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THE WHITE HOUSE  
EXCHANGE OF TOASTS  
BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT  
AND  
YITZHAK RABIN  
PRIME MINISTER OF ISRAEL

9:07 P.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Mr. Prime Minister, I am very delighted to have you here and to welcome you back to Washington.

You have been here a number of times, plus your long service as a member of the diplomatic corps, and we are delighted to have you here on this occasion. I think it also gives to all of us an opportunity to thank you for your very generous hospitality on behalf of many Members of the Congress and others, as well as many Americans, who have visited Israel. I thank you on their behalf.

I think your visit comes at a very important moment in the history of both of our countries. As Americans, we face our Nation's 200th anniversary, and in the process, of course, we are reviewing the past in search of some of the fundamental human values which characterize, as I see it, the very best in America.

The most basic of this, of course, is the desire for freedom and the desire for independence and the right of each individual to live in peace. Fortunately, Israel shares this view with us. It is this sharing which is the basis of our fundamental relationship of the United States' strong and continuing support of the state of Israel and Israel's understanding of the essential interests of the United States.

Mr. Prime Minister, when we met in Washington nine months ago at the very outset of my administration, we jointly reaffirmed the need to continue our intensive efforts for peace. We then recognized the importance of maintaining the momentum of negotiations toward this end.

Having admired you as an Ambassador, we found it easy, I think, to establish a good working relationship. We agreed that it was in our mutual interest that these efforts succeed, and it would be a tragedy if they failed. I think we recognize that stagnation would be most unfortunate in our work for peace.

MORE

Page 2

We met today to insure that this does not occur, to seek progress toward a truly just and durable peace, a settlement that is in the best interest of all of us, in the Middle East. I consider the meeting this morning very constructive and our conversations here tonight equally so. I think with perseverance we can be successful.

Gentlemen, let me ask that you join me in a toast to the success in these efforts to obtain a just and durable peace in the Middle East, to the close relationship between our two countries, and to an individual of dedication and courage in the service of his country, the Prime Minister of Israel.

Mr. Prime Minister.

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PRIME MINISTER RABIN: Mr. President, Members of the Congress, members of the Administration:

Mr. President, I would like to thank you very much for inviting me to Washington in the efforts to do whatever is possible to move towards peace in the Middle East. I believe that your interest, your determination to do whatever is possible and to explore all the possibilities that will lead these complex conflicts in the area toward peace are a sign of the great leadership of you and a few great countries in the free world.

I would like to assure you, in the name of my country and my people, that, if there is something that we are really eager to achieve, it is a real peace in the area. We have tried for 27 years to do whatever is possible, or was possible, to achieve peace. Unfortunately, peace has not been achieved. But we believe that peace must be reached in the area. It is in the interest of all the people who live there and will serve to their interests, and, therefore, whatever is done to move towards peace is more than appreciated by us, by the people of Israel.

I am sure that, in the course of the talks that we have had and we will have, we will try to find what are the best ways in which we can cooperate with you, Mr. President, with the United States Government, to move toward peace. But allow me to say that, peace, a real one, can achieve only by understanding -- can be achieved by compromise, but must be achieved when the two sides that are involved in the conflict would decide to put an end to it and to establish the structure of peace.

The United States has served -- and I am very pleased and grateful to you that you are determined to continue to play -- a major role in the achievement of peace, Israel has learned to admire, to appreciate the United States and American people.

In the last 27 years, we have gained the support, the understanding of the American people, and we are more than thankful for what has been done by the United States in supporting Israel and helping the cause of peace.

I would like to thank you, Mr. President, very much, for your understanding of the problems of Israel and the need, the urgency to move towards peace, and I hope that, through your efforts, we would achieve what has not been achieved by now, a real move towards a real peace.

Therefore, allow me to raise my glass to you, to the President of the United States and to the friendship between our two people.

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(AT 9:15 P.M. EDT)