the UAR. I, therefore, think that the criticism of peace-loving mankind should be directed to the UAR. Never in history has any government been more responsible for a war than was Egypt in 1967 and never has any government been more responsible for the actions of peace than Egypt is in 1968.

SUSSKIND: With each foreign minister, including yourself, returning to his country, have you any tacit or understanding of any kind about meeting again in the immediate future?

EBAN: I think that the special representative of the Secretary-General has the idea of meeting us somewhere nearer to our capitals than here. I would think that, by the end of the month or early in December, there will be an opportunity for us to get together again but I'm at a loss to understand what advantage there is in losing these weeks during which our presence at United Nations headquarters could have been used to clarify the issues, to define them and, perhaps, to carry some of them forward towards serious discussion.

SUSSKIND: What does your intelligence tell you about their reasons for breaking off talks now. Why did the Egyptian go home and why did the Jordanian go home?

EBAN: Well, the second one is easy. The Jordanian went home because the Egyptian went home. (LAUGHTER)

Now, why Mr. Ryad went home, one can only conjecture. He had the opportunity of stating his positions, but I think the answer is this: if he had given his positions on these seven or eight problems, he would have been committing the vast sin of negotiating. He would have violated the sacred principle of the Khartoum Conference, which said, no negotiation, no agreement, no recognition, no peace.

Well, they've refused to meet us directly for negotiation. They've refused to have joint meetings with us under Jarring's auspices. And now they've refused to exchange positions with us by official correspondence. This is an attitude of complete intransigence

for which there isn't any parallel in the international life of our times. There is no conflict in the world today which is not being submitted to some process of discussion and negotiation.

SUSSKIND: May I ask you what you make of recent New York Times dispatches which suggest, on the one hand, that there is a hardening of the line in Jordan, that King Hussein is desperate, that his own people and his own militants have made life impossible in terms of his holding out any peace hopes with Israel. Is he having to take a harder line because of internal pressures?

EBAN: No, I haven't noticed that. If it isn't blasphemous to differ from the New York Times, I would say that Mr. Dan Adams Schmidt's(?) story is not convincing. Because what happened in Jordan last week was that King Hussein attempted to suppress the more militant organizations, which would indicate that he might be trying to create a situation in which he would be able to explore the possibilities of a settlement with us. That is a possible explanation. There is some evidence in support of it, but that, also, I think, will become evident in the weeks ahead.

The essence of the position is this: we have a cease-fire. The Arab states want to change the present situation. The only way you can change the present situation is by replacing it by peace. Therefore, they ought to be interested in exploring that alternative. You cannot get peace without agreement and you cannot get agreement without negotiation. That's where the deadlock now is.

SUSSKIND: Isn't there a proverb or a saying in Israel that, it's - the last to make peace with Israel will be Syria. First will be Jordan. Isn't that a truism or a.....

EBAN: Well, it's true that the absence of peace weighs much more heavily on Jordan than upon any other of our neighbors because the human problems are all concentrated in the Israel-Jordan sector. The Palestine Arabs on both sides of the Jordan, the refugee population, these are the people most affected by the absence of peace. Now, there is a possibility to create a new system of relations in the Middle East. Instead of cease-fire, peace. Instead of demarcation lines, secure and agreed boundaries. Instead of blockade, free passage. Instead of being separated into ghettos, freedom of movement across a community of sovereign states. It's a very high vision but, so far, Israel maintains that vision alone.

SUSSKIND: What would you comment as to the statement that, if King Hussein were to actively engage in peace talks, with Israel, it would be, at the very least, at the cost of his throne, and, at the worst, at the cost of his life?

EBAN: Well, it's one of these slogans which have never been put to the test. I would think that his throne and his life are much more endangered by the present situation than they would be by an honorable peace. I think that statesmen gain by courageous actions and that, if he were to make a peace with - with us, which would bring advantage to him as well as to us, I would think a greater advantage to him than to us, from the starting point of the present position, many people in the world, including the Arab world and the Moslem world, would applaud this act of statesmanship. I'm not at all certain that he would endanger his position by peace. I think his position is dangerous without peace.

