

Remarks Following Discussions With Prime Minister Shimon Peres of Israel

October 17, 1985

The President. It has been a special pleasure for me to welcome Prime Minister Peres to the White House, both as a personal friend and the leader of the Government of Israel. It's a great honor for me to receive the Weizmann Institute's honorary degree of doctor of philosophy. The Weizmann is synonymous with humanitarianism and the pursuit of excellence. For Israel, the institute is a symbol of an old intellectual tradition that has survived even the ravages of the Holocaust. The institute made a magnificent contribution to the future state of Israel, helping to assure its leading role in the vanguard of peaceful democratic nations leading the world toward the 21st century. And I'm very pleased to have been honored by this award.

Our talks today have been in the tradition of the close regular dialog that we have with Israel, a reflection of the warm and enduring relationship between our two nations. In our talks, we paid special attention to two issues: our commitment to Israel's security and well-being and our shared desire to move forward together toward a just and lasting peace between Israel and all its Arab neighbors. Prime Minister Peres and I fully agreed to press ahead in this search. We recognize there are obstacles, significant obstacles to peace, but we also recognize that there is a better opportunity for real progress now than there has been for some time and a better chance than we may have for some time to come; much progress has already been made.

Prime Minister Peres has made clear Israel's desire for direct negotiations without preconditions, and King Hussein stated here at the White House on September 30 that he welcomes the prospect of beginning negotiations with Israel promptly and directly. This kind of determination and good faith gives the United States confidence that the hurdles to peace can be overcome. Prime Minister Peres and I are also fully agreed that a strong, secure Israel is a shared interest. In the year since the Prime Minister's last visit, Israel and the United States have strengthened and expanded our security cooperation, which furthers a number of common objectives, including the maintenance of Israel's qualitative military advantage against any combination of adversaries.

We also discussed the evil scourge of terrorism which has claimed so many Israeli, American, and Arab victims and has brought tragedy to many others. Terrorism is the cynical, remorseless enemy of peace, and it strikes most viciously whenever real progress seems possible. We need no further proof of this than the events of the last few weeks. The Prime Minister and I share a determination to see that terrorists are denied sanctuary and are justly punished. Furthermore, and just as important, Prime Minister Peres and I agreed that terrorism must not blunt our efforts to achieve peace in the Middle East.

Prime Minister Peres and I also have reviewed many other issues on our common agenda. We took stock with real satisfaction of what Israel and the United States have accomplished together. Among other things, we've concluded a free trade area agreement, the first of its kind for us. In this regard, I salute Prime Minister Peres and his government for their courage in adopting an economic reform program that holds promise if effectively implemented for leading Israel to

strong and steady noninflationary growth. We agreed last year that growth is the main objective. And we will continue to explore in our joint economic group and elsewhere ways to promote Israel's strong economic potential.

Mr. Prime Minister, I thank you very much for your visit. It's been an occasion to renew a friendship and to review and enhance the strength of our unique bilateral relationship.

The Prime Minister. Mr. President, I'm grateful for the opportunity of expressing to you the admiration and the gratitude of the people of Israel. In our country, pluralistic as it is, where the national consensus is reserved for very rare occasions, you have achieved it -- an admiration of all parts in our country, all people, who came, really, to learn to know you and to admire you.

We admire your leadership because it gave American greatness a new dimension; because it has introduced a new solidarity to the free world; because it has enhanced the desire for knowledge in the realm of science; because it has demonstrated a moving friendship for the new and old Israel. On a personal note, may I add that one who has had to take decisions affecting the lives of young soldiers, I appreciate both your correct instinct and decisive reaction to the unfolding drama in the east Mediterranean last week as it was manifested in real leadership and real courage.

Twelve months ago, Mr. President, when we met here, I felt that I was standing at a new beginning. You then extended your support for some of Israel's ambitious plans. Since then, we have removed the Lebanese wall from the agenda of Arab-Israel relations. We tightened our belts in order to stabilize our economy, reduce inflation, and deficits. We have begun a process meant to transform the peace treaty into a viable precedent for the whole region -- I'm referring to the peace treaty with Egypt. We have changed our policy on the West Bank. We confronted the agony of terrorism without losing hope that peace would destroy terror before terror would destroy peace. Today we stand ready to take bold steps in a no less challenging direction, and I trust, Mr. President, that we shall have the benefit of your continued support.

The first objective is the most challenging of all: making peace. With our hand of peace extended across the Jordanian River, we call upon our eastern neighbor to heed and accept this sincere invitation. We should not miss the opportunity of putting an end to belligerency and of entering honorable and direct negotiation. We are ready to meet without preconditions, without losing time, at any suitable location -- be it in Amman, in Jerusalem, or Washington. We are prepared to consider any proposal put forward by the Jordanians. Let us bear the cost of peace in preference to the price of war. Our second objective is to move economically from stabilization to growth. We are grateful for your continued support in reaching both objectives, particularly in the light of our heavy security burden and lack of natural resources, save for a highly motivated people. Finally, Mr. President, we would like to join hands with the United States in an appeal to the heart of our fellow men. We welcome the opportunity to participate in amplifying the voice of democracy and echoing its values as we address those who are denied its reality, yet yearn for it. In so doing, we reaffirm our commitment to strive for a world free of discrimination, free of oppression, free of terror.

Mr. President, Chaim Weizmann, a world-renowned scientist, was our first president. He believed that ancient prophecy and modern science, together reaching across the gulf of generations, could set our small nation on the road to development at its highest values. In recognition of your proven ability to lead a great country to even greater heights by seeking the new horizons of real and great promise, the Weizmann Institute, which has gained high repute, was proud to bestow on you, Mr. Ronald Reagan, an honorary doctorate. Your search for a more stable and safer world has unleashed human curiosity in pursuit of wisdom and knowledge as well as of untold opportunity.

Mr. President, as always, it was a great pleasure and honor to meet with you to discuss in a real friendly way and free spirit our common problems and hopes. And again, thank you for your support, and I'm sure we shall be able to cooperate in the future in the same good way that our two countries were working together for such a long period of time.

The President. The feeling is mutual.

The Prime Minister. Thank you very much.

Reporter. Mr. President, Italy says we violated their airspace. Did we, sir? Italy, violated their airspace, plane.

The President. I'm not going to take questions or get into a debate on what took place. I am satisfied with what we did.

Q. Does the PLO still have a place in the peace process?

Q. What would you expect -- --

Q. Should Hussein go ahead without the PLO?

The President. I'm not going to take your questions on these things.

Q. What about the Jordanian arms sale, sir? Is Israel going to support us?

Note: The President spoke at 3:12 p.m. at the South Portico of the White House. Earlier, the President and the Prime Minister met in the Oval Office.