

ly reexamine them in the light of what the Ambassador had said. He emphasized, however, that we believe it is most important that two problems—Sudan and the base—be settled as soon as possible.

Ambassador Eban informed the Secretary that Israel's Foreign Minister, Mr. Sharett, has gone to Rangoon to attend the Asian Socialist Conference. The Foreign Minister instructed Ambassador Eban to express to the Secretary Israel's appreciation for the consideration which the Secretary has always shown and the help given in the solution of some of Israel's problems.

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No. 539

883.84A/1-653: Despatch

*The Ambassador in Syria (Moose) to the Department of State*

SECRET

DAMASCUS, January 6, 1953.

No. 402

Ref: Embtel 462, January 1, 1953 <sup>1</sup>

Subject: Head of State Selo Comments to Ambassador on Syro-Israeli Relations

During a conversation on subjects of mutual interest on December 29, General Selo made some interesting observations on his country's present and future relations with Israel (see enclosure), <sup>2</sup> in the course of which he predicted "peace" with that country in due course if Israel would abandon its provocative tactics. The Head of State ridiculed Israel complaints about Syrian "aggressive" intentions, stating that there was no thought of using arms which Syria has or may eventually secure against Israel, and indicated his willingness to give assurances to this effect if the additional arms Syria needs for its defense could thereby be obtained.

So far as the Embassy knows, this is the first reference by a Syrian official, even privately, to the possibility of "peace" with Israel. General Selo's comment reflects the increasingly realistic view which he and Colonel Shishikli are taking of the Palestine question. His remarks lend added moment to Syria's standing offer to Israel (Embtel 400, 12/1/52) <sup>3</sup> to undertake direct negotiations with a view to replacing the present demilitarized zone with a *de facto* frontier. Though the Syrian Government will hardly go as far to meet Israeli desires as the Tel Aviv Government would like, it is

<sup>1</sup> In telegram 462 from Damascus, Jan. 1, Moose reported on his conversation of Dec. 29 with Chief of State Selo and Colonel Shishikli. (783.5/1-153)

<sup>2</sup> Below.

<sup>3</sup> Not printed, but see footnote 4, Document 528.