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EXCERPTS
FROM
PRESIDENT REAGAN'S SPEECH TO THE
YOUNG LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE OF THE UNITED JEWISH APPEAL

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PRAISE OF UNITED JEWISH APPEAL

Through the agencies it funds, the UJA provides vital social and economic assistance, including resettlement, rehabilitation and development programs for Jews in Israel and more than 30 other countries. And through its Young Leadership Cabinet and -- the UJA trains the hundreds of young men and women for service positions of responsibility around the world. In recognition of your historic task and your great humanitarian achievements, I certainly commend you.

SOVIET JEWRY/ HUMAN RIGHTS

In the Soviet Union, Jews are virtually forbidden to teach Hebrew to their children, are limited to a small number of synagogues and cannot publish books of Hebrew liturgy. Emigration of Jews from the Soviet Union has been brought to a near standstill. Prominent Jews like Iosif Begun have been arraigned in mock trials and given harsh sentences. Hebrew scholars like Lev Furman have seen their teaching materials robbed and their homes ransacked. And Jewish dissidents like Anatoly Shcharansky have been put in mental wards or thrown in jail. [We must support Soviet Jews in their struggle for basic rights -- (applause) -- and I urge all Americans to observe the International Day of Concern for Soviet Jews this Thursday -- day after tomorrow -- March 15th.]

Our administration has repeatedly and vigorously protested the persecution of Jews and others in the Soviet Union and other communist nations.

A second great challenge is to defend and promote human rights throughout the world. Alexander Herzen, the great Russian writer, warned, "To shrink from saying a word in defense of the oppressed is as bad as any crime. . ." Well, we who are blessed by the fruits of liberty have a personal responsibility and a moral obligation to speak out in defense of our brothers and sisters. We must not and we will not remain silent.

ANTI-SEMITISM

First, we must teach tolerance and denounce racism, anti-Semitism, and all ethnic or religious bigotry, wherever they exist, as unacceptable evils. And down through our history, American Jews have been on the front lines in our nation's great struggles for equal rights. A century ago, the 14th amendment proclaimed the full protection of the law for all. In the 50's and 60's, the struggle for civil rights stirred our nation's soul. Americans must continue that great tradition because, even today, vestiges of racism and anti-Semitism remain. Synagogues are vandalized, Jews and others are harassed and mocked, and Nazis and the Ku Klux Klan have attempted to march through black and Jewish neighborhoods. Let us reject prejudice, turn our backs on bigotry, and stand shoulder to shoulder for equal rights. (Applause.)

As I wrote last month to Stanley Blend, the President of the Jewish Federation of San Antonio, ". . . the lesson of history is overwhelmingly clear. Silence is never an acceptable response to anti-Semitism." (Applause.)

In the United Nations, Iran's representative once called Israel, quote, "a cancerous growth," and Libya's representative has referred to the people of Israel as, quote, "the most vile people upon earth." This so-called "anti-Zionism" is just another mask for vicious anti-Semitism, and that's something the United States will not tolerate. (Applause.)

GENERAL SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL

Now, let me take a moment to describe our relations with Israel and our efforts in the Middle East. Israel and the United States are bound together by the ties of friendship, shared ideals, and mutual interests. We are allies in the defense of freedom in the Middle East. The United States was the first nation to recognize the state of Israel and ever since, our support for Israel has remained unflinching.

All in all, the friendship between Israel and the United States is closer and stronger today than ever before. And I intend to keep it that way. (Applause.)

But we've only begun to repair past damage. Make no mistake: if we heed those who would cripple America's rebuilding program, we will undermine our own security and the security of our closest friends, like Israel, and I am not prepared to let that happen. (Applause.) After two decades of military expansion by

In Israel, free men and women are every day demonstrating the power of courage and faith. Back in 1948 when Israel was founded, pundits claimed the new country could never survive. Today, no one questions that Israel is a land of stability and democracy in a region of tyranny and unrest.

