**SUBJECT:**

Talk with Section of Quai d’Orsay on Israel Nuclear Activity

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**MINUTES**

(Copied and Passed to CRO)

From (Redacted, likely due to confidentiality)

84. It is important in this connection that the French have a clear message to pass to the Israelis which they are prepared to accept. I therefore think that the Canadian information should certainly be passed to the French if it is possible. I have spoken to the French ambassador who also has been informed and may be of some assistance in this matter. He was also interested in the fact that he was not consulted (apparently in the Canadian embassy) on the Canadian contribution to the Canadian section.

This French section is a question of whether there will be a significant effect on the Israelis. If we can ensure that the French will not come to the Israelis with false ideas or statements, it may be more effective to pass the information to them than to the Israelis themselves.

In February 1957, the French government had discussions with the Israelis in connection with the French declaration that they had acquired the bomb. However, it is not clear whether these discussions were held during the period referred to or whether they were held in early 1957.

We have not yet received any indication from the French that they are prepared to accept the information we have passed to them. It is possible that they may want to consult with the Israelis first. However, it is clear that they are not prepared to accept the information we have provided without further discussion.

We have therefore decided to hold discussions with the French government to ensure that they are clear about the situation with the Israelis. This will ensure that they are aware of the information we have passed to them and that they are prepared to accept it.

Signed [Redacted]

25/6

(Handwritten notes)

25/6
In your letter BR 1256 of April 27th about Israel's nuclear activities you suggested a number of points which we might put to the French were they to resume the dialogue on the subject with us. Subsequently Laurence wrote to Pedler (his letter VO 1053/4 of April 29) reporting a conversation he had had with Brignon of the French Embassy.

2. When I called on Soutou the other day for a tour of his office, the conversation turned to Israel and I found him very ready to discuss the subject of Israel's nuclear activities. He started off by saying that the French agreed with us that it could prove disastrous if the Israelis were to develop a nuclear military potential since it would almost certainly stimulate the Egyptians into trying to acquire a similar capability for themselves. He said that French policy in this matter was extremely firm (meaning, no doubt, that the Élysée was now even more determined than before not to arouse Arab suspicions that France was assisting Israel to acquire a military nuclear capability).

3. Confirming what de la Grandville had previously told us (my letter of February 14), Soutou said that the French Government recognised that it was probably Israeli policy to attempt at least to put themselves in a position to make a nuclear bomb if they wanted to. He repeated that the French, for their part, were satisfied that the system of control now operating on the supply of French material and its return for re-processing and plutonium-recovery was meticulous. Everything was being checked and weighed to the last milligram.

4. Soutou then explained that the original Franco-Israeli agreement for nuclear co-operation had been rather loosely drafted and had not made it a condition that only French uranium should be used in the reactor supplied by the French - though this was clearly the spirit of the agreement. The French interpreted the agreement in this sense and had already prevented the sale of uranium to the Israelis from one of the ex-French African countries. Soutou added that, if the Israelis now succeeded in obtaining significant supplies of uranium from sources other than France (he mentioned South Africa),
Africa, but not Argentina, and I naturally made no reference to it in view of the secrecy of the Canadian information (mentioned in Goodison's letter of April 20 to Kallas), the French would tell them that they regarded this as a breach of the agreement and that they would consequently withdraw from it and deny the Israelis any further assistance.

5. As time was short I did not have the opportunity to put the points suggested in the enclosure to your letter under reference except to ask if the French knew whether or not there was a plutonium separation plant at Dimona. Soutou replied that the French did not believe that the Israelis had such a plant.

6. It is interesting to find the French still ready to talk to us about this delicate subject at a time when even Soutou is becoming much less frank in discussing African affairs. (There are special reasons for this.) You may therefore think that it would be worth telling the Canadians about my conversation with Soutou and suggesting that, since the French seem to be sincerely in agreement with their Western partners in wishing to prevent the Israelis acquiring a military nuclear capability, the Canadians might like to consider talking to the French (or authorising us to do so) about the Argentine deal. I appreciate that the Canadians may not agree to this suggestion since they have so far treated their information as Guard, but it seems to me that if we really want the French to do what they can to prevent the Israelis breaking the spirit of the Franco-Israeli agreement we shall have to take them into our confidence when we hear of Israeli attempts at evasion.

7. I am sending copies of this letter to Kallas in Tel Aviv, Wright in Washington and Maitland in Cairo on a secret and guard basis. I enclose additional copies for Arkell in the Defence Intelligence Staff and Badpath in the Commonwealth Relations Office who received copies of Goodison's letter under reference.

(P.E. Ramsbotham)