SUSSKIND: We must pause for this message and we'll be right back.

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SUSSKIND: Okay, your first question.

MAN: I realize that the Golan(?) Heights and a secure frontier on the Sinai Desert are essential to Israel's security. But, in relation to Jordan, does the fact that so much of Jordan's economic resources lie in the west bank area, the area that is occupied currently by Israel, lead Israel to be more willing to return that territory to Jordan in order that it may survive as a nation?

EBAN: Well, we've said that the territorial question is open, is open to negotiation. We hadn't said at any time that the cease-fire line must be maintained. We say that security cannot be negotiated but territory's negotiable and all that Jordan has to do, is, therefore, to negotiate in order that we should achieve both a new security dispensation and also a new - a boundary, for the first time. Many of my colleagues - I think the majority of them - believe that Israel should not only aspire to peace and to security, but also to the preservation of its character as a Jewish state, namely, a state whose culture, whose language, whose traditions, whose parliamentary decisions are fashioned by the Jewish people. Therefore, there is not a desire to dominate an enormous Arab population nearly as great as ours. This creates an objective starting-point on which a mutually advantageous settlement could be reached.

MAN: Is the question of Jerusalem's territorial status still open?

EBAN: Well, we had not said that we'd come to the negotiating table after fixing positions in advance. But there are things on which we will be very rigid. One of them, legitimately, is the unity of Jerusalem. The normal condition of any city is unity and,

especially, of that city from which the concept of unity was proclaimed to all mankind, that we say that, even there, although the unity of Jerusalem must be preserved and its status as Israël's capital must be maintained, there are things to be negotiated which concern the interests of the world community in relation to the spiritual concerns, the holy places. Islam, the relationship of the kingdom of Jordan to the Islamic holy places, negotiations with the interests concerned with the Christian holy places, so there are important matters affecting Jerusalem in its universal aspect which we would like to discuss with those concerned.

MAN: Thank you.

SUSSKIND: Mr. Eban, recognizing how very different it is for any of the Arab countries to be the first to come to a specific and actual negotiations with Israel, isn't there a sweetening of the Jordanian consideration possible, beyond what has been proffered so far? To make something very particular available to Jordan?

EBAN: Well, we are doing whatever we can to indicate to Jordan that we would welcome a peace settlement with it, that we think that priority logically belongs to Jordan-Israel settlement, that's where what is called the 'Palestine problem' originated. We've indicated that the frontier is negotiable, that, when it's negotiated, it should be open to mutual access, that the movement of men and of goods which exists in time of cease-fire should not be renounced in time of peace, that we could solve the problem of Jordan in its desire to be a Mediterranean country in its commercial relations. I've said something already tonight about our acknowledgment of Jordan's traditional relationship to the Moslem holy places. I

think that Jordan should, therefore, have a picture of the advantages which it could claim. What is needed is an act of courage and of international statesmanship for it to take the exploration further. We are prepared to take that further through meetings with Jordan under the auspices of Ambassador Jarring.

SUSSKIND: How would you assess the recent border clashes, the air attacks, the growing militancy in Cairo, your own stiffening attitudes in Israel, in terms of the imminence of another Middle East war?

EBAN: I don't think our attitudes in Israel are stiffening at all. I read a great deal of surprising information in the foreign press about the situation in our government. I must say that the situation as portrayed in the press is much more interesting than the one that I find at cabinet meetings where the harmony is far greater than the.....

SUSSKIND: Recent dispatches about the Cabinet differing on the situation are not true?

EBAN: They're rather impressionistic...there are different views because we're a democratic government...and there is a consensus and the consensus is that peace is better than cease-fire and that secure and agreed boundaries are better than cease-fire lines and that a peace settlement cannot be dictated. It must be elicited through agreement. I think these are the dominant trends. There's also the dominant trend to which I have referred, that we do not have any - any ambition to hold under our domination a vast Arab population.