State of Israel

Permit me to join you and all Jews -- and I'm now going to demonstrate my own courage -- (Laughter.) -- your fervent and triumphant affirmation: Am Yisrael Chai! (Applause.)

US/UN/ISRAEL RELATIONSHIP

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U.N. Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick is our leader on this. Let me assure you of one thing about Jeane: She is a very tenacious woman. (Applause.) She has defended Israel and stood up for human rights with persistence and courage. But just so no one gets any ideas, I will be blunt: If Israel is ever forced to walk out of the U.N. -- the United States and Israel will walk out together. (Applause.)

US-ISRAEL STRATEGIC RELATIONSHIP

Since I took office, the U.S.-Israeli relationship has grown closer than ever before in three crucial ways:

First, the U.S.-Israel strategic relationship has been elevated and formalized. This is the first time in Israel's history that a formal, strategic relationship has existed. The new -- (Applause.) -- the new American-Israel Joint Political-Military Group is working to decide how the U.S. and Israel can counter the threat that growing Soviet involvement in the Middle East poses to our mutual interests. Our cooperation adds to deterrence and improves and protects the prospects for peace and security. The negotiations have been positive, and they're moving forward.

FREE TRADE ZONE BETWEEN ISRAEL AND US

Second, we're negotiating to establish a free trade area between the United States and Israel -- (applause) -- and this will launch a new era of closer economic relations between our countries.

By substantially eliminating duties and non-tariff barriers between our nations, we will enable American producers to sell and compete in Israel while providing Israeli manufacturers unimpeded access to the free world's largest market. (Applause.)

US LOAN/AID TO ISRAEL

Now, third, the United States will soon be giving Israel military aid on a grant, not a loan, basis. (Applause.) We have restructured our 1985 foreign aid package, and Israel will now receive economic aid totaling \$850 million and a military grant of some \$1.4 billion. (Applause.) This will ensure that Israel maintains its qualitative military edge. (Applause.)

SEPTEMBER 1st INITIATIVE/ ARAB STATES SHOULD
RECOGNISE ISRAEL

I am convinced that the initiative that I presented on September 1st, 1982 remains the best option for all the parties. It is squarely based on the Camp David framework and UN Security Council Resolution 242. It is time for the Arab world to negotiate directly with Israel and to recognize Israel's right to exist. (Applause.)

PEACE TALKS NEGOTIATIONS: WEST BANK, JERUSALEM

LAND USAGE, VOTING RIGHTS

Now, we hope that the government of Israel will understand that continued settlement activity in the West Bank and Gaza will make the peace process more difficult. Peace can only come about through the give-and-take of direct negotiations. These negotiations will deal with many issues, including the status of Jerusalem, voting rights, land use and security

US ROLE IN PEACE PROCESS

..... If there's to be any hope for these negotiations, however, we must preserve our credibility as a fair-minded broker seeking a comprehensive solution. Only the United States can advance this process. And we must not undermine our role.

JORDAN/ISRAEL RELATIONSHIP

Syria is trying to lead a radical effort to dominate the region through terrorism and intimidation aimed, in particular, at America's friends. One such friend we continue to urge to negotiate with Israel is King Hussein of Jordan. Today, Jordan is crucial to the peace process, and for that very reason, Jordan, like Israel, is confronted by Syria and faces military threats and terrorist attacks.

Since the security of Jordan is crucial to the security of the entire region, it is in America's strategic interest, and I believe it is in Israel's strategic interest, for us to help meet Jordan's legitimate needs for defense against the growing power of Syria and Iran.

Now, such assistance to Jordan does not threaten Israel, but enhances the prospects for Mideast peace by reducing the dangers of the radical threat. This is an historic moment in the Middle East. Syria must decide whether to allow Lebanon to retain control over its

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Only two weeks ago, terrorists planted hand grenades outside a store on a crowded street in Jerusalem. When they exploded, 21 shoppers and passers-by were injured, some seriously. Yasir Arafat, on behalf of the PLO, praised the attack on innocent civilians. He had the gall to call it a "military operation." Well, terrorism, whether by government or individuals, is repulsive and peaceful co-existence can never come from indiscriminate violence. (Applause.)

