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ADDRESS BY REP. GERALD R. FORD, R-MICH.
ZIONIST ORGANIZATION OF AMERICA
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
September 4, 1971

For Release on Delivery

I am grateful for this opportunity to be with you at your 74th Annual Convention.

Zionism was born out of the depths of Jewish martyrdom, aspirations and faith, to challenge destiny and end the age-old injustices, prejudices and persecutions which had so long denied the Jewish people the elementary human rights of dignity and national heritage.

Its goals of national liberation and redemption for the Jewish people have paralleled those of the United States in this period as the defender of individual freedom and national independence for all peoples, at a tremendous cost in American blood and treasure.

In the three-quarters of a century since the Zionist movement began, the world has survived through traumatic and dramatic developments. Mankind has engaged in unspeakable horrors and has also wrought wonders of which our forefathers scarcely dared to dream.

Americans have walked and driven on the moon and have slogged through jungle mud and other Americans have watched them in color in the safety of their living rooms.

But surely there has been no greater miracle in this momentous period of human history than the attainment of the Zionist goal to restore the Jewish people to an honorable place among the nations of the earth on the holy ground from which they had been dispersed for centuries.

The Zionist Organization of America played a major part in this modern miracle which brought about the State of Israel, and in sustaining it through the fiery trials that attended its establishment. You rightfully take pride in what has come to pass in our time and all Americans can share a portion of that pride, for it is part of our own pioneer heritage to champion the oppressed and help those who struggle against towering odds to defend their dignity and freedom.

(more)



I for one am proud of the part our countrymen have played in realization of the Zionist dream and of all the United States has done to strengthen the State of Israel and ensure its progress. It has not been a one-way exchange. As an American I am also grateful for the examples Zionism and modern Israel have given to the world, that devastated lands can be restored to fruitfulness, that degraded people can rise from despair to new heights of creativity and courage, that a free society can react to crisis with resolution and unity of spirit.

But we are not here to take pride but to take stock; to realistically appraise the present and attempt to peer rationally into the future. I cannot claim to be a prophet or the son of prophets, but I can share your concern over certain developments both in our own country and in the Middle East.

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Realism dictates that the only way to secure Israel's existence and the free world's position in the Eastern Mediterranean is to keep Israel prepared militarily, strong enough to meet a new attack and withstand it, and to withstand threats and blackmail from whatever source they may come.

For this, Israel needs the aid of the United States, militarily and diplomatically. Israel does not ask, nor does she need, American fighting men to defend it. Its ability to face its foes has been amply proven. What it does need, and deserves, is to receive from us sufficient military wherewithal. This should be given Israel not grudgingly, but willingly and generously, for it is in our own best interests.

Israel is entitled to know that we understand and appreciate its position as a de facto ally of the United States. The weapons Israel needs from us for its defense must be made available to it not by bargaining processes each year, but through a credible long-range plan. Diplomatically, we must press the initiative by putting on the international agenda a call to free the Middle East from outside forces which have no legitimate or moral justification for being there, and only threaten the peace of the world.

There is a standard old political cliché in this country that firm support of Israel is a bipartisan cornerstone of American foreign policy; that this goes on forever, through the campaign platforms of both Democratic and Republican parties ever since 1948. You and I know that this is not so; American support for Israel has followed a zigzag course in spite of the fairly straight line of political rhetoric.

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Despite recent revelations, most Americans are not fully aware of the extent to which the Vietnam war effort was financed at the expense of other essential U.S. defense programs, since those who escalated our involvement were unwilling to come to Congress and openly ask for the sums and the sacrifices a commitment of this magnitude and duration demanded.

To give one example, since we have spoken of the Soviet challenge to our peacekeeping Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean. During the 1960's, the Soviet Union spent over 34 percent of its defense budget on research and development, while we cut ours back to about 18 percent. In the same period the Russians modernized three-fourths of their shipyards; we have only modernized 20 percent of our shipbuilding facilities since World War II.

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The President promptly chose the activist course to help defuse the ominously ticking timebomb. When about a year ago his efforts both on a big power level and with the Israelis and Arabs directly appeared stalled and the military situation worsened, the Administration stepped up its initiatives and Secretary Rogers was able to obtain a cease-fire along the canal and some agreement by Egypt, Jordan and Israel to a broad basis for negotiation. Firmness by the United States prevented a serious flareup on the Syrian frontier and helped enable King Hussein to gain the upper hand over terrorists in Jordan.

Stabilization has not been followed by serious direct negotiation, but at least the cease-fire has held. Egypt and the Soviet Union have formalized their de facto dependency with a 15-year pact, and the Russians have reached over the Himalayas to side with India while China lines up with Pakistan.

The Russians do not win every round, however. Attempted coups were crushed in Morocco and the Sudan and blamed on the local Communists. While the extent of Soviet involvement is not clear, it is safe to say that Soviet goals are always advanced by turmoil and political instability in target countries.

On a larger map we see a hope of reduced tension with Red China and with the Russians in West Berlin -- though on Berlin I will wait to read the fine print. President Nixon is making steady progress toward cooling down the whole spectrum of international tensions but an essential ingredient in this is to maintain a strong and credible defense posture for the United States.

I earnestly hope the Congress and the American people will not repeat the mistake we have made after every war in our history by throwing down our strong shields while we beat our swords into plowshares. Certainly the defenders of Israel, and their true friends in America, will never do so..

Thank you, and a heartfelt Shalom.

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Stabilization has not been followed by serious direct negotiation, but at least the cease-fire has held. Egypt and the Soviet Union have formalized their de facto dependency with a 15-year pact, and the Russians have reached over the Himalayas to side with India while China lines up with Pakistan.

The Russians do not win every round, however. Attempted coups were crushed in Morocco and the Sudan and blamed on the local Communists. While the extent of Soviet involvement is not clear, it is safe to say that Soviet goals are always advanced by turmoil and political instability in target countries.

On a larger map we see a hope of reduced tension with Red China and with the Russians in West Berlin -- though on Berlin I will wait to read the fine print. President Nixon is making steady progress toward cooling down the whole spectrum of international tensions but an essential ingredient in this is to maintain a strong and credible defense posture for the United States.

I earnestly hope the Congress and the American people will not repeat the mistake we have made after every war in our history by throwing down our strong shields while we beat our swords into plowshares. Certainly the defenders of Israel, and their true friends in America, will never do so..

Thank you, and a heartfelt Shalom.

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