These are elements which the majority upholds. I don't believe in the differences alleged between the hawks and the doves. After all, what is a hawk in Israel? A hawk says, we will maintain the present situation until there is peace; and the dove says, we will try to get peace and, until then, we will maintain the present situation. I think the nuance is very small. The cease-fire is working in general terms. The UAR has a sense of greater military arrogance as a result of the enormous rearmament which it has achieved in the past year. There may be a school of thought in Cairo which says that it's better not to make peace now but to wait for six months or a year and then to attempt a military solution. We do what we can to foreclose this by indicating that Israel is not standing still in the reinforcement of its defensive capacity.

SUSSKIND: Do you believe that the heightening adventures of a military nature are bringing an East - Middle East war closer to reality? I mean, you did.....

EBAN: I don't - some of my colleagues have spoken in apocalyptic terms about war - well, those who are charged with defense, of course, ought to be thinking about defense and they naturally lay emphasis on the security aspect. But it is not the Israel Government's view that war is inevitable. It would be a great failure of statesmanship if a war were to come about - of international statesmanship.

I think it can be avoided. The best way to avoid it is to make peace. If not, I think that the cease-fire situation can be maintained while activity is continued on behalf of peace.

SUSSKIND: What is your assessment of the strength and the skill of the rearmed and the retrained Arab armies?

EBAN: Their rearmament has become enormously increased in some crucial fields. They have more weapons than they did on the fourth of June, 1967. But military strength, as experience has shown, is not simply a function of the accumulation of hardware. It depends increasingly upon the social and educational and cultural capacity of the population concerned. The paradox is that, the more sophisticated the weapons become, the greater is the gap between the man and the weapon; and we found, with the UAR, that they were much better with the less-developed weapons than with the more developed and, therefore, the greater the sophistication of weapons, the more the military capacity falls. The question is the intention behind the weapons. I think they're wrong if they believe that they could get a better result militarily now than before, but governments often act on wrong appraisals of situations, as we learnt in May and June of last year. The important thing in Middle Eastern history is not reality, but the reflection of reality in - in imagination.

SUSSKIND: Well, how is the imagination of the ARabs at the moment?

EBAN: There may be people in Cairo who imagine that they are strong enough to secure a military victory. I can assure them that they are wrong. I hope, for their sake, that they will take my word for it. I hope that they'll take the word of other, more objective observers. But there is, I think, a school of thought in Cairo which wants a military solution. That's one reason why their diplomacy is inhibited and why they're not doing anything substantial in order to explore the possibility of peace. I would hope that they would, at least, not interfere with a tendency, if it exists, on the part of Jordan, to explore a peace settlement with us.

Perhaps, that's the greatest contribution that the Egyptian government can make to peace, to remove any obstacle or impediment to the exploration of peace between Israel and Jordan.

SUSSKIND: Are these attitudes on the part of Israel-Jordan particularly in Cairo, Egypt, are they being formulated with or without Soviet pressure, do you guess?

EBAN: About the Soviet Union, there are not any different degrees of knowledge, there are only different degrees of ignorance. It's a mystery that nobody has really been able to penetrate. We know that the Soviet Union is responsible for the rearmament and we know that they identify themselves blindly with whatever the Arab states say at any given time. I have not the impression that the Soviet Union is stimulating war in the Middle East, but nor do I think that the Soviet Union is acting in favor of peace. Their - their situation may be that they like a position which is one of tension without explosion.

SUSSKIND: Excuse me, sir, we pause again. We're coming right back.

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SUSSKIND: What's your question?

MAN: Mr. Eban, your country has been very adamant about withdrawing from the possessions taken prior to the war, after the war, and I was wondering, if the Russians made a gesture of withdrawing their troops and dismantling the armies of the Arabs, would your country consider withdrawing from those positions?

EBAN: No, what we've been adamant about is the refusal to move without peace. It's the absence of peace that is the crux of the issue. We've said and we repeat, to suggest that we abandon the cease-fire lines, which are essential for our security, without peace is an idea so eccentric and so unprecedented and so irrational that it's astonishing to hear it ever put forward. In every other conflict, the occupation has been liquidated as a result of peace in which frontiers are established. In our case, the boundaries have never been established and they must be established again. What we would like the Soviet Union to tell the Arab states to do, if they have any influence, is simply to negotiate with us the conditions of peace. Then, the frontiers will be agreed to between us and them and, obviously, armed forces will dispose themselves accordingly and no armed forces will stay in areas which they are not supposed to under the agreements reached in the boundary settlement.