And permit me to reaffirm a long-standing American commitment: So long as the PLO refuses to recognize Israel's right to exist and to accept Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, the United States will neither recognize nor negotiate with the PLO. (Applause.)

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Did we take a strong enough stand at the Madrid Conference on human rights in general and on the rights of the Jews in the USSR in particular?

The United States was extremely outspoken at the Madrid Conference on human rights in general, and the rights of Soviet Jews in particular. Ambassador Kampelman repeatedly addressed such issues as the denial by Soviet authorities of Jewish emigration rights, prohibitions against the teaching of Hebrew in the Soviet Union, officially sanctioned anti-Semitism, and discrimination against Jews in education and employment. These speeches, which documented specific instances of Soviet human rights violations, were regularly delivered over a three year period.

The U.S. has become more and more isolated at the U.N.
Should we leave the U.N.?

If the UN Charter was fundamentally violated or subverted, the drastic US decision to withdraw from the UN would be justified. The expulsion or exclusion of Israel would constitute such a major Charter violation, since it would gravely undermine the Charter principle of universality of membership. Barring such major Charter violations, however, the US should not withdraw from the UN, but should rather use its influence to effect improvements. Under current circumstances, a US withdrawal from the UN would almost certainly precipitate Israel's expulsion. This would be a serious setback to Israel's international position -- a setback which we can prevent by remaining in the UN.

Is your Administration aware of the precarious situation of the Jews in Syria and if so, is it prepared to apply diplomatic pressure or otherwise act to assist in their escape?

We are very familiar with the situation of Jews in Syria. The United States Government has long insisted that emigration should be recognized as a universal human right. We have communicated this concern to the Syrian government many times, including at the highest levels, with specific reference to the Jewish community in Syria. We will continue these efforts, which the Syrian Jewish community and the Government of Israel are familiar with, both to permit emigration and to assure better treatment to Jews who remain in Syria.

Is your Administration aware of the precarious situation of the Jews in Ethiopia and if so, is it prepared to apply diplomatic pressure or otherwise act to assist in their escape?

The situation of the Ethiopian Jews is a high priority and concern of the Administration. While it is generally accepted that the situation of the Ethiopian Jews has improved somewhat since the revolution, the Ethiopian Jews continue to suffer economic hardships and human rights violations, including discrimination from their neighbors.

We have raised this issue of the conditions of the Ethiopian Jews and their desire to emigrate with the Ethiopian Government on numerous occasions. We continue to monitor the situation as closely as possible and to make every effort to facilitate visits to the Ethiopian Jewish areas. We are, however, limited in what we can do by our strained relations with the Ethiopian Government. The United States, a number of European countries, and several international organizations, have made repeated demarches to the Ethiopian Government on human rights since the Revolution. In no instance of which we are aware did any international representations have an effect; the conclusion most governments seem to have drawn is that the Ethiopians are resentful of and very resistant to human rights criticism.

Nevertheless we will persist for efforts to aid Falashas to leave Ethiopia are right and are to some extent effective: thousands have gotten out in the last three years.

Why hasn't the U.S. ratified the U.N. Treaty on Genocide?

The United States has failed to ratify the UN Treaty on Genocide because of substantial but probably decreasing opposition within our society. For example, until a few years ago, the ABA opposed ratification of the Genocide Convention. The Convention does contain some troubling clauses, and many of those who favor ratification have stated that they would do so only if reservations were added which would deal with such questions as the justification of the International Court of Justice and certain problems regarding the definition of genocide. The Genocide Treaty has been before the Senate for over 35 years, and as yet there has been a lack of either the votes or perhaps the energy necessary to pass it. There is some reason for optimism, however, for over time it appears that objections to the treaty are eroding and it is more likely now than in the past that the Senate will act.

