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It is a very special pleasure for me to be with you this evening.

I have not previously had the opportunity to speak before The Foundation for the Jewish National Fund, but I have seen your work at first hand. I have seen much of the beautiful land. And I know that God made Jerusalem golden -- but the Jewish National Fund made Israel green. In fact, I have just been informed that 100 trees were planted for me over there, and I am proud of that.

Exploring the issues involving Israel and peace in the Middle East has always been a complicated endeavor. In the past month, events have accelerated so rapidly that it has become almost impossible. Prime Minister Begin's faith, foresight and firmness have at last won a response from another Middle East leader. Anwar Sadat has demonstrated that courage and conciliation are not incompatible; and has acknowledged that national pride need not be maintained at the cost of regional peace.

It is difficult to predict whether the spirit of Jerusalem will continue to flourish in Cairo. I am deeply concerned over the Administration's continued meddling in the Begin-Sadat initiative. I think it is a grave mistake to delay the momentum developed in Jerusalem by even so much as a single day. The White House has prevailed upon President Sadat to delay it for two weeks.

The Arab states have had 29 years to make peace with Israel, and now that one Arab leader -- the most important one, without whom there can be no war against Israel -- now that one Arab leader has moved, President Carter wants two more weeks to get the rest on board.

That means two weeks for the effort to be derailed, for pressure to be brought on President Sadat, for him to be left open to every effort to destroy him and his peace efforts.

If the Cairo Conference is derailed, or if its prospects for success are reduced, the responsibility will rest with the President and his national security advisor.

It was Mr. Brzezinski two weeks ago, after Prime Minister Begin addressed the Knesset, who picked up the telephone and called representatives of the three major networks -- Bob Pierpoint of CBS was one, and Ann Compton of ABC was another -- to tell them, not for attribution, that the Prime Minister had damaged hopes for the success of President Sadat's efforts by refusing to announce concessions to Egypt. Those stories colored the entire event for days after, portraying Sadat as disappointed and endangered, and Begin as obstinate and misguided.

So while we have President Sadat and Prime Minister Begin seeking peace, we have Brzezinski seeking vindication of his own policy design and President Carter seeking the redemption of his own reputation in foreign affairs.

It is frighteningly clear that these are mutually exclusive objectives, and that one set of objectives is jeopardizing the other. In my judgement, peace is the more important objective, and I think the Carter Administration should back away and let the principals proceed.

President Sadat and Prime Minister Begin have opened the door to a new era in the Middle East. It remains to be seen now whether they can overcome the obstacles being placed in their path. As long as the initiative remains with President Sadat and Prime Minister Begin, I am optimistic about the outcome. Whether they succeed or not, however, will not dim the lustre of the effort they have made so far.

I spoke before the United Synagogue Biennial Convention in New York on November 16, and at that time I said: "It would be nice if the events of the next few days should result in Anwar Sadat and the man who has been unjustly branded a terrorist -- Manahem Begin -- going to Stockholm next year to receive the Nobel Peace prize. The beginnings of peace in the Middle East would be a prize in which the whold world could share equally and gratefully."

I believe the events of November 19, 20, and 21 placed that prize without our grasp. Accordingly, I have sent today the following letter to the Nobel Peace Prize Selection Committee in Oslo, Norway:

Dear Sirs:

"War falls upon armies and civilian populations alike and vast numbers are required to prosecute it and more are condemned to suffer by it. Peace, however, may be achieved through the deeds of single individuals. Today, in the Middle East, two men reach toward such an achievement, and now invite others to join with them in forging plows and pruning hooks where sword and spear once prevailed.

Whether they shall succeed is yet to be determined. Without their wise and courageous efforts, however, and the beginning they have made, it is certain that peace would have remained only a hope in the heart, rather than a genuine possibility in the councils of the governments involved. Such courage and wisdom should be rewarded. They have our prayers of gratitude and we trust that these find favor in the eyes of God. But here on Earth no acknowledgement of efforts in behalf of peace conveys the inspiration, nor exceeds the dignity and force, of the Nobel Peace Prize.

In acknowledgement of their efforts, and in the hope of inspiring others to emulate their efforts, I herewith nominate as recipients of the 1978 Nobel Peace Prize Manahem Begin, Citizen of Israel, and Anwar Sadat, Citizen of the Arab Republic of Egypt."

Respectfully, Robert J. Dole, United States Senator

I have been informed that similar nominations have been made by two West German legislators. I salute them. In this season of miracles, it bodes well that representatives of the German people should nominate a Jew to receive the single most prestigious award bestowed by mankind.

LEADERSHIP IN THE MIDDLE EAST

We have learned much of value in the past month. We have learned which Arab leaders truly want peace, and which ones want to maintain a state of hostility. This tells us a great deal about leadership in the Middle East.

Who are the men who have absolutely opposed the peace initiative? Quaddafi, the posturing puff-ball of Libya whose chief experience with war has been against the American oil companies. How many Libyans have died in the Middle East wars?

How many members of the P.L.O. have marched against Israel? They perform their gallant deeds in darkness, behind masks, against women and children.

How many Iraqis have died in the Middle East wars?

And there is Algeria. Algeria's valiant contribution to martial affairs seems limited to providing a haven periodically for terrorist hi-jackers and similar assorted misfits.

It is easy to call for war when someone else's blood is being shed. It is easy to insist on solidarity when someone else's young men are paying the price for one's own intransigence.

Finally, there is President Assad of Syria. While Israel was agreeing to send her representatives to Cairo in search of peace, Assad is sending his to Moscow. That is the wrong direction. Nobody ever achieved a just peace through Russia. Soviet interests lie with continued hostility in the Middle East, not with peace and, like Quaddafi and Boumediene and the rest, they will fight to the last Syrian and the last Egyptian to achieve their interests.