MAN: Well, suppose they agreed to this and they actually went ahead with reducing the arms to the Arabs, would you, then, with - give back the lands to the Arabs?

EBAN: No, it's - the question of territory is not linked with how many arms they have. I would say that, if they were to stop giving arms to the Arabs now, that would not be a negotiable concession at all, because I don't know what the Arabs would do with any more arms. Therefore, they've already stuffed the arsenals as full as they can. They - their hangars are full. The thing which gets the territorial position moving is a peace negotiation in which the boundaries are worked out and, once the boundaries are agreed, then the problem of armed forces is resolved. Armed forces dispose themselves in accordance with what the boundaries are and there wouldn't

any longer be occupation.

SUSSKIND: Yes, sir. Your question.

MAN: Mr. Minister, what do you think of the idea of, perhaps, a new principle in the United Nations of recognizing the Suez Canal as a critical area in the world civilization, and, perhaps assuming a long-term - taking it on a long-term lease from Egypt or else purchasing it from Egypt and maintaining it as an international waterway under the protection and maintenance of the United Nations, open to all nations and applying similar principles to the Bay of Tiran.(?) The - the fortifications at the edges of the bay.

EBAN: Well, all you have to do is to get the United Arab Republic to agree to sell the Suez Canal and then to open it to the passage of all ships, including Israel. What's happened has been the opposite. It had an international character and they nationalize it. Thereafter, it was decided that Israeli vessels had a right of passage and they denied it. Therefore, all proposals for internationalizing the Canal and for opening it to the shipping of all nations really ought to be addressed to Mr. Ryad(?), if you can get him back to sit here. Then, he has to ask that question. The point is that the UAR has constantly acted against the international principle in - in that matter. Now, to the other question concerning the United Nations, what is the use of having a United Nations force if it goes away as soon as danger arises. It's like having a policeman who runs away as soon as he sees that there's some trouble in the streets. That's what happened last May and the traumatic memories of that accompany us still. There - there's nothing less attractive to Israel than the illusion of a presence which melts away at the first smell of danger.

SUSSKIND: If Mr. Jarring, as he has indicated, will not abide with this protracted negotiation longer than December first, what would be your recommendation, then, if he were to bow out?

EBAN: I don't believe that he intends to bow out. It's incredible to me that that can be the case. Here you have the Arab states and Israel, the United States and the Soviet Union, all the members of the United Nations calling for the continued availability of this instrument. I can't imagine that anybody could be impervious to the moral pressure of such a situation if he - if for - if this were to be withdrawn, we would not go back to the situation as it existed before. It would be worse. It would - there would be created a psychology of inevitable war. The idea of peace would vanish from the - from the area. The United Nations would have withdrawn from its presence in the only international conflict in which it has a presence. The constitutional effects on the United Nations, I think, would be fatal - it would be a very traumatic event. It would have much more effect on the United Nations than it would on - on Israel, because this is the only major dispute in which the United Nations has a presence. It's not there - it has nothing to do with Vietnam. It's not discussing Czechoslovakia; it's not discussing the Nigerian slaughter in West Africa. It has made this conciliation machinery available to Israel and the Arab states. For it to withdraw would mean that the United Nations had decided, really, to abdicate from effective international life.

SUSSKIND: If Ambassador Jarring does withdraw at some point, and/or the United Nations is not subsequently successful in mediating this tension, what is the specific impact upon the United Nations' future usefulness?

EBAN: Well, the United Nations, of course, is at the lowest point of its fortune. I've already pointed out, as I did in my speech to the general debate, that it has a very marginal influence on the central international issues. It's not dealing with Vietnam. It's not dealing with Czechoslovakia. It's not dealing with the fighting in West Africa. If it were now to decide not to deal with the Middle East by making the Jarring mission available, you would get the extraordinary situation in which the criterion for the importance of an international question is decision of the United Nations not to deal with it. Now, I think this would have a very profound effect upon its prestige which is now not very high. There's never been a time in my experience when the United Nations debates had less resonance than at this moment as - except for certain dramatic occasions, such as some that we have experienced. I think the United Nations ought to be very careful before it withdraws its availability, when that availability, through Mr. Jarring, is requested and accepted by all the parties concerned.