Emigration of Jews from the USSR has slowed down to a bare trickle. This seems to correspond with the decline of detente and dialogue with the Russians. Hasn't your Administration's aggressive and inflexible attitude toward the Russians been largely responsible for the crack-down on Jewish dissidents in the USSR?

" The Andropov period and the last few years have seen a revival of anti-Semitic activity and a slowdown of emigration from the Soviet Union which are unprecedented in the last few decades. The decline in emigration began in early 1980 shortly after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December, 1979. The decline continued throughout 1980 and 1981 and went further in 1982 and 1983 after the December, 1981 military coup in Poland. Thus, this phenomenon has been occurring under two administrations, and began under President Carter. Neither the Carter nor the Reagan Administration can in any sense be blamed, however, and both have vigorously protested and opposed the Soviet clampdown on emigration.

The explanation for the decline in emigration seems to be a combination of two factors, the internal and the external. Internally, there were always opponents in the regime over permitting substantial numbers of Jews to exit. One argument used against them was that if a few troublemakers were let out, the "Jewish problem" would be solved. This proved to be false, and in fact, the more Jews that got out, the more Jews that applied to get out; and seeing this phenomenon, the regime felt that it would spread to not only more Jews but as well to other nationalities and ethnic groups within the Soviet Union. Moreover, the last couple of years has seen a general crackdown and increase in repressiveness in Soviet society, which has affected freedom of religion in general, emigration, political and cultural dissidence, and other factors.

As to the external, there is no doubt that the tone of East-West relations effects emigration levels. The Soviets see Jews as chattel to be traded to the West for certain purposes. At times of bad relations, they know that they cannot get what they want from the West even if they let some Jews out -- so, they don't let any out. (This is why emigration levels fell precipitously immediately after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The Soviets knew that opinions of them in the West were so low that they would not get anything in response for letting some more Jews out.)

It is ridiculous to claim that President Reagan's attitude toward the Soviet Union is in any sense responsible for a crackdown on Jews there. First, there has been a general crackdown in the Soviet Union, on Jews and non-Jews, on corruption, on dissidents, and it is silly to think that the Soviets make the decision to engage in such a crackdown as a reaction to President Reagan's criticism of them. It is notable that emigration rates for Germans and Armenians have gone down just as have those for Jews. If the Soviets were reacting to Reagan rhetoric, why would they lower emigration rates for Germans as much as they have for Jews?

Surely the lesson of the 1930s is that Jewish lives will not be saved by silence. In fact, is it not the entire premise of the Soviet Jewish movement that as much as possible should be said about Soviet human rights violations and that we must always speak with complete frankness and honesty about the

nature of The Soviet regime and about its repression of
Jews and others? The issue really is not why the President
used the term "evil" to describe the Soviet regime; the real
question is whether there is anyone in the Jewish community
who can, or wishes to argue that the term does not apply?

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

March 15, 1984

I thought you might be interested in the enclosed speech by President Reagan at the United Jewish Appeal Young Leadership Conference in Washington, March 13.

As you have no doubt read, the speech was well received. The President received a number of standing ovations and was applauded at least 22 times.

All good wishes,


Marshall Breger, Esq.
Special Assistant to
the President for
Public Liaison

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

March 13, 1984

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
TO THE YOUNG LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE
OF THE UNITED JEWISH APPEAL

The Washington Hilton
Washington, D.C.

11:12 A.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: I'm delighted to be here. And special greetings to Steven Greenberg of the Young Leadership Cabinet, Mickey Baron of the Young Women's Leadership Cabinet.

For almost 45 years, the United Jewish Appeal has served as the main fundraising organization of American Jews. And you certainly have proven that to me this morning with the figures that we've just heard.

Through the agencies it funds, the UJA provides vital social and economic assistance, including resettlement, rehabilitation and development programs for Jews in Israel and more than 30 other countries. And through its Young Leadership Cabinet and -- the UJA trains the hundreds of young men and women for service positions of responsibility around the world. In recognition of your historic task and your great humanitarian achievements, I certainly commend you.