The Soviets have refused to go to Cairo, explaining with their usual hypocrisy that they cannot go to a country that "departs from the common Arab front and sacrifices the interests of the Arab states as a whole." President Sadat is not guilty of departing from a common Arab front because there is no common Arab front, and never has been. Nor is he guilty of sacrificing the interests of the Arab states as a whole because, as a whole, their interests -- the interests of their people -- rest with peace. He has short-circuited the ambitious plans of some of their more unstable leaders, but that is to be praised, not condemned.

The truth is that President Sadat's unforgivable sin in Soviet eyes was to round up the Soviet advisors running around his country and send them all packing back to Moscow. That was a precedent which Somalia recently followed, and which Syria herself will no doubt follow in due time.

The first inkling we had that Anwar Sadat might be a statesman was when he threw the Russians out of Egypt, and they are not going to go back there now to acknowledge his statesmanship.

Syria, unlike the other rejectionist states, has paid the price of war. It is difficult to believe that before the last card is played President Assad will pass up the chance to dismount from the tiger of war, and will instead seek refuge in the jaws of the Russian bear.

It is both sad and incomprehensible that he would turn away from an ally who seeks his help for the purposes of peace to make common cause with an adversary whose interests rest with continued hostility.

If anything we might say here is heard and taken into account abroad, I hope President Assad will take his rightful place as a leader of the Arab world and share with President Sadat and Prime Minister Begin the task of building a lasting peace.

GIANT STRIDES FORWARD

Several extremely important developments have taken place since the weekend of the 19th of November. President Sadat has recognized irrevocably the State of Israel, its existence and its right to exist. He has recognized Israel's jurisdiction over Jerusalem which, unfortunately, our own government guided by the State Department, has yet to do. These are giant strides forward. President Sadat invited all parties to Cairo for talks in preparation for a settlement. Israel agreed to attend these meetings. She did not do so with reservations or qualifications. That meant even the P.L.O. could go to Cairo and sit down with the Israelis. That had been a major procedural stumbling block up until now.

In the past, Israel refused to sit down with the P.L.O. I have always endorsed that refusal. I don't think civilization gains much by dealing with terrorists. But Israel has put herself in a position of going even that far in the quest for peace. She may pull back from dealing with the P.L.O. in the future. But if she does, at least it can be said that all parties will have had their shining chance -- their golden opportunity -- including the P.L.O.

If they reject the opportunity, if they reject the spirit of Jerusalem, then the onus of rejection is upon them. And if President Sadat should seek a separate peace for his people in the face of such inexplicable stubbornness, then his actions will be justified and this nation must do everything within its power to bolster him and to support Egypt in the difficult times that will surely result from that final shattering of the myth of Arab solidarity.

ROLE OF THE UNITED STATES

Let me just say a further word about the course our own nation might take in this effort.

The President is in the unenviable position of having peace break out behind his back. There is a certain apparent resentment about this in the White House and absolute bitterness about it at the State Department.

A month ago Mr. Brzezinski was making arrogant speeches about the U.S. interest in the Middle East and about pressuring, or "using leverage", as he put it, over Israel to force an early comprehensive settlement at Geneva.

Part of the leveraging process involved bringing Russia back into the situation in the hope that they might muscle radical Arab leaders into going to Geneva.

The predictable result of all this has been to discredit U.S. diplomacy in the Middle East.

The real settlement will not come at Geneva. It may be signed there as a gesture to the Geneva Co-Chairmen, but it will not be arranged there. Whether it will be comprehensive in fact remains to be seen. It will certainly not be comprehensive in Mr. Brzezinski's terms: that is, it will not be the result of resignation and retreat on the part of a browbeaten, "leveraged" Israel.

The fallacy of a comprehensive approach to peace, evident from the beginning, has been confirmed by the outrage of those states -- including Russia -- which fear the prospect of peace in the area.

So events have come tumbling down upon the Carter Administration and common sense tells us when you are in the path of an avalanche, you should get out of the way.

The role of peacemaker is a much-coveted role. It lay within our grasp, and it has not just been allowed to slip away, but has been actively pushed away. Today, as I said once before, we must not let our ambition to be known as a peacemaker stand in the way of peace itself. It is time to stop bleating about Geneva, and talking about comprehensive settlements, and insisting that Israel make this concession or that overture or some other gesture. And we must stop seeking credit for events in which we played no part, unless there is some advantage not apparent to me in making ourselves look more ridiculous than we do already.

The better part of wisdom for the Administration today is to make it clear to all concerned that the U.S. government fully supports Israel and Egypt in their efforts, just as do the American people. This is the way to begin to restore our credibility there if, indeed, it is possible to restore it at all.

We can do one more thing. We can use whatever means of persuasion remains available to us to urge the Saudi Arabians to maintain their economic support of Egypt until the blessings of peace permit the restoration of the Egyptian economy. And we must urge that the Saudi Arabians extend to Egypt their moral support for President Sadat's peace efforts.

Russian can pout and fume; Libya, Algeria, and Iraq can all rant and threaten. But out of the fever of words one stark fact matters: If Egypt chooses peace, there will be no war.

Today, the words of the Psalmist, "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem" assumes new meaning.

MODERN MIRACLE

The City of David, the City of Gold, has seen other miracles. Perhaps what began there two weeks ago was the beginning of a new miracle. For Jewish children tonight, the words ness gadol hayah shom recall an event which occurred 2,141 years ago.

Now, in their lifetime and in our own, we may be able to look to the events which began in Jerusalem on November 19, and say with a new meaning ness gadol hayah shom -- a great miracle happened there.

We pray for that and one thing more. We pray for the health of Prime Minister Begin.

Thank you.