SUSSKIND: Does its lesser resonance today - in the United Nations - have to do with the voices that speak there. Just maybe?

EBAN: That may have something to do with it, David. I think really it's the - it is because it has not been able to give security to member states. Now, if our governments in our nations did not give us security, they would not be able to ask for obedience.

Why can a government ask for us to obey its laws? Because, in return for our obedience, it gives us security, firstly in the physical sense, and, then, in the social sense. The United Nations has not been able to play a role in the protection of - the security of a nation. We saw this dramatically in May, 1967. The United Nations ran away from the scene and left us to our fate. It did nothing, it said nothing which would reinforce or console Israel in the hour of its anguish. It did nothing about Czechoslovakia. This is the real cause for decline. Member states say it - it will not give us security, then, why should we give it obedience. There are also other matters, such as the adoption of impracticable resolutions. I think the United Nations ought not to try to act by dictation and resolution, but by conciliation, by bringing parties together and trying to reach agreement. Its action should be much less parliamentary and much more diplomatic.

SUSSKIND: How, then, does a state like Israel react to periodic resolutions and - and condemnations of the United Nations Security Council? Do you not care about them? Do they - have they lost their moral assuasions?

EBAN: Yes, they have, not on - not only for us, but this is the case in general. I met one western government, which is the subject every year of a resolution rather wild and extreme against it; it has decided this year not even to work against it, not even to try to get the votes against it. It - it says, let it be passed. It's never published. Nobody takes any notice. We have found, on Rhodesia, where, I think, the general line of its policy is correct, resolutions which are simply not carried out, resolutions calling upon - upon the United Kingdom and others to start a war in Rhodesia.

Well, it's very hard to think that the real purpose of a peace organization is to create wars. Now, when you get these rather extreme resolutions and they're simply recorded and nothing happens about them, you have an inflation of the currency and the United Nations resolutions have ceased to have the weight that used to be attached to them.

SUSSKIND: And, sir, we pause one more time.

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SUSSKIND: Yes, sir, your question.

MAN: Mr. Eban, just to change the emphasis a bit: in June, 1967, there was a very strong reaction on the part of the Jewish community in the United States to the situation in Israel. Based on your knowledge of the community here in our country, I wonder if you could tell us what you feel the responsibility of the community - the Jewish community in the United States is under the present situation.

EBAN: The reaction in our favor in the United States was not limited to the Jewish community, alone. I had very strong evidence of this. I had the opportunity to address the General Assembly on the 19th of June, when I believe, some 80 million people were listening. I studied mail that - that reached me thereafter. I made a study of some 70,000 letters that reached me in the United States within the few weeks that elapsed and the majority of them were not from those of Jewish faith. But those of Jewish faith certainly felt a special horror at the idea that a state which was the last refuge of a people, which had already lost six million of its sons, might be annihilated, there was a deep passion, therefore, about Jewish solidarity and this has continued. It finds expression in economic support, in the enormous growth of pilgrimage and tourism

to Israel, and in a very vigilant defense of - of Israel's right before world opinion. I've noticed this in the discussions which the American people has been having with itself in recent turbulent months. I've noticed the underlying unity and consensus of the American people in all its parties and groups and regions on behalf of the strengthening of friendship with Israel and support of peace in the Middle East.

SUSSKIND: Mr. Minister, do you detect that the United Nations' a growing sympathy among the diplomatic corps for the Arab cause?

EBAN: Well, a great number of the diplomatic corps are - are themselves Arabs and that's the first thing to point out, that you have so-called judgments between the country with one vote and the country which begins with 15, or, really, with 40, when you add the Communist bloc. Now, that's a very funny court, when one of the parties has 40 votes on the bench. It's as though you were going to have a lawsuit with somebody and, when you arrived there, you found that all his cousins and uncles were sitting there as judges.