In your lives, you must overcome great challenges. I know you draw strength and inspiration from the well of a rich spiritual heritage, from the fundamental values of faith and family, work, neighborhood and peace.

Two centuries ago, those values led Americans to build democratic institutions and begin their Constitution with those courageous and historic words, "We, the people -- " And today, our democratic institutions and ideals unite all Americans, regardless of color or creed.

Yet, as we enjoy the freedom that America offers, we must remember that millions on earth are denied a voice in government and must struggle for their rights. They live under brutal dictatorships or communist regimes that systematically suppress human rights.

MORE

Under communism, Jews, in particular, suffer cruel persecution. Here in our own hemisphere, the communist Sandinista regime in Nicaragua has used threats and harassment to force virtually every Nicaraguan Jew to flee his country.

In the Soviet Union, Jews are virtually forbidden to teach Hebrew to their children, are limited to a small number of synagogues and cannot publish books of Hebrew liturgy. Emigration of Jews from the Soviet Union has been brought to a near standstill. Prominent Jews like Iosif Begun have been arraigned in mock trials and given harsh sentences. Hebrew scholars like Lev Furman have seen their teaching materials robbed and their homes ransacked. And Jewish dissidents like Anatoly Shcharansky have been put in mental wards or thrown in jail. We must support Soviet Jews in their struggle for basic rights -- (applause) -- and I urge all Americans to observe the International Day of Concern for Soviet Jews this Thursday -- day after tomorrow -- March 15th.

In this world where so many are hostile to democracy, how can Americans best preserve and promote the democratic ideals that we hold dear, ideals which are the keys to the golden door of human progress?

Here at home, I believe we can move forward together toward a genuine opportunity society by meeting two important challenges.

First, we must teach tolerance and denounce racism, anti-Semitism, and all ethnic or religious bigotry, wherever they exist, as unacceptable evils. And down through our history, American Jews have been on the front lines in our nation's great struggles for equal rights. A century ago, the 14th amendment proclaimed the full protection of the law for all. In the 50's and 60's, the struggle for civil rights stirred our nation's soul. Americans must continue that great tradition because, even today, vestiges of racism and anti-Semitism remain. Synagogues are vandalized, Jews and others are harassed and mocked, and Nazis and the Ku Klux Klan have attempted to march through black and Jewish neighborhoods. Let us reject prejudice, turn our backs on bigotry, and stand shoulder to shoulder for equal rights. (Applause.)

Our second challenge is to promote economic growth. Throughout history, civil and economic rights have gone hand-in-hand. For centuries, rulers kept Jews down by limiting their occupational choices. In our country, many blacks suffered from Jim Crow prejudice, denied all but the poorest of jobs. But in a strong and growing economy, all groups have the opportunity to advance through hard work, enterprise and heart.

MORE

Just three years ago, our nation was an economic disaster area. Double-digit inflation, record interest rates, huge tax increases, and too much regulation were destroying growth, drying up opportunities, and freezing those at the bottom of our society into a bleak existence of dependency.

And that's why economic recovery without inflation was our top priority. We cut taxes, reduced the growth of the federal budget, eliminated useless regulations, and passed an historic reform called tax indexing. Indexing means government can never again profit from inflation at your expense.

Today, America's economic engine is pulling this nation forward again. Inflation is down from more than 12 percent in 1980 to about 4 percent. The prime interest rate has fallen by almost half. New businesses are the biggest innovators and job producers, and from January to November 1983, more than 548,000 companies incorporated. That's nearly half again the yearly rate during the 1970s. It means more jobs and opportunities so it's no accident that unemployment is down to 7.7 percent, the sharpest drop in more than 30 years.

More Americans are holding jobs today than any other time in this nation's history. Despite all we've accomplished, we must go forward to new goals to keep the nightmare of inflation from ever coming back. We must enact constitutional budget reforms like the line item veto and the balanced budget amendment. And to make taxes more simple and fair, and to provide greater incentives to our people we must press for tax simplification -- a sweeping and comprehensive reform of the entire tax code.

