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FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

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FROM : AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

652  
DESP. NO.

TO : THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON.

April 16, 1958  
DATE

REF : A-128, March 7, 1958; CERP Section D, Item VEB, B-1

REP-2

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	IRC-8	REC'D			

SUBJECT: Israeli Exchanges With Other Countries Relating to Atomic Energy

Dr. Ernst Bergmann, Chairman of the Israel Atomic Energy Commission, was queried yesterday on the subject of statements attributed by the Jerusalem Post, in its issue of February 4, 1958, to M. Francois Benard, former French Minister for Foreign Affairs, on the subject of exchanges between Israel and France in the field of atomic energy. M. Benard is reported to have said that France was supplying Israel's uranium needs in exchange for the results of "important discoveries in atomic research for peace" made by Israeli scientists.

Dr. Bergmann declared flatly that M. Benard did not know what he was talking about. He said Israel had an agreement with France for the exchange of information only concerning uranium chemistry and the production of heavy water. Under the agreement Israel was receiving unpublished reports from France on peaceful applications of uranium, and was allowed to send students to study in this field at French scientific institutions. The agreement made no provision for the supply of uranium by France, nor had Israel ever received any from her. He emphasized that Israel's only sources of uranium were her own phosphate deposits, from which she was extracting uranium, and the United States, which was supplying her with U-235 and U-238 for a research reactor. (See Embassy Despatch 532, March 3, 1958.)

Israel also is a member, with France and England, of a tripartite accord for research and development on heavy water, he said.

Dr. Bergmann said both agreements were unpublished and that he was unable to provide the reporting officer with a copy of either.

Dr. Bergmann digressed to comment vehemently on an article in a local paper quoting the London Sunday Observer of April 6 to the effect that France would soon produce nuclear weapons and then would try, alone or with her ally Israel, to exert stronger pressure on the Arabs. He said there was absolutely no foundation for this prediction, that the writer of the article knew it, and that the true purpose behind the article was to try to persuade the United States not to aid France in developing

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Desp. No. 652

From Tel Aviv

a nuclear bomb. It was part of the general campaign to undercut France and Israel. Expanding on the theme, he said Israel's industry was far too small to produce an atom bomb even if she wanted to.


No new information was gained on the subject of Israel's plans for a power reactor. Contrary to the impression received in a prior interview, and reported in Despatch 532 of March 3, Dr. Bergmann said the decision to build a power reactor had already been taken; however, it would take at least two and a half years to construct the experimental reactor now contemplated, and five to seven years before a large, economically feasible reactor could be put into operation.

FOR THE AMBASSADOR:



Lewis R. Townsend  
Second Secretary of Embassy

Approved:



Frank P. Butler  
Counselor of Embassy  
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