The - the Arab states have the sympathy of themselves. They have the support of the Soviet Union but I don't think they've made any real inroads upon the support for Israel, either in the Americas or in Western Europe or - or in Africa. It's because they didn't win sympathy there that they have never been able to get a resolution in support of their position about Israeli alleged aggression or about withdrawal to the June 5th lines. They've never been able to get such a resolution through in spite of their enormous parliamentary advantage.

SUSSKIND: I was privileged to visit Israel last summer and very privileged to have a conversation with you in Jerusalem. You said at that point that in your opinion the Soviet Union and the United States had come to some kind of silent determination not to make the Middle East the place of confrontation. Military confrontation.

EBAN: Well, I remember that conversation, David. It was such a good one, I was sorry there were no television cameras around. I was....

SUSSKIND: Do you still feel the same way.....

EBAN....but there's, first of all, we have experience, In June, 1967, there was a situation of danger. The two major powers solved it by avoiding confrontation. This, for us, was very important, that the chief American contribution to Israel's security at that time was to indicate clearly to the Soviet Union that American disengagement would depend upon Soviet disengagement, that this was the gist, I understand, of the message of President Johnson to Mr. Kosygin on the fifth of June. That was one of the great turning points. Now, I believe that this was repeated at the Glassboro meeting and my impression is that the Soviet Union has been told that the Middle East is not part of what is called the Socialist Commonwealth. It's not an area where they can do what they like. The United States, through its leaders, has repeated from - at various times that it has certain interests there and, therefore, it is not a free-for-all. It's not a no-man's land. I hope that that is the position still and that it will be maintained and that this conflict, if it continues, which I hope it will not, but even if it continues, will remain between Israel and the Arabs and will not be globalized.

Anything that can be done to keep the conflict at least within its regional framework is a service to peace.

SUSSKIND: Is there any unanimity in the Israeli government about the one million Arab refugees acquired during the '67 war?

EBAN: Well if there were unanimity between us, we wouldn't be Jews and we wouldn't be Israelis. And we wouldn't be a democratic government. Those are three reasons why we can't be unanimous.

We're Israelis, we're Jews and we're democratic.

But there is a consensus. It was expressed by my colleague, Mr. Sapir(?) the other day to the following effect: if there is a situation of ceasefire and there's no peace, then we maintain the present situation, as under the Hague Convention. These are occupied areas.

But if there is peace, we would try to find a solution which improved our boundary from the viewpoint of security, but which also did not radically change the nature of our state, and which did not make it the beginnings of an Arab state within ten years or so.

In other words, we will try to get more security with a minimum addition of population.

SUSSKIND: Is there a basic decision about integrating the Arabs versus separating them? Has that been determined upon?

EBAN: We have not decided to absorb or to integrate them. That they are not our citizens. The situation is that of a military regime. I have heard speeches about the necessity to absorb them. I don't know whether those who made those speeches in Jerusalem were animated amongst other motives by a desire to make my path easier here. I don't believe that was one of the motives.

But the fact is, there is no authority whatever for those statements. We maintain the ceasefire, and beyond that we say that the question is open, open for the peace negotiations.'

SUSSKIND: Recently our government has agreed upon the sale of Phantom jets to Israel. Did Israel have to give something in return? Was there some quid pro quo in it or . . .

EBAN: No, I discussed this before I left for Israel last month. I talked to President Johnson about it, and then we began the negotiation with Secretary Rusk. It was made clear that this matter was not dependent upon any conditions external to itself. In other words, the memorandum or the agreement or the treaty concerning the sale must deal with the sale itself, and I've asked Ambassador Rabyd(?) to propose exactly the same formula as that which we negotiated for the Sky Hawk transaction, which I was familiar with two or three years ago.

So that the understanding that your government has given to us at its highest levels is that this is a decision not dependent on matters extraneous to itself.

SUSSKIND: The decision essentially based on a military estimate of the situation, and the hardware of the Arabs?

EBAN: I think they share our view that there has been a very dangerous rearmament and that if this is not corrected, Nasser could probably think that he would be able to get a military solution, if not now then in a year or so.

And this would prevent any peace developing now.

SUSSKIND: Yes, Ma'am, your question.