Could I interject something here? When we talk about simplification, it sounds awfully simple. But the other day, I got a figure from the Treasury Department that astounded me. If you're a young lawyer deciding, maybe, to get into the area of tax counseling and advice and so forth, do you know how many books of regulations you would have on your shelves just to help you with the income tax? Well, you've heard of the Harvard Classics, five-foot shelf of books. You'd have to have a shelf of 31 feet of books just for that one subject.

Well, as we move ahead, we're determined to leave no one behind. Under this administration, more funds go to needy Americans, even after adjusting for inflation, than ever before. And total spending on social programs has increased by \$71 billion during these last three years.

And while I'm on this subject, I wonder if you who are intensely committed to social justice and Jewish charity would join us in questioning the relationship between greater federal spending and a healthy, prosperous, and growing country. During the '60s and '70s, the Great Society and other federal programs led to massive increases

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in social spending. Why, then, at the same time did the number of Americans below the poverty line stop shrinking? Why did we see a drop in the number of males in the work force and a huge increase in births out of wedlock?

I believe the answer lies in the firm difference between the New Deal and the Great Society. The New Deal gave cash to the poor; but the Great Society failed to target assistance to the truly needy and make government the instrument of vast transfer payments, erecting huge bureaucracies to manage hundreds of social programs. The Great Society failed in two crucial aspects: It fostered dependence on government subsidies and it made the transfer of money from Washington bureaucrats to those in need seem like a mission impossible.

I was a New Deal Democrat. And I still believe today that there is only one compassionate, sensible and effective policy for federal assistance: We must focus domestic spending on the poor and bypass the bureaucracies by giving assistance directly to those who need it. We must end dependency, eliminate quotas and foster a vital, innovative economy that rewards all Americans according to their talent and hard work. If we do, we can enhance our democratic ideals and can make America a genuine opportunity society.

To promote our democratic ideals abroad, we must also meet great challenges, and I see three that are paramount.

First, we must keep America strong. During the '70's, the United States made a conscious choice to restrict its military development, fervently hoping the Soviets would respond in kind. Well, during those 10 years, our spending on defense dropped over 20 percent in real terms. We cancelled major weapons programs, reduced our nuclear stockpile to its lowest level in 20 years and slackened in the training of our armed forces. Between 1968 and 1978, we cut our Navy -- the fleet -- by more than half.

But far from responding to our good intentions with restraint, the Soviets launched the most massive military buildup in world history. From 1974 to 1980, they outproduced us in practically every category of weapons: 3 times more tanks, twice as many tactical combat aircraft, 5 times more ICBM's and 15 times more ballistic missile submarines. By 1980, total Soviet military investment was more than 1½ times ours.

President Carter's Secretary of Defense, Harold Brown, put it very well. He acknowledged a bitter lesson about Soviet practice in saying, "When we build, they build. When we don't build, they build."

Since taking office, our administration has made significant headway in rebuilding our defenses and making America more secure. Perhaps you remember the 29th Psalm in which King David said, "The Lord will give strength to His people; the Lord will bless his people with peace." Today, America once again recognizes that peace and strength are inseparable.

But we've only begun to repair past damage. Make no mistake: if we heed those who would cripple America's rebuilding program, we will undermine our own security and the security of our closest friends, like Israel, and I am not prepared to let that happen. (Applause.) After two decades of military expansion by the Soviet Union and a decade of neglect by the United States, we're struggling not to regain the superiority we once enjoyed, but simply to restore the military equivalence we need to keep the peace.

A second great challenge is to defend and promote human rights throughout the world. Alexander Herzen, the great Russian writer, warned, "To shrink from saying a word in defense of the oppressed is as bad as any crime. . ." Well, we who are blessed by the fruits of liberty have a personal responsibility and a moral obligation to speak out in defense of our brothers and sisters. We must not and we will not remain silent.

Our administration has repeatedly and vigorously protested the persecution of Jews and others in the Soviet Union and other communist nations. We're also using our influence with countries that receive American assistance to give human rights firm support. In El Salvador, we're insisting that the leaders take steps to end human rights abuse. And although El Salvador is far from perfect, we've seen marked progress.