WOMAN: To change the subject a little bit. A number of years ago a comment filtered over to us from someone in power in Israel that the only good Jew was an Israeli Jew. This produced a little

resentment, at least in my house. Could you comment on this?

EBAN: Well, it does not show our national character at its most modest, if that's what was said.

No, I don't accept that at all, and the book that I'll publish in December will try to explain a concept of Israel as a universal concept which has its national expression in Israel, and it's universal expression in the diaspora, but I don't know who said that. I would say it's a very arrogant remark.

That's not a -- that's not a good example of how to win friends or to influence people.

WOMAN: Thank you.

SUSSKIND: Do you foresee any change in the United States-Israeli policy as a result of the election of a Republican, Richard Nixon?

EBAN: No, I think not, David. We followed the statements of the candidates in the recent electoral dialogue here. I was much more impressed by the similarity and by the emphasis on continuity than by any indications of change.

Both the President-elect and the Vice President of the United States emphasized certain points in very similar terms. The first, the necessity to maintain American-Israeli friendship. Second, the need to give Israel a balance of arms sufficiently effective to deter aggression upon it. The third, the necessity for an agreement, as the President-elect said, to emerge from the parties themselves and not to be dictated by great or small powers outside and fourth, they both made statements about the necessity for the United States to clarify for the Soviet Union that there were other powers in

the Middle East which had interests and therefore that the Soviet Union would not be advised to regard the Middle East as a Soviet preserve.

These are three or four of the major elements, and principles which were stated in the platforms of both parties, and in the policies of both candidates. The conclusion that I draw is that friendship for Israel and the support of peace in the Middle East is a general American attitude which transcends the barriers of party and region and race and religion.

SUSSKIND: Can you tell us a little something about your own election which impends next year I believe.

As I understand it, from a visit there and reading as much as I can, it shapes up as, at this point, a contest between General Dayan and Deputy Premier Allon(?). Is that likely to be the

...

EBAN: No, I don't agree with that at all. These may be two of the dark horses. I'm not going to go any further than that. But there's no such decision at all.

There's no decision to change the premiership in any case.

SUSSKIND: Do you think Mr. Eshkol will continue?

EBAN: There's no decision. This is a decision that has to be reached. And it isn't a matter for election, because under our parliamentary system, the people will elect the party, and I presume if they have any sense, they will elect our party.

Now . .

SUSSKIND: How popular is General Dayan?

EBAN: All of those that you have mentioned, and I as well, are members of the same party. And our party would at its -- the proper level -- determine who shall lead it.

But the people elect the party, and the party central committee elect its leaders.

SUSSKIND: Yes. Well, is General Dayan very popular within the party?

EBAN: He is one of those who is popular within the party.

SUSSKIND: I see. Do you have a last word to say because I'm out of questions, and I appreciate all the ground we've covered.

EBAN: I think the influence of world opinion upon the Middle East, as represented by this gathering today, does merit a word.

The Middle East is one of the two great sources of world tension. The other is in Southeast Asia.

Now in one respect the situation in the Middle East is better because we have a ceasefire whereas in Vietnam, there isn't a ceasefire, there's a partial de-escalation.

But the guns and the bullets are speaking every day. In another respect, however, the situation in the Middle East is worse. There is not a process of negotiation.

Whenever you see an international conflict and you are asked to fix responsibility for its continuation as a conflict, the key is the word negotiation. Who is willing to negotiate and who is not willing to negotiate. We have not yet overcome the Arab inhibition about negotiation.

It is here I think that world opinion must focus itself. Mankind is sick of the Middle Eastern conflict. It weighs upon the conscience and upon the interests of the international community. World opinion should be directed in an exigent and in a determined spirit to the Arab governments, saying to them, if you want to change the present situation, then negotiate the change.

If you will not negotiate, then do not expect to change the present situation.

SUSSKIND: Mr. Eban, you have been so gracious in giving to me. I've always wanted to give you something.

Perhaps we can help by getting people to buy your book. The Foreign Minister of Israel, Mr. Abba Eban, has written a book called "My People". It's a story of the Jews and it is now in your bookstore. I think you'll find it a fascinating document.

Thank you very much for coming here. Thank you very much.