In the United Nations, Iran's representative once called Israel, quote, "a cancerous growth," and Libya's representative has referred to the people of Israel as, quote, "the most vile people upon earth." This so-called "anti-Zionism" is just another mask for vicious anti-Semitism, and that's something the United States will not tolerate. (Applause.)

As I wrote last month to Stanley Blend, the President of the Jewish Federation of San Antonio, ". . . the lesson of history is overwhelmingly clear. Silence is never an acceptable response to anti-Semitism." (Applause.)

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U.N. Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick is our leader on this. Let me assure you of one thing about Jeane: She is a very tenacious woman. (Applause.) She has defended Israel and stood up for human rights with persistence and courage. But just so no one gets any ideas, I will be blunt: If Israel is ever forced to walk out of the U.N. -- the United States and Israel will walk out together. (Applause.)

Standing steadfast with our allies in support of greater economic growth and of peace with freedom is our third great challenge. Our administration is working hard to do just that. In Europe, we and our NATO allies have shown the Soviets our willingness to negotiate and our unshakable resolve to defend Western Europe. In the Far East, we are strengthening our ties to the Asian democracies and developing our relations with China. In Central America, we have supported democracy and fostered economic development. And in the Middle East, we have strengthened our relations with a nation close to your heart and mine -- the state of Israel.

Now, let me take a moment to describe our relations with Israel and our efforts in the Middle East. Israel and the United States are bound together by the ties of friendship, shared ideals, and mutual interests. We are allies in the defense of freedom in the Middle East. The United States was the first nation to recognize the state of Israel and ever since, our support for Israel has remained unflinching. Today, when even our NATO allies vote with us in the United States* only some six out of ten votes, the alliance between the alliance and Israel is so strong, that we vote together more than nine times out of ten. (Applause.)

Since I took office, the U.S.-Israeli relationship has grown closer than ever before in three crucial ways:

First, the U.S.-Israel strategic relationship has been elevated and formalized. This is the first time in Israel's history that a formal, strategic relationship has existed. The new -- (Applause.) -- the new American-Israel Joint Political-Military Group is working to decide how the U.S. and Israel can counter the threat that growing Soviet involvement in the Middle East poses to our mutual interests. Our cooperation adds to deterrence and improves and protects the prospects for peace and security. The negotiations have been positive, and they're moving forward.

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(*United Nations)

Second, we're negotiating to establish a free trade area between the United States and Israel -- (applause) -- and this will launch a new era of closer economic relations between our countries.

By substantially eliminating duties and non-tariff barriers between our nations, we will enable American producers to sell and compete in Israel while providing Israeli manufacturers unimpeded access to the free world's largest market. (Applause.)

Now, third, the United States will soon be giving Israel military aid on a grant, not a loan, basis. (Applause.) We have restructured our 1985 foreign aid package, and Israel will now receive economic aid totaling \$850 million and a military grant of some \$1.4 billion. (Applause.) This will ensure that Israel maintains its qualitative military edge. (Applause.)

All in all, the friendship between Israel and the United States is closer and stronger today than ever before. And I intend to keep it that way. (Applause.)

In the Middle East, as a whole, the United States has three aims. First, we must deter the Soviet threat. As the cross-road between three continents and the source of oil for much of the industrialized world, the Middle East is of enormous strategic importance. Were the Soviets to control the region, and they have expanded their influence there in a number of ways -- notably, by stationing 7,000 troops and advisors in Syria -- the entire world would be vulnerable to economic blackmail.

Their brutal war against the Afghan people continues with increasing verocity. We must not allow them to dominate the region.

Second, we must prevent a widening of the conflict in the Persian Gulf which could threaten the sea lanes carrying much of the free world's oil. It could also damage the infrastructure that pumps the oil out of the ground, and we must not permit this to happen.

Third, we seek to go on promoting peace between Israel and her Arab neighbors. In response to the growth of Syrian power and the rise of the Iranian threat, we must help to protect moderate Arabs who seek peace from the radical pressures that have done such harm in Lebanon.

Syria is trying to lead a radical effort to dominate the region through terrorism and intimidation aimed, in particular, at America's friends. One such friend we continue to urge to negotiate with Israel is King Hussein of Jordan. Today, Jordan is crucial to the peace process, and for that very reason, Jordan, like Israel, is confronted by Syria and faces military threats and terrorist attacks.

Since the security of Jordan is crucial to the security of the entire region, it is in America's strategic interest, and I believe it is in Israel's strategic interest, for us to help meet Jordan's legitimate needs for defense against the growing power of Syria and Iran.

Now, such assistance to Jordan does not threaten Israel, but enhances the prospects for Mideast peace by reducing the dangers of the radical threat. This is an historic moment in the Middle East. Syria must decide whether to allow Lebanon to retain control over its own destiny, or condemn it to occupation. Syria forced the Lebanese government to renounce the May 17th agreement with Israel precisely because it was a good agreement. Now, those who have chosen this course will have to find other ways to secure the withdrawal of Israeli forces. Arab governments and the Palestinian Arabs must decide whether to reach

peace with Israel through direct negotiations. And if Arab negotiators step forward, Israel must decide if she will take the risks necessary to attain the real security that comes only with genuine peace. I have no doubt that given that choice Israelis will once again have the courage to choose peace. (Applause.)

I am convinced that the initiative that I presented on September 1st, 1982 remains the best option for all the parties. It is squarely based on the Camp David framework and UN Security Council Resolution 242. It is time for the Arab world to negotiate directly with Israel and to recognize Israel's right to exist. (Applause.)

Now, we hope that the government of Israel will understand that continued settlement activity in the West Bank and Gaza will make the peace process more difficult. Peace can only come about through the give-and-take of direct negotiations. These negotiations will deal with many issues, including the status of Jerusalem, voting rights, land use and security. If there's to be any hope for these negotiations, however, we must preserve our credibility as a fair-minded broker seeking a comprehensive solution. Only the United States can advance this process. And we must not undermine our role.

And permit me to reaffirm a long-standing American commitment: So long as the PLO refuses to recognize Israel's right to exist and to accept Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, the United States will neither recognize nor negotiate with the PLO. (Applause.)

Only two weeks ago, terrorists planted hand grenades outside a store on a crowded street in Jerusalem. When they exploded, 21 shoppers and passers-by were injured, some seriously. Yasir Arafat, on behalf of the PLO, praised the attack on innocent civilians. He had the gall to call it a "military operation." Well, terrorism, whether by government or individuals, is repulsive and peaceful co-existence can never come from indiscriminate violence. (Applause.)

If I could leave you with one thought today, it would be this: Even though in the Middle East and elsewhere the world seems hostile to democratic ideals, it's the free men and women on this earth who are making history.

Here in the United States we've only seen the beginning of what a free and a brave people can do. Today, America is leading a revolution even more sweeping than the Industrial Revolution of a century ago. It's a revolution ranging from tiny microchips to voyages into the vast, dark spaces of space; from home computers that can put the great music, film and literature at a family's fingertips, to new medical breakthroughs that can add years to our lives, even helping the lame to walk and the blind to see.

In Israel, free men and women are every day demonstrating the power of courage and faith. Back in 1948 when Israel was founded, pundits claimed the new country could never survive. Today, no one questions that Israel is a land of stability and democracy in a region of tyranny and unrest.

So, this Sunday, as Jews the world over observe Purim, they'll certainly -- or celebrate not only the ancient deliverance of Jews from the wicked, but a modern joy as well -- the miracle of the State of Israel. (Applause.)

Permit me to join you and all Jews -- and I'm now going to demonstrate my own courage -- (Laughter.) -- your fervent and triumphant affirmation: Am Yisrael Chai! (Applause.)

Thank you. Thank you, and